

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Decision-making at schools is a skill that has long been identified with the work of principals alone in many parts of the world (Good and Brophy, 1994; Vandenberghe, 1995). The centralisation of decision-making by principals has been criticised by many who have called for greater participation in decision-making as a progressive way of making schools more democratic and more efficient (Ellis and Fischer, 1994). Greater participation in decision-making processes has been a major focus in educational reform movements all over the world. In South Africa for example, this has led to legislation driven educational reform that mandates the incorporation of educators, parents, and learners in the decision-making processes. The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), is the juridical culmination of a long process of establishing democratic practice in schools. This reform initiative in South Africa rests on the assumption that participation of educators, learners and parents can enhance the achievement of the desired transformation (Mosoge and van der Westhuizen, 1998:73). This is a dramatic change from an historically and almost mutually exclusive decision-making. This shift in authority can now provide other stakeholders with a voice in what had largely been principals' sole domain

Consequently, the key changes in the way schools in South Africa are organized with regard to governance and decision-making are entrenched in the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996). These key changes are explained by (Hart 1995:11; Gultig and Butler, 1999:62-63) as follows:

- *Principals should lead rather than instruct.* Principals need to rely on the support of their staff in order to efficiently manage their institutions. Their status will depend on the ability to lead and motivate their team of educators. Effective principals are able to create an ethos that generates motivated and successful educators. They also

nurture stimulated and inspired learners in an effective school setting (Terry, 1999:28)

- *Decision-making hierarchy becomes flatter.* To reduce problems that emanate from a hierarchical system, flatter, more open and more participative structures should be created. This will enhance the flow of information and create an atmosphere where all members experience a sense of “ownership”.
- *Responsibility should be shared.* With the development of teams, responsibility should be shared. Where teams operate, the principal cannot be blamed since the team works together to solve problems.
- *Leadership is about empowering participants.* People in senior management positions should see their role as empowering others to make accurate decisions about the operation of the school, rather than controlling them or imposing their will on them. This can be achieved by providing other stakeholders within the school setting with greater autonomy and by creating opportunities for them to engage in professional conversation. Also, supportive environments are developed and a culture of commitment is created.
- *Command respect through stature and not status:* In the new dispensation, an individual’s position in the hierarchy is not the only basis for respect. The respect will rather be won by demonstrating to other educators and learners that respect is deserved and earned because an individual succeeds in getting things done.
- *Emphasis to be placed on effectiveness of schools and not simply efficiency.* In the past many schools ran efficiently. They were quiet and neat, but still produced poor matric results and not the desired learning outcomes. The emphasis is now being placed on a commitment to constant and continuous improvement which involves everybody in the school.
- *Creation of a culture of learning rather than of controlling behaviour.* Whereas principals in the past believed that educators needed constant control and supervision,

the approach in “new” schools should be to ensure that agreed-on outputs are achieved. This needs trusting educators and learners to work towards outcomes without constant supervision.

Based on the foregoing, it may be argued that the educational policies of the new South Africa require educational managers who are able to work in democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure effective delivery of education. The new policy framework for shared decision-making is embedded in the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996). The Act requires the involvement of other stakeholders in the decision-making process of the schools. In other words, the efficacy of shared decision-making is based on open communication, consultation and a willingness to negotiate. Schools need to have strong leaders who are prepared to share their power and authority and who can initiate and manage change that is based on the group decision strategy. In their research Shield and Knapp (1997:292) found that group decisions are inherently better than individual decisions and that the quality of the decision naturally follows the process.

However, changes in the new system of governance in schools have unfortunately resulted in school principals who still view their schools as their domain. As a result, they are organizing and managing their schools according to authoritative frames of reference and leadership styles. Yet in the light of democratic school governance, it is highly risky to ignore the views and inputs of other people in decision-making. Research has shown that, “if people are angry regarding the way decisions are taken, and their views are not accommodated, such decisions will not proceed smoothly” (Woodward and Buchholz, 1987:xvi).

Research is therefore needed to investigate whether or not the decision-making processes in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province are carried out in a collaborative manner.

1.2 PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

This research study will focus only on secondary schools situated in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. Thabo Mofutsanyana is one of the five largest education districts constituting the Free State Education Department. An overview of the district will be provided in chapter five. However, the study will focus only on **two** secondary schools found in the named district. For the purpose of this research, the schools are merely identified as Alpha and Omega to protect their true identity. By involving the two secondary schools, the study is not meant to be a comparative research but aims to explore perceptions of participants on the subject being pursued. Again, the purpose of this study is to provide in detail all that goes on in the two schools that have been chosen.

As a theoretical framework for this study, in the sections to follow the researcher will discuss problem formulation, significance of the study, objectives of research, research methodology and the research design.

1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Targeting the principals as leaders and initiators of change, studies have focused on what effective principals do. Rutherford (1985) found that effective principals seek involvement and consensus of others in decision-making more often than not. Contrary to that, some principals allow little or no subordinate participation in decision-making processes because such involvement is seen as counterproductive, threatening, potentially disruptive, or inefficient. However, Kassirjian (1992:28) is of the view that people will more readily accept decisions if they have been involved in the process.

The researcher of this work has been a teacher at a secondary school and has served on several school governing bodies, and noticed that most secondary school principals are often reluctant to consult their subordinates, and to involve other stakeholders in the decision-making processes. Under a democratic model of governance, schools are not

supposed to function according to a hierarchy of authority whereby leaders make decisions alone. On the contrary, research has shown that satisfaction and morale are likely to be higher in democratically led groups (Kassarjian, 1992:28). Taylor and Bogotch (1994:77) hold a similar view that if teachers are happy because they see themselves as having a significant say in the decision-making, they do their work well. This, they argue, has a positive bearing on student performance.

On the basis of his personal experience and observation, the researcher decided to investigate the effective decision-making of secondary school principals in the THMOED. The main research question of the study is as follows: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?*

The following sub-questions were formulated based on the main research question:

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?*
2. *Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a management **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how you dealt with it?*
4. *What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?*
2. *Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how it was dealt with?*
4. *What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings from this research may have the following impact:

- It is more relevant to those who are dealing with the design and development of training manuals on management and governance of schools;
- It will help secondary school leaders who are experiencing management problems in their schools;
- The study will encourage the creation of the necessary climate, structures and support mechanisms for engendering genuine participation and involvement in the governance of secondary schools;
- The study will also create opportunities for principals to review their decision-making strategies with the view that other role players should participate in decision-making processes and better decisions could be made as a result of wider participation.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In as far as the main objectives of the study are concerned, the study attempts to provide answers to the following basic question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?* The study has other essential objectives in that it also aims:

- to describe key issues and strategies of effective decision-making with a view to producing a conceptual framework;
- to explore decision-making strategies at secondary schools in the THMOED;
- to review participation of stakeholders within the school organizational structure;
- to capture the views and opinions of the respondents regarding the way decisions are taken in secondary schools;
- to describe strategies for effective decision-making as perceived by the respondents in secondary schools in the THMOED.

From the review of the literature on decision-making and shared decision-making, effective ways of making decisions will be suggested. These strategies will then be used to analyse the situation in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Literature study

Literature study is a necessary tool as it provides guidelines for the construction of the theoretical framework and also for the structuring of the interviews and questionnaire. Available literature on decision-making and shared decision-making were consulted to obtain an objective view of the problem outlined above, and is reported in **Chapters Two and Three.**

1.6.2 Qualitative research methodology

The research methodology to be used in this study is descriptive and exploratory. According to authors such as Lovell and Lawson (1979:34), descriptive research takes the form of:

- case studies
- survey studies
- developmental studies
- qualitative studies

This study will concentrate on the qualitative form since this research aims at elucidating what the participants themselves have to say with regard to decision-making in their natural settings. In this regard, it is imperative that a methodological perspective be adopted which will allow the findings to develop “from the data itself rather than from preconceived, rigidly structured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed” (Filstead, 1970:6). After all, “it is the unique demands of the problem which indicate the method rather than the method which limits the problem” (Romanyshyn, 1971:107). The problem identified in this study demands that the participants themselves be allowed to freely express their feelings, views and opinions. To this end, Sherman and Webb (in Ely, 1991:4) provide the following definition “...qualitative implies a direct concern with feelings, experiences and views as lived or felt or undergone ...”. Qualitative research thus has the aim of understanding experiences and views that are as near as possible to how the participants live then or express them. This research methodology fits with the kind of problem that this study aims to address which is: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?* The intention with employing the said strategy is to find out as much detail as possible on how the decision-making processes are carried out in secondary schools by the principals in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District.

As a way of concluding, Polkinghorne (1991:112) states, qualitative methodology is especially useful in the “generation of categories for understanding human phenomena

and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events that they experience”. Further details about the use of qualitative method and its value as a scientific technique will be discussed in **Chapter Four**.

1.6.3 Data collection

Decision-making in schools has extensive literature distributed in form of books, journals and articles. In this regard, available literature on the concepts decision-making and shared decision-making were consulted and were reported in Chapters Two and Three. To facilitate the collection of data in order to answer the research question stated in section 1.3 above, two investigative methods, which supplement each other and are found to be relevant to this research study will be used. The two methods are the open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. The questionnaires will be used specifically to elicit background information about the schools involved as well as the participants. The semi-structured interviews will be used to gather more information from the participants regarding the main research question. Interview schedules will be prepared with semi-structured questions and where possible the interviews will be audiotaped to provide verbatim records for subsequent analysis. Later on, the recorded information will be transcribed. Further details about the three techniques will be discussed in **Chapter Four**.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Seaman and Verhonick (1982:149) research design refers to “the way the researcher plans and structures the research process.” Denzin and Lincoln (1994:14) share same views and they describe research design as “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical materials.” In other words, research design refers to an arrangement of procedures and methods of a research study that includes sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results. Research design provides guidelines and structures to the research process in order to prevent haphazard procedures. In this regard a research

design confines the researcher in an empirical world and connects him to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions and bodies of relevant interpretative materials.

1.8 PHASES OF THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

PHASES	ACTIVITIES
<p>1. Preparatory phase</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making written application for permission to conduct study at secondary schools within Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District (THMOED) in the Free State Province to Head of Education. • Identification of schools and School Management Developer (SMD) who will invariably recommend the researcher to the “gatekeepers” involved for entry. • Selection of the participants according to set specific criteria. • Briefing of the subjects and logistical arrangements e.g. fixing of dates and venues.

Focus group discussions

2.1 Research population

- The population for this study in each school will come from volunteer teachers who are not members of school management team, members of learners' representative council, members of school governing body and the principal.

2.2 Sampling criteria

- Teachers who are currently at post level one and not members of school management team would be asked to volunteer to participate in the focus group discussions. The researcher believes that their views might not be biased as they are not members of the school management teams.
- The second group will constitute members of learners' representative council. The researcher believes that this group represents the views of the learner population and also represents learners in the School Governing Body.
- The third group will include parents, who are members of the school governing body. The researcher assumes that each parent has, over time, becomes knowledgeable about the school and should provide a unique perspective.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lastly, it would be the principal.
<p>3. Data gathering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering techniques will include questionnaires, individual and focus group interviews. Again, observation will be done in the form of visits to the identified schools for actual field work. Field notes will be recorded. The next step will be the study of available documents. This will help to get documented information about the specific management style of each school.
<p>4. Data analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis will be approached by identifying categories, recurrent themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interviews. Tanscribed transcripts will be used to determine categories, emerging themes and sub-themes. Again, consensus analysis, which is a meeting between the researcher and the promoter, will be conducted so that the identified categories, themes and sub-themes could be critically assessed. In establishing themes from qualitative data, works of experts such as Bogdan and Biklen (1992); Giorgi (1989); Goetz and LeCompte (1984), and others will be consulted to assist in this regard.

1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.9.1 Decision-making

Decision-making is a process whereby the awareness of a problem existing within a system, influenced by information and values, is transformed into competing alternatives among which a choice is made based on perceived outcomes (Fraser, 1988:88). This process of decision-making can be considered to consist of steps beginning with the identification of the problem and ending with the evaluation of its outcome.

Although people make decisions all the time, managers make decisions which affect others. In education, for instance, the influence of decisions has consequences on the lives of educators, learners, parents and the community. Schreuder et al. (1993:70-73) warn that in education, a decision should never be made in an arbitrary manner or without consultation with other stakeholders. The same authors maintain that decisions would be readily accepted by the people affected on condition that they were consulted and took part in the decision-making process. This is a point where shared decision-making is considered indispensable.

The researcher's experience has shown that many decisions in schools are taken without consultation or involvement of other stakeholders. Principals who do this feel that because they are accountable, they would rather be autocratic. However, shared decision-making has definite advantages – “two heads are better than one”. Besides that, shared decision-making increases a sense of ownership and commitment on the part of stakeholders.

1.9.2 Principal

The principal is the chief educational manager of a school. However, other titles such as administrator, headmaster, manager, educational leader, or decision maker are synonyms for principal and shall be used in this study. Reference to any one of these terms does not imply that the head of the school alone is responsible for decision-making.

1.9.3 School

In this study the term “school” refers only to secondary school. Secondary school means a school that offers education to learners up to Grade Twelve.

1.10 PLANNING OF RESEARCH

The study is organised as follows:

Chapter One provides an overview of the research. It covers the context of the problem, statement of the research problem, the research objectives, significance of research, method of research, research design, phases of research, parameters of study, definition of concepts, and planning of the research.

Chapter Two reviews the literature dealing with the nature of decision-making and decision-making styles in organisations.

Chapter Three expands on decision-making but focuses on the concept of shared decision-making as a requisite for effective decision-making.

Chapter Four discusses the research design and the selection of the research method, techniques for data gathering and the procedure to be followed to arrive at trustworthy and confirmable results.

Chapter Five deals with the presentation of data, analysis of data, interpretation of results and preliminary findings.

Chapter Six concludes by summarising the study. It draws conclusions and makes recommendations for application and practice of effective decision-making by principals. The study also suggests pointers for future research.

Lists of all sources consulted are provided under **References**. Questionnaire and interview schedules used are included as **Annexures**.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has placed the research problem into context and illustrated the need for the problem to be studied. The problem has been formulated and elaborated upon and the research question demarcated. The objectives and the significance of the research were presented together with a brief description of the research methodology employed. The scope of the study was demarcated and the concepts used were defined. Finally, the chapter outlined the presentation of this study.

The next chapter comprises a literature study on the nature of decision-making and decision-making styles within an organisation.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE OF DECISION-MAKING AND DECISION-MAKING STYLES IN ORGANISATIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the principles of decision-making. This chapter contains exposition on the nature of decision-making. It also concentrates on the major types of managerial decision-making and the various conditions under which decision-making takes place. The chapter also provides some definitions of decision-making and discussion of the decision-making process as it occurs in organizations. The decision-making process and the steps associated with it plus the techniques for improving decision-making are discussed.

Various types of the decision-making styles are mentioned in the literature. For the purposes of this discussion, the following types of the decision-making styles will be reviewed: decision-making by authority rule, decision-making by majority rule, decision-making by consensus rule, decision-making by minority rule, decision-making by lack of response, decision-making by participatory management and finally decision-making by unanimous rule. These will be discussed in detail in section 2.3

Decision-making can be regarded as the process of making a choice between two or more alternatives (Daft, 1994:251). This definition implies that the decision makers are faced with an opportunity or problem for which various courses of action are proposed and analysed, and from which a choice that is likely to move the organization in the direction of its mission and goals is made. In making a choice, decision makers come to a conclusion and select a particular course of action that they feel might enhance the success of the organisation. Some decisions are trivial while others have a major impact on the operation of the organization. However, there is wide range of principles to which managers can resort when they are faced with a problem or opportunity. Details about the concept of decision-making are provided in section 2.2.

2.2 WHAT IS DECISION-MAKING?

The rationale behind the discussion below is to come to a clearer understanding of the concept of decision-making. A discussion of the various aspects of the nature of decision-making and decision-making styles will enable the researcher to analyse the following general research question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?*

There are many definitions of decision-making in the literature of the subject. Blau and Scott (1962:250-251) see decision-making as a process that usually results in incremental progress and they define it as follows:

The experience in solving earlier problems is not lost but contributes to the search for solutions to later problems....The process of organizational development is dialectical – problems appear, and while the process of solving them tends to give rise to new problems, learning has occurred, which influences how the new challenges are met.

Sergiovanni et al. (1980) provide the following definition:

...the process boils down to the basic concept of making a choice among alternative courses of action.

Campbell, Corbally and Nystrand (1983:108) prefer the following definition of decision-making:

...the basic nature of a decision is that it is a choice of one from among two or more alternative ways to achieve an objective.

Fraser (1988:88) broadens this definition and explains decision-making as follows:

Most authorities describe decision-making as the process of making a choice from among alternatives. Some make description broader, including the steps

of defining the problem, generating alternatives to solve problems, evaluating the alternatives, selecting the best alternative, putting the best alternative into effect, and then evaluating the results.

Lipham, Rankin and Hoeh (1985:80-83) view decision-making as consisting of three basic dimensions, namely, *decision content*, *decision processes*, and *decision involvement*. They explain that decision content is analysed according to the administrative functions and the types of decisions made by the principals. For example, decision content relates to the following functions of the principal in a school situation: it involves the instructional program, staff personnel, learner personnel, financial and physical resources, and school-community relations. Although most of the decisions made by principals deal primarily with one of these functions, broader decisions, such as introducing a new curriculum may transcend several of the decision areas. *Decision processes* are a dimension which is regarded as the stages of a rational decision-making process. For the authors, *decision involvement* concerns *who* makes *what* decision, as well as the level of their participation in decision-making.

This Chapter concentrates on two of the three dimensions, namely the *decision content* and on the *decision processes* of decision-making. *Decision involvement* will be examined in **Chapter Three**. Nevertheless, decision-making, as will be indicated in this chapter, cannot be separated from problem solving. Decision-making and problem solving are really part of the same process: most decisions are made to solve problems. Most problems have many possible solutions and then a decision must be made as to which solution to adopt. Decision-making process as the main focus will be considered in detail later in section 2.5.

2.3 TYPES OF DECISIONS

Decisions are made at all levels of the organization, either by individuals or groups of individuals. The type and complexity of the decision to be made will vary according to the hierarchical level at which it is made. However, decision-making is the key activity of

the leader or manager. There are different types of decisions to be made within organisations. Many decisions are made unconsciously while others need a good deal of thought and analysis. Daft (1994:251) makes a distinction between “programmed” and non-programmed decisions as follows:

2.3.1 Programmed decisions

Programmed decisions are repetitive and routine and are based on established systematic procedures (Daft, 1994:251). Programmed decisions are made when the situation occurs often enough for the decision rules, policies and procedures to be developed and applied in the future. Examples in schools include the processing of applications for admission, re-ordering of paper and other office supplies when the inventory drops to a certain level; and the processing of end of the year reports. School leaders can usually handle programmed decisions by means of rules, standard operating procedures and specific policies if it occurs frequently. These enable decision makers to eliminate the process of identifying and evaluating and making a new choice each time a decision is required. While programmed decisions, to some extent, limit the flexibility of the leaders, they free the decision makers to devote attention to other, more important decisions. Programmed decisions can be delegated to lower level employees (Daft, 1994:251).

2.3.2 Non-programmed decisions

Non-programmed decisions are made where the situation is unique, poorly defined, unstructured and has important consequences for the organization. An example in schools is the launch of a new instructional programme, and designing new study material. Routine for handling such problems do not exist. In the case of non-programmed decisions, leaders have to rely on their own creativity. Leaders are often evaluated on this ability to apply creativity, intuition and judgment to the solution of problems.

Hoy and Miskel (1991:307) use the terms *generic* and *unique* to describe both programmed and non-programmed decisions respectively. Generic decisions come from

established principles, policies or rules. Recurring problems that mostly confront organisations are routinely solved by formulaic rules and regulations. For example, generic decisions are needed when a principal monitors teacher absenteeism, mediates student-teacher conflicts, and enforces the disciplinary code. Administrators normally make generic decisions by applying the appropriate rule, principle, or policy.

In contrast, unique decisions are creative decisions that require an administrator to go beyond established procedures for an effective solution. Unique problems are exceptions to the general principle or rule. A unique decision might arise when a superintendent asks the principal and teachers to introduce curriculum reform. Creative decisions to solve unique problems quite often change the thrust of an organisation. In order to seek a creative solution decision makers must be open to a wide range of ideas. They must break out of the standard organisational mindset. It is true that unique events are rare, but it is imperative that decision makers should be able to differentiate between routine and unique problems. Decision makers make a mistake when they treat a routine situation as if it were a series of unique events or when they treat a new event as if it were just another old problem. Once a problem has been classified as generic or unique, the analysis proceeds.

However, in this ever-changing environment, leaders need to transcend, recognize, understand and be able to apply sequential steps involved in creative or rational decision-making. Friedman (1990) argues that one of the factors related to organizational effectiveness, is the ability of a leader to make sound, logical decisions based on an analysis of factual information and the readiness to take appropriate actions to implement the decisions.

It is clear from this discussion that programmed or generic decisions are guided by rules, standard operating procedures and policies. In case of non-programmed or unique decisions, managers have to rely on their own creativity.

This study will attempt to identify mechanisms in place at secondary schools in the THMOED to handle programmed decisions. This study also aims to establish the extent

to which school managers make use of creative abilities of their subordinates to handle non-programmed decisions. The most important factor influencing the creativity of the subordinates is probably the environment in which they work (Smit and de J Cronje, 1997:171). Managers usually foster creativity among subordinates by developing effective communication systems throughout the organization. Inability of the manager to share information with his subordinates jeopardizes creativity and innovation. Managers are often evaluated on this ability to distinguish between certain types of decisions and accordingly apply appropriate approaches to the solution of the problem.

2.4 CONDITIONS OF DECISION-MAKING

Various factors affect decision-making, thus often rendering the process complex and difficult. One reason for this is that decision-making tasks differ greatly in the level of complexity. There are a number of reasons as to why decision-making tasks differ in their levels of difficulty. Some of the reasons include the perceived effort to make the decision, the likelihood that the decision will be correct, the novelty of the decision, and the novelty of the context.

Decision-making is also affected when there are multiple stimuli. Research has demonstrated that if there are more than two information sources, people generally do not use the additional information to make more accurate decisions. It is believed that this is due to the use of selective filtering strategy. One such strategy is called the *salience bias*, where information is selected solely on the basis of how important the decision-maker perceives it to be (Harris, 1998). Also, information that is difficult to interpret and process is usually ignored, or given little weight.

Given the scenario that decision-making tasks differ in their levels of difficulty and that one utilizes cognitive resources differently to make a decision, it is useful to identify conditions under which decisions occur, so as to enable leaders to make better decisions. According to Smit and de J Cronje (1997:172-173) decisions occur under *certainty*, *uncertainty* and *risk*. Each of these conditions is discussed in the following section.

2.4.1 Decisions under certainty

A decision is made under conditions of certainty when the available alternatives and the benefits associated with each are known (Smit and de J Cronje, 1997:172). Decisions in such a situation are made by examining the value of each choice, based on visible attributes and the importance of those attributes to decision-makers. Making decision under certainty involves compensation, that is, the choice is based on one thing over another, which is compensated for by a higher value on attributes.

When choices become more difficult, decision-makers mould their choices. This process involves assessing values and previous ideas with their frame of reference. Sometimes choices are on the minimum criteria, which is appropriate in that situation and it is called “satisficing” choice (Harris, 1998).

2.4.2 Decisions under uncertainty

A decision is made under conditions of uncertainty when the available alternatives, the probability of their outcomes, and their potential benefits or effects to individuals are unknown to the manager. The complexity and dynamism of today’s organizations and their turbulent environments lead to this state of uncertainty. Uncertainty therefore refers to the conditions under which a manager cannot assign even subjective probabilities to a possible state of things (Daft, 1994:253).

It is not surprising that most management decisions involve varying degrees of uncertainty, in the light of the foregoing, since there are usually too many unknown facts that can affect a decision for a manager to be able to predict its probable outcome. Because managers cannot predict outcomes under conditions of uncertainty, they often make decisions based solely on their intuition and belief that their decisions will lead to desirable outcomes.

2.4.3 Decisions under risk

A decision occurs under conditions of risk when the available alternatives, the potential or costs associated with them, and the probability of their occurrences are known (Smit & de J Cronje, 1997:172). Under risk conditions options are already known, but their outcomes are unknown. Risk therefore means that a decision has clear-cut objectives and that good information is available, but the future outcomes associated with each option are subject to chance (Daft, 1994:253). Risky decisions are a choice between a definite occurrence and an option with less certain outcomes. The selection between these options is dependent on individuals' frames of reference, past experiences and personal judgment and beliefs (Smit & de J Cronje, 1997:172-173). However, the decision maker may refuse to decide or attempt to delegate or involve subordinates in situations where the risk of failure is high. Nevertheless, participation in decision-making remains a basic tenet of human relations theory (Strauss and Rosenstein, 1970).

2.5 DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

2.5.1 Introduction

This section discusses the sequential steps of the decision-making process, leading to the solution of the identified problem. The aim of this section is to determine how the rational decision-making process operates. However, decision-making process, as it will be indicated in section 2.5.2 cannot be separated from problem solving. The relationship between decision-making process and problem solving is reviewed in section 2.5.2.

2.5.2 The relationship between decision-making process and problem solving

Problem solving is a process in which we perceive and resolve a gap between a present situation and a desired goal, with the path to the goal blocked by known or unknown obstacles. In general, the situation is one not previously encountered, or where at least a specific solution from past experiences is not known. In contrast, decision-making

process is a selection procedure where one of two or more possible solutions is chosen to reach a desired goal. The steps in both problem solving and decision-making processes are quite similar. In fact, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. But in this study focus will be on the decision-making process.

Various authors have indicated that the identification of a problem followed by logical steps to solve the problem is the point of departure in making a decision (Reynolds, 1997:33; Ubben and Hughes, 1997:43; Reinhartz, 1989:265). Reynolds (1997:133) claims that the effectiveness of the team in developing school improvement plans will be dependent on the predetermined sequence of steps that are followed in the decision-making process.

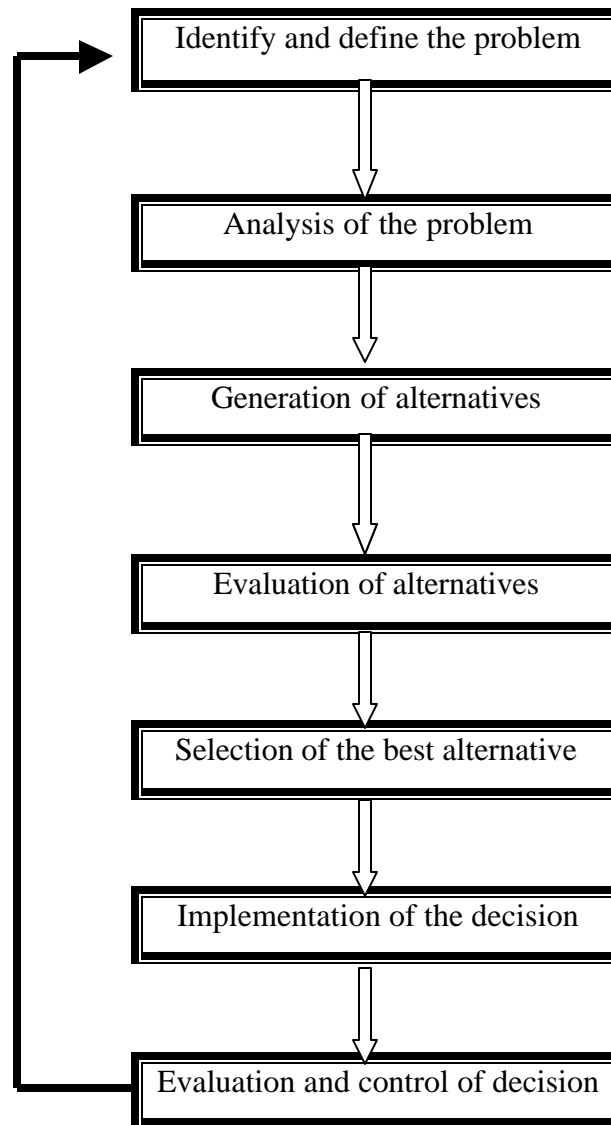
2.5.3 Steps in the decision-making process

Decisions are concerned with solving problems – any type of decision-making will have different definable steps in the process. The process of decision-making can be considered to consist of steps beginning with problem identification and ending with the evaluation of its outcomes. However, it is a cycle of events in that, having decided on a solution, it is usual to monitor and evaluate the results of that decision – this may give rise to further decision-making.

Those with responsibility in the decision-making process should go through a series of steps that lead to a particular result. Decision-making is therefore a sequential process in the sense that, in most decision situation, managers go through a number of steps that help them think through the problem and develop alternative solutions. Problems that occur infrequently with a great deal of uncertainty may require the manager to utilize the entire process (Daft, 1994:251-253). In contrast, problems that occur frequently with a great deal of certainty are handled by rules, specific policies and standard operating procedures of the organizations, making it unnecessary to develop and evaluate alternatives each time these situations arise (Daft, 1994:251-253). It could therefore be realised that decision-making steps are more applicable to non-programmed decisions than to programmed decisions. **Figure 2.1** illustrates the six steps in the decision-making

process. The model is from Smit and de J Cronje (1992:146) but modified to suit school situations. These steps are developed, elaborated and discussed in the sections below.

Figure 2.1: The steps in decision-making process



(Smit and de J Cronje, 1992:146)

Consequently, it is idealistic to even hope that one effective decision making structure is going to solve all problems. Thoughtful and skillful decision-making at best leads to more rational decisions, but it typically will not result in final decisions. The inherent nature of decision-making and organizations precludes that possibility.

2.5.3.1 Identification and definition of the problem

A problem is regarded as an obstacle to the achievement of organizational goals and is therefore an obstacle that needs to be overcome by decision-makers. According to Hoy and Miskel (1991:307) the first step in making a decision is recognising that a problem exists and that a decision is necessary. Identifying the problem means describing as precisely as possible the gap between one's perception of present circumstances and what one would like to see happen. Arnold (1978:34) identified the following four types of gaps:

- something is wrong and needs to be corrected;
- something is threatening and needs to be prevented;
- something is inviting and needs to be accepted; and
- something is missing and needs to be provided.

Stating the problem too narrowly represents the major difficulty in problem identification as it leads to artificially restricting the search for alternatives. The way a problem is conceived is important to its subsequent analysis and solution. A quick and narrow definition of a problem unduly restricts options and frequently treats symptoms, not the actual problem (Smit and de J Cronje, 1992:146).

Guthrie and Reed (1991:241) point out that during the problem identification step, the problem must be specified, the difference between the actual and the ideal situation must be determined and the problem must be categorized. Heller and Lundquist (1984:57) argue that during this step, the decision maker needs to, first, quantify or qualify the problem, then, with the assistance of information available and inputs from other people,

determine the goals that need to be achieved and finally acquaint himself with the limitations and anomalies that exist.

Everard and Morris (1990:49) concur with the above statements and offer the following procedure in the problem identification step:

- The situation must be understood and its causes explored;
- The questions “when”, “where”, “how” and “why” should be asked when a situation could or should be improved;
- What has changed must be determined;
- Relevant data, facts, attitudes, events, figures must be collected or found;
- The problem may have to be reformulated to be more specific and focused.

However, Crous (1990:195) regards information gathering and analysis of the situation as an important part of the problem identification and explains:

The more applicable, accurate and reliable the information about the circumstances regarding the problem or situation, the better the identification and definition of the problem.

Beinstock (1984) notes that collecting too much information can actually confuse the situation rather than clarify it.

However, lack of complete information must not be allowed to paralyse the decision. A decision based on partial knowledge is usually better than not making the decision when a decision is needed (Harris, 1998:15). The statement by Harris is in line with the adage “any decision is better than no decision,” while perhaps the extreme, shows the importance of choosing. This can be illustrated by the following example: When a driver is racing toward a bridge support, she or he must decide to turn away to the right or to the left. Which way she or he turns is less important than the fact that she or he does indeed turn.

Also, as part of the collection of facts for problem identification, it is wise to consult those who will be affected by and who will have to implement the decision. Inputs from other people and stakeholders not only help supply a leader with information that helps in making the decision but it begins to produce the acceptance of the decision. The implementers of the decision arrived at are often happy about it because they feel that they are part of the decision making process. As Ackoff (1981) noted in *The Art of Problem Solving*, the tendency not to consult people who are supposed to be involved in the decision-making is often perceived as an act of aggression.

This step of problem identification entails considering a number of factors. The essential include gathering of sufficient information and consultation. **Exhibit 2.1** will explain the application of this step: “problem identification” for an attendance problem among learners in a school situation.

EXHIBIT 2.1

In a school situation problem identification step will operate as follows in the area of attendance. The principal has identified that a problem exists in the area of irregular class attendance, and then arranges for collection of attendance registers. He makes findings on the necessary steps to be instituted. However, a reactive style would be to wait until some parents lodge a complain about learners loitering the street during school time, or when end of year results drop. Once the irregular attendance problem has been identified, the problem must be restated as follows: the attendance of both boys and girls in Grade 11 classes is irregular. Personnel affected by this problem are: the principal, staff members assigned to monitor attendance, Grade 11 class teachers, Grade 11 subject teachers, parents of the learners, the learners and the school governing body. The seriousness of the problem has been weighed against aims, goals and objectives of the school. The policy of the school states that, attendance is compulsory with no exception and is monitored closely throughout the academic year. Irregular attendance has negative impact on the school performance. Consequently, the problem is found to be serious and necessitates a decision to be taken.

2.5.3.2 Analysis of the problem

Once the problem has been identified and appropriately defined, it needs to be analysed as to what type of problem it is, how it occurred and how it can be solved. This analysis is sometimes referred to as “situational analysis” and it calls for the problem to be classified according to whether it would lead to programmed or non-programmed decisions (Hoy and Miskel, 1991:307). As it has been shown in section 2.3 above, some decisions may be handled by applying appropriate rules, principles or regulations. Daft (1994:251-252) classifies such decisions as programmed decisions because they are repetitive and routine in the sense that they are based on established and systematic procedures. Again, these decisions are made in accordance with the organizational goals, policies, procedures, rules regulations, methods or procedures. According to Daft (1994:252) programmed decisions can be delegated to lower levels within the organizations.

Again, in section 2.3 above it was also shown that certain problems cannot be handled by established sets of rules and regulations. Instead, they require going beyond established procedures for solutions. Such decisions are classified as non-programmed decisions. According to Daft (1994:251) non-programmed decisions may have a major impact on the organizations and these decisions require analysis that cannot be based on prior circumstances; therefore, they include a level of risk and uncertainty. As a result unique problems or non-repetitive problems may lead to decision-making process steps being followed (Daft, 1994:252).

Crous (1990:191) maintains that non-programmed decisions occur at all levels of any organization, including schools, and further:

...are usually non-recurrent and less structured than programmed decisions. Non-programmed decisions are made when a problem or situation does not occur in the same way as previously. This type of decision requires a creative approach by managers because a policy, procedure or rules have to be

developed. Non-programmed decisions also demand special attention because they are usually more complex than programmed decisions.

If a problem has been analysed as a repetitive problem, then a programmed decision will serve the purpose. But if it is a unique problem, then it calls for creative decision-making through the various steps of the decision-making process. The problem is further analysed according to rules, standard operating procedures and policies of the organization. **Exhibit 2.2** discusses the application of the steps in the analysis of a problem with reference to the school situation.

EXHIBIT 2.2

In analyzing the problem of absenteeism identified in exhibit 2.1 above, the principal of the school determines that a routine decision is required. Since the school has established set of rules and procedures on how to deal with absenteeism problem, the committee in charge, in consultation with the Grade 11 teachers, gives directive to the deputy principal to send out letters to the parents of the affected learners to invite them to the school. This is considered to be the programmed decisions. However, if the problem persists, in accordance with the school procedure, the matter is referred to the principal. The principal, in accordance with state statutes informs the school governing body. The school governing body takes the matter up with the education authorities. Through the school governing body, the education authorities instruct the principal to take appropriate steps. This requires of the principal to think through the problem. The principal has to apply creative thinking when he discovers that the letters about absenteeism that were sent to parents did not reach them. This calls for application of rational decision-making process steps in order to make non-programmed decisions.

2.5.3.3 Generation of alternatives

Once the problem has been analysed, a manager needs another step in decision-making: developing alternative solutions to deal with the problem. These alternatives are possible solutions to the problem. The solutions must be generated by taking into account criteria that have been developed (du Toit, 1990:47). The decision-making process requires that

the decision maker identify the different alternatives and ensure that he possesses in-depth knowledge of each alternative.

Enough time should be spent on the generation of alternatives steps in order to ensure that non-standard and creative alternatives are generated. A brainstorming technique can be used during this step. Brainstorming is a technique by which an individual or a group formally jots down as many ideas or solutions as they come to them (Guthrie and Reed, 1991:241). However, details about the brainstorming technique will follow later in this chapter. An individual or a group makes a list of all the possible choices including the choice of doing nothing.

Hoy and Miskel (1991:310) emphasise the fact that it is advantageous to have a great number of choices because it “increases the possibility of finding satisfactory alternatives that meet the already specified conditions”. Crous (1990:197) shares the same view and states that the development of more than one alternative establishes the potential for better solutions.

The manager should bear in mind Crous’ (1990:197) advice that in attempting to generate many alternatives:

The number of alternative solutions to problems is naturally influenced by a few factors such as time constraints, quality, quantity, accuracy, reliability and relevance of the information...

It may be realised from the foregoing discussion that several alternatives that lead to the resolution of the problem need to be generated. Again, the success and the number of alternatives generated depend on the involvement of other people and the availability of information to help with the generation of alternative steps.

Exhibit 2.3 discusses the generation of alternatives in a school set up.

EXHIBIT 2.3

The principal is faced with a situation which requires generation of alternatives to the unique problem which is that learners are not giving letters to their parents concerning their absence. The principal approaches the problem as follows: he convenes the staff meeting wherein teachers are asked to think about the problem and provide possible solutions. He does likewise with the school management team as well as the school governing body. He also continues to search for possible solution to the problem by consulting other people. In the final analysis the principal is left with the following respondents' suggestions that must be taken into account: (1) Send letters to parents as registered item (2) Visit the parents (3) Ask learners to bring acknowledgement slips from their parents as a proof that they have received the letters (4) Punish learners found not to have giving letters to their parents (5) Telephone parents about their misconduct (6) The problem of absenteeism is not serious enough and no action should be taken (7) Introduce a point system in consultation with parents which will operate as follows: deduct a point every time a learner is absent. A certain number of points are required for a learner to qualify to sit for any exam. Parents should request a weekly attendance report from the school via their children. The report should outline the situation of points against their children.

2.5.3.4 Evaluation of alternatives

The next step in the decision-making process involves evaluating the various alternatives generated in the previous step. Glasman and Nevo (1988:34) consider evaluation as “a systematic activity of using information” to describe organizational objectives and to make a judgement on their merit and worth. Simkins (1983:187) shares the same sentiment and considers evaluation as “making judgements on the effectiveness of the strategy adopted”.

Answers are provided to the question “what will happen if this course of action is followed?” in the evaluation of alternatives step (Hoy and Miskel, 1991). The following discussion serves as an attempt to respond to the question.

Advantages, disadvantages, and interesting aspects for each alternative are written individually, then they are shared and discussed by stakeholders. A brainstorming technique can be used during this step. Details about the technique will follow later in this chapter. After discarding alternatives that are clearly outside the bounds of the previously stated criteria, both advantages and disadvantages should be considered in more detail. An analysis of relationships among alternatives should be completed (i.e. is an advantage of one a disadvantage for another) and consideration should be given to the relative importance of advantages and disadvantages. Only those alternatives that the majority favours as correct are considered further. It should be remembered that the alternative that you as a leader might like best or that would be the best in all possible worlds will, however, not be functional in the real world because of too much cost, time, or lack of acceptance by others.

Elbing (in Boone and Kurtz, 1984:162) offers the following rules that should be taken into consideration when evaluating alternative solutions:

- A solution should be of a quality satisfactory to meet organizational goals;
- A solution should be acceptable both to those who are affected by it and those who implement it;
- A solution should be evaluated in terms of its consequences to an organization;
- Each alternative solution's risk should be taken into consideration.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion it seems that the evaluation step in the process separates the alternatives into useful and not so useful alternatives. To make a judgement on the worth of an alternative, involvement of other interested parties is essential.

The evaluation of alternatives as applied to a school situation problem is explained in **Exhibit 2.4.**

EXHIBIT 2.4

The principal together with the school management team and other interested parties evaluate the alternatives suggested in exhibit 2.3 above. The team arranges the alternatives according to desired outcomes. Referring to alternatives in exhibit 2.3, alternative numbered (4) was considered as physical abuse of children and do not conform to school policy and the policies of the education department. With regard to the alternative numbered (3), it would be difficult to verify parents' signatures as learners of the school have a tendency of forging their parents' signatures. A scenario of the alternative numbered (6) may escalate the situation and the consequences thereof may impact negatively on the school performance. A further step is a comparative analysis that is conducted for alternatives 1, 2, 5 and 7 and a feasible solution is found. Other generated alternatives are disregarded.

2.5.3.5 Selection of the best alternative

Once the previous steps of decision-making have been completed and complied with, the next step is to select the best alternative. The act of selecting a solution strategy from among the alternatives is the actual decision. Views on which alternative is selected vary: the one that is most suitable, the one that is the best, the one that is the most appropriate, the alternative providing the optimum solution or the one that provides the maximum utility (Hoy and Miskel, 1991:309).

Bush (1986:34) points out that the optimum alternative is the one that best fulfils the criteria developed from the organisational objectives, aims, goals and standards of the organization. For relatively simple problems, one alternative may be obviously superior. However, in complex situations several alternatives may likely be combined to form a more effective solution. A major advantage of this process is that if previous steps have been done well then choosing a solution is less complicated (Bush, 1986:35).

However, many factors mediate the choice among preferred alternatives. Factors such as the values of the manager, the cultural context, perceptions of those involved, the

significance of the situation, and pressure on the organization influence the selection of the alternative (Hoy and Miskel, 1991:309).

Before leaving this step it is important to diagnose possible problems with the solution and implications of these problems (what could go wrong). When developing a solution, it is important to consider the worst that can happen if the solution is implemented. In addition, the solution should be evaluated in terms of overall “feelings”.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the selection of the best alternative requires the selection of optimal solution. Perceptions and overall feelings of the stakeholders involved are essential in this regard. **Exhibit 2.5** provides an example of the use of selecting the best alternative in a school situation.

EXHIBIT 2.5

A further comparative analysis of the alternatives 1, 2, 5 and 7 selected as possible solutions to the problem of absenteeism reveals that the alternative numbered (7) has more benefits and advantages than the other three. The reason is that the responsibility of monitoring learners’ attendance involves parents. Further it is within the school policy and the education department policies that parents should be involved in the education of their children. As a result the alternative is considered viable and the best. It is therefore, selected for implementation.

2.5.3.6 Implementation of decision

After a decision is made, managers should make plans to put the decision into effect. This is the stage called the “implementation of decision” by researchers such as Bush (1986:34); du Toit (1990:47) and Gorton (1980:235). The plan must be sufficiently detailed to allow for successful implementation, and methods of evaluation must be considered and developed. When developing a plan, the major phases of implementation are first considered, and then steps necessary for each phase are generated. It is often helpful for managers to construct a timeline and make a diagram of the most important

steps in the implementation. The plan is then implemented as carefully as possible. According to Hoy and Miskel (1991:312), initiating the plan of action requires at least the following four steps: "...programming, communication, monitoring, and appraising".

Sharing a similar view, Fraser (1988:88) describes the steps of initiating a plan of action as follows:

...an implementation plan will include the following...:what the tasks are; who is to perform each; the schedule and deadlines for task completion. Essential to an implementation plan is providing for communication...An evaluation of each step and the final result is also necessary.

However, an important issue to consider when implementing decisions is the resistance to change by people within the organization. The leader should secure the commitment of those involved in implementing the decision, since its success is invariably dependent on the acceptance by all affected people in an organization. Implementers are much more willing to support decisions when they primarily understand the risks and believe that they are being treated with honesty and like adults (Harris, 1998:16). If the decision is a good one but subordinates are unwilling or unable to carry it out, that decision will not ultimately be a good one. It is at this point that the decision making process often falls short.

Based on the foregoing discussion, it is realized that those concerned should understand not only the logic behind a decision, but also what they are supposed to do.

Exhibit 2.6 describes the implementation of the decision in a school situation.

EXHIBIT 2.6

The school management team and the committee in charge for class attendance have the task of implementing the decision that a point system as a way of controlling attendance be introduced. An action plan outlining the process for development of how the system will operate is drawn up. A programme indicating the persons responsible for various tasks is drawn up. In this case, the procedures with regard to the dispatch of the report form and its return was delegated to the deputy principal. The principal in consultation with the school governing body ensured that the school policy is amended and the new policy is communicated to all stakeholders including the learners. Again, the principal is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the plan and that all the assigned tasks are carried out accordingly.

2.5.3.7 Evaluation and follow-up of decision.

Evaluation is necessary after a decision has occurred, to provide feedback on its outcome. According to Bush (1986:34) and Hoy and Miskel (1991:300) this step often concludes the process of decision-making. Guthrie and Reed (1991:274) offer the following aim of evaluating the follow-up action on a decision:

Evaluation is a set of procedures undertaken to assess effectiveness of a program. The intent can be either to improve the program or to make judgement regarding its continuation.

In an evaluation of the effectiveness of a decision, actions taken to implement decisions are monitored and appraised to ensure that they serve the objective of their implementation. However, a manager can respond in a number of ways when an implemented solution does not appear to work, and these ways are identified as the following by Smit and de J Cronje (1992):

- He can adopt one of the previously identified alternatives;
- He can acknowledge that the problem was not correctly defined to start with and begin the process all over again;
- He can decide that the solution originally chosen is in fact the correct one but that it should be implemented in a different manner.

The decision making process is not complete until a decision is exposed to the realities of the practical situation. Lipham, Rankin and Hoeh (1985:88) state that “the ultimate effectiveness of a decision is judged according to whether or not the system’s problem has been solved to the satisfaction of those involved.” Evaluation requires an objective assessment of how the decision solves the problem. Without this step the decision-making has little value beyond providing an immediate solution to a problem.

Exhibit 2.7 discusses the evaluation of decision-making in a school situation.

EXHIBIT 2.7

Provision should be made for periodic evaluation of the plan. The deputy principal should submit the report to the principal, clearly indicating whether the decision had an impact on the attendance or not. If the report shows that the attendance had improved, the decision had the intended outcome. However, if the report reveals that the attendance had not improved, obviously the decision did not have intended outcome, then the decision process should be restarted.

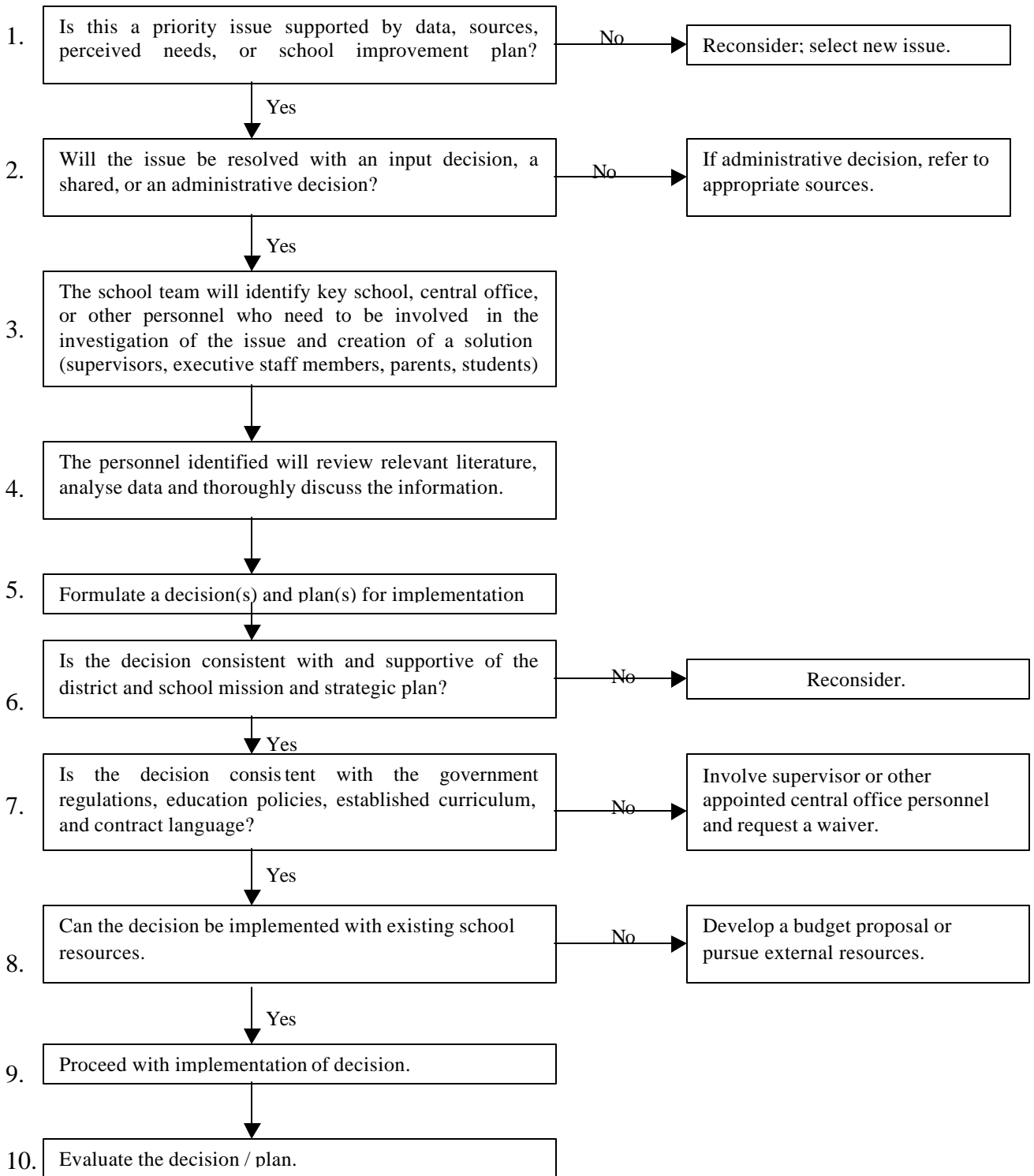
Lipham, Rankin and Hoeh (1985:89) point out that in schools the decision-making process typically occurs in three broad phases, namely, *before the decision*, *the moment of decision* and *after the decision*. The *before the decision phase* includes interactive activities and behaviours that typically include posing many alternative solutions as a means for defining and redefining the problem. Instead of each alternative being considered in terms of its positive and negative outcomes, various alternatives are weighed against each other as to their acceptability. It is not at all unusual for the least upsetting alternative to be selected as the possible decision.

The *moment of decision* is typically seen as a crucial stage in decision-making process. In fact, the tendency exists in schools to debate about the decisions until the time runs out, thereby shifting the decision-making process from shared to authoritative rule. Lipham, Rankin and Hoeh (1985) maintain that “Do what ever you wish” ultimately becomes a rule.

After the decision, is normally characterized by commitment, interest and expertise by those who should implement the decision. After the decision choice is made, particular individuals become the driving forces for putting the decision into action. Lipham, Rankin and Hoeh (1985:90) argue that *before the decision* actions include a high degree of input and involvement using group processes; after the decision actions include a high degree of individual effort and initiatives.

Ubben and Hughes (1997:47) propose a simple decision-making flowchart (See **Figure 2.2**) for schools to solve their numerous problems in a much quicker and more effective way. The flowchart takes into account the social and political realities of the milieu within which schools operate.

Figure 2.2: Decision-making flowchart



(Ubben and Hughes, 1997:47)

While the flow chart above may seem to be a long-winded approach to decision-making, once it is internalized by those involved, it will become less time-consuming and will be more likely to be followed by decisive action.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that decision-making is best dealt with by involving a number of steps as well as other stakeholders. Very often this is not the way in which problem solving is approached in most organizations. From experience it seems that most managers still view decision-making as something they can handle alone without the involvement of other stakeholders. On the other hand, some may view decision-making as something that can be handled by experts as well as professionals. In this research an attempt is made to establish if any of these ideals dominated decision-making in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province.

2.6 GROUP DECISION-MAKING

In section 2.5.3.3 above it has been shown that a large number of alternatives can be generated and analysed when more people are involved. This is called group decision-making. Group decision-making has been found to be effective and to enhance non-programmed decisions where there is usually a great deal of uncertainty about the result. Group decision-making is effective because it involves a collective, transparent and consultative approach undertaken throughout the decision-making process (Daft, 1994:270). There are advantages and disadvantages to arriving at group decisions – an obvious disadvantage is that it takes a longer time to arrive at a consensus (Daft, 1994:272). But there are advantages in the sense that a group brings more knowledge and expertise to the situation and, by involving more people in the process, increases chances of acceptance of the decisions (Daft, 1994:272).

To overcome the disadvantages and to capitalize on the advantages of group decision-making, various techniques are suggested in the literature we review in this study. In the next section, some of the techniques available will be presented.

2.6.1 Techniques for improving group decision-making

The authors of *In search of excellence*, who conducted a study of American companies, contend that successful companies encourage creative decisions and innovation on the part of their managers (Peters and Waterman, 1982:12-13). Three widely used techniques to encourage creativity in decision-making are brainstorming, the nominal group technique, and the Delphi technique suggested by Smit and de Cronje (1997:181). Discussion of each technique follows.

2.6.1.1 Brainstorming technique

Brainstorming is a group technique for generating new and useful ideas, and it promotes creative thinking (Smit and de Cronje, 1992). It can be used to help: (1) define what project or problem to work on, (2) to diagnose problems and (3) remedy a project by coming up with possible solutions and to identify possible resistance to proposed solutions. During the brainstorming session there is no criticism of ideas – the idea is to open up as many possibilities as possible, and break down preconceptions about the limits of the problem (de Bono, 1992).

Once this has been done, the results of the brainstorming session can be analysed and the best solutions can be explored either by using further brainstorming or more conventional solutions. The following are considered ground rules for brainstorming to be successful (de Bono, 1992):

- (i) A leader should take control of the session, initially defining the problem to be solved with any criteria that must be met, and then keeping the session on course. He or she should encourage an enthusiastic, uncritical attitude among brainstormers and encourage participation by all members of the team. The session should be announced as lasting a fixed length of time, and the leader should ensure that no train of thought is followed for too long. The leader should try to keep the brainstorming on subject, and should try to steer it towards the development of some practical solutions.

- (ii) Participants in the brainstorming process should come from as wide a range of disciplines with as broad a range of experience as possible. This brings many more creative ideas to the session.
- (iii) Brainstormers should be encouraged to have fun brainstorming, coming up with as many ideas as possible, from solidly practical ones to wildly impractical ones in an environment where creativity is welcomed.
- (iv) Ideas must not be criticised or evaluated during the brainstorming session. Criticism introduces an element of risk for a group member in putting forward an idea. This stifles creativity and cripples the free running nature of a good brainstorming session.
- (v) Brainstormers should not only come up with new ideas in a brainstorming session, but also should also “spark off” from associations with other people’s ideas and develop other people’s ideas.
- (vi) A record should be kept of the session either as notes or a tape recording. This should be studied subsequently for evaluation. It can also be helpful to jot down ideas on a board, which can be seen by all participants.

Brainstorming can either be carried out by individuals, groups or both (de Bono, 1992):

- (i) Individual brainstorming tends to produce a wider range of ideas than group brainstorming, but tends not to develop the ideas as effectively, perhaps as individuals on their own run up against problems they cannot solve. Individuals are free to explore ideas in their own time without any fear of criticism, and without being dominated by other group members.
- (ii) Group brainstorming develops ideas more deeply and effectively, as when difficulties in the development of an idea by one person are reached, another

person's creativity and experience can be used to break them down. Group brainstorming tends to produce fewer ideas (as time is spent developing ideas in depth) and can lead to the suppression of creative but quiet people by loud and uncreative ones.

- (iii) Individual and group brainstorming can be mixed, perhaps by defining a problem, and then letting team members initially come up with a wide range of possibly shallow solutions. These solutions could then be enhanced and developed by group brainstorming.

2.6.1.2 Delphi technique

Delphi technique refers to an interactive process that uses controlled feedback to isolated, anonymous (to each other) participants. In this technique the group members never meet face-to-face, instead, a series of confidential questionnaires are involved to refine a solution to the problem.

The Delphi procedure consists of a series of steps undertaken to elicit and refine the perspectives of a group of people who are experts in their area of focus or representative of the target group (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1997). The following steps characterise the Delphi technique (Rothwell and Kazanas, 1997):

- (i) Develop the first questionnaire focusing on identified issues e.g. problems, causes, solutions and actions. Then, pretest it. The question(s) must be understandable to the respondents and generate the kind of information you are seeking. Have several members of the staff or representative groups review the question(s) for more clarity. The first questionnaire is generally broad in nature and simple in form, consisting of one or two open-ended questions, a request for the list of examples, or some other format that will generate information that is relevant and manageable for further questionnaires. The intent is for the respondents to list ideas regarding the specified issue.

- (ii) Choose the participants. From the participants' list or lists, individuals can be contacted and asked to nominate other respondents. Or the individuals can be randomly selected for each representative group. More people, up to 25-30 or more may be selected if the group is homogenous. After identifying the potential respondents, they are informed about the type of assessments, the purpose, the process, the composition of the respondents' group, the time investment and the commitment required on the part of each respondent, and how the results will be shared. Depending upon the complexity of the process, it may be necessary to convey detailed information in writing. After that, consent of the participant may be obtained for participation in the project.

- (iii) Distribute the questionnaire with a covering letter to appropriate groups of respondents. This should be done as soon as the respondents have been contacted. Both the questionnaire and covering letter should be well constructed and well designed. Cover letter should briefly outline the points that were presented in the initial contact with the participant. A response date of two weeks should be emphasised. A stamped self-addressed envelope may be enclosed for ease in responding. To encourage a timely response, a reminder to the participants of the response should be included date. A phone call also may be necessary for late respondents. Each respondent independently generates ideas in answering the questions and returns the questionnaire.

- (iv) Synthesise and analyse the responses of the first questionnaire. As the questionnaires are returned, the responses can be recorded in a master list for the ease of analysis. Once all the questionnaires have been returned, call a meeting of the workgroup. Provide the members with a copy of the master list from which they can sort the items into similar categories. These categories are discussed until there is a consensus among the group members regarding a final list. The items in the final list then need to be summarized into clear and concise statements that will make up the second questionnaire.

- (v) Feedback. Provide an accurate summary of the results of the questionnaire. Summarize the questionnaire into a feedback report for the same respondent group. Participants are asked to view, comment and clarify, and vote for each specific item listed in the summary from the earlier questionnaire.
- (vi) Develop and send out the second questionnaire along with the Feedback Report on the 1st Questionnaire. The purpose of the second questionnaire is to get further clarification concerning the information from the first questionnaire. The process of developing the second questionnaire follows the same steps as the first questionnaire. The format employed will depend on the kind of information obtained from the first questionnaire and what kind of additional information obtained from the first questionnaire and what kind of additional information is needed. Try to keep it short.
- (vii) The process is repeated (steps 4,5, and 6) until general agreement is reached on problems, causes, solutions, and actions.
- (viii) A final summary and feedback report is prepared and distributed to respondents. The feedback reports throughout this process allow for the exchange of opinions and priorities, and offer priorities after respondents evaluate the general groups of perspectives.

According to Rothwell and Kazanas (1997) the process is essential and it normally includes:

- Obtaining anonymous opinions from members of an expert group by formal questionnaire or individual interview.
- Obtaining several rounds of systematic modifications/criticisms of the summarised anonymous feedback provided to the groups
- Obtaining a group response by aggregation (often statistical) of individual opinions on the final round.

2.6.1.3 Nominal Group Technique

Research in a group dynamics indicates that more ideas are expressed by individuals working alone, (but in a group environment) than by individuals engaged in a formal group discussion. The Nominal Group Technique is a good way of getting many ideas from a group. It has advantages over the usual committee approach for identifying ideas. Group consensus can be reached faster and everyone has equal opportunity to present his or her ideas.

The nominal group is a structured group that meets to gather information about a specific concern, that is, to identify problems and priorities. Individuals work alone but in a group setting (Smit and de Cronje, 1997).

The following steps are essential for successfully implementing the Nominal Group Technique (Smit and de Cronje, 1997):

- (i) Individuals silently write down their ideas in a few words.
- (ii) Each group member presents, but does not discuss, one of the ideas on his or her list. The ideas are recorded on newsprint. The leader then asks each person for a second idea, and so on, until all ideas are recorded. All ideas are recorded as presented.
- (iii) The leader reads each idea on the newsprint and asks if there are questions, interpretations, or explanations. It is a good idea at this point to number the ideas.
- (iv) The leader asks each person to write down a few items that important; others may feel all items are important. Some people may feel only a few items are important, others may feel all items are important. The leader then goes down the list and records the number of people who consider each item a priority.

- (v) Finally, participants rate each item from no importance (0) to top priority (10). A person may have several top priority items (all 10s), or only one top priority. The leader then collects and calculates the ratings, recording the cumulative rating for each item. Starting with the issue receiving the highest priority, a leader may search for solutions to the issue using the same method. Action steps may then be identified and prioritized.

When the Nominal Group Technique is conducted properly it reduces the pressure on individuals to conform and allows separate opinions to emerge. Unlike brainstorming, this somewhat more formal technique may foster the development of ideas from members who may otherwise remain silent. Because of the added anonymity in the process, attention can be directed away from personalities and more to the ideas themselves.

We now proceed to discuss the different decision-making styles.

2.7 DIFFERENT DECISION-MAKING STYLES

2.7.1 Introduction

Friedman (1990) argues that one of the important factors related to school effectiveness is the principals' decision-making style. The term decision-making style has been used to refer to individual differences in:

- the way people process information to make decisions; and
- the set of procedures that a decision-maker engages in when attempting to select among courses of action (Ruble and Cosier, 1990).

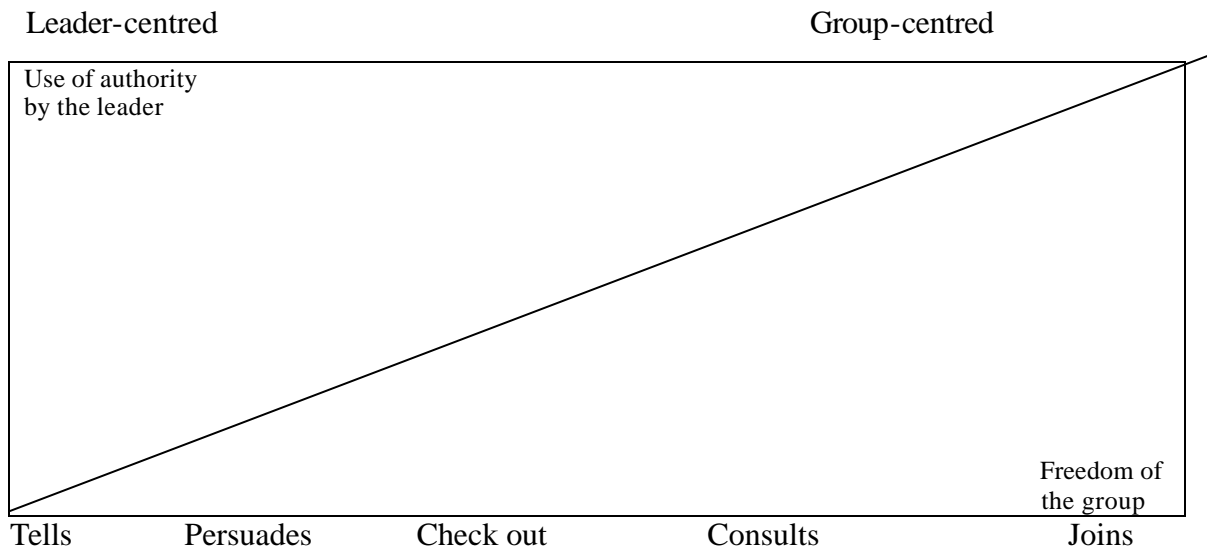
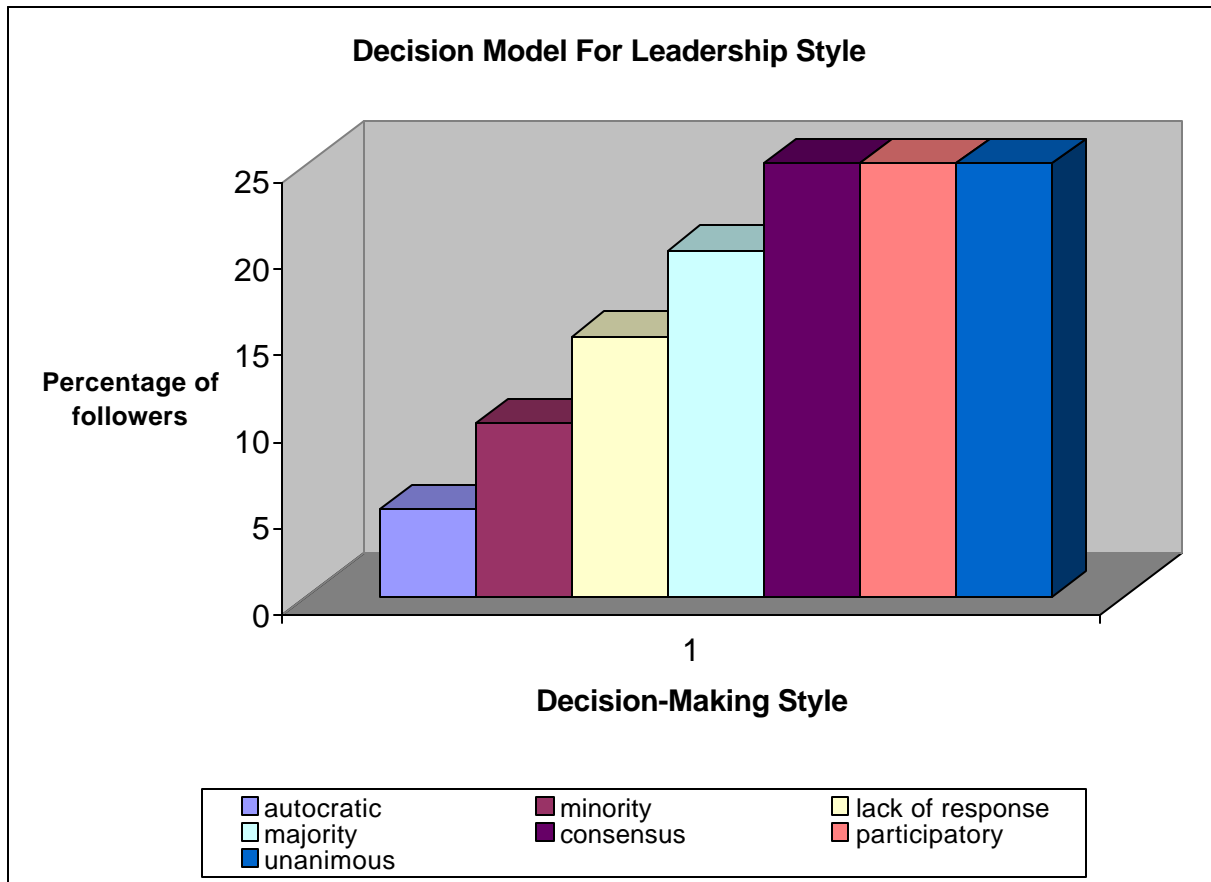
Through the use of the appropriate decision styles it is expected that teachers' quality of work life, job satisfaction and school productivity will be enhanced (Sizer, 1983). One of the hidden assumptions in the management literature regards the democratic styles of decision-making as the ones most likely to enhance teachers' job satisfaction and yield acceptable decisions to all the stakeholders (Simon, 1982: 408-423, Schweiger et al.

1985). The more role players are involved in the decisions to be taken, the better the chances that decisions will be accepted and supported by the majority of people because of ownership.

If we accept the argument that the decision-making style of the school principal is an important factor for school effectiveness and if the assumption that democratic styles are most likely to yield acceptable decisions to all stakeholders, then we need to investigate the question: *Are democratic organizational approaches employed in the decisions taken by secondary school principals?* To respond to this question a closer review of the different decision-making styles is essential in this regard. Various styles are suggested in the literature we review for the purpose of this study.

The various styles of decision-making found in the literature offer a theoretical framework against which the decisions taken by secondary school principals can be classified. The following provisional model (**Figure 2.3**) will be used as a basis to classify and discuss decision-making styles for the purposes of this research. Both the bar chart and the line graph explain the same phenomena, which are the different decision-making styles. However, the line graph goes further to indicate the strategies likely to be associated with the different decision-making styles. An autocratic leader for example, (see bar chart) might use telling and persuading strategies (see line graph) and such approaches enjoy minimal support, approximately 5% of followers (see bar chart). Contrary to that, the participatory, consensus and unanimous leadership styles might be associated with strategies such as consultation and involvement. Approaches of this kind enjoy maximum support, approximately 25% of followers (see bar chart).

Figure 2.3: Different decision-making styles:



When a leader relies on the decision-making framework shown above, he or she thinks about each decision to be made. Is the decision leader-centred or group-centred? If it is a leader-centred decision, is it a decision the leader makes solely on his or her own, or will he or she involve others in a particular way? If a decision is a group-centred one, what is the role of the leader? Does he or she consult the group or become an equal participant in the group decision-making process?

Based on the graphs above, it is possible to see the various styles of decision-making according to leader-centred or group-centred. These styles are discussed in the subsections below. Consequently, both figures will be used to analyse decision-making styles followed by the principals in the THMOED.

2.7.1.1 Decision-making by authority rule

Decision-making by authority rule obtains when a leader makes the decision by using the information supplied by subordinates or other stakeholders (Wilkinson and Cave, 1987:72). This is referred to as an autocratic style of decision-making (Steyn, 1996:14; Lunenberg and Orstein, 1995:157). In such a style, the decision-making powers are vested in the leader who uses the power to take decisions while other members comply without questioning. This implies that the decision rests with the leader and that other members are not involved (Rosenbaun, 1996:23).

The advantages of the authority rule include very fast decision-making and the personal responsibility by the leader for the outcome. If an emergency situation exists, the autocratic style of decision-making is usually the best choice. The disadvantages are varied and sometimes include less than desired effort from the people that must carry out the decision. The greatest problem is that if a subordinate is personally affected by the decision, but not included when the decision is made, morale and effort may or may not suffer. This may lead to resentment and the leader is likely to revert to coercion to ensure that the decision taken is implemented. If the outcome of the decision is not positive,

members of the organization begin to feel that they could have done a better job themselves and the leader may lose credibility.

2.7.1.2 Decision-making by majority rule

Wynn and Gaditus (1984:113) regard the majority decision-making style as a “groupthink”. When this style is implemented effectively, the loyalty of the members and greater motivation among the members to achieve the goals of the group are ensured. Steyn (1996:15) refers to the decision-making by majority rule as democratic in the sense that every individual is consulted before the group takes a decision. Decision-making by majority rule reflects the wishes of the majority of the people. The caveat of majority rule is that it divides the group into two factions: the winners and the losers.

Advantages include a fairly quickly made decision, and a certain amount of group participation. The main disadvantage of this style is that an individual is not responsible for the outcome. In fact, even the group feels no real responsibility because some members will say, “I didn’t vote for that.” Lack of group and personal responsibility seems to disqualify this style of decision-making; however, the democratic style does have its place in organizations.

2.7.1.3 Decision-making by consensus rule

Decision-making by consensus is defined as “All parties agreeing to the decision” (Herman and Herman, 1992:71). The complete group is totally involved in the decision. The leader is not individually responsible for the outcome. The complete organization or group is now responsible for the outcome. This is not a democratic style because everyone must agree and “buy in” on the decision. If total commitment and agreement by everyone is not obtained, the decision becomes “democratic” (Herman & Herman, 1992:77).

Consensual decisions reached after discussion by members, tend to be better than individual decision-making (Wynn and Guditus, 1984:113). Decision-making by consensus rule is more effective because it reflects a firm belief in the authority of the knowledge generated through debate and scrutiny of options. Sergiovanni and Starrat (1993:122) refer to consensus rule as a collaborative style where each participant provides input and listens to other members.

The advantages include group commitment and responsibility for the outcome. Teamwork and good security is also created because everyone has a stake in the success of the decision. A more accurate decision is usually made, with a higher probability of success, because so many ideas, perspectives, skills and “brains” were involved in its creation. The disadvantages include a very slow and extremely time-consuming decision. It is also a lot of work getting everyone in the organization involved. It takes skill and practice for a group to learn how to work together.

Estes (1983) provides the following key elements for a consensus decision-making style to work in organisations:

Responsibility: The power to object and block consensus should be used responsibly and sparingly. Block consensus only for serious, principled objections; when possible, object in ways that do not block consensus. Help others find ways to satisfy your objections.

Respect: Trust others to make responsible objections. Do not argue the merits of an objection; either accept it or try to find ways to satisfy the objection.

Cooperation: Avoid competitive win/lose, right/wrong thinking. Look for areas of agreement and common ground. When a stalemate occurs, look for ingenious resolutions of the next-most-acceptable alternative for all concerned. Avoid arguing for your own way to prevail; present your ideas as clearly as you can, then listen to others and try to advance the group synthesis.

Creative conflict: Avoid conflict-reducing techniques like majority vote or coin tossing; try instead to resolve the conflict. Do not change your mind or withdraw an objection simply to avoid conflict or to promote harmony. Do not try to trade off objections or to reward people for standing aside. Seemingly irreconcilable differences can be resolved if people speak their feelings honestly and genuinely try to understand all positions (including their own) better.

2.7.1.4 Decision-making by minority rule

Rosenbaum (1996:25) indicates that when this style is used, a few members with a vested interest might enthusiastically support the decision while the rest of the members remain silent when the decision is taken. A good strategy in this situation would be to refer the issue to the interested members for further investigation. Minority decisions are also common in situations where a few members are experts on the topic and dominate the deliberations on the decision needed.

Lunenberg and Orstein (1995:60) regard minority rule as a particular group style, and when it is used regularly without the leader checking the reasons for lack of participation, the minority group may begin to dominate all the decisions to be taken by the group. In situations where a few interested or expert members dominate discussions while other members remain silent, minority rule is closely linked to decision-making by lack of response.

2.7.1.5 Decision-making by lack of response

Decision-making by lack of response is a style adopted when the participants leave the decision in the hands of the leader and do not discuss or make any contributions to the solution of the problem. People remain quiet in the meeting and allow other members to move quickly and to consider alternatives before finding a viable solution. Another form of decision by lack of response is when a motion is tabled and the decision is reached without allowing deliberations or inputs from members. Van Balkom (1996:19) indicates

that if one or more individuals are frequently taking decisions without allowing proper consultation, then serious resentment is likely to arise.

2.7.1.6 Decision-making by participatory rule

Collective and participative decision-making style is used when the leader involves members of the organization. Different perspectives of the situation are sought and discovered because the leader deliberately asks and encourages others to participate by giving their ideas, perceptions, knowledge, and information concerning the decision. The leader maintains total control of the decision because, although outside information is considered, the leader alone decides. The leader is also completely responsible for the good or bad outcome as a result of the decision.

The advantages of decision-making by participatory rule include some group participation and involvement. This is especially valuable when a person is affected negatively by the decision. In most cases, the individual is informed before the decision is implemented (there are no surprises) and he usually feels good about personal involvement. If the leader is a good communicator, and listens carefully to the information collected, he or she will usually have a more accurate understanding of the situation and make a better decision. The disadvantages of this style include a fairly slow, time-consuming decision and less security because many people are involved in the decision.

Bredeson (1989:9) argues that the advantages of participatory decision-making by far outweigh the disadvantages. The positive effects of participatory decision-making are most evident in the areas of teacher attitudes to professional work and their commitment to the organization. Bernd (1991:65-66) concludes that the success of participatory decision-making has much to do with the readiness of the leader to share power and his or her ability to establish the processes, information and resources necessary to make participatory decision-making work.

2.7.1.7 Decision-making by unanimous rule

When every member enthusiastically supports a decision, there is unanimity. When this model is used members often feel impelled to keep silent and give the impression of supporting the decision (Wilkison and Cave, 1987:110). Contrary to consensus and participatory decision-making, unanimity does not start from the assumption that opposing views exist. Typical of unanimous decisions is a shared value system and a shared knowledge and information base. This may lead to a situation where decisions are taken without exploring alternatives, and groupthink tends to dominate the decision reached.

The research on decision-making styles conducted by Meghetto & Associates drawing on the work of Vroom and Yetton (1973:13), gives a picture on how leaders solve problems and make decisions in their organizations. When a decision is made it is through one of five styles, Meghetto & Associates argued. We discuss them below. However, as shall be observed below, styles AI and AII are autocratic in nature; GII is democratic; and CI and CII are consultative in nature. Consequently this information will be used as a basis to determine how the secondary school principals in the THMOED solve problems and make decisions. The letters in this code signify the basic properties of the process (A stands for autocratic; C, for consultative, and G, for group). The roman numerals that follow the letters constitute variants on that process. Thus AI represents the first variant on autocratic process; AII, the second variant; and so on.

Autocratic

AI

The first autocratic style operates as follows: The leader solves the problem or makes the decision using the information available to the leader at the time.

AII

The second autocratic style is described as follows: The leader obtains the necessary information from team members, then decides the solution. The leader may or may not tell team members what the problem is in getting information from them. The role played by team members in making the decision is one of providing the necessary information to the leader rather than generating or evaluating alternative solutions.

Consultative

CI

The first consultative (also called collective) leadership style is: The leader shares the problem with the relevant team members individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group. Then the leader makes the decision that may or may not reflect team members' influence.

CII

The second consultative leadership style is: The leader shares the problem with the relevant team members as a group, obtaining their collective ideas and suggestions. Then the leader makes the decision that may or may not reflect team members' influence.

Democratic

GII

The democratic (also called group) leadership style operates as follows: The leader shares the problem with the relevant team members as a group. Together they generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach agreement (consensus) on a solution. The leader's role is much like that of a chairperson. The leader does not try to influence the group to adopt a solution that has support of the entire group. The designation GII (instead of GI) is for consistency with the literature regarding leadership.

2.7.2 Selecting the appropriate decision-making style

Just as there is no best way to organise, teach, or do research, there is no one best way to make decisions (Hoy and Tarter, 1995:89). The search for the most effective style on making decisions often compares the *democratic*, *autocratic* and *participative* styles. While much of the research seems to indicate that *democratic* and *participative* decision styles are the most effective, a new perspective has emerged, suggesting that the particular situation is the main determinant and that different styles are needed for different situations. Behavioural scientists interested in problems of leadership and administration are recognizing the fact that the most effective decision style is dependent on the situation. Even the advocates of participative management have noted this “situational relativity” of leadership style. Hence, Argyris (1966:84) writes: “No one decision-making style is the most effective. Each is probably effective under a given set of conditions. Consequently, it is suggested that effective leaders are those who are capable of using many different decision-making styles, depending on the requirements of reality, as they and others perceive it, which is called ‘reality-centred’ decision-making style”.

Further analysis of the decision-making literature reveals that a leader’s decision style is also influenced by personality factors such as age, intelligence, formal educational level, knowledge in specific specialization, and work experience (Gaziel, 1995). Nutt (1984) expresses the same view, and says that “according to the contingency models to decision-making, the selection of a decision style is contingent upon the characteristics of the decision-maker and characteristics of the decision-task”.

In the light of the discussion above, it may be concluded that the selection of an effective decision style is influenced both by the situation and the personality variables of the leader. Notwithstanding that, the researcher holds the view that democratic and participative styles are key to effective decision-making.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The literature on the types of decisions, namely programmed and non-programmed discussed in this chapter reveals that programmed decisions are those that are made by habit or policy and involve simple, common, frequently occurring problems. Non-programmed decisions, on the other hand, deal with unusual decisions and require creative thinking on the part of the leader.

The literature reviewed on the conditions under which decisions are made indicate conditions under which decisions are taken namely certainty, uncertainty and risk. Under conditions of certainty the leader knows exactly the outcome of each alternative, whereas under uncertainty the leader does not know the probabilities of the outcome of alternatives. Under conditions of risk, the leader is able to ascertain only the probabilities of outcome of each alternative.

Also, in this chapter, the process of decision-making was discussed. It was observed that decision-making is the process of making a choice among alternative courses of action. In the process of decision-making those with responsibility should go through a series of steps that lead to a particular result. Most models of decision making include at least the following steps: identification and definition of the problem, analysis of the problem, generation of alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, selection of a suitable alternative, implementation of decision and evaluation and follow-up of decision.

Further literature review on various group decision-making techniques, namely brainstorming, the Delphi technique and the nominal group technique show that the major benefits of group decisions are accuracy, the generation of more alternatives, and increased acceptance of the decisions.

Furthermore in this chapter, the literature on various decision-making styles gives leaders a wide range of leadership strategies namely, authority rule, majority rule, consensus rule, minority rule, lack of response, participative management and unanimous rule were discussed. These styles were classified on the leader-centred versus group-centred

decision-making framework. The framework will be used in Chapter Five to analyse the decision-making strategies pursued by secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province. The basic assumption is that principals who operate in democratic ways employ decision-making styles that involve other stakeholders in the decision-making process, and therefore their decisions are more effective.

It follows that the involvement of other people in decision-making seems to be the key factor for effective decisions. There is evidence that the participation of other people in decision-making has the potential to improve the quality of decisions; increase a decision's acceptance and implementation; strengthen staff morale, commitment, and teamwork; build trust; help staff and administrators acquire new skills; and increase school effectiveness (Liontos, 1993:42). However, participatory decision-making does not materialise within the framework of an autocratic decision-making style. In their research work on the perception of staff on their involvement in decision-making, Steyn and Squelch (1997:7) found that teachers wanted a say and not merely to adhere to the autocratic decisions of the principal.

Participation in decision-making seems to be the basic tenet for effective decision-making and will be discussed in Chapter Three. Participation in decision-making, democratisation, shared decision-making, and subordinate empowerment are concepts used interchangeably by various authors. The concept "shared decision-making" is preferred in this study and will be discussed in Chapter Three. Thorough discussion of the concept "shared decision-making" will enable the researcher to analyse the situations in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province and determine whether or not decisions are carried out in a collaborative manner.

CHAPTER THREE

SHARED DECISION-MAKING: REQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to discuss shared decision-making as a requisite for effective decisions in schools. Shared decision-making (SDM) is an elusive concept to grasp, Lew and Glickman (1992) state. It involves fundamental changes in the way schools are managed, and alterations in the roles and relationships of everyone in the school community. SDM does not mean running the day-to-day operations of the school. It, instead, implies that school staff and members of the school community are involved in making decisions aimed at improving the school's performance. SDM is a process of making educational decisions in a collaborative manner at the school level.

SDM seems destined to be one of the major reforms of the education systems worldwide. Traditionally, in South Africa, school governance and management have been hierarchical and authoritarian in nature. Loci of control and decision-making powers have resided mainly in the school principal with minimal participation from teachers, parents and learners. The dawn of the new South Africa has seen a proliferation of legislation specifying the participation of stakeholders in the school governance and management. The reform movement in education has understood the significance of transforming leadership into a collaborative effort (Fennel, 1992). This reform movement in education, in turn, has presented principals, long accustomed to authoritarian modes of management, with the daunting task of converting into a collaborative style of leadership.

However, there are models and procedures suggested in the literature that can be applied to help principals grapple with the application of SDM in their schools. This chapter will explore the nature of SDM. The exploration will include the definition, clarification and purpose of the SDM; the principal's role in SDM; determination of factors for the

implementation of SDM and the Hoy-Tarter model of SDM. The significance of teams in organizations and the review of decentralized school governance in South African schools since 1994 will also be discussed. Finally, the type of leadership needed to manage change as well as the decision-making skills needed by principals for effective implementation of SDM will be discussed.

3.2 WHAT IS SHARED DECISION-MAKING?

3.2.1 Clarification of the concept

Educators use a variety of terms to refer to shared decision-making (SDM), which is confusing at best. Two terms often incorrectly interchanged with SDM are *decentralization* and *site-based management* (SBM). Decentralization refers to the transfer of authority to local school units; whether decisions are shared at the school level is at the discretion of the principal (Wohlstetter and Mohrman, 1994). Thus decentralization may or may not include SDM. The same is true of site-based management (SBM): It can refer solely to the concept of decentralization (a shift in power from district offices to individual school). Site-based management may also include SDM, although SDM is not necessarily a component of SBM.

Lack of definitional clarity is one of the eight barriers to changing traditional behavior, according to the Heritage Foundation survey. Many survey respondents reported uncertainty about the meaning of the concept itself, indicating that there needs to be a common language and a set of understandings about SDM. However, in this study, SDM will be used interchangeably with decentralisation.

3.2.2 Definition of the concept

There are numerous definitions of SDM suggested in the literature. The definition of SDM developed by Lew and Glickman (1992) is as follows:

SDM is a process in which a variety of members of the school community collaborate (when appropriate) to identify problems, establish visions, define goals, shape direction, develop action plans and ensure implementation and accountability. Those responsible for implementing the decision must be actively and legitimately involved in making the decision.

Bauer (1992) provides the following definition:

Shared decision making is a process designed to push education decisions to the school level, where those closest to children may apply their expertise in making decisions that will promote school effectiveness and ensure that the most appropriate services are provided to students and the school community.

Bauer (1992) emphasises that SDM is content-free; that is, it does not deal with specific topics or programs. Rather, it is an ongoing process of making decisions in a collaborative manner. SDM “cannot be done once and then forgotten,” states Meadows (1990).

Harrison and colleagues (1989:55) as way of concluding, suggest that the new arena for decision-making:

“brings the responsibility for decisions as close as possible to the school . . . defining how school staffs can work collaboratively to make these decisions. . . creating ownership for those responsible for carrying out decisions by involving them directly in the decision-making process and by trusting their abilities and judgements . . .”

A study conducted by Lontos (1994) showed that the majority of teachers said their participation in the decision-making process was unsatisfying because their involvement seemed inconsequential. To be truly beneficial, Lontos (1994) believes SDM must incorporate three components: involvement, influence, and accountability. However, the face of SDM looks different in different schools, depending on local factors. Huddleston

and others (1991) emphasise that tolerance for diversity and atmosphere of trust with all involved are necessary when it comes to SDM.

3.3 PREMISES AND GOALS FOR SHARED DECISION-MAKING

All SDM processes are built on common premises or beliefs, Bauer (1992) observes. The following are regarded as some of the goals and premises of SDM (Bauer,1992):

- Those closest to the students and “where the action is” will make the best decisions about students’ education;
- Teachers, parents, and school staff should have more say about policies and programs affecting their schools and children;
- Those responsible for carrying out decisions should have a voice in determining those decisions;
- Change is most likely to be effective and lasting when those who implement it feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the process.

The following table (**Table 3.1**) summarises the premises and goals of SDM by looking at *who benefits* and *how* in a school situation:

Table 3.1: Premises and goals of SDM

Who benefits	How
Learners gain...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - additional support and opportunities for achievement. - value / respect for education through observed involvement. - an opportunity for learner representatives to shape their learning.
Parents gain...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an opportunity to shape policy decisions. - an opportunity to redefine parent involvement. - a better understanding of the school's possibilities and challenges.
Community members gain...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an opportunity to shape policy decisions. - an opportunity to redefine community involvement. - an increased value, awareness, and access of community resources.
Educators gain...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an opportunity to shape policy decisions. - increased public confidence and mutual support. - added insight regarding community perceptions and expectations.

3.4 PURPOSE OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

The primary purpose of SDM is not to make teachers feel more satisfied with their work, though it may have this effect, notes Bauer (1992). As a result of SDM, staff should have a greater impact on decisions, be better informed, and have greater commitment to making their decisions work. The purpose of SDM is to improve the quality of educational services and to ensure that schools are more responsive to the needs of students and the community.

Bauer (1992) maintains that students, parents, educators, and community members become more committed to improving and supporting their school when they have an

opportunity to serve or be represented on a council with a role in shaping the direction their school might take.

“Student success and student achievement must be kept in mind as the reason to implement site-based, shared decision making,” states Lange (1993:98). If education districts establish SDM for the purpose of shifting accountability or abolishing a “top-heavy central office staff,” SDM will be nothing more than another “buzzword,” Lange (1993) contends. Decisions in the SDM process should be motivated by the goal of making schools and the total school program a better place for students.

3.5 BENEFITS OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

According to Lontos (1993:42), SDM has the potential to improve the quality of decisions; increase a decision’s acceptance and implementation; strengthen staff morale, commitment, and teamwork; build trust; help staff and administrators acquire new skills; and increase school effectiveness.

A larger number of alternatives can be generated and analyzed when more people are involved, often resulting in innovative approaches to issues. Lange (1993) found, in a fifteen-month study of six schools that switched to SDM that, as autonomy was achieved, better decisions were made than would have been under centralised school management. Trust also increased as staff gained an understanding of management complexities and principals learned to respect faculty judgement.

SDM assures that teachers are key players in determining school policies and practices (Griffin, 1995). The rationale is simple: those who are closest to student learning are best equipped to make educational decisions. Imber (1983:36) shares the view and states that “if teachers participate more in decision-making, students will reap certain benefits”.

Imber (1983) goes further and contends that, this position is based on the following two theoretical arguments:

The first argument rests on the belief that a sound awareness of student needs is a prerequisite to effective educational decisions. It holds that by virtue of their daily contact with students, teachers are the only professionals who can accurately gauge the particular needs of students at a given school. Therefore, the argument concludes, teachers have a unique contribution to make to the school decision-making process.

The second argument is psychologically based. It holds that if people are involved in making decisions they will have a greater stake in those decisions than those who are not. They will be more likely to comply with decisions they have helped to make and to feel positively about the organization they help to govern. The conclusion made on these arguments is twofold: First, teachers who help make decisions will try harder to make those decisions work out well. Second, if teachers try harder, students presumably will benefit.

As expected, teachers are pleased when their views influence school decisions, leading them to feel both respected and empowered. Collaborative efforts are often taken seriously, and decisions are more likely to be supported (Griffin, 1995). Steyn and Squelch (1997:7) in their research work on perceptions of staff on their involvement in decision-making found that teachers wanted a say and not merely to adhere to autocratic decisions of the principal.

Research on SDM in schools builds a strong case for a more professional, autonomous role for teachers which could enhance school quality for the following reasons (Hoyle, 1994; David, 1989; Dimmock, 1995):

- increased participation of staff is a powerful means of improving schools due to enhanced ownership;

- shared decision-making enhances control by extending its influence over a wider range of decisional issues;
- increased decision-making improves job satisfaction;
- higher performance of both teachers and students is achieved.

However, SDM brings challenges as well. It places new demands on teachers and principals. All participants must contend with a heavier workload and the frustrations that accompany a slower group process. Increased demands on participants' time may pose the greatest barrier to implementing and maintaining shared decision-making.

The shared decision making environment ensures that, teachers, who typically work in isolation from other adults in the "egg-crate organization of schools," must "engage other adults, negotiate, resolve differences, and come to decisions" concerning issues that have not traditionally fallen within the scope of their duties (Weiss, Cambone, and Wyeth 1992). To do this effectively, state the authors, teachers have to "extend themselves into new arenas of expertise."

3.6 COMPONENTS OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

The following are some of the elements Lontos (1994) believes should be incorporated in SDM, namely, participation (also called involvement), influence, accountability as well as information flow (also called communication). This section will focus only on participation, accountability and information flow.

3.6.1 Participation

Many South African leaders, including educational leaders in the past, were authoritarian (Lemmer, 2000:128). They made decisions without consultation with other stakeholders. As a result, members of the school community did not feel committed to the decisions that the leaders made. The new educational context in South Africa emphasises involvement, transparency, responsibility, democracy and accountability (White Papers 1995 and 1996).

The questions of *who* makes *what* decisions at what level of structures in the decision-making process relate to the important question of *participation* (Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997:92). Participation in decision-making is a broad term, often used to refer either to joint decision-making or to the process of delegating specific decisions to subordinates. Some theorists distinguish between participation in decision-making and delegation of decision-making (Locke and Schweiger, 1979) and others do not (Sashkin, 1979).

Hoy and Sousa (1984) make the following distinction between *participation in decision-making* and *delegation of decision-making*:

In joint decision-making or participation in decision-making, participants are involved in the process of making decision, they share a common effort and jointly arrive at the decision.

Delegation of decision-making is the entrusting of authority to subordinates; an administrator assigns specific decisions to subordinates. The subordinates are free to make their decisions without further consultation with the administrator.

Hoy and Tarter (1993) argue that to maximize participation, subordinates are included in the process as early and as long as possible. Subordinates share in the definition and elaboration of the problem and then are involved in each successive step of the process. Hoy and Tarter (1993) maintain that participation is limited when involvement occurs only in the later stages of the process. For instance, if the problem has been defined, reasonable alternatives identified, and the consequences specified, then participation is restricted only to evaluating, selecting, and implementing a strategy for action. On the other hand, if subordinates are provided with data, are asked to define the problem, and are involved in each subsequent step of the process, their participation is extensive.

Ubben and Hughes (1997:47) suggest that individual roles should be clearly specified to avoid a misunderstanding of *who* makes what decisions, as well as the *level* of their participation. Robert Lancto, drawing on the work of Ubben and Hughes (1997:47) on

subordinates' participation in decision processing, proposed five levels of participation in decision-making in the school and submitted that the kinds of decisions to be made vary by level. Sometimes the participation is at the advisory level; sometimes it will result in the final decisions. In SDM, staff work with the principal in two ways, namely, giving advice before the principal makes certain decisions and making decisions in predetermined domains. **Table 3.2** below illustrates the decision levels proposed by Lancto, and also provides examples of the kinds of decisions to be made at several levels. The model is useful in the sense that it clearly sets out varying degrees of participation in school-based decision-making. It provides help in the consideration of who needs to be involved in what and to what end. It helps avoid misunderstanding about roles, responsibilities, and authority to act. This model will be used as a basis to determine who makes what decisions and the level of their participation, specifically in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province.

Table 3.2: School-based decision-making levels

Levels of Participation
1. Decisions made by individual teachers
2. Decisions made collectively by teachers (may also involve learners and parents in an advisory role)
3. Decisions made collectively by teachers, principals, and other auxiliary administrators (parent and learner participation where possible)
4. Decisions made by administrators, department heads after consultation with staff (school-wide advisory councils are often a good mechanism for this)
5. Decisions made solely by the principal or other designated administrator
Typical kinds of decisions to be made at each level
Level 1: Classroom teaching strategies; enrichment; remediation
Level 2: Selection of instructional material and texts; use of time and allocation of resources within a grade level or department – including staffing patterns
Level 3: Curriculum decisions involving more than one group or instructional unit; scheduling; scoping and sequencing across subjects and grade levels; sequential texts; materials, and other instructional protocols involving two or more instructional, support or administrative units; any other decisional matters affecting more than one unit
Level 4: School-wide scheduling; budget recommendations to the central office; balancing resources / resolving conflicts; appraisal and evaluation strategies; development of school effectiveness reports to district offices and state agencies.
Level 5: Legal issues such as teacher remands; official recommendations to superintendent on the re-employment of staff and tenure; final decisions on the general use of buildings and other physical facilities; allocation of resources for the school plant in general; selection and assignment of support staff.

Maximum participation of all those affected by decisions in the SDM is ideal and should be striven for on both moral and efficiency grounds. The moral justification of participation is based on the notion of “mutual beneficence” and the principles, amongst

others, of tolerance and respect for others (Aspin in Chapman, Froumin and Aspin, 1995:7). These principles are incorporated in democratic life as well as the belief in the worth and dignity of individuals and the value of their expressions and participation. Respect for freedom, intelligence and inquiry as well as the responsibility of individuals to explore and choose collaboratively, together with community members, courses of joint practical actions – these all form part of the fabric of democratic life (Maxcy, 1995:58). In addition, Labour Law in South Africa impacts greatly on the lives of people in the workplace in terms of the right to participate (Pienaar, 1998). This allows workers adequate freedom to have a voice in matters that concern them (Bacon, 1978:101).

The efficiency argument is that successful implementation of any decision or plan is largely dependent on the extent to which the people concerned have some sense of ownership with regard to control and responsibility. Asking teachers to do something when they were not part of the decision-making process, for instance, can be problematic. Heron (1992) argues that it splits control and responsibility. That is, the leader gives the teachers the responsibility, over which they have no control. Leithwood, (1996:93) maintains that allowing employees greater decision-making power is presumed to lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness and better outcomes.

The issue of participation could also be linked to the theories of Maslow and McGregor, who suggest that human motivation can be readily explained in terms of a “...sequential hierarchy of needs culminating in the desire for self-actualisation” and expressed through recognition and involvement in decision-making. Based on these theories of Maslow and McGregor, collaborative working relationships are voluntary and spontaneous (as opposed to contrived) (Hargreaves 1998). Participation is not about delegating certain jobs as decided by the management, which essentially maintains control on particular people. Participation requires people to have and exercise a “voice” which Smith and Scott (1990) define as a right conferred by law to participate in decision-making processes in an organisation.

Although maximum participation is seen as morally an ideal in SDM, there are different degrees of participation depending on the particular needs of the situation. In support of this statement Heron (1992) provides the following framework:

- decision by the leader only (directive approach);
- decision by the leader in consultation with staff (negotiating approach);
- decision by the staff (delegation approach).

Elaborating on these approaches, Heron (1992) argues that: In a crisis situation it is often essential for an individual or small group to be *directive* and to take the necessary decisions to address the immediate demands of the situation. *Negotiation*, on the other hand, is essential when all concerned have an interest in the outcome, and need to be involved in agreeing on that outcome. This what democracy advocates. Lastly, it is appropriate at times to *delegate* decision-making responsibilities to others, especially when they have the resources and capacity to carry out their responsibilities.

Drawing on the preceding discussion, it could be argued that the appropriateness of participation is the key to a good decision-making process in any organization. In order to decide what is appropriate, a leader needs to decide on *what* kind of decisions require to be taken by *whom* and at *what* level of the structures of the school or organization.

3.6.2 Accountability

The question of accountability is crucial in South African schools. Accountability refers fundamentally to responsibility and reporting system (Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997:95). Traditionally, in South African schools, teachers have been accountable to their principal and, ultimately, to the education departments. Holt and Murphy (1993) observe that school leaders in most countries in the past have been “lords in their own education fiefdoms”. In a hierarchy, teachers tend to distance themselves from the results where accountability is the responsibility of some external agency (Laffitte, 1993:76). Such forms of accountability are based on the performance of the individual teacher and apply traditional technical accountability criteria which means that teachers are accountable to

the principal (Legget, 1997:281). This accountability process is top-down and the source of criteria is the superordinate. It furthermore encompasses tacit codes of behaviour and it assumes expert knowledge only. This view is consistent with the findings of the Cambridge Accountability Project (in Macpherson, 1996:40) which attempted to determine teachers' perception regarding the concept of "accountability".

Research indicates that teachers, in general, define accountability in two ways, namely "fitting in" with role expectations predetermined by others and explaining and justifying the decisions and actions taken by others (Davidoff and Lazarus, 1997:94). This indicates that teachers generally feel contractually accountable to their position in terms of the hierarchy. This perception of teachers is not necessarily in line with the requirements of democratic management theory and practice.

The demands of both democracy and efficiency require some form of accountability in schools. Fundamentally, the question needs to be asked: *who* is accountable to *whom*, and for what? Davidoff and Lazarus (1997:95) maintain that all stakeholders have to account for their actions to the bodies that represent all of these stakeholders. Principals are for example, held accountable, for certain responsibilities, to the Department of Education authorities, governance structures, parents, teachers other staff members and learners. Teachers are in the same vein accountable, for their work, to the Department of Education authorities, governance structures, principals, other staff members, parents, and learners. This type of accountability places emphasis on mutual accountability among all stakeholders. Accountability that operates in one direction only, such as in a hierarchical management structure or in a system where "the people" control the management may not further the aims of democracy (Griffin, 1990:252).

It is necessary to conclude by differentiating between accountability and responsibility. Accountability first and foremost, as discussed above, implies "being answerable". This implies owing "...an account to a range of stakeholders for what they do" (Bullock and Thomas, 1997:44). Responsibility, on the other hand, according to Macpherson (1996:72), "...is a broader concept that entails capacity of rational conduct and freedom

to choose between courses of action but it need not imply answerability or the need for an audience”.

However, persistent insistence on “bringing democracy to schools”, along with greater teacher participation in decision-making processes regarding school management, prompts one to consider the question “If things go wrong, who is to blame? A clear accountability process / structure will “...set the stage for allocation of blame or praise” (Mcpherson, 1996:1). Taking minutes of meetings, for example, is a traditional and very helpful way of ensuring accountability. When a decision is taken, this is minuted. Where action needs to be pursued, this is also minuted with the name of a person or persons linked to that. It is normal practice, then, to pick this up under “Matters Arising” on the agenda of the next meeting. This makes for very tight accountability, which allows the organisation to monitor its work well. Other forms of accountability may include verbal reports at meeting, evaluation reports, written reports at stipulated times, for example every quarter or any other time agreed upon by people involved.

3.6.3 Information flow (or communication)

Information flow in this context does not refer to informal communication between people, but rather to the way in which the various subsystems within an organization communicate and link with one another. It is necessary first to clarify the meaning of the concept “communication” as it forms the basis for understanding how the various subsystems interact and how internal messages travel in an organisation. Schools, like other organisations, are held together by communication. As soon as people gather together and begin organising, planning, arriving at decisions and settling disputes, the umbrella term for all these processes is communication. Kreps (1990:26) defines communication as a dynamic, ongoing process that enables people to work together, to cooperate with each other, and to interpret the ever-changing organisational needs and activities. The author goes further to stress that communication facilitates the efficient functioning of an organisation.

Communication, for some theorists is concerned with more than efficient functioning. In the view of Wilson, Goodall and Waagen (1986:20), “communication is simply not the means of doing organisational work, it is also the process by which the organisation is brought into existence and given personal, social and professional meanings”. Their view is that communication and organisation are synonymous: communication *produces* an organisation. That is, communication creates the nature of the organisation and influences the way the organisation is perceived by all stakeholders.

(a) Structure of organisational communication

Structure in this context refers to the components of the communication system in an organisation, most importantly the channels of communication through which information is sent and received. Channels entail the route by which information travels. Channels of information in an organisation are commonly described by distinguishing between the formal and informal flow of information (Badenhorst, 1996:32).

(b) Formal and informal channels of communication

Formal channels are the official channels through which communication is exchanged. Formal channels may be written or oral and include personal instructions, interviews, training programmes, letters, memoranda and annual reports (Badenhorst, 1996:32). Conversely, information is also exchanged *informally*. *Informal channels* entail for example, conversations among employees. Such information may be work-related or may be concerned with social and personal matters (Badenhorst, 1996:33). However, this section mainly focuses on the formal communication, although it will still touch on informal channels. Informal channels may at times prove to be more effective means of communication than formal channels in an organisation.

According to van der Westhuizen (1997:435) formal communication in an organisation may take the following forms:

- *Downward communication*

Downward communication flows from top to bottom in the organisational hierarchy, that is, from those who hold positions with more authority to those with less authority, usually from the principal to the staff and learners in a school situation. Downward messages are usually work-related and are disseminated through formal communication channels.

Messages sent from the top to the staff may have the following purposes according to Goldhaber (1990):

- (i) specific instructions on how to do the work;
- (ii) information which encourages an understanding of the task and its relationship to other organisational tasks and, in this way, to give a rationale or reasons for the work;
- (iii) information about organisational policies, procedures and practices;
- (iv) feedback on performance;
- (v) philosophical information regarding the organisational mission or orientation towards the goals of the information.

Van der Westhuizen (1997:435) maintains that downward communication may easily be authoritarian. He warns that care should be taken not to give too many instructions and that a system of feedback should be established. The principal certainly also needs feedback on how a message has been received and acted upon.

- *Upward communication*

Sending messages is not the only concern in an organisation. There are times when the staff and learners find it necessary to communicate information to someone in authority. Upward communication flows from the subordinates to superiors and usually takes place via the same channels as downward communication.

However, direct channels to the principals may be created by the use of suggestion boxes, consulting sessions, mass meetings, questionnaires and others (Koontz et al., 1980:695-696). The authors assert that at times communication through a hierarchal structure of an organization distorts information.

- *Lateral or horizontal communication*

Lateral or horizontal communication describes communication between people of the same hierarchical level, that is, between subordinates of the same status, for example heads of various departments in a school. Information can flow horizontally at that level by means of informal meetings, notices, circulars to mention but a few (Koontz et al., 1980:697).

However, many organizations today strive to create an open (transparent) communication climate by implementing programmes to encourage upward and lateral communication (Kreps, 1990:27). Consequently, it could be argued that the particular way in which the subsystems link with one another reflects the ethos and, in particular, the specific management of the school. For example, in a democratically managed school, lines of communication between the different systems would be as open (transparent) as possible, to facilitate maximum participation in the life of the school. Decisions taken at a particular committee meeting would be minuted and distributed to all other relevant structures in the school. All relevant stakeholders would, therefore, be kept informed of the discussions and decisions that transpired in a meeting.

Being kept informed is a particularly important issue within the context of a democratic organization. People want to know what decisions are being arrived at that affect their lives. They want to have the opportunity to participate in these processes and need to have access to the information in order to do so. While the principle of transparency is essential in a democratically functioning school, confidentiality needs to be taken seriously as well. It is not always proper to make minutes and other certain documents available for public consumption. Strict measures should be set in place, and that in itself

requires a good communication system. Confidential information may at times land in the wrong hands before it has been finalized and that in itself may jeopardize whatever is being discussed.

Besides, communication requires administrative support. Good communication within the school system is dependent on good administrative support. Bakker and Gaunt (1996:200) define organizations like schools as “collected groups of people that are constructed to achieve specific goals which cannot be met by individuals alone”. They state that successfully run organizations are characterized inter alia by:

- a shared vision around which all members of a organizations can rally and direct their energies;
- increased availability of information i.e. effective distribution and share of information.

3.7 ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN SHARED DECISION-MAKING

SDM does not replace the principal as a decision-maker on all issues, Bauer (1992) emphasises. The principal instead, becomes “part of a team of decision makers” and will likely arrive at decisions on issues outside the scope of the shared decision-making group or committees. The principal plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining SDM.

Stine (1993) describes the principal’s new role as an organizer, adviser, and consensus builder, who takes advantage of the group’s thinking. Bauer (1992) calls principals who utilise SDM “internal consultants” who provide the staff with current research and advice. Blasé and colleagues (1995:192) on the other hand, emphasise the facilitative aspects, such as finding space and time for staff to meet, helping groups work effectively together, and minimizing distractions and obstacles for shared decision-making participants. The principal helps a school become ready for SDM by promoting a non-competitive, trusting climate, creating opportunities for the staff to express ideas, and placing a priority on professional development.

SDM in theory calls for new modes of leadership: teachers lend their expertise, and principals become facilitators rather than directors. The new behaviors, in practice, can, however, be elusive. Participants often tend to shape their new roles with old assumptions. For example, McNabb (1994:40) studied one principal who was consciously manipulating the process to move in the direction he wanted by planting ideas, pressuring opponents, and showing favouritism to supporters. This principal characterised his approach as “going through the motions” of SDM, but he still saw himself as the source of decisions.

Even when principals are committed to SDM, they still have a special accountability that makes it difficult to be consistently facilitative. Blase and colleagues (1995:193) found that some enthusiastic supporters of SDM took a more directive approach at key moments, exercising vetoes when decisions by teachers threatened to harm students. Nona (1993) uncovered another leadership dilemma. If principals do not play an active, visible role in SDM, teachers may fail to take it seriously, yet participation that is too vigorous may convince teachers that the principal is still in charge.

SDM in conclusion, seems to be a complex process that does not lead to simple leadership strategies. As the principal of a particularly effective school stated, “If you do not really believe in participative decision-making, then do not try it. But it really works.

3.8 IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Several guidelines are suggested in the literature for the implementation of SDM in schools. Some of the guidelines for principals to observe are discussed in the following section:

- (i) *Start small, go slowly.* Evidence on the adoption of innovations suggests that SDM will be most successful if carried out in small steps rather than “wholesale changes” foreign to the school and participants (Gene and Galluzzo, 1991:57). A

- leader may analyse school's needs, then adapt selected processes that meet the local situation; additional components can be added when the staff are ready.
- (ii) *Agree on specifics at the outset.* There is no single “right” way to do SDM; it depends on what a leader wants from it. Many schools develop one decision-making team or council; others use several groups or committees. Unless mandated, decide who will be involved (Will you include students, parents, community members, and outside consultants?), the size of the group Stine (1993) suggests nine to seventeen members, and how to ensure that the group will be representative. Also determine how decisions will be made (majority vote or consensus) and who will make the final decisions on issues.
 - (iii) *Be clear about procedures, roles, and expectations.* Lack of clarity leads to lack of progress with SDM. Staff members need to understand what steps and procedures are to be followed before decisions are made. Lew and Glickman (1992:80) learned that “unclear processes created confusion that fragmented people’s actions,” while clear processes empowered participants. Groups also need to understand whether they are a decision-making body or play an advisory role; it is demoralising for groups to think they are making decisions only to have their decisions vetoed. At both her schools, Meadows (1990) found it useful to spell out the shared decision-making process in writing.
 - (iv) *Give everyone a chance to get involved.* Decisions made by administrative appointees as opposed to elected or volunteer representatives may be perceived as top-down decisions. Volunteer positions or task forces give people the opportunity to participate as much or as little as they want. “The more accessible the process was to all teachers,” say Lew and Glickman (1992:82), “the more positive feeling they had for the process.”

- (v) *Build trust and support.* If mistrust and apprehension exist between administrators and teachers, SDM is not easily accepted. Avoid pushing solutions on the group or overriding decisions delegated to shared decision-making teams. Lack of hierarchical support can also lead to failure. “If the culture outside the school does not change,” say Gene and Galluzzo (1991:57), “those inside the school will find it difficult to take charge of decision making.”

3.9 A MODEL OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

3.9.1 Introduction

There are instances when participation improves the quality of the decision, as well as instances when participation obstructs implementation of effective decision (Hoy and Tarter, 1995:118). This view implies that there are times when subordinates are in the best position to make decisions and that there are other times when they are not. According to Hoy and Tarter (1995:85), subordinate participation can enhance the quality of decisions and promote cooperation if the right strategy is linked to the right situation. The critical question to answer is, “Under what conditions should staff members be involved in decision-making?” Two models of shared decision-making are useful in addressing this question: one based on a comprehensive set of decision rules (Vroom and Jago, 1988) and the other on a simple set of three criteria – expertise, relevance, and commitment (Hoy and Tarter, 1993). Both of these models are designed to enhance the acceptance and quality of decisions.

Hoy and Tarter’s model of shared decision-making is adopted in this research project because it is a simplified normative model of shared decision making. The model is built upon sound organizational theory and research; its internal logic is clear; its applicability is extensive; and it is easier for administrators to use. The model suggests conditions under which subordinates should be involved in decisions and indicates the degree of frequency, nature, purpose, and structure of their involvement. Further, the model specifies different roles of the principal, depending upon the situation. However, it is not

the aim of this research to give details about the model but to focus only on the aspects that will be used as a yardstick to analyse the situation in secondary schools in the THMOED. The discussion on the model follows.

3.9.2 Hoy-Tarter model of shared decision-making

Successful SDM at school level and its associated teacher empowerment is a function of the principal's readiness to share autonomy with those whose commitment is necessary for effective teaching and learning (Lucas, Brown and Markus, 1991). Steyn and Squelch (1997:6) in their research work on teacher empowerment, indicate the relationship between shared decision-making, the readiness of principals to help teachers become empowered and the leadership style of the principal. All teachers interviewed in this research work (Steyn and Squelch, 1997:7) acknowledged the importance of the principal's role and expressed their preferences for a principal who was open, democratic, encouraged participation and was willing to listen to other points of view.

If principals are required to share power, *how should they involve teachers in decision-making?* Hoy and Tarter (1995) propose the simplified normative model that provides the direct answer to the question. The key concept in the model, drawn from the work of Barnard (1938); Simon (1947) and Bridges (1967) is the zone of acceptance or indifference.

3.9.2.1 The zone of acceptance or indifference

The concepts "zone of acceptance" and "zone of indifference" almost refer to the same meaning and are clarified in the following discussions. Based on Barnard's (1938:167) conceptualization of the "zone of indifference" which states that subordinates have a zone of indifference within which an administrator's decision will be accepted without question. Bridges (1967) argues that not all decisions are appropriate for SDM and that there are issues that subordinates do not care to be involved in. Bridges (1967) therefore, postulates the need for administrators to apply a "test of relevance" (interest) and a "test of expertise" (knowledge) before seeking to involve subordinates in the decision-making

process. The combined levels of interest and expertise serve as a means of determining whether or not a decision issue falls within subordinates' zones of indifference.

Clear and Seager (1971) further explored the zone of indifference concept. However, they preferred to use the label "zone of acceptance". Their study found, when relating to either organizational maintenance or subordinates' professional judgments, that administrators can expect always to have a desire to exercise influence greater than subordinates are willing to accept. In short, administrators' zones of desired influence are believed to be consistently greater than subordinates' zones of acceptance.

Hoy and Miskel (1982:291), in summarizing the research work regarding the zones of acceptance, stated that if subordinates possess a personal stake (high relevance or interest) in the decision and knowledge to make useful contribution (high expertise) then the decision clearly falls outside the zone of acceptance. Then subordinates should be involved in the decision-making process. If, on the other hand, the issue is not of interest and falls outside their sphere of competence, then the decision is within their zone of acceptance and involvement should be avoided. The test, which identifies zones of acceptance produces two marginal cases (high interest-low expertise and low interest-high expertise) for which answers regarding decision involvement are less clear. Therefore, careful attention should be given to these marginal cases.

The challenge for the administrators becomes one of deciding which decision issues fall within the subordinates' zone of acceptance and which issues do not. That is, *how would an administrator then know if a decision is inside the zone of acceptance, outside the zone of acceptance, or marginal?*

3.9.2.2 Mapping the zone of acceptance

Two decision rules were developed by Hoy and Tarter (1995:140) to answer this question: *the relevance rule* and *the expertise rule*.

- *The relevance rule*: Do staff have a personal interest in the outcome of the decision?
- *The expertise rule*: Do staff have the expertise to contribute to the decision?

These rules are closely linked to the situational theory of Hersey and Blanchard that acknowledges the maturity level of followers (Mosley, Meggins and Pietri, 1993:265 and Slater, 1995). Maturity of followers is defined in terms of the following three components:

- the capacity to set high but attainable goals;
- the willingness and ability to act responsibly, and
- experience.

When followers are immature, they need more guidance and more structure, while mature subordinates need less structure and more human-relations-oriented behaviour (Slater, 1995).

These two rules define four decision situations as illustrated in **Figure 3.1** below (Hoy and Tarter, 1995:141).

		Do subordinates have personal relevance?	
		Yes	No
Can subordinates contribute expertise?	Yes	Outside zone of acceptance [Definitely include]	Marginal with expertise [Occasionally include]
	No	Marginal with relevance [Occasionally include]	Inside zone of acceptance [Definitely exclude]

Figure 3.1: Zone of acceptance and decision situations

If the response to both of these questions is *yes*, the staff members have both a personal interest in the outcome of the decision and the expertise to contribute, then the situation is outside the zone of acceptance (Hoy and Tarter, 1995:141). Surely, the staff will want to be involved, and their involvement will enhance the effectiveness of the decision.

The next situation is a marginal case of personal interest (relevance) but no expertise. When a staff member has personal interest but no expertise, involvement should be limited. Staff participation in this case may be dangerous, and could lead to frustration because subordinates are asked to do a job for which they are ill-skilled or ill-prepared. As a common result, either the decision will be uninformed by expertise, or it will be made by the administrator contrary to the wishes of those involved. In the first instance, involving teachers who lack expertise in the process may reduce resistance, but it cannot inform the substance of the decision. In the latter instance, the administrator makes a show of soliciting opinion, which is subsequently ignored. Such decisions give an indication of manipulation and “game playing” and eventually produce dissatisfaction. Occasionally, however, teachers must be brought into the process to gain acceptance of the decisions, but only when the teachers know at the outset that their role is advisory.

The third situation is the marginal case of expertise but no personal interest. In this case teachers can feel frustrated because they perceive their skills and knowledge to be exploited by their superiors. They have little interest in the outcome of the decisions because they are unaffected. Initially, they may feel a sense of worth as they are involved, but that quickly passes as they labour. The likely long-term response of teachers to such involvement is resentment and alienation. However, teachers may be involved occasionally in this case to enhance the quality of decisions.

In the last situation teachers should not be involved in the decision-making if they have neither the personal interest nor expertise to contribute towards effective decisions. This fourth situation is a case for unilateral decision-making by the administrator.

One more consideration is necessary to effectively apply the model to actual problems. According to Hoy and Tarter (1995) the appropriate level by participation of subordinates is mediated by commitment to the organization. To gauge subordinate commitment the authors propose the following rule: *The commitment rule*: Are subordinates committed to the organization and its mission? Can they be trusted to make decisions in the best interest of the organization?

If the decision is outside the subordinates' zone of acceptance and if they share the aims of the organization, then their participation should be extensive. Sometimes the subordinates may have expertise and personal interest in the decision but may not be committed to the aims of the organization. In a situation like that, the area outside the zone of acceptance can be divided into situations with committed and uncommitted subordinates (Hoy and Tarter, 1995:141). When subordinates are committed and have the expertise and interest, then the decision-making may require consensus rather than majority rule. These styles were discussed in Chapter Two. In the case where there is little commitment, then participation should be restricted, otherwise it would create a clash of interests (moving the decision in the direction not consistent with the organization's goals). If the decision is within the zone of acceptance, commitment is not an issue. Automatically, subordinates will not be part of the decision. In these two marginal cases, subordinate commitment is seldom a consideration because participation is already limited by either lack of expertise or lack of interest.

As a way of concluding, Bridges (1967) in his research work on SDM in schools, discovered the following: if staff members have a high interest and feel capable of making a contribution, then their desired level of participation will be high. If on the other hand, staff members have high interest but do not feel capable of contributing, then they may wish to be involved only in the later stages of implementing and evaluating the decision. If staff members have low interest but high expertise they may particularly wish to be involved at the early stages of defining the problem and suggesting and weighing alternatives.

3.9.3 Summation

As a way of recapping, this model does not solve problems. However, the model is a guide to participative decision-making. The framework provides a guide by addressing the critical issue of teacher-principal collaboration: *Under what conditions should teachers collaborate in decision-making?* Principals who understand the interest and capabilities of their staff can use the model to determine who should be involved early, late or throughout the decision making process.

The model by Hoy and Tarter (1995) suggests that the leader in deciding who to involve in the decision process, needs to consider, amongst several criteria, whether subordinates have the expertise and interest to contribute to the solution or not. **Exhibit 3.1** provides an example that embodies the collaborative spirit that should be encouraged in a school situation.

EXHIBIT 3.1

If there is a decision to make about what type of a computer to buy for the library, the leader will approach the computer teacher, who has a lot of knowledge and interest in this area, for advice. Again, the leader will also approach the librarian and any teacher who will be using the computer for their input. The reason being that a leader should not assume that a lack of expertise as perceived by him or her (a leader), rules out a vested interest that other people might have in a choice. The leader should make the decision known to others because as members of the school they have the right to know. The idea is not to involve them but to gain greater acceptance of the final decision.

Partners in a collaborative effort do not have to bring with them identical levels of expertise, but they do have to have an equal sense of responsibility for the outcomes of the effort, and they should be equally committed to the goals of the organization. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) have used the term “contrived collegiality” to describe a type of

collaboration that is superficial. This, they contend, is imposed in situations in which leaders wish to control and regulate more than true collaboration might allow.

However, strategies need to be devised by principals to provide staff with the time and opportunity to improve their interpersonal relationship and working together. Without proper preparation and ongoing power-sharing, people participating in SDM cannot be expected to perform their duties satisfactorily and decision-making would become what Holt and Murphy (1993:179) describe as nothing more than “muddling through”. For example, some schools arrange common planning sessions so that teachers can work together at times and not always in isolation.

Although the discussion focused on the conditions under which subordinates should be involved in the decision-making, eventually the goal of shared decision-making is to involve subordinates in as many decisions as realistically possible. In the next section a paradigm for a SDM process that supports team building will be discussed. Firstly, a discussion of the significance of teams in organisations will be reviewed.

3.10 TEAMS IN ORGANISATIONS

School improvement can be supported by the existence of teams in the school. “More is better” - this precept lies behind the burgeoning use of work teams to handle problem-solving and decision-making in schools and school districts. Teams are said to build stronger relationships among those involved in education and, ultimately, to benefit students because more people with broader perspectives help shape a stronger educational program. Yukl (1981:154) defines a team as a group of people who get along well with each other, share information, ideas and are friendly, helpful, cooperative and are committed to a common purpose. Oakland and Oakland (1998:337) share the same sentiment and add that strong teams can be built through genuine participation of members in a given task.

3.10.1 Why are schools using teams?

The proliferation of work teams at the school and district levels stems from education's embracing of Deming's (1994) business-management theories, referred to as total quality management (TQM). The author held that managers should treat workers as partners rather than underlings, for employees will work better together and feel more empowered. The product will ultimately be enhanced by such a collaborative arrangement, suggested Deming. Putting Deming's philosophy into practice at the school situation is said to reduce rivalry among individuals and increase the energy necessary for better learning environments (Siu-Runyan and Heart, 1992).

Teams have several positive effects. First, the more people involved in making a decision, the greater the chances for the decision to be implemented. Second, team members continually learn from one another's new ideas. Third, more and better information and actions come from a group of people with various resources and skills. Fourth, there is a better chance that mistakes will be identified and corrected. Finally, risk-taking is more likely because of the collective power of the group.

Vollmer (1995) mentions another advantage - a sense of "teamness". When a group comes together, she explains, "there is that feeling that it can happen," that the organization can move forward. "There's a flow in the same direction, there's excitement, there's understanding."

3.10.2 Common types of teams

Teams vary in size, mission, and duration. Two major types of teams identified by Snyder and Anderson (1986) are: permanent teams and temporary teams. Permanent teams "specialise in a particular function," such as curriculum design. Temporary teams are "organized for a particular short-term purpose and are dissolved when the task is completed." It is important to specify the short - or long-term nature of a team. Nothing

can dampen team members' enthusiasm like feeling obligated to continue meeting after their mission has been fulfilled.

However, the aforementioned information is too general because it does not address specific types of teams likely to occur in schools. Later in this chapter more appropriate information relevant to the South African School situation will be discussed.

3.10.3 Factors ensuring a quality team

Two factors are essential to a quality team: bonding and cohesiveness (Cunningham and Gresso, 1993:285-6). Both of these factors assist teams to establish a sense of team culture. "The strength and potential of the team," write the authors "develops once people join together to form a single, united, and cohesive culture." They argue that a team with a strong culture has several qualities: "purposefulness, pride, confidence, enthusiasm, empowerment, commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction"

The authors further state that bonding ensures that team members will commit their time, knowledge, skills, and energy to the team and its goals. "Bonded" team members are more enthusiastic, and more loyal to the school and the team. Members can begin this bonding process during the very first meeting, as they set their purpose, goals, roles, and individual and group responsibilities.

Cunningham and Gresso (1993:286) define "cohesiveness" as a "sense of togetherness, or community, within a group. A cohesive group is one in which there are incentives for remaining in the group and a feeling of belonging-ness and relatedness among the members." Cohesive teams are effective teams, Cunningham and Gresso argue.

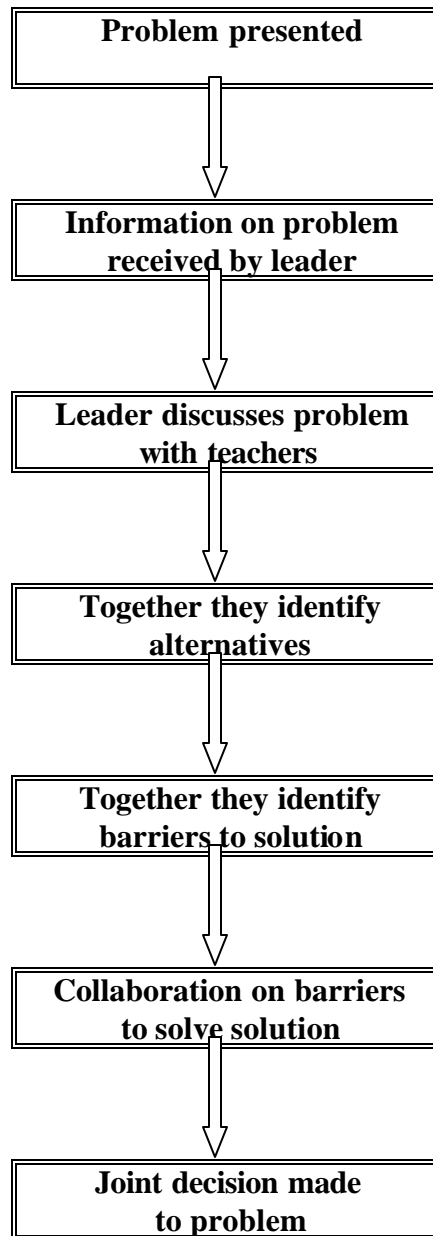
To promote high-quality communication and cohesiveness, the Institute for Educational Leadership (1994) offers the following tips: limit talking time by remembering there are others in the group, do not interrupt, listen actively, allow others to be silent if they wish but try to elicit their views by asking questions or inviting their opinions, encourage

rather than dominate, offer only constructive criticism, accept others' opinions even if you do not agree with them, and support those who are unfairly attacked.

3.10.4 Paradigm for shared decision-making process

A paradigm for a SDM process that would support team building is proposed below. The idea is from Owens (1991:284) but modified in this research work to suit school situations. This idea will also be used as a basis to analyse how SDM is carried out in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province. The paradigm for a SDM process is presented in **Figure 3.2** below:

Figure 3.3: Paradigm for SDM process (Owens, 1991:284)



In work situations, there is the ideal or the desirable situation and the real or practical. The prevailing conditions in a work situation at the time will determine whether it is appropriate to involve subordinates or to be selective, because in certain conditions it may not be necessary or it may be time consuming to seek everybody's participation in a decision-making process. In reality, people do not always want or expect to be involved

in every decision-making process. A model discussed in section 3.6.1 above as well as a Hoy-Tarter model of SDM can assist in this regard.

However, in the absence of relevant information such as these models, selection can be based on the preparedness of the individual to participate in the task, level of their maturity, dedication, individual or group ability or a combination of these variables. Often such variables can be found among the ranks of senior officials in an organization. A considerable number of them got promotion on account of these variables.

As a way of concluding, the sense of SDM that can perpetuate a culture of teamwork in an organization is advocated by Hargreaves and Hopkins (1997:17). They argue that: “The task of deciding priorities is best undertaken by a team, chaired by the leader. This helps develop the much needed ownership”. A similar view goes as follows: In effective schools management is not the unique task of those at the apex of a hierarchy, but a shared responsibility of all those involved in the school (Hopkins, 1997:17).

Dinham et al. (1995) make eight point guideline which school principals can use to motivate and maintain teamwork in their schools, providing acronym for the word *motivate*:

- Make a point of being accessible to team members and have mutually agreed responsibility;
- Opinions, contributions and experience should be valued;
- Treat colleagues as equals in the team and treat them as individuals in a professional capacity;
- Improve communication in teams by showing respect to others in the hope of reciprocal respect, not by showing a position of authority;
- Value team and individuals by fostering responsibility;
- Allocate time for planning and discussion;
- Team members appreciate praise and constructive criticism and
- Encourage initiative taking and the need to work together, that is for all to contribute.

However, success of SDM depends on such intangible factors as team members' willingness to be open, trustworthy, and nonjudgmental and a leader's eagerness to share power while retaining final responsibility for team decisions (Anderson 1988:27).

3.11 GOVERNANCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS SINCE 1994

3.11.1 Introduction

Following the General Elections of 1994, the new government shifted the direction and vision of the education system with a series of policy initiatives and new legislation. The policy frameworks contain clear implications for planning and effective management in the education system. The provisions of National Department of Education of White Paper 1 on Education and Training of 1995; White Paper 2 on Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools of 1996, the new national legislation (the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996) as well as provincial legislation and policy documents, all point South Africa firmly towards a school-based system of education management. All policies are in line with the stipulations of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. Although a review of various policies, legislations and acts is imperative, however, it is not the purpose of this section. The overall purpose of this section is to determine how secondary school principals operate under the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

The most important aim of transforming apartheid education system that existed for a very long time, was to create a system based on the fundamental principles of democracy, unity, non-discrimination, equity and equality. A system of education that "opens the doors of learning and culture to all" and that would "benefit the country as a whole and all its people" (*White Paper One on Education and Training*, 1995:17). Furthermore, the aim was to develop a democratic system that would cater for the participation of all stakeholders with a vested interest in education. According to the *White Paper One on Education and Training* (1995:22):

...the principle of democratic governance should be increasingly reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role-players.

With the introduction of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) (SASA), South African schools have subsequently moved towards decentralized school governance. The SASA has mandated the establishment of democratic structures of school governance composed of education authorities and the school community (hereafter called school governing bodies). The rationale for the establishment of representative school governing bodies is essentially to ensure that teachers, parents, learners and non-teaching staff do actively participate in the governance and management of their schools.

The aim of this section is to explore the position of a governing body within the organizational structure of a school. Consequently, decentralized governance was created with the purpose to reduce bureaucratic control and enhance shared decision-making in schools. With a view to appreciating an advance in terms of governance of schools, Pampallis (1998) argues that there remains within this governance model a hierarchical structure of authority. In other words, decision-making practices still adhere to formal lines of authority with the principal largely retaining the final authority over management decisions. In this research study an attempt will be made to determine if this situation prevails and dominates decision-making in secondary schools in the THMOED.

3.11.2 Legal status of school governing body

As a result of the introduction of SASA, the legal status of public schools has changed greatly. Public schools are classified as *juristic persons* (Section 15 of SASA). In terms of the law, “juristic person” does not only refer to a human being, but also to institutions like churches, schools, universities or banks, which stand independently from their members. A juristic person can in itself have rights and duties that have nothing to do with its members. In other words, the school as a juristic person has rights and duties to

engage in legal activities in its own name, and not in the name of people associated with the school. Thus, the school participates in legal activities through its organs or functionaries, who act on its behalf.

A school functions as a juristic person through its governing body in which school governance is vested (Section 15 of SASA). In other words, the governing body acts on behalf of the school; it has the decision-making powers concerning the school; and it may bind the school legally. For example, the governing body acts on behalf of the school when it suspends a learner (Section 9 of SASA). The action taken to suspend the learner is taken in the name of the school and the school (not the governing body) is legally responsible for its conduct. Therefore, the school may sue or be sued in its capacity. However, this does not rule out the fact that school governors and educators can be sued in their personal capacity. For example, if an educator administers corporal punishment to a learner, that educator contravenes section 10 of the SASA and a parent may sue him or her or the school. The school, through its governing body, operates in both the private and public sphere of law. For example, the school may buy, sell, hire, own property, enter into contracts, and make investments.

Section 16 of SASA also states that the governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school. To stand in a position of trust implies that the governing body must:

- act in good faith;
- carry out its duties and functions in the best interest of the school;
- not disclose confidential information that might be of detrimental to the school;
- not engage in any unlawful conduct; and
- not compete with the school's interests and activities.

3.11.3 Composition of school governing body

The governing body of an ordinary public school comprises the following three groups of people (Section 23 of SASA):

- Members who are elected;
- The school principal as an *ex officio* member; and
- Members co-opted (invited) by the governing body.

Elected members

The members who are elected include:

- Parents of learners at the school; excluding parents employed at that school;
- Educators at the school;
- Members of staff at the school who are not educators (such as administrative personnel and those who clean the premises); and
- Learners at the school who are in grade eight or in higher grades.

Co-opted members

In addition to members who are voted to serve on the governing body, a governing body may also co-opt members from the community. This enables the governing body to draw on people with certain skills and expertise. However, co-opted members do not have the right to vote.

The governing body of an ordinary public school that provides education to learners with special educational needs must, where practically possible, co-opt a person or persons with expert knowledge on the special educational needs of such learners. This provision is important because it ensures that all major role players are represented on the governing body.

The SASA also states that parents must form the majority of membership on the governing body. In other words, parents who can vote must be one more than all the other

voting members combined. The word “parent” must read as it appears in Chapter I of SASA. The definition includes a person who is the learner’s guardian, or is legally entitled to give custody to the learner, or who has undertaken to fulfill the obligations of a parent or guardian towards the learner’s education. Only a parent who is not employed at the school may be the chairperson of the governing body. In other words, the school principal or educator or any other person attached to the school may not be a chairperson.

Learner representatives represent learners on the governing body. The representatives have voting rights and should be involved in activities of school and the decision-making meetings of the governing body. Although some stakeholders do not approve their participation in every discussion and decision-making, however, the SASA makes provision for their extensive involvement. It is essential and necessary for learner representatives to participate in decisions that they have to implement and when they are responsible for outcomes. Indeed, this involvement would be consistent with the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Children. Some critics maintain that the inclusion of learners is a recipe for conflict in schools. However, it may be argued that a tension in the balance of power could have positive outcomes such as ensuring greater accountability, transparency and involvement in the activities of the school.

This inclusive approach to the composition of the governing body is essential for the practice of participatory democracy and to encourage sense of ownership and commitment in the school. The exact number of members of governing body may vary from one school to another. The Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education determines this and informs schools of the exact composition of the governing body of each school. According to Chapter 1 of the SASA “Member of the Executive Council” refers to the minister who is responsible for education in that province.

3.11.4 Functions of school governing body

The governing body is not involved in the day-to-day running of the school. That is the work of the principal and educators. However, it contributes to or decides on all or some

of the following as outlined in section 20 of SASA. The functions can be categorised as follows viewed in the context of the *Free State School Education Act, 2000*:

Broad policy:

- To formulate the school's mission, vision, goals and objectives;
- To develop and implement a policy for the governing body of their own school; and
- To promote the interest of the broad school community.

Personnel:

- To recommend the temporary or permanent appointment of educators in consultation with the Free State Education Department (FSED); and
- To recommend the appointment of administrative staff in consultation with the FSED.

Admission to their school:

- To determine the admission policy for their school in consultation with FSED.

Curriculum

- To lay down a language policy for their school within the parameters of the Constitution ("Constitution" means the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996) and the framework of the FSED;
- To determine the curriculum choices for their school within the framework of the FSED;
- To determine the curricula for extra-mural activities; and
- To formulate a code of conduct of teaching and learning.

Finances:

- Raise and control funds;
- To determine priorities for the school budget;
- To control the purchase of textbooks, materials and equipment; and
- To control the payment of electricity and water accounts.

Maintenance:

- To control the maintenance of school buildings, school grounds and any other equipment.

Communication

- To report to parents with regard to issues like policy matters, quality and standard of education and financial matters.

Community service:

- To provide local services for children; and
- To promote social, health, recreational and nutritional programmes within the broad school community.

Section 21 of SASA includes a list of functions that may be allocated to a governing body by the MEC for Education in the province. A governing body can also request “extra powers” from the MEC for Education in each province. “Extra powers” include the power to decide admission policy, improve the school’s property, decide on subject options and extra-mural curriculum, purchase books and educational material, and enquire into, and take action on, complaints about the staff and learners at the school.

3.11.5 Governing body and school management

According to the SASA the principal of the school is responsible for the professional management of the school. In the context of the FSED, the Head of Education delegates powers to the school, the school principal, to organise and control teaching and learning at school level. In the next sections the differences and the relationships between school management and governance will be reviewed.

3.11.5.1 Difference between school management and school governance

The governing body and the principal must work hand-in-hand. The day-to-day administration of the school is still very much the responsibility of the principal. The

organisation of teaching and learning at the school is also the responsibility of the principal. On the other hand, the sphere of the governing body is governance, that is, policy determination in which the democratic participation of the schools' stakeholders is essential.

The following table (**Table 3.3**) helps draw a distinction between the roles of management (principal) and the governing body, as outlined in the *Free State School Education Act 2000*:

Table 3.3: Roles of Management and Governing Body

Management	Governance
1. Responsibility of the principal	1. Responsibility of members of governing body
2. Principal is officially appointed and is on the payroll of the FSED	2. Members are elected or co-opted and are not on the pay roll of the FSED
3. Principal is responsible to Head of the FSED	3. Governing body is mainly responsible to the school community
4. Ensures the day-to-day administration and organisation of teaching and learning	4. Determines the of policies and rules by which the school is to be organised and controlled.
5. Includes the management of certain areas typical of the teaching and learning situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personnel affairs • learner affairs • curriculum and teaching affairs • physical affairs • financial affairs • school community relation 	5. Includes the governing of certain areas typical of the control function in a broader policy context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personnel • broad policy • curriculum • maintenance • finance • community services

3.11.5.2 Relationship between school management and school governance

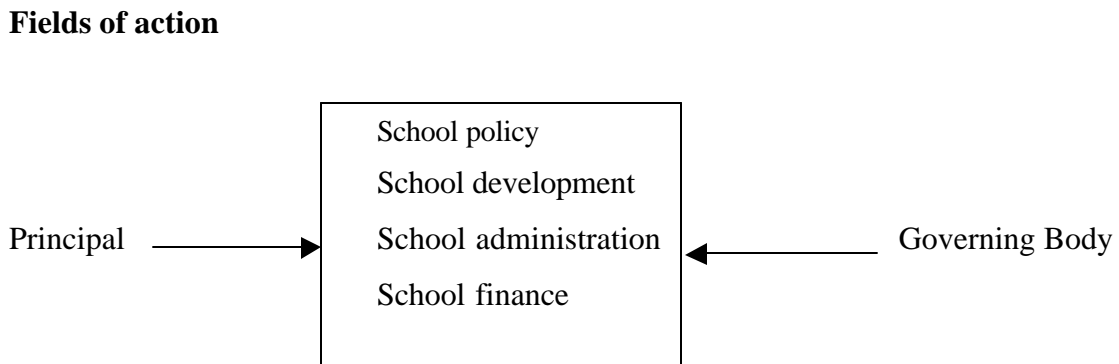
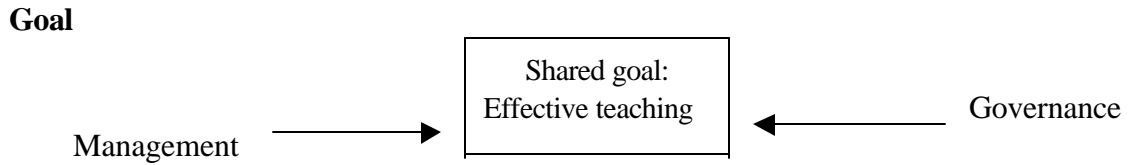
A good relationship between the governing body and school management is very important. As mentioned above, the governing body has the overall responsibility for the school, that is, to make sure that everything in the SASA is carried out, which is basically school *governance*. Governance means "...the act of governing". It means the "guiding" or "ruling" organisation (SASA). On the other hand the principal is responsible for *management*. Management is seeing that the "guides" or "rules" made by the governing body are properly carried out (SASA). Although there are differences between the working areas of the school principal and the governing body of a school, they cannot work in isolation. As a matter of fact, they have the same goal, namely effective teaching and learning, and should work closely together as a team.

The second relationship between the principal and the governing body is the fact that the principal is an *ex officio* member of the governing body. As such, the principal forms the link between the school and the governing body. The successful and effective functioning of the school will, to a large extent, depend on the co-operation between the two parties, their shared vision, mission and enthusiasm.

Finally, the third category of the relationship is the common field of management and governance. For example, the principal will assess personnel applications professionally, and advise the governing body, which will finally make recommendations to the provincial department of education, specifically to the Free State Education Department in the context of this research. A reverse example is where the governing body formulates the admission policy of learners to the school while the principal has to apply the policy in the practical day-to-day running of the school.

The diagram below (**Figure 3.3**) describes and summarises the relationship between school management (principal) and governance (school governing body):

Figure 3.3: Relationship between management and governance



3.11.6 Participation of stakeholders within the school organisational structure

Stakeholders are persons who have an interest in the affairs of the school. In the school these may include principal, members of the staff (teaching and non-teaching), cleaning personnel as well as learners. Persons outside the school comprise parents of the learners in the school and the other members of the community interested in the affairs of the school. All the stakeholders have a role to play in the affairs of the school. Following is the discussion of the roles various stakeholders are expected perform in a school.

3.11.6.1 Role of parents in the affairs of the school

Parents are involved in the following:

- They will elect members of the school governing body. The governing body serves as a representative of the parents in the governance of the school;
- They must see that every learner for whom she or he is responsible must attend school from the first day of the year in which she or he turns seven years of age until the last day of the year in which such a learner reaches the age of fifteen or until the ninth grade;
- They must pay school fees that have been duly approved of. The only exception is in the case of a parent who has been exempted (Section 40 of SASA). Exemption applies to parents who are unable to pay school fees; and
- They must see to it that a school provides a high standard of education.

3.11.6.2 Role of principal and members of staff

- Manage school professionally;
- Organise the activities that support teaching and learning;
- Decide on the activities that will assist learning and teaching during school hours;
- Decide on textbooks, educational materials, and equipment to be purchased;
- The principal is an *ex officio* member of the school governing body;
- Educators are elected by educators to serve on the school governing body; and

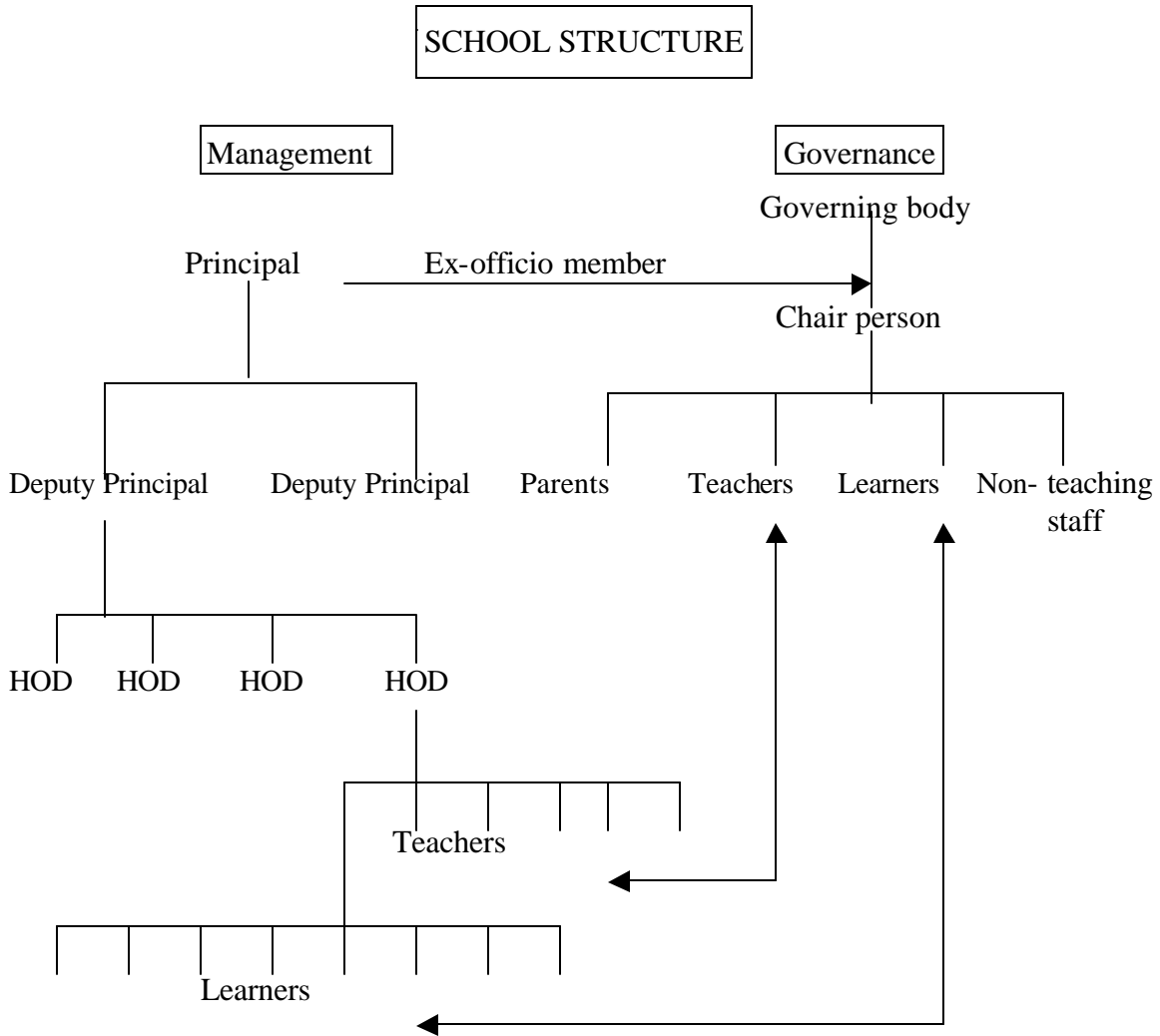
- The members of non-teaching staff are elected by non-teaching staff to serve on the school governing body.

3.11.6.3 Role of learners

- Learners elect the Learners' Representative Council (LRC)
- Members of the LRC of learners can become members of the school governing body (grade 8 and higher) to represent the interests of the learners of the school.

In conclusion, **Figure 3.4** below illustrates the participation of various stakeholders within the organisational structure of the school:

Figure 3.4: Participation of stakeholders in the organisational structure of the school:



Both **Figure 3.3** and **Figure 3.4** provide a clear picture of what the SASA expects in secondary schools and at the same time the figures enable the researcher to analyse the interaction between the management and other role-players in secondary schools in the THMOED, mainly with regard to decision-making. In other words, the dynamic relationship between all the stakeholders is the major focus of the research project.

3.11.7 Co-operation at school level

An important aspect of the SASA is the principle that there must be a partnership between all stakeholders who have interest in education. After reviewing various definitions of the term *partnership*, Bastiani (1993:105) describes effective partnership as one in which the following essential characteristics are present:

- Mutual trust and respect;
- Shared decision-making;
- Common vision;
- Open communication;
- Good team work;
- Promotion of the interest of the partnership rather than those of the individual; and
- Respect for the roles of different partners.

3.11.8 Summation

The shift towards decentralised school governance and management is not confined to South Africa nor is it a recent phenomenon. Education systems worldwide are subject to ongoing change and reform (Wegenke, 1993). The rationale for this reform is to make schools more efficient and effective by involving the various role players interested in education, improving the quality of education, raising the levels of student performance, and by being able to respond to the needs of learners. The divergent views are, in part, a result of the degree of preparedness for moving from a highly centralised, system with lingering strands of autocrated management to a decentralised, participatory system.

Schools need to have strong leaders (principals) who are prepared to share power and authority and who can initiate, manage and implement changes envisaged by the education system. The ability of schools to transform themselves, to grow in strength and to have a sense of purpose and commitment, is, to a great extent, dependent on the quality of leadership in the school. The leader, who knows when to listen, when to act, and when to withdraw, can work effectively with nearly everyone, Heider (1985:55) observes.

Focus in the next section will be on the concepts leadership and management. The section will give the difference between leadership and management as well as the desired type of leadership within an organisational setting.

3.12 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.12.1 Leadership versus management.

The attention to the concept leadership has been unprecedented in education, the business sector as well as in government. Maybe a question needs to be asked, “What is the leadership function?” One aspect of the leadership discussion for the past few years focused on the distinction between management, which educational administrators typically perform with reasonable success, and leadership, which educational administrators allegedly do not execute, but should. Though these concepts are frequently confused, various researchers have made a clear distinction.

Gardner (1990:1) suggests that leadership is “a process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by leaders and their followers”. Further, Gardner (1990:3) reserves the term “managers” for individuals who “hold a directive post in an organization presiding over the resources by which the organization functions, allocating resources carefully, and making the best possible use of people”. In agreement, Tosi (1982:233) states that “leading is an influence process; managing may be seen as the act of making choices about the form and structure of those factors that fall within the boundaries of managerial discretion”.

In the early seventies, Burns (1978) distinguished between the role of the manager, who negotiates with subordinates to obtain balanced transactions of rewards for the subordinates’ efforts, and the role of the leader, who targets efforts towards change, to improve, and transform the organization. Tichy and Devanna (1986) expanded on Burns’s ideas, asserting that managers engage in very little change but manage what is

present and leave things much as they found them when they depart. Transformational leadership, they declared, focuses on change, innovation and collaborative decisions. The leader changes and transforms the organization according to a vision of the preferred status. Leaders, then, are change makers and transformers, guiding the organization to a new and compelling vision, demanding role expectation.

Following the discussion above, leadership is defined by function and is not restricted to people occupying particular positions. Any person who can deliver the function is a leader. As Block (1987:98) puts it, anyone can be a leader who provides leadership, “the process of translating intentions into reality”. Such a person can be a principal, a teacher, a student, parent or community member. It means that there is need for leaders who can initiate, manage and implement the envisaged change in the education system.

3.12.2 The need for leaders

Deal (1990:4) states, “Nothing will happen without leadership”. The author maintains, “From someone or someplace energy needs to be created, released, channeled, or mobilized to get the ball rolling in the right direction”. Research on schools in the last couple of decades leads to the interpretation that schools can develop as places for excellent teaching and learning, but left to their own devices many of them will not (Wimpelberg, 1987:100). As Glatter (1987:61) points out, “there has too often been an assumption that you only need to introduce an innovation for it to be effectively absorbed by institutions.

Many researchers, Cawelti (1987:3) in particular, noted that “research has documented what common sense has long dictated: that school leaders do determine whether or not schools are successful”. This growing knowledge base points to the importance of effective principals to school improvement and student success. Lezotte and Bancroft (1985), in their research work on effective schools, conducted largely in low socio-economic settings, found that strong educational leaders administered the more effective campuses. In the next section the spotlight will fall on the principals as school leaders.

3.12.3 Principals as school leaders

While the importance of principals to the quality of schools may seem obvious, researchers have recently begun to examine educational leadership. Research on the topic suggests that in the past, principals were able to succeed, at least partially, by simply carrying out the directives of the authorities (Perez et al.,1999). But “management” by principals is no longer enough to meet today’s educational challenges. Principals instead, must assume a greater leadership role.

According to Drake and Roe (1999) a school leader envisions goals, sets standards and communicates in such ways that all associated directly or indirectly know where the school is going and what it means to the community. While managers rely on the authority given to them from above (Buhler, 1995), leaders seek to create a cooperative culture in which everyone has a responsibility to lead and suggest changes when necessary. Still, since both management and the principal must ultimately integrate leadership aspects, it is important to understand the two leadership forms.

Burns (1978) argues that there is a distinction between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leaders take a more managerial approach; they get things done by clearly defining the task to the followers and providing whatever immediate rewards they can. Transformational leaders, in contrast, work with all the stakeholders both external and within the organization to map new directions, obtain necessary resources, and respond to present challenges and future threats. The transformational leader recognizes that change is imminent and even strives for its creation.

Applying the above information to the school, Avolio and Bass (1988) maintain that although transactional and transformational leadership can represent two discrete forms of leadership, effective school principals exhibit characteristics of both by maintaining short-term endeavours through transactional leadership and by inciting change as transformational leaders. However, the number of studies emphasize the importance of

transformational leadership for school principals (Fullan, 1991; Hord, 1992; Conley, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Targeting principals as transformational leaders, studies have focused on what effective principals do. Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) found that effective principals were proactive in nature and took steps to secure support for change efforts on behalf of their students. Sharing the same view, Stallings and Mohlman (1981) indicated that principals who were particularly effective in program implementation went out of their way to be helpful to teachers and staff; were constructive in the support they provided, and explained their reasons for suggesting changes. They shared new ideas, involved others and welcomed inputs.

Little (1981:97), for example, found that effective change facilitation occurred in schools that were administered by the principals who communicated particular expectations to teachers; modeled the norms they supported; sanctioned teachers who performed by using and allocating available resources; and protected teachers from outside interferences by acting as a “buffer”. From a four-year study of London schools, Mortimore and Sammons (1987:7) reported 12 key factors related to schools’ effectiveness. The first of these was the principal’s purposeful leadership of the staff, where the principal understood the needs of the school and was actively involved in the school’s work, without exerting total control over the staff. More recently, the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (1983) identified the primary determining factor of excellence in public schools as the collaborative leadership of the individual principal. The Task Force report further noted that on campuses where principals have leadership skills and are highly motivated, and involve other people in the school activities, the effects have been startling, regardless of the unique ethnic or socio-economic factors of the school community and the nature of the population the school serves.

Perhaps the most significant trend in the literature related to school leadership in recent years has been toward the development of collaborative cultures, based upon a philosophy of professional interdependence championed by Fullan and Hargreaves

(1991) in their popular work, *What's Worth Fighting For: Working Together for Your School*. Rosenholtz (1989:57) in this regard distinguished between “isolated cultures” and “collaborative cultures” in schools, and related this in part to the behaviour of principals. The author notes that principals in “isolated” schools tend to “draw in, making a circle around them, to avoid any circumstances that may call their performance into question”. The author explains further and adds: “Most principals of isolated schools, when confronted by teachers’ myriad classroom problems, appeared to use only one method to carry on their workday lives - total bland pretence that nothing is ever wrong”.

Principals in collaborative settings, on the other hand, decisively empower teachers to solve both school and classroom problems. As a result, notes Rosenholtz (1989:59), “teachers become aware of the importance of their input and feedback to principals”. Fullan (1997:46) in a similar vein builds upon these ideas in his discussion of strategies for success in the principalship, pointing out “principals can make even more long-lasting contributions by broadening the base of leadership of those with whom they work, such as teachers, parents and students”. Short and Greer (1997) develop the idea that *empowerment* is a critical key to effectiveness in schools, and emphasize the central role of the principal in bringing this quality to the forefront. Drawing upon the work of Elmore (1990:183), they suggest that the following components are necessary for the principals’ leadership in empowered schools:

- building trust throughout the organization;
- developing the communication necessary for people to feel empowered;
- risk-taking;
- problem-solving; and
- building commitment and support for change.

In conclusion, Fullan (1991) perceives the role of the principal, in models of the future, will be to encourage collaborative groupings of teachers, learners, and parents to play a

more central role in the leadership of the school. This, however, will require active participation of the principal to facilitate change.

3.12.4 Summation

The literature review conducted under the following headings: management versus leadership, the need for leaders and principals as school leaders often point to the kind of leadership needed to manage change in the education system. Principals who feel threatened about the envisaged changes in the education system have a hunger for power and still want control over everything. Consequently, that kind of leadership is perceived to be demonstrating autocratic behaviour.

For the education system to move in the envisaged direction, faith in centralized, hierarchical power arrangements has to be done away with completely in favour of decentralized, participatory ones. A major challenge facing principals in a decentralized governance of schools is the shift from being the sole authority to sharing authority with other stakeholders.

Following is the discussion on certain skills needed by principals to effectively promote collegiality in the school.

3.13 DECISION-MAKING SKILLS NEEDED BY PRINCIPALS

From the definition of participation in decision-making, which states, “jointly arriving at a decision” (Hoy and Sousa, 1984), it is logical that this process has some implications for principals who play a pivotal role in the process. At the same time it is required of principals to develop certain skills to enhance the quality of the process. Some of the skills principals are required to acquire are discussed in the next sections

3.13.1 Establishing shared decision-making structures

Organisational structures for shared decision-making are needed in schools. Such structures enable teachers to work with learners in teaching and advising, and also allow teachers to work jointly with others in planning and implementing instructional activities. Finally, these structures enable teachers and other stakeholders to work jointly with the principal in providing inputs to the decision-making process of the school.

The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), is a statutory body which ensures the participation of various stakeholders in governance of public schools. According to this Act, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body and the principal of the school has formal legal authority in terms of the management of the school. This implies that both the governing body and the principal are legally required to perform certain functions for which they are accountable (Beckman and Visser, 1999).

Some schools, however, have established certain structures such as advisory councils and curriculum committees to work with the principal in making school-wide decisions (Lipham, 1997). Generally, these structures have resulted not only in higher levels of staff involvement in decision-making, but also in greater staff satisfaction, motivation adaptiveness, and instructional effectiveness (Speed, 1979). Still so, simply establishing a structure does not make it effective, especially if the principal continues in making decisions unilaterally. Instead, a basic commitment of the principal and other stakeholders to a philosophy of shared decision-making is essential.

3.13.2 Setting priorities for action

Principals are frequently confronted with many problems and issues that they have to deal with effectively. Some issues and problems will be crucial while others will be trivial. Some will require immediate attention and others will need to be deferred; some will call for the principal's personal attention while others can be delegated. Principals

are therefore required to set decision-making priorities to handle problems in an effective way.

Skillful priority setting, however, involves much more than just simply reviewing a series of items to be solved and establishing a timeline for action. Priority setting needs the well thought-out use of information. Observational studies conducted in schools have shown that considerable time is often spent in defining issues and examining alternatives rather than clarifying the decisions reached and implementing them (Dunstan, 1995). Decisions made under circumstances where a valuable time has been wasted by hammering on one issue are seldom adequately clarified and communicated to others. Instead, meaningful agendas should be prepared and minutes of the previous meetings distributed, the decision made should be clearly communicated to others, and the plans for implementation and evaluation should be specified.

3.13.3 Using power effectively

Leaders can influence their followers and apply their authority effectively because an effective leader has powers of one kind or another. Without power, it is believed, a leader would not be able to influence his subordinates properly to voluntarily perform their duties in the productive attainment of the organisation's goals. Therefore, power is defined as "the ability of one person or a group of persons to influence the behaviours of others, that is, to change the probability that others will react to specific stimuli in a particular way" (Daft, 1994:478). Power has nothing to do with a manager's position in the hierarchy and is not acquired through title, unlike authority. It has to be earned by the leader.

Authority on the other hand entails having the right to perform certain actions according to specific guidelines, the right to say who must do what, the right to expect people to do their duty and to address failure or negligence (Bacharach and Lawler, 1981). Thus what it boils down to is the right to insist on action by subordinates and the right to act against subordinates. The right to expect others to act, however, is allocated not only to a

particular leader or manager by the organization, but also by the members of a group who feel that a person has the ability to act as a leader.

This is precisely why a person who has both authority and power, that is a manager with power, is far more effective than a manager who has only authority. Power is central to the leadership process. The leader will have different power bases, some of which are given, that is, legitimate power, some of which are a result of the leader's personal characteristics, that is, referent power. The subordinates' reaction to the different types of power can range from total commitment to mere compliance or even resistance.

The education paradigm calls on educational leaders to use their authority and power to develop the ability of others. In South Africa at present, the most constructive and effective use of power is when it is used to empower others. Policy and legislation in the "new South Africa" specifies that the major stakeholders should share power in school management and governance. The key to effective school leadership and management is using power effectively to ensure that everyone in the school is heard and is able to make a contribution. The approach encourages everyone to do their share.

The approach which encourages everyone to do their share is evident when:

- the school leaders believe in the school and are more committed to making it excellent;
- the school leaders have facilitated a process in which all members of the school community have developed a shared understanding of what they want for the school;
- people are involved in decision-making, so they know why decisions are made and feel motivated to put them into practice;
- the leadership of the school values educators and learners and makes their development a priority;
- people have a clear sense of what is expected of them; and

- the leaders are committed to leading with integrity. They try to do what they believe is right for the school and are prepared to make difficult decisions when these are needed, even if they are not popular decisions.

3.14 CONCLUSION

Chapter three focused on the concept of shared decision-making (SDM). Definition, premises, purpose and benefits of SDM were reviewed in this chapter. Furthermore, the components of SDM such as participation, accountability and information flow were also discussed. Under information flow, different types of communication were discussed. It is maintained that through downwards, upwards and horizontal communication management and employees can come to a common understanding about issues on hand through constant consultations and feedback. And in this way employees get the chance of making contributions.

Also in this chapter, The Hoy-Tarter model of shared decision-making was discussed. The model suggests conditions under which teachers should be involved in decision-making. Administrators who want to improve the quality and acceptance of decisions by involving teachers in decision-making, should take into account the expertise teachers bring to a question, their personal stake in the outcome and their acceptance of school goals. The model presented in this chapter guides administrators when to collaborate: teachers should be most involved when they have the most to contribute in skills, interest, and commitment; they should be least involved when they have no expertise to contribute and no interest in the outcome.

Furthermore, the importance of teams in an organisation was also discussed. Teams have several positive effects. First, the more people involved in making the decision, the more likely that decision will be implemented. Second, team members continually learn from one another's fresh ideas. Third, more and better information and actions come from a group of people with various resources and skills. Fourth, there is a better chance that mistakes will be caught and corrected. And finally, risk-taking is more likely because of the collective power of the group.

Also in this chapter, changes that came into being in the South African education system in the new dispensation were reviewed. The dawn of a "new South Africa" has seen a proliferation of legislation specifying the participation of stakeholders in the school

governance and management. This reform initiative is based on the assumption that participation of educators, learners and parents can enhance the achievement of the desired transformation. However, this, in turn, has presented principals long accustomed to authoritarian modes of management and having very little prior experience and theoretical grounding in the principles of participatory management, with a daunting task of converting this new legislation into reality.

It is this shift in school governance and management that has prompted an investigation into the question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?* Chapter Five of this research study will investigate this question and at the same time offer the findings. It is assumed that principals who operate in a democratic way, and have clear channels of communication and allow extensive participation of other people in decision-making processes, will invariably enjoy the support of their staff. Essential pre-requisites for effective decision-making are considered to be open and efficient communication, consultation and involvement.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The express purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical exposition of the whole research design, which deals with the manner in which the research will develop. Included in the discussion will be aspects like definitions, processes, value of research design, methodology as well as data analysis. Selection and justification of the research methods, general research question, measures to ensure validity and reliability of the results will also be discussed. According to Yin (1994:64) it is of critical importance that the research procedure, data collection, data analysis and the research protocol are clearly documented to strengthen internal validity of the results.

4.2 RESTATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question of the study is: *How do secondary school principals in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District (THMOED) of the Free State Province make decisions?* Out of this main research question, the following sub-questions were formulated and used during individual and group focus interviews:

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?*
2. *Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a management **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how you dealt with it?*
4. *What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?*
2. *Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how it was dealt with?*
4. *What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

4.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to extend the knowledge and widen the understanding of the leadership provided by secondary school leaders especially with regard to decision-making. Specifically, the study will attempt to provide answers to the following basic research question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?*

Essentially, the study aims at the following:

- to describe key issues and strategies of effective decision-making with view to produce conceptual framework
- to explore decision-making strategies in place at secondary schools in the THMOED
- to review participation of stakeholders within the school organizational structure
- to describe strategies for effective decision-making perceived by the respondents in secondary schools in the THMOED.
- to capture the views and opinions of the respondents regarding the way decisions are taken in their settings.

4.4 PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

The research will be conducted primarily in the Free State Province, more specifically in secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District (THMOED). The THMOED is the largest of the five education districts in the Free State Province with fourteen secondary schools, and as such is considered representative of the larger secondary school population. However the study will focus only on **two** secondary schools in view of the number of participants to be involved in the process and subsequent analysis of the results. Again, it is not the purpose of this study to generalize on the findings, as it is the case with quantitative methodologies, but to provide in detail all what goes on in a particular situation or institution. The next sections focus on how the sampling procedure in terms of secondary schools as well as participants will be conducted.

4.4.1 Criteria for schools sampling

It is impractical to study a whole population to arrive at generalizations: valid generalizations may be arrived at using a proportion of a sample. This gives rise to the process known as sampling (Borg, 1981:73). A sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis. In this study the researcher intends studying **two** secondary schools within the district, which will be selected according to the following criteria:

- (i) Principals should have served at such respective schools for a minimum of five years to ensure that they are least familiar with the school situations;
- (ii) Schools should have functioning governing bodies;
- (iii) Schools should have a learners' roll ranging between 100 and 300; and
- (iv) Schools should have been categorized as high performing (functional). It should have been a consistent outstanding performance over a period of four years based on Grade 12 (twelve) results. The Free State Education authorities will be approached to assist with such information.

The rationale behind such a selection is *purposive*. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned, a sample which serves the purpose of the research, namely to understand how decisions are made in functional schools. Patton (1990:169) argues, “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of study, in this case responses to the following basic research question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?*

It is assumed that effective schools are usually associated with effective management and governance. This assumption is supported by Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994:153) when they say: effective schools’ emphasis is laid on consultation, teamwork and participation of other stakeholders. A similar view is held by Boyer (1995) in Hart and Bredeson (1996:191) that: In schools where achievement was high...invariably the management and governance made the difference.

However, it does not always follow that leaders of effective schools consult, promote teamwork and involve others in decision-making. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to determine state of affairs in secondary schools in the THMOED of the Free State Province.

4.4.2 Criteria for participants sampling

The research problem involving an investigation into how decisions are taken within secondary schools requires participants such as the principals, teachers, learners and parents. Focusing on these key participants carries a common sense of justification. Participation of respondents would mainly be voluntarily in this study. However, there may be good reasons for the researcher to be selective or purposeful in his sampling as is the case in this study.

Selection of staff members (ordinary teachers) would be based on their availability and willingness to become involved. However, the researcher would involve those teachers at post level one and who are not members of the school management team. The researcher believes that their views may not be biased and they will provide unique information. With regard to learners, the researcher will target members of the Learners' Representative Council (LRC). The researcher believes that this body represents the large learners' population in a school governing body and each will provide a unique perspective. Written consent from parents will be sought and obtained before underage learners are invited to participate. As far as parents are concerned, the researcher will target members of the school governing body. The researcher assumes that each had, over time, become knowledgeable about the school and would provide a unique perspective. Principals will obviously be involved on account of their schools being selected.

The researcher purposefully selects particular respondents from whom informed, quality, and reasonably valid findings can be expected. Those who expressed interest in participating in the research will be provided with more information about the purpose of study, instructions, and the procedures that will be followed.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.5.1 Qualitative research methodology

4.5.1.1 Definition

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) qualitative research could be defined as “a multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter”. This means that qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Patton (1985:1) expresses similar sentiments and states “Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting – what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what

is like in that particular setting – and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting...The analysis strives for depth of understanding”.

It may therefore be concluded thus, research is “qualitative” if it lays emphasis on *understanding, process* and *meanings*. In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts, qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole. It is assumed that meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator’s own perceptions. However, there is a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions surrounding the concept qualitative research.

4.5.1.2 Aims

The following aims of qualitative research, according to Sherman and Webb (1988:34-35) are distinguishable:

(a) Clarity

By their very nature and approach, qualitative research methods provide the researcher with a deep understanding of the situation from the participants’ perspectives, not the researcher’s. This is sometimes referred to as insider’s perspective, versus the outsider’s view. Deep understanding is quite possible because the method suggests focus within the field or situation, which is basically the quality that enables the deepening of thought. An unanalysed phenomenon is analysed and interpreted contextually.

(b) Context

Context has to do with the building up, enriching, and synthesizing of the perceived situation. The situation, therefore, provides the necessary yardstick against which new phenomena are re-interpreted. In this process, new meanings, insights and values are gathered. Qualitative researchers argue that events that are interpreted in a vacuum are never better understood.

(c) **Consciousness**

In qualitative research the researcher is afforded the opportunity to grasp and become aware of the tensions created by problematic situations and the necessity for choice. Consciousness is mainly rooted in context and intent on an object. Again, it also enlivens the sense of possibility and enables the movement from habit to reflective thought. However, clarity, context, and consciousness must be understood to function together in actual thinking. To put this statement in proper perspective, clarity, context and consciousness, as aims of qualitative research can, for example, be obtained by gaining new perspectives on this research question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?* In fact different opinions will come to the fore from various participants, and how they view the process of decision-making within their schools.

4.5.1.3 Nature and purpose of qualitative research

Qualitative research methodology is designed to give real and stimulating meaning to the phenomenon by involving the researcher directly or indirectly in the process. According to Borg (1981), numbers do not represent qualitative research; rather, it is focused on meaning and the involvement of the researcher in the process. The research is usually conducted in a natural setting and premised upon the uniqueness of the individual and his or her environment. According to Sherman and Webb (1988:7) qualitative research implies a direct concern with experience as it is “lived” or “felt” or “undergone”. Borg (1981:194) shares the same sentiments by stating that “the purpose of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals and events in their natural state, taking into account the relevant context”. Borg (1981:195) further explains that by its very nature, qualitative research is a field of enquiry in its own right and it crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter. It is contextual, flexible and dynamic. It is perspective-seeking in that it takes into account participants and their particular contexts. In other words it is situationally determined.

However, an important characteristic of this type of research to note is therefore not possibly to generalize results to apply to large populations, but it is an in-depth study of smaller cases. Schurink (1990:103) supports this by saying that when the emphasis in research is on the unique, qualitative and non-repetitive aspects, the contextual aspects are the most significant elements and we are dealing with qualitative research.

In this study it has been decided to follow the descriptive research design, as an example of qualitative research, as it has been found suitable to the nature of the general research question, namely:

How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?

4.5.1.4 Method selection and justification

The result of any research effort is essentially a function of the research method used. Selecting a suitable research method is not an arbitrary process. The choice of research method is partly dictated by the nature of the research problem, problems of access and the availability of data (McNeill, 1991:123).

The choice of which techniques to use, which research practices to employ, is not set in advance. The questions asked and the contexts determine the method to be employed. The types of questions to which answers are sought predetermine to a large extent the most applicable type of strategy that ought to be followed. Some researchers, for instance have a preference for what is referred to as “hard” and quantifiable data produced by quantitative studies, such as various forms of official statistics (Gilbert, 1993:25). However, if the researcher intends to obtain answers aimed at providing insight and knowledge that is exploratory and descriptive, answers that give an in-depth, holistic description of a particular phenomenon, then the researcher may well prefer qualitative research methodology (Myburgh and Poggenpoel, 1995:5).

In this research study, qualitative research methodology has been found desirable and suitable on the ground that the researcher sets out to address the question: *How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?* The views, feelings, experiences and perceptions among participants cannot be adequately captured following quantitative research techniques.

In view of the fact, the researcher will be focusing on **two** secondary schools, a *collective case study* approach, as example of qualitative research will be employed. Collective case studies involve collecting and analyzing data from several cases and can be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits embedded within. However, a case study is a useful methodology when holistic, in-depth investigation of a phenomenon is needed (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991:45). The inclusion of multiple cases in this study is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity of the results (Miles and Huberman, 1984:29). However, it has been stated above that the results obtained by way of a qualitative research may not necessarily be generalized to a larger population.

4.5.1.5 Points of departure

In essence, qualitative research proceeds from the premise that the particular physical, historical, material and social environment in which people find themselves has a great impact on what they think and how they act. It is based on the notion of context-sensitivity because it studies qualities or entities and seeks to understand them in a particular context (Muller, 1993). Qualitative researchers contend that human acts are context-sensitive and reject the view of universal, context-free generalizations.

Again, this theory propagates that no research method can produce “absolute truth”. What research can produce is a particular perspective on a phenomenon, which should help people understand that particular phenomenon better and further assist in developing new insights. In other words, people’s perceptions, feelings and attitudes are essential towards a better understanding of the phenomenon.

According to Creswell (1994:162-163) the following are the distinctive characteristics and assumptions of qualitative research:

- The focus is on the currently observed phenomenon, but the findings are contextualised within a social, cultural and historical framework.
- The research is carried out within a theoretical framework. Although there may be a few questions guiding the study, further questions may arise during the course of the study.
- It involves close, detailed intensive work. The researcher participates in the social situation he or she studying.
- The main research tool is the researcher himself who endeavours to obtain a participant perspective of the social situation.
- Unstructured interviews in the form of comprehensive discussions can supplement the observation.
- Personal documents can lend depth and background to the report.
- Different research methods can be used to supplement the field research. The researcher consequently integrates different methods.
- Decisions regarding the collection and analysis of the data take place in the field and are the products of the research. In other words, data that emerge from qualitative research are descriptive. This means that data are reported in words rather than numbers.
- The researcher endeavours to cause as little disturbances as possible to the process of social life. Appointments with the relevant participants will be secured in time.

- Research results analyse the knowledge provided by the informants without tampering with such knowledge. Ethical issues relating to the researcher and the respondent are taken into account and respected.

The researcher has decided to adopt the format as offered by Cresswell (1994:162-163) due to the fact that it is realistic, thoughtful, exploratory and highly practical. Erickson (1990:81-85) contends, “Qualitative research focuses on content rather than procedure”. Its object is to *action*, not behaviour. He further explains that interpretative fieldwork involves being unusually thorough and reflective in noticing and describing every event in the field setting and in attempting to identify the significance of actions and events from various perspectives of the participants themselves.

4.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Taylor (2000:80) research designs are constructed plans and strategies developed to seek, explore, and discover answers to research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:14) suggest a similar definition, which they describe as “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical materials”. Research design, it can be argued, is the manner in which the entire process is planned and managed until its final stage of report writing. It is an arrangement of procedures and methods of research project that includes sampling, data collection and analysis and interpretation of the results. In conclusion, it could be argued, therefore, that a research design provides guidelines and structures to the research process in order to prevent haphazard procedures.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION

The methods that will be used to gather information in this study will be concerned with seeking participants’ written and verbal information in relation to the way problems are solved and decisions are taken in their schools. Therefore, the strategies to be used will produce mainly descriptive data based on insights rather than statistical data where

hypothesis testing is involved (Bell, 1992:4). Two types of strategies that will be used to provide the database for this study include the following:

- a questionnaire: to elicit background information on the participants and their settings
- Interviews: individual and focus groups

4.7.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a pen-and-paper instrument on which the respondents provide information about themselves or a specific issue with which they are familiar. According to Borg (1984:84), there are no characteristics that invariably differentiate between a pen-and-paper instrument and a questionnaire. Whether conceived to be filled in by a respondent directly or by an interviewer, a questionnaire remains a complex instrument for the collection of information. The design of the questionnaire is critical to ensure that the correct research questions are addressed and that accurate and appropriate data for analysis are collected. According to Wegner (1993:180), a questionnaire design requires that attention be paid to the following:

- (i) the type of questions to be included;
- (ii) the order of questions, and
- (iii) the structure and wording of questions.

In this study a questionnaire will mainly be used to gather baseline information about the secondary schools under investigation. The researcher believes that the background information about the secondary schools is necessary and may be used to strengthen the internal validity of the research study. It seems reasonable to assume that the targeted principals would have the necessary information since they are responsible for the day-to-day running of their institution.

The researcher will personally administer the questionnaire at the selected secondary schools. The questions to be used in the questionnaire will include both closed and open-ended questions. The closed type of questions permits only certain responses whereas the

open-ended type of questions allows the respondent to air his views as he sees necessary (Borg, 1981:184). The responses to certain open-ended questions will be audiotaped with the permission of the respondents.

4.7.2 Interviews

Data will also be gathered by way of individual and group interviews, and the discussion of each follows in next the section.

4.7.2.1 Individual interviews

Lovell and Lawson (1970:170), divide interviews into two types, namely, the standardised and non-standardised interview. In the standardised interview, the procedure to be followed is determined in advance. The non-standardised interview, on the other hand, uses a flexible technique. The series of questions to be asked and the procedure to be followed may be decided upon in advance, but the interviewer is allowed to deviate from this if the situation demands it. This research study compels the researcher to use the latter strategy. The semi-structured interviews will be used in this regard. The interviews will involve the principals, staff members, parents and learners of the two selected secondary schools. The most important advantage of interviews is that, data is gathered systematically and that the researcher is assured that no data is omitted (Schurink, 1990:139).

A distinction can also be made between individual and group interviews. Individual interviews are a popular method for data gathering, especially if a researcher intends to obtain answers aimed at providing knowledge that is exploratory, answers that give in-depth and holistic descriptions.

Manga (1996:42) identifies the following advantages for using this method:

- (i) interviews allow the researcher to enter another person's world and in this way gain an in-depth understanding of the person's perspective

- (ii) interviews allow the researcher to get close to the data and get first-hand information about the social world, thus enabling the researcher to understand the definitions, concepts and meanings that respondents attribute to their social world
- (iii) interviews are the appropriate choice of method when the evidence sought does not exist as hard data and is not observable, e.g. perceptions, values or attitudes
- (iv) it is a method which is consistent with those theories that value human responses as an actuality.

Two of the limitations of the interview method identified by Borg (1981:87) are:

- (i) the adaptability gained by interpersonal situations may lead to subjectivity;
and
- (ii) the interactions between the interviewer and interviewee may be biased by various factors.

With reference to the construction of the questions for the interview schedule and subsequent interview, the following guidelines, as offered by Bless and Higson-Smit (1995:110), will be used as *criteria* to direct this study:

- (i) *To what extent are respondents prepared to co-operate and what are the constraints (lack of time, fatigue, other priorities, etc.) that may affect co-operation?*

The interviews will be conducted during school hours on different days suggested by the interviewees. The duration of the interview process will vary from place to place depending on factors such as time and work commitments. However, they will range from twenty five to thirty minutes in case of individual interview and from thirty to one hour in focus group. All interviews will be audiotaped with the permission of the respondents. This will enable the researcher to record the actual spoken words of the respondents. It is these audiotaped interviews that will be transcribed verbatim and the analysis done in order to determine themes, categories and sub-categories.

- (ii) *To what extent might a question influence the respondents to show themselves in a good light, to answer so as to please the researcher, or distort reality in other ways?*

The researcher will follow the guidelines offered by Baily (1987:186), particularly the need for making the respondent feel at ease to say anything she or he wants without being pressurised.

- (iii) *To what extent do the questions ask for information that the respondents do not have, do not understand properly, or are not sure of, so that they will try to guess answers?*

Through the use of interview, interviewer is able to elaborate on issues and questions and to clarify the meaning of statements, answers or questions that may not be clear to the interviewee as they engage in the dialogue.

4.7.2.2 Focus Group interviews

Focus groups occupy a middle ground in qualitative studies between two other long time tools of research: participant observation and in depth interviews (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups have, for some time, been considered as group interviews, often utilizing a semi-structured approach to questioning and relying on the responses themselves to move the interview or conversation along (Rezabek, 1999). This opens up pathways to new topics during the discussion, where the researcher is free to probe and explore some of the responses made by the participant(s).

In general, focus groups are usually used in one of three ways. Morgan (1997:2) states that:

First, they are used as a *self contained* method in studies in which they serve as the principal source of data. Second, they are used as a *supplementary* source of data in studies that rely on some other primary method such as a survey. Third, they are used in *multimethod* studies that combine two or more means of gathering data in which no one primary method determines the use of the others.

In this research, the focus group is one of a multimethod technique where the focus group results will contribute to a questionnaire developed and used, as well as interview questions that will be used. In this way, the focus group will not stand alone, but will contribute substantial data that contributed to the other techniques to be used in this study.

The interviews, both individual and focus group types, will be semi-structured and the participants will be asked to respond to four questions for both individual and focus group interviews. **Table 4.1** below provides details regarding individuals and Focus Group interviews.

TABLE 4.1: INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS:

TYPE	CATEGORY	NUMBER PER SCHOOL
Individuals	Principals	1
Focus Group	Educators	3
	Learners	3
	Parents	2
		TOTAL: 9

(a) Definition of a Focus Group

According to Krueger (1994:6), a Focus Group is “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment”. It can also be typified as “a special type of group in terms of purpose, size, composition and procedures”. In deciding on the appropriateness of the selected method, the researcher had to take into account the following factors:

- *Sensitive* topics are difficult to investigate with single questions. Therefore, in-depth interviewing as it happens in Focus Group would produce more valid information. Such interviews, according to Lee and Renzetti (1993:103), provide a means of

getting beyond the surface appearances and permit greater sensitivity to the meaning of contexts surrounding informants' utterances.

- Krueger (1994:7) argues that Focus Groups create a permissive environment that nurtures different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants to vote or reach consensus. Therefore a Focus Group is a non-threatening, non-directive and open-ended method of research, which allows individuals to respond without setting boundaries or providing clues for potential responses categories.
- Standardised interviews, according to Lee and Renzetti (1993:108), do not strengthen disclosure but preclude it with their closed questions and rigid perceptions of topics.
- The intent of Focus Group, according to Krueger (1994:87) is not to infer but to understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, not to make statements about the population but to provide insights about how people perceive a situation.

(b) Characteristic features of a Focus Group

According to Krueger (1994:79), the following constitutes characteristic features of a Focus Group:

- A Focus Group has to provide insights into attitudes, feelings, perceptions and options in a natural setting.
- It may consist of four to twelve participants. However, a mini-focus group consisting of 4 – 5 participants is ideal because of its distinctive advantages in terms of logistics, such as easier to arrange and to facilitate.
- A focus group possesses certain homogeneous features such as affiliation or educational level. The fact that the focus group members may have similar demographic characteristics helps researchers focus on the responses, with a high degree of confidence that the responses from these individuals are crucial.

- A focus group normally assembles in a series until “theoretical saturation” is reached. This concept refers to a situation where “little or no more new information emerges from the discussions”, (Krueger, 1994:18 and 88).
- Seaman and Verhonick (1982:219) assert that a focus group is suitable when it is not possible or desirable to observe directly. It is partially structured by a schedule of questions and topics that the interviewer wishes to cover but focus group is free to deviate, as long all aspects will be covered.

In conclusion, the researcher decided on the focus group as a method of investigation for the following reasons (Edmunds, 1999:23):

- Focus Group research has a potential to reach a broader geographical scope. This study involves teachers, parents, and learners, and can be easily handled by way of a focus group research.
- Focus Group provides a convenient and a comfortable way of participating. As mentioned above, Focus Group is a non-threatening, non-directive and open-ended method of research, which allows individuals to respond without setting boundaries or providing clues for potential responses categories.
- Individuals are brought together to discuss common or similar experiences in order to better understand the phenomenon. All of the participants have a common experience which becomes the focus of the study. In this study it is presumed that the participants have a common understanding on how decisions are carried out in their schools.

Based on the criteria used to select the participants (4.4.2 above) it is believed that the participants have the necessary information to share with the researcher on how decisions are carried out in their settings. In this study, teachers, learners and parents will be interviewed separately, but in a group form (see table 4.1 above).

4.7.3 Observations

Observation is another major means of collecting data in qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman (1995:79) define *observation* as “the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for the study”. It offers a first hand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. Nevertheless, no one can observe everything, and the researcher must start somewhere.

In this study, the researcher will be guided by the following checklist likely to be present in an observation (Merriam, 1998:97-98):

- *The physical setting*: What is the physical environment like? What is the context? What kinds of behaviour does the setting promote or prevent?
- *The participants*: Describe who is in the scene, how many people, and their roles. What brings these people together? Who is allowed here?
- *Activities and interactions*: What is going on? Is there a definable sequence of activities? How do the people interact with the activity and with one another? How are people and activities connected?
- *Conversation*: What is the content of conversations in the setting? Who speaks to whom? Who listens?
- *Subtle factors*: Less obvious but perhaps as significant to the observation are: informal and unplanned activities, symbolic and connotative meaning of words, non-verbal communication such as dress and physical space, what does not happen – especially if it ought to have happened.

These are some of the things that will be taken into consideration in this research.

According to Merriam (1998:98) the process of collecting data through observations can be categorized into the three stages: *gaining-entry*, *data collection* and *exist*. Gaining-entry would be accomplished through a mutual contact with the Director or School

Management Developers (SMD's) within the THMOED, who will invariably recommend the researcher to the "gatekeepers" involved. Once the entry has been gained, the researcher would observe the following guidelines as offered by Taylor and Bogdan (1984:67):

- be relatively passive and unobtrusive, put people at ease, learn how to act and dress in the setting;
- keep the first observations fairly short to avoid becoming overwhelmed with novelty of the situation;
- collecting data is secondary to becoming familiar with the setting;
- be honest but not overly technical or detailed in explaining what is going on to the people;
- Finally, establish rapport by fitting into the participants' routines, finding some common ground with them, helping out on occasion, being friendly, and showing interest in the activity.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) also recommend that once the researcher has become familiar with the setting and identified what is there to observe, serious data collection can begin. Again, leaving the site, however, may be even more difficult than gaining entry (Merriam, 1988:100). Taylor and Bogdan (1984:67) elaborate on that by stating that exiting the site may mean "breaking attachments and sometimes even offending those one has studied, leaving them feeling betrayed and used". Taylor and Bogdan (1984:68) recommend easing out or drifting off – that is, "gradually cutting down on the frequency of visits and letting people know that the research is coming to an end". Of course, the researcher will convene the meeting to thank all the participants for their co-operation in the named research project.

4.7.4 Documents

Commonly, when documents are included in a study, what is being referred to are public records, personal documents and physical material already present in the research setting (Merriam, 1998:112). Glaser and Strauss (1967:179) point to the usefulness of documents for theory building – a process that "begs for comparative analysis". Documents of all

types can help the researcher to uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights. However, some ingenuity is needed in locating documents that bear on the problem, because they are produced for reasons other than the study at hand. According to Merriam (1998:125), congruence between documents and the research problem depends on the researcher's flexibility in construing the problem and the related questions. This research will strive for that.

4.8 REDUCING BIAS BY DISCIPLINED SUBJECTIVITY

Patton (1990:54) claims that the qualitative approach has been charged with being subjective in large parts because the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; therefore, it may become impossible to preclude the issue of "bias". The SA Oxford School Dictionary (Hawkins, 1996) describes "bias" as "a feeling or influence for or against someone or something; a prejudice". In other words, a researcher imposes his or her own preconceptions and personal preferences to the study.

According to Manga (1996:50), bias can muddle the whole research process and, thereby, precipitate research results. The sources of "bias" may include, inter alia (Manga, 1996:50):

- the attitudes and opinions of the interviewer;
- a tendency of the interviewer to see the respondent in his or her own image;
- a tendency of the interviewer to seek answers that support his or her preconceived notions;
- misunderstanding by the respondent of what is being asked;
- misinterpretation by the interviewer of what the interviewee is saying.

However, as Magagula (1996:7) explains, the researcher in the qualitative approach cannot be detached from the object of investigation because both the researcher and the object of investigation interact to influence one another. Neuman (1997:69) supports this explanation and argues that in order to know and understand a particular social setting

and seeing it from the point of view of those in it, the researcher should not be detached, but be part of the whole situation.

Arguing against the issue of subjectivity as a result of the researcher interacting with the subjects under investigation, Patton (1990:57), questions the validity of the essence of subjectivity in the use of questionnaires, interview schedules by pointing out that these instruments are designed by human beings and are subject to the intrusion of the researcher's biases. In their effort to clarify the observer effect, Mckerrow and Mckerrow (1991:17) quote the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, which is understood to mean essentially that observers by their very presence always change what is being observed. In essence, the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle claims that whatever method used, there will always be some interference since human beings are always involved. Patton (1990:57) believes that the only way to establish credibility is that the researcher should be committed to understand the world as it is, to be true to the complexities and multiple perspectives as they surface.

Following the foregoing discussion, the researcher recognizes that it is impossible to eliminate bias completely in the research process. In this study, however, the following precautionary measures will be undertaken to deal with "bias":

- Research questions will be formulated clearly and be presented to the respondents in written form to avoid ambiguity;
- Individual and focus group interviews will be audiotaped to capture all spoken words, with the permission of participants;
- Audiotaped interviews will be transcribed verbatim and be cross-checked with the participants and the promoter;
- Audiotapes will be kept in a safe place for a period deemed necessary for reference.

The study of this scope uncovers many findings, some of which are anomalous and unhelpful; while others provide the basis for school improvement initiatives, further planning or additional research. However, as a researcher I assume the following:

- that this study will generate academic debate on how can effective decision-making strategies be implemented in secondary schools to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders;
- this study will create opportunities for principals to review their decision-making strategies with the believe that other role players should participate in decision-making and that better decisions could be made as a result of their participation;
- principals who typically work in isolation from other stakeholders in the “egg-crate organization of schools” will devise new strategies based on accountability, communication rather than hierarchical authority;
- that this study will encourage for the creation of necessary climate, structures and support mechanisms for engendering genuine participation and involvement in secondary schools.

4.9 PILOTING THE STUDY

After the data-gathering instruments have been designed and compiled then they will be piloted. Piloting exercise will be conducted in any other secondary school categorized as second better performing within the THMOED of the Free State Province. The purpose of piloting exercise will be to determine the credibility of the questions, their relevance, the level of difficulty of the questions, the time it would approximately take to conduct each interview and to determine any ambiguity in the questions.

The piloting excise will be conducted as follows:

The questionnaire primarily meant to gather base line information about the secondary schools including the individual interviews will be piloted with the principal. Focus Group interviews will be administered on two post level one teachers, two learners (members of LRC) and two parents. All the interviews will be audio-taped, however, with the permission of the participants.

Following the piloting exercise, necessary changes will be effected then submitted to the promoter for perusal and approval thereof. The approved questions will then be used in the actual research study.

Similarly, Borg (1981:85) offers the following guidelines for critically evaluating the design of interview questions, after they have been used:

(i) *Were the questions checked out before the actual qualitative process?*

In this study, the researcher will evaluate the questionnaire with the principals, members of staff and governing body as well as learners of any other secondary school within the THMOED. Checking out the questionnaire will help identify questions that might have to be reviewed;

(ii) *Did the interview schedule include any leading questions?*

According to Bless and Higson-Smit (1995:117), leading questions may start with “Don’t you agree that...” or end with ‘... is it not so’?. The researcher will deliberately avoid such questions, as they may influence the respondents;

(iii) *Were the respondents who participated in the research likely to have the information required?*

It seems reasonable to assume that the targeted members will have the necessary information since some of them are serving in the governance structure of schools.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Cresswell (1994:165), a researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the respondents. This is so because sensitive information will frequently be revealed and chances are that the respondents' position or his/her institution could be easily recognised.

Manga (1996:38) advises that a researcher should give a great deal of attention to the following measures regarding ethical acceptability:

- (i) conduct the research with respect and concern for the dignity and welfare of the informants;
- (ii) respect the individual's rights to decline to participate;
- (iii) ensure that the purpose and activities of the research are clearly explained to the participants;
- (iv) ensure that promises and commitments are honoured;
- (v) safeguard participants' identities by assuring anonymity and confidentiality;
- (vi) establish clear and fair agreements with regard to the participants' obligations and responsibilities.

In an attempt to adhere to these guidelines, the following measures will be taken to ensure anonymity and consent in this study:

4.10.1 Informed consent

Where all participants are informed about the research study in a way that is clear and understandable to them, the process is referred to as "informed consent" (Erlandson et al., 1993:155). According to Technikon SA (1998:26), before respondents even agree to participate in the research study or a project they must be furnished with full information on:

- (i) the aims and objectives of the research study or project
- (ii) method of research, that is, the procedure that will be followed.

In this research study the researcher will ensure that the aforementioned issues are adhered to by:

- (i) making a written application to conduct the research study at selected secondary schools within the THMOED in the Free State Province to the Director of the District.
- (ii) visiting the identified secondary schools and introducing himself to the participants. The purpose of the visit as well as the significance of the research study will be clearly explained to the participants. The participants will also be afforded an opportunity to ask questions.
- (iii) The letter written by the Director of the THMOED granting permission to conduct the research as well as the letter written by the supervisor attesting that the researcher is a registered student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and is involved in the named research study will be made available to the participants.
- (iv) Participants will also be informed about the need for the proceedings to be recorded. Consensus has to be reached to proceed. A partnership relationship is created between the researcher and the respondents once they have agreed for the proceedings to be recorded. In order to bring this about, consensus should be reached between the needs of the researcher and the respondents.
- (v) The respondents will also be guaranteed anonymity. In other words the researcher will explain the data collection methods and devices instead of using them sneakily. The devices would be made available for their scrutiny. To ensure anonymity all recorded proceedings will be transcribed verbatim and will be saved on a computer diskette using a password known only to the researcher. Nobody will have access to the stored information without the researcher's consent. Audiotapes will be safely kept for a period deemed necessary after

publication of the results to enable anyone interested in verification to do so. However, this will be in consultation with the promoter or external examiner.

4.10.2 Termination

Respondents have the right to withdraw from further participation in a research project if they so wish. In this research study, participants will be made aware of their right to withdraw if they so wish. The established agreement should not place participants under the obligation to continue participating in the project if they are no longer interested. To ensure continued participation, the researcher will try to adhere to the agreed plan of action.

4.10.3 Privacy

All participants in any kind of research should have the right to have some sensitive data collected through the research process to be confidential. The researcher should assure the participants that sensitive data will be held in the strictest confidence in order to protect their anonymity.

In this study the researcher will ensure this by using secret codes for all questionnaires and interview transcripts, and the names of the participants will be concealed. Even the promoter will not know the names of the institutions. The researcher will use false names to protect the anonymity of the institutions and the participants.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Patton (1990:376), “The first decision to be made in analyzing interviews is whether to begin with case analysis or cross-case analysis.” In this study, data analysis will be approached by treating each case as comprehensively as possibly on its own; and then cross-case analysis will follow. Instead of studying one good high school, Lightfoot (1983) studied six. Her findings are presented first as six individual case studies (or “portraits” as she calls them); she then offers a cross-case analysis leading to generalizations about what constitutes a good high school. The cross-case analysis of the

conducted interviews will be approached by using the constant comparison method “to group answers . . . to common questions and analyze different perspectives on central issues” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:338).

Glaser and Strauss (as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985:339), describe the constant comparison method as following four distinct stages:

- (i) comparing incidents applicable to each category;
- (ii) integrating categories and their properties;
- (iii) delimiting the theory, and
- (iv) writing the theory.

Data analysis in this study will follow these guidelines closely. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1981:58) the comparison method “combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed”. As social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories. Thus, relationship discovery begins with the analysis of initial observations. This process undergoes continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, continuously feeding back into the process of category coding. “As events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered” (Goetz and LeCompte, 1981:58). The process of constant comparison “stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:341).

In conclusion, Bogdan and Biklen (1992:154) advise that there are really two stages of data analysis: the first stage of analysis occurs as data are being collected, and second stage after data collection has been completed. Data analysis in this study will occur in the stages described by Bogdan and Biklen, especially in view of the number of participants in each of the two school sites. Merriam (1998:124) contends that the researcher who fails to recognize the importance of the first stage of analysis that occurs during data collection, runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed.

4.12 STANDARDS OF RIGOUR

In addressing the question of rigour in qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) put forth the contention that:

The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation; but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigour, breath, and depth to any investigation.

The criteria for establishing trustworthiness of the research conducted within the qualitative paradigm, are different than those applied to research undertaken within the other paradigms. Terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:14). The following discussion of the strategies that will be adopted to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this research is included so that the reader may assess the rigour that will be applied throughout the conduct of this research.

The researcher will deal with each of the essential elements of trustworthiness as follows:

4.12.1 Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe credibility as being parallel to internal validity. In order to enhance the credibility of the research, triangulation and member checks will be employed in this study:

4.12.1.1 Triangulation

The researcher will attempt to provide triangulation in the following four ways:

- Multiple data sources and data collection strategies will be used. The data collected through questionnaires, interviews, field observations, and school

documents will allow for triangulation by providing a variety of perspectives on the case.

- By including several respondents from three different referent groups within each school site, a diversity of perceptions, of constructed realities of each case, will be incorporated.
- By collecting data over a period of four months there will be multiple opportunities for triangulation in each case. Data collected over this time period reflect the complexities of the case that would not likely have been perceptible if the data had been collected over a shorter period of time.
- At regular meetings with my promoter, during data collection, analysis, and writing of the case study reports, patterns of meaning, interpretations, and assertions will be presented and debated in a manner described by Stake (1995:113) as investigator triangulation (i.e., where alternative interpretations are discussed with other researchers). In other words an interaction with another researcher will be helpful in preparing the draft.

These attempts to provide for triangulation will be undertaken in order “to increase credence in the interpretation, to demonstrate commonalty of an assertion (Stake, 1995:112).

4.12.1.2 Member checking

Member checking provides for credibility by allowing members of stakeholding groups to test analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:314) this technique is the most important in establishing credibility. It is in this step that the members of the setting being studied have a chance to indicate whether the reconstructions of the researcher are recognizable.

Member checks will be conducted as follows during the conduct of this study:

- Typewritten transcriptions from all tape-recorded interviews will be returned to respondents for editing and approval before analysed as data. Respondents will be asked to note questions or topics for further discussion. The questions respondents constructed based on the initial interview will provide the framework for the subsequent interview.
- Draft versions of the case study reports will be returned to all respondents for editing and approval before analytic themes are constructed. Respondents will be asked to make specific comments on how accurately the case study reports reflected their perceptions of the case. The feedback from this member check will confirm that the case study reports reflected respondents' experiences and perceptions.

However, there are dangers that exist in the member-checking process. One of the dangers is that, member checks can be misleading if all the members share some common myth or conspire to mislead. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), if an investigator is taken in, it is an easy next step for the member checks to verify the validity of what has been "found". The researcher will be on the guard.

When coming to the analysis of data, the tape-recorded and typewritten transcriptions of the interviews will be given to the promoter who will invariably check for the recurrent themes / categories. The idea is to try to eliminate the researcher's biasness as much as possible and increase credence to the study. Before the promoter can start with data analysis, both parties (the researcher and promoter) would have to agree on a "protocol" as well as the method of data analysis that should be used.

After analysis the promoter and the researcher will meet and conduct a consensus analysis. This will ensure that points, where necessary, are clarified and cross-checked to enhance credibility of the study.

4.12.2 Transferability

Transferability is described as being parallel to external validity. Transferability is relative and depends entirely on the degree to which salient conditions overlap or match. This is mostly verified through “thick” description. According to (Erlandson et al., 1993:33) “effective thick description brings the reader vicariously into the context being described”. Before the study is finalized, research results will be put through a “consensus stage” where the researcher and the promoter will critically assess and comment on the results and the format of reporting. The record of these meetings will be kept. It shall be remembered that the possibility to generalize in qualitative research is irrelevant because the context of the research is naturalistic and non-repeatable.

4.12.3 Dependability and confirmability

In order to enhance dependability and confirmability, an on-going audit will be conducted as part of the study. As part of the on-going audit, during the data collection, analysis and writing stages of the study, the researcher will meet regularly with the promoter to review decision made and questions that had arisen. A record of these meetings will be kept. The audit trail, “the residue of records stemming from the inquiry” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:319) for this study, will include the records of activities, decisions, and concerns which occurred during all the phases of the study. This information will be assembled such that it allows for other audits.

The audit trail, along with extensive member checks, inputs from the promoter undertaken throughout the data collection, data analysis, and writing stages of the study, are important techniques to enhance dependability and confirmability of the study.

4.13 REPORTING RESEARCH FINDINGS

Patton (1990:387), on writing about the findings of the qualitative case study states that: “should take the reader into the case situation, a person’s life, a group’s life, or a program’s life”. Detailed description of particulars is needed so that the reader can vicariously experience the setting of the study, the author claimed.

In this study, the findings will be presented in a descriptive-narrative format. Where applicable, the respondents' actual opinions and feelings will be reported *verbatim* as a way to strengthen the report. The literature survey conducted in both chapters two and three will also be incorporated into the report. Where some of the findings are not confirmed by the literature survey, it shall be interpreted that they are another contribution to the broader scientific body of knowledge.

4.14 CONCLUSION

As has been observed, qualitative research methodology is predominantly descriptive and exploratory and it is not so much concerned with the explanation of human behaviour, but rather understanding the meanings underlying human actions.

The researcher believes that, despite its limitations, the qualitative research method is relevant to the phenomenon under investigation that is “how do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions? The feelings, perceptions, concerns, expectations and suggestions of the participants cannot be adequately explored if a quantitative research technique is employed. However, the researcher undertakes to adhere to the procedures as outlined in the chapter and assumes that the results so achieved will make a contribution towards the practice of effective decision-making processes in educational institutions. In Chapter Five the findings of the research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 ORIENTATION

Chapter Four outlined the entire research design and the manner in which the study was conducted. The purpose of Chapter Five is to present, analyse and interpret the findings of the research work. The findings are given in the following way: First, an overview of the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District (THMOED), that is the district in which the secondary schools are located will be given, followed by a detailed explanation of the culture of teaching and learning in each school. The secondary schools are explained in terms of their locations, learners' and staff information, facilities, syllabus and curriculum, governance and financing.

Second, this chapter endeavours to respond to this research question: "*How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?*" To address this problem adequately, four semi-structured interview questions were formulated and presented to the principals during individual interviews and another set of four questions were presented to the focus groups consisting of teachers, learners and parents.

The participants were asked the following questions structured in the form of interview schedules:

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?*
2. *Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a management **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how you dealt with it?*
4. *What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?*
2. *Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how it was dealt with?*
4. *What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

The thrust of this section will be the presentation of the results gathered by way of individual and focus groups interviews. The results will be presented and discussed as factually and as objectively as possible and where applicable, the respondents' actual responses will be reported verbatim. Possible themes and categories that emerged from the interviews will be summarised in the form of a table, and each will be discussed on its own. The literature survey reported in Chapters Two and Three will be referred to

immediately after each theme or category to establish whether or not other studies found these themes and categories as equally important.

5.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THABO MOFUTSANYANA EDUCATION DISTRICT

The education district conferences of 1999 held in all South African Provinces produced an emerging understanding of what constitutes an education district and the roles and the responsibilities of the individuals within the districts. Mphahlele (1999) finds that the emerging definition of an education district is: "...clusters of schools (making up a circuit), teacher formations and other stakeholders, such as School Governing Bodies (made up of communities around the schools) in a given area and has as its nodal point at a district office. An education district is an emerging entity which is largely defined in terms of schools, teachers, parents and learners". Mphahlele (1999) defines an education district in terms of its position in the system – as the main intermediate structure between the school and the province. Following the latter explanation, alternatively, an education district could be described in terms of its function – to facilitate, administer and monitor educational delivery across a number of schools in a certain geographical area.

Education districts are divided into circuits with the norm in South Africa being 30 – 55 schools per circuit. The Free State Province also falls within this norm. The Free State Province consists of five education districts, namely Motheo, Xariep, Lejweleputswa, Northern Free State and Thabo Mofutsanyana. Of the five, Thabo Mofutsanyana is the biggest district situated in the Eastern Free State region. It emerged as a result of the amalgamation of the former Bethlehem, Harrismith, Phuthaditjhaba and Reitz circuits in the year 2001. It consists of eighty-five (85) schools, that is thirty-five (35) secondary schools and fifty (50) primary schools. However, this study focused only on secondary schools, which are classified as high performing within the district. For the purposes of confidentiality these schools were named Alpha and Omega. In the next section, information gathered by way of questionnaires and interviews regarding the secondary schools will be reviewed.

5.2.1 Alpha and Omega Secondary Schools

The following information was captured during the site visits by way of field notes and observation:

5.2.1.1 General information

Alpha Secondary School is located in a small town not far from the Kingdom of Lesotho. A visitor is immediately impressed by a big logo of the school at the gate and the well-maintained surroundings. The school is completely surrounded by a high intact barbed fence. The two main gates, made of iron bars, are locked when there is no school activity, but are kept open when classes are in session. School buildings were still in good condition, with good ventilation. Classroom doors and windows-with panes-were still intact. There is a stable electricity supply, running water and sanitation. The high level of academic success in the school can be easily seen from the merit awards displayed in the reception area. Samples of uniform, and an extra-mural activity kit are kept and displayed in a glass cabinet. Uniform is compulsory and every learner is expected to take part in extra-mural activities. The school displays a definite sense of communication through newsletters and information boards.

Conversely, Omega Secondary School is located in one of the developing towns in the Eastern Free State region, not far from the former Qwaqwa homeland. Although the school was established long ago, the buildings, windows-with panes, and the security fence are still intact. Surroundings are well maintained. In the reception area a visitor is able to capture the academic successes, historical events, the mission and the philosophy of the school. Like Alpha, uniform is compulsory at Omega, and every learner is expected to take part in some extra-mural activities. Again, there is a stable electricity supply, running water and sanitation. What is impressive about the schools is that all learners are in their proper school uniform, except on sports days, in which case they wear tracksuits.

Further information about Alpha and Omega Secondary Schools as reported below was mostly gathered by way of the questionnaire and documentation:

5.2.1.2 Learners' information

Table 5.1: Number of learners at Omega and Alpha

2002 – Across all subjects	ALPHA			OMEGA		
	Gender			Gender		
Grade	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
8	58	57	115	83	78	161
9	61	50	111	87	84	171
10	65	70	135	92	64	156
11	65	55	120	99	100	199
12	62	39	101	83	71	154
	311	271	582	444	397	841

Table 5.1 gives an overview of the number of learners enrolled at both schools. At the time of the study, Alpha had approximately 582 full-time learners, 311 male and 271 female and only 3 part-time ones. Part-time registration starts from Grade 10 to 12. Omega, on the other hand, had approximately 841 full-time learners and no part-time learners. Both schools use the selection and admission criteria based on previous grade examination results. The smaller number of learners at Alpha creates uncertainty among the teaching personnel. They fear that if the learners' roll continues to drop, some staff members are likely to be re-deployed. However, in both cases, the whole student body is multi-cultural with approximately 20% Blacks, 5% Coloured, 66% Whites and 9% Asian at Alpha, and 8,9% Blacks, 9.98% Coloured, 77,67% Whites and 3,34% Asian at Omega.

Following the imbalances in terms of the student population, the researcher discovered that Omega once experienced a serious racial conflict. From the informal discussion the researcher had with the student body, especially Blacks, it emerged that the Blacks are not adequately represented in the decision-making structures. According to them, education institutions have to be broadly representative of the broader population as a whole in terms of race and gender. Their views clearly link up with the philosophy of

demographic representation which stipulates that all the sectors of the population – according to the demographics of a country – should be represented at all the levels.

Black students, in particular, asserted that their under-representation was a critical matter that had to be addressed. De Lyon and Mignilolo (1989:50) hypothesized that the under-representation of a certain section of the population reduces the influence and power of that section over issues that affect them in an organisation. An organisation should begin to reflect the demography of the country by doing away with exclusion and under-representation.

From the informal discussion the researcher had with the learners of Alpha, it emerged that the problem of racial conflict was addressed in a collaborative manner. The principal invited all the learners into the school hall and then asked them about what ideas they could give to solve the racial problem. The strategy used by the principal may be viewed as brainstorming. Brainstorming is a technique used to stimulate creative or imaginative solutions to organizational problems (Smit and de Cronje, 1992:181). Group participation informally generates as many ideas as possible. During idea generation, the participants are encouraged to build on, but not criticize, ideas produced by others. The rationale is that the greater the number of ideas, the greater the likelihood of one dominating idea emerging. Certainly, in that meeting, the researcher learnt that many ideas were generated and finally the outstanding one emerged and the racial problem was laid to rest. Section 2.6.1.1 of Chapter Two clearly illustrated how best the technique could be used to solve organizational problems.

A similar racial problem was approached differently by the Omega principal. In this case, the principal identified the culprits who caused the problem and who afterwards were subjected to a disciplinary hearing. The researcher discovered that after the hearing, the problem continued. It therefore suggested that the principal should have approached the problem in a much more collaborative manner and invited as many ideas and inputs as he possibly could.

Table 5.2: Subjects pass rates, in 2001 across all the grades at Omega and Alpha

Grade	Pass Rates (Percentage)	
	ALPHA	OMEGA
8	85%	96,8%
9	85%	97,8%
10	80%	94,7%
11	90%	86,3%
12	90%	97%

Table 5.2 gives a picture of the pass rates across all the grades in the year 2001. Generally, the schools performed well across all the grades. The researcher was able to access the information outlining the fact that the *Sunday Times* once selected Alpha as one of the top 100 schools in the country. In the year 2001 the National Department of Education graded both schools as among the top 50 schools in the Free State Province. Within the THMOED Omega came second best while Alpha came third. The examination of results across all the subjects indicated in Figure 2 above, and achievement awards justify why the schools were selected for this research study.

At the time of the study, several learners in both cases seemed to be serious and disciplined, judging from the way they rushed to their respective classrooms when the bell rang for the commencement of their lessons. It emerged from the interviews that one of the reasons for their consistent achievement in grade 12 was student discipline and commitment.

The literature on why some schools are more successful indicates that many schools have achieved their success by ensuring that teachers – and often parents and learners as well - have a voice in governance. There is evidence that teacher participation in school decision-making can lead to improved academic achievement for learners (Smylie et al., 1996). However, this study has to present empirical evidence linking what the literature says and the information portrayed in Table 2 above.

5.2.1.3 Staff information

Table 5.3: Teaching staff at Alpha and Omega

ALPHA				
Principal	Deputy Principal	HOD	Teachers	TOTAL
1	1	2	20	24
OMEGA				
Principal	Deputy Principal	HOD	Teachers	TOTAL
1	2	4	28	35

At the time of the study Alpha had 24 permanent teaching personnel and there were no part-time posts. There were 12 male and 12 female teaching staff. Omega, on the other hand, had 35 members on the teaching staff. Of the 35, 29 members were permanent while 6 members were temporary and were paid by the School Governing Body (SGB). The entire staff consists of 10 male and 25 female people. The researcher discovered that the entire teaching staff in both cases is predominantly one race. Again, this reflects exclusion and under-representation of other sectors of the population.

From the informal discussion the researcher had with the student body, Blacks and Coloureds in particular, it emerged that they would appreciate it if the Department of Education could secure the services of other races. According to them, staff composition in schools will have to become more diversified in terms of race and gender as prescribed by the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996). The Act recognises that there are many cultures and languages in the country. The Act therefore, creates a school system in which the various cultures and languages in South Africa are respected, protected and advanced. However, the Act condemns any form of exclusion in terms of race, gender or disability.

Table 5.4: Qualifications of teaching staff, 2002 at Alpha and Omega

REQV (Relative Education Qualification Value)	Education Qualification	Number of Staff Members	
		ALPHA	OMEGA
13	Grade 12 plus three years' apposite training	10	15
14	Grade 12 plus four years' apposite training	11	13
15	Grade 12 plus five years' apposite training	2	4
16	Grade 12 plus six years' apposite training. Only professional, qualified educators can be classified under REQV 16, provided that such persons are in possession of a recognised, completed university degree.	1	3
		24	35

Table 5.4 illustrates the qualifications of the teaching staff in both cases. The determination of Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) is based primarily on the number of recognized, prescribed, full-time professional or academic years of study at an recognised university, technikon or college of education and taking into account the level of school education attained (Mothata, et al. 2000:145). The staff members are relatively well qualified, as the majority of them are classified within the 13-14 REQV groups. The principals are also well qualified and fall within the REQV 16 groups.

Figure 5.1: Teaching Experience of teachers at Alpha and Omega

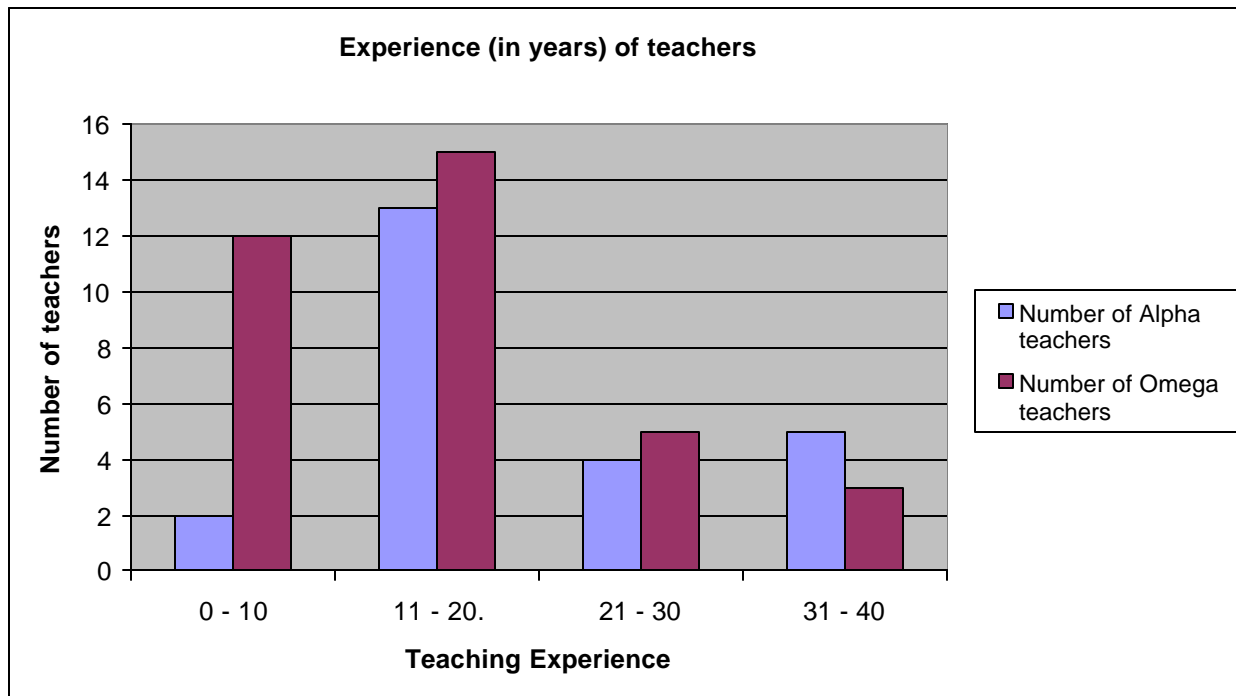


Figure 5.1 indicates that most of the teachers have extensive teaching experience, as the majority of them in both schools fall within the 11 to 20 years category. However, a higher number of teachers at Omega have less than 10 years teaching experience. This is due to the fact that some staff members had lately been appointed on a temporary basis. The principals in both schools have more 30 years teaching experience.

Research conducted on effective schools has shown that both the qualifications and teaching experience of staff contribute immensely to the success of schools. Advocates of shared governance stress that making use of teachers' expertise and experience is an obvious step to empowering teachers. A practice of this nature often leads to job satisfaction (Hoy and Tarter, 1992:27). However, the personal characteristics of principals who use shared governance will be discussed in detail later in this chapter especially under the heading "findings of the interviews".

As far as the administrative component is concerned, Alpha has one person in the administration section, serving as a typist, receptionist and a switchboard operator but Omega has two administrative personnel. The issue of one or two administrative staff is

obviously based on the number of teaching staff and learners. Omega has two administrative staff because it is larger than Alpha, which deserves one administrative staff (see table 5.1 and 5.3). The administrative personnel in both schools are efficient and capable to handle numerous administrative tasks. Another factor that makes the schools efficient is that they use computers to assist with regard to administrative work in general. In his research study, Patel (1993:284-288) found that the use of computers in school administration and management assists the principal in being proactive and effective in decision-making. With regard to Alpha and Omega, the researcher realised that the principals in both schools are computer literate and they have computer sets in their offices to assist them in their administrative duties.

5.2.1.4 Facilities

Both Alpha and Omega are considered to have the right facilities, and these are essential for effective teaching. These are tabled below.

Table 5.5: Teaching facilities at Alpha and Omega

Kind of facility	Quantity of facilities	
	ALPHA	OMEGA
Classrooms	18	21
Laboratory for science teaching	2	2
Laboratory for biology teaching	2	2
Rooms for technical subjects	6	3
Rooms for Home Economics	1	2
Typing rooms	1	2
Computer science rooms	1	1
Special rooms for needle work	1	-
Library	-	1
Other	Yes	Yes

Table 5.5 gives an overview of the facilities in both cases. The general condition of the teaching facilities in both cases was conducive to effective teaching and learning. There

are excellent laboratories, large classrooms that accommodate more than 35 learners, well equipped technology classes, and domestic science centres. The seating arrangements of students reflected the new teaching approach: “Outcomes-Based Education” as required by the new South African Education Policies. In contrast to Alpha, Omega has large workshop centres with expensive equipment to ensure that learners do not only receive theoretical training, but also had practical training that is suited to the needs of industry. Both schools have big halls which are specifically used for functions, assemblies and other major activities.

Alpha has no library and Omega has no needlework rooms. Again, except ordinary classrooms, Alpha, despite being smaller in numbers compared to Omega, is more equipped with facilities. But the fact that Alpha has no library, and Omega has no special rooms for needlework, that makes the schools equally equipped.

Other additional facilities available in both schools included modern hostels for girls and boys, sports facilities like tennis courts, soccer, rugby, golf and hockey fields, club-houses with changing rooms. There is also a tuck shop and a shop at each school to cater for the physiological needs of both teachers and learners especially non-boarders and to supply a whole range of prescribed school wear. However, Omega also makes provision for non-boarders to have lunch at the hostels (at a reasonable fee) as well.

5.2.1.5 Syllabus and curriculum

Alpha school offers tuition in the following fields of study:

- Academic
- Commercial
- Technical and
- Agricultural

Omega offers the following fields of study:

- Academic
- Commercial
- Technical

Tuition in both schools is offered in Afrikaans and English. The Free State Department of Education together with the governing bodies of each school are responsible for the curriculum design of the schools.

5.2.1.6 School governance

Table 5.6: School Governing Bodies and their responsibilities at Alpha and Omega

	ALPHA	OMEGA
School Governing Body	Yes	Yes
Date established	1998	1998
Legislation	SASA 84 of 1996	SASA, 86 of 1996
Number of members	13	13
Stakeholders:		
Teaching profession	Yes	Yes
Local community	Yes	Yes
Education Department	No	No
University representatives	No	No
LRC	Yes	Yes
Non-academic staff	Yes	Yes
Powers: 1 = considerable say, 2 = some say, 3 = little say, 4 = no say		
Financial	1	1
Appointment of staff	2	2
Discipline staff	1	2
Dismiss staff	2	2
Discipline students	1	1
Overall management	1	1
Appraisal of staff	1	2

Democratic governance by means of school governing bodies was practised in both schools. However, it is the purpose of this study to establish the degree to which the school governing bodies are involved in the decision-making process in the schools. The findings with regard to this will become apparent later in this chapter. Autonomy as far as staff appointment and dismissal of staff are concerned, is still limited and the SGBs only make recommendations to the FSED. A research study conducted by the Price Water House and Coopers on the role of principals in creating effective schools in the United States, discovered that much of their success came from having some autonomy from the central Board of Education constraints. Based on these findings, the researcher believes that greater autonomy is needed in the Free State school systems in order to increase the number of successful schools. Providing such autonomy would free successful principals to pursue academic success and generate more positive results for learners.

However, based on his experiences as a teacher, the researcher assumes that not all principals will effectively use greater autonomy wisely. Some may use their increased freedom to pursue ineffective policies and inappropriate goals. Under such circumstances the researcher would recommend that some regulations must be maintained to ensure accountability to public standards. It is the researcher's view that under a system of greater parental, student and community involvement, principals would be held directly accountable to the parties concerned. However, this study discovered that schools are still bound to operate within the rules and regulations of the FSED and certain decisions still need its approval.

The other bodies operating at the schools are the Learners' Representative Councils (LRCs). The LRCs, democratically elected by learners, assist the management in social or academic matters that affect learners. The LRCs also serve on the SGBs and other committees in the schools such as disciplinary committees.

5.2.1.7 Financing

As far as the financing is concerned, both schools receive some funds from the Free State Education Department (FSED) in order to pay for electricity, water, and photocopying machines, to mention but a few. In other words, the schools fall under Section 21, of the

Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999. In addition to what government financially contributes, learners pay school fees determined by the school management and its governing body. Teachers' salaries are paid by the FSED.

5.3 SYNTHESIS

As a way of recapitulation the following outline was found crucial, as it would highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each school. As far as the schools are concerned, the following conclusions could be made:

- Alpha has low learner capacity than Omega. Alpha has 582 learners while Omega has 841. The smaller learner numbers create uncertainty among the teaching personnel at Alpha because if the learner's roll continues to drop, staff members are likely to be re-deployed.
- Both schools have a history of good academic performance, especially at Grade 12. OBE approach is followed at all levels.
- Both schools have fairly adequately qualified teaching staff, and the majority are classified within the 13-14 REQV groups. Principals are also well qualified. Again, permanent teaching staff have extensive teaching experience and most of them fall within 11 to 20 years category, while principals have over 30 years.
- Alpha has broader fields of study than Omega. In addition, Alpha is offering tuition in agriculture and their technical section is highly equipped.
- Governing bodies are in place at both schools. They are selected according to the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996). LRC is operating at both schools and certain members serve on the SGB.

Furthermore, the researcher was afforded an opportunity to peruse through schools documentation during site visits and the following were captured:

- Both cases operated in a highly formal fashion, with a year plan, regularly scheduled meetings, agenda, minutes and attendance register.

- Formal governing body meetings in both schools were held monthly. The chairperson, secretary and the principal normally meet before hand to draw up agenda for the next meeting and thereafter distribute it to other members.
- In both schools members of the School Management Teams (SMT) were delegated specific responsibilities. At Alpha, for instance, the deputy principal was assigned curriculum areas, administrative functions and specific personnel supervision. Now the question still remains: “Do members of staff have powers to make decisions?” Answers to the question may become apparent in the next section.

5.4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEW RESULTS

This section presents an analysis of the data collected mainly by means of interviews. Individual interviews were held with the principals whereas the teachers, learners as well as parents were involved only in focus groups. The groups were identifiable as follows:

ALPHA		
CODE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF PATICIPANTS
PRA	Principal at Alpha	1
PA 1,2	Parents at Alpha	2
TA 1,2,3	Teachers at Alpha	3
LA 1,2,3	Learners at Alpha	3

OMEGA		
CODE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
PRO	Principal at Omega	1
PO 1,2	Parents at Omega	2
TO 1,2,3	Teachers at Omega	3
LO 1,2,3	Learners at Omega	3

Data analysis procedures gave rise to the following results that can be presented by means of tables below. The identified themes, categories and sub-categories are discussed separately with the support of the literature survey reported in Chapters Two and Three.

THEME A: DEFINITION OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING (SDM)	
CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Conceptualisation of SDM	–

THEME B: DECISION-MAKING	
CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Participative decision-making	1.1 Democratic leader
2. Concerns	2.1 Communication
	2.2 Power sharing
	2.3 Resources
	2.4 School policy

THEME C: STRATEGIES	
CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Delegation	—
2. Flatter school structure	—
3. Communication	—
4. Training and re-training	—

In this section the researcher discusses the results of the following themes, categories and sub-categories:

THEME A: DEFINITION OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING (SDM)	
CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Conceptualisation of SDM	–

5.4.1 Theme A: Definition of shared decision-making (SDM)

Shared decision making is based on the philosophical belief that some decisions traditionally made by district-level administrators are moved to the school level, and some decisions traditionally made by the school principal are shared with school staff, students, and members of the school community. Shared decision making is not the same as administering the school, which is the principal’s function. Shared decision making does imply, however, that school staff and members of the school community are involved in making decisions. Shared decision making is a process, not an end in itself. It provides an opportunity for members of a school community to collaborate in solving problems, defining a course of action, and shaping the direction for the individual school.

According to Bauer (1992) shared decision making process promotes the following in a workplace:

- Mutual trust, respect and acceptance.
- Clear and open communication.
- A timely decision-making and implementation process.
- Ownership of and support and accountability for decisions.
- Continuous growth of students, parents, staff and community.

In keeping with international trends, South African schools have moved towards greater decentralised governance. With the introduction of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the management structure of schools changed considerably. The Act has mandated for the establishment of the democratic structures of school governance, which provides

the basis for decentralised governance between education authorities and the larger school community. The rationale for the establishment of representative school governing bodies is essentially to ensure that all stakeholders participate in the governance and management of schools.

Following these developments, it is crucial that all the stakeholders come to some common understanding of the concept SDM. It was necessary to find out in this research how respondents conceptualised SDM because its effective implementation depends, to a large extent, on whether the people affected have a common understanding or not

5.4.1.1 Category 1: Conceptualisation of SDM

Mouton (1996:109) points out that conceptualization involves the clear understanding of a phenomenon. It refers to a mental process that culminates in the formation of ideas and their meanings. Psychologically, related ideas are arranged in an order or framework called cognitive structure, that would be used as a frame of reference for interpretation and understanding of new data. It is this conceptual framework that facilitates meaning-giving. However, different people understand and attach different meanings to a particular phenomenon.

According to Lew and Glickman (1992), SDM involves fundamental changes in the way schools are managed, and alterations in the roles and relationships of everyone in the school community. SDM is a process of making educational decisions in a collaborative manner at the school level. The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 requires that school governance be democratised. The democratisation of school governance supports the idea that stakeholders such as parents, teachers, learners and other members of the community be involved in the activities and decision-making processes of the school.

As a result, the respondents, principals, teachers, parents and learners in both cases were asked to respond to the following question:

What is your understanding of the concept shared decision-making?

The critical issue here was to establish whether the SASA had been converted into reality in schools. Respondents in both cases viewed SDM as a process whereby various stakeholders must have a saying in decision-making.

“Ja...my understanding of the concept is that there must be wide participation in decision-making” [TA]
“My understanding of the concept is that all members of the school governing body should have an input and voting powers regarding final decisions” [PA]
“Shared decision-making is where everybody says something and the decision is made through wide spectrum not just eh...one person’s point of view. So that’s where everybody says something about the decision that is going to be made eh...everybody becomes involves in a decision-making” [LA]
“Well everybody must have say...” [PA]
“Well I see shared decision-making as a concept where everybody in the school meaning learners, teachers, school management team (SMT) eh...principal as well as school governing body (SGB) as well as parents eh...should come together and make certain decisions in connection with the school. In other words it comprises everybody inside the school in making decisions eh...everybody must be involved”. [PRO]
“All right shared decision-making if you look at the word shared in the concept it means that decision must be shared among certain people. Those certain people in my honest opinion are the stakeholders at this particular school. Stakeholders we start from the level of parents, teachers as well as learners should be involved in a lesser or largely pertaining to the sharing of decisions”. [PO]
“That’s where is not only one person making the decision, so not the principal alone instead he is going to ask teachers what do they think and maybe the governing and the learners as well. So its not just one person making the decision. All role players must be involved”[TO]
“I understand it as all involved parties must have a say in decision-making that is, they must have an input in decisions that affect them”[LO]

It emerged that respondents in both schools viewed SDM as process of making decision in a collaborative manner. Statements from the respondents in both schools affirmed SDM is being perceived as an involvement of other stakeholders in decision-making. It became clear that all affected parties in both schools have a common understanding of SDM. This affirmed that the SASA was in place in both schools. However, Sarakinsky (1993:6) is skeptical about the practice of SDM, and points out that “SDM is a term that has attracted much scorn in education systems and presupposes open communication, consultation and willingness to negotiate”.

This is evident in the view that though the respondents have a common understanding of the concept SDM, the question remains: Are decision-making processes really carried out in a collaborative manner in both schools? To find out about the situation in both schools, the respondents were asked to respond to a similar question in this study. The question was stated as follows:

Could you tell me how decisions are taken in this school?

The question gave rise to the theme “decision-making” and it relates to the research problem. The research explores effective decision-making of secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province. Consequently, the respondents were also asked to respond to the following question:

Could you tell me about any real problem or incident that has occurred recently in this school and how that particular problem was dealt with?

The researcher decided to include this question as a way of getting a clearer understanding of how decisions are arrived at in each school. We established in previous chapters that the terms “ decision-making” and “problem solving” are interchangeably used and this somewhat suggests that it is difficult to separate the two terms because they are part of the same process. For example, the basic purpose of making a decision is to solve a particular problem. The steps in both problem solving and decision-making are quite similar. However, this research study focuses only on decision-making rather than problem solving because the study is about exploring decision-making strategies of secondary school principals.

5.4.2 Theme B: Decision-making

Holman (1986:41) regards decision-making as a purposeful process whereby the manager or group selects the most suitable alternative for the solution of a problem, implements it and evaluates the consequences thereof. The principle of decision-making follows the scientific steps as described in Figure 2.1 in Chapter Two. Although the discussion of the

steps involved in the decision-making process focused primarily on the individual decision-maker, a great deal of decision-making in large organizations such as schools is achieved through the participation of stakeholders. The increased complexity of the organization such as a school requires specialised knowledge in a number of different fields. The fact that such knowledge is usually not possessed by one individual underscores the importance of involving other people in the decision-making process. According to Daft (1994:266) groups tend to make better decisions than individuals and that increases acceptance of decisions by the group members.

The centralization of decision-making by principals has been criticized by many who have called for greater participation in decision-making as a progressive way of making schools more democratic and more efficient (Ellis and Fischer, 1994). Greater participation in decision-making has been a major focus in the educational reform movement worldwide. In South Africa for instance, this has led to legislative-driven educational reform captured by the South African Schools Act of 1996. The Act gives powers to teachers, parents, and learners in the decision-making process. Following the Act, principals, who, in the apartheid years, viewed schools as their domain, and thus organized and managed them according to their particular frame of reference and leadership style, are expected to be democratic. This shift provides teachers with, according to Weiss (1993:69), "... a voice in what had largely been principal-made decisions".

Sharing the same views, Calabrese and Barton (1994) suggest that the inclusion of all the members of the school community in a decision-making process creates a climate where the democratic values of fairness, justice, and equity are honoured. Moreover, they view the inclusion of appropriate parties in decision-making as an ethical issue that administrators cannot ignore.

During the individual interviews the researcher had with the principals, it emerged that other role players participate in school-wide decision-making processes.

Various stakeholders most of the times are consulted before any decision can be made [PRO] Right mostly well to me participation of other people in decision-making is very important. We discuss the matter properly and vote about it and majority decisions rules [PRA]

Following statements made by the principals, it is evident that both schools operate in a democratic fashion. This evidence gave rise to a category called participative decision-making. This category was found crucial in this regard and it relates to the theme of “decision-making”. What is crucial is that principals might create the impression of being democratic but other stakeholders might not experience the same. What follows below is a discussion of the identified category: participative decision-making.

5.4.2.1 Category 1: Participative decision-making

Participative decision-making is a process of dynamic interactive decision-making and problem solving, shared governance, ownership and accountability, organizational transformation and empowerment as well as applicable communication inside and outside the school situation (Muller, 1993). It implies that participative decision-making has to do with sharing in decisions.

Democracy in the workplace, in the sense of participative decision-making is seen as morally good because it is consistent with the broader democratic ideals and the values of the society. The moral justification of participative decision-making is based on the notion of “mutual beneficence” and the principles amongst others, of tolerance and respect for others (Aspin in Chapman, Froumin and Aspin, 1995:7). Empirical studies supporting the argument for teacher participation in the decision-making process suggest that participation in democratic management can be linked to fair outcomes. Among these are teacher job satisfaction, increased organizational effectiveness, teacher loyalty, and role ambiguity (Mohrman et al, 1978). Expanding on that, Leithwood (1996:93) affirms that “...participative decision-making, allowing employees greater decision-making power, is also presumed to lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness and better outcomes”.

Furthermore, research has shown that teachers who are allowed to participate in the decision-making processes in terms of important matters (for example the management of the school) are reported to reflect a high level of organizational commitment not only in the community, but also in their day-to-day work life. Moreover, teachers who are encouraged to participate democratically in the decision-making process are reported to be more positive and committed to the school as an organization, show enthusiasm for the school, pupils and parents, are willing to take on projects or to work on teams, and are creative and innovative as they have co-ownership because of their participatory decision-making (Hoy and Forsyth 1986; Steers, 1977; Sergiovanni, 1990).

Bernd (1991:65-65) contends that the success of participative decision-making has much to do with the readiness of the principal to share power and his or her ability to establish the processes, information and resources necessary to make shared decision-making work.

The researcher found evidence from the interviews he conducted with the teachers that differs with the principals' views. The principals in both cases claimed that various stakeholders were consulted before any decision could be made. However, the following emerged, encapsulated as quotes:

<p>In the school we have the management team consisting of the principal, two deputies and then heads of the departments. Eh...usually what they do if there is some decisions to make they come together talk about a thing make some decisions and give it through to us eh...members of staff. But the day-to-day running they decide on their own and they give feedback to teachers [TA].</p> <p>Well, eh...the principal and the management team set up meetings twice a week to discuss certain things and bring it to the staff [TO].</p>

Following the statements made by the teachers, it is clear that principals in both cases perpetuate a top-down, hierarchical leadership and management approach rather than participative decision-making as claimed above. It further shows that locus of control and of decision-making powers lies mainly in the hands of a few individuals. Management strategies, in the context of school hierarchical structures do not just encourage participation but also demand participation, and it is after this end that democracy strives.

Table 3.2 in Chapter Three illustrates who makes what decisions at what level of the structures of the school. Some problems require individual and others group decision-making. Principals should be capable of making professional judgements, which involve finding a personal position between “hands on” versus participation and delegation as well as attention to “detail” versus the “big picture”. The principals in both cases seemed to lack the characteristics outlined above.

One of the ways to analyse a school in terms of power relations is to look at the question of decision-making, whether it is participative or non-participative. However, the hierarchical approach witnessed in both schools is completely viewed as a non-participatory decision-making process. Non-participatory decision-making includes amongst others strategies such as telling and selling. In the telling strategy the principal makes a decision with his team or on his own and then simply announces the outcomes. This decision-making strategy is extremely authoritative, with no participation by the group members. Again, in selling strategy, the principal makes a decision on her or his own, and thereafter sells the idea to the group members. This strategy also implies minimal participation but by selling the idea he or she tries to obtain the co-operation of the subordinates. Following the contents of Chapter Two, in particular **Figure 2.3** - the use of authority in this regard is viewed as leader-centred. From the diagram one would see that a leader-centred approach is characterized by minimal participation of other people in decision-making processes.

However, one can argue that this strategy is justifiable in an emergency situation, but even then, other people should be familiar with the emergency procedures or policy. Clark (1980:7) warns that the more power is centralized into one or a few individuals, the more likely it is that they will dominate decisions. Statements made by the teachers clearly indicate that the management teams in both schools dominate most of the decisions. Tye (1992:14) believes that there is a need to shift the hierarchical line of decision-making in that “teachers and school principals, working with their communities, will have to learn to make collective decisions and to take collective actions. In their research on the perceptions of staff on their involvement in decision-making, Steyn and Squelch (1997:7) found that teachers wanted a say and not merely to adhere to autocratic

decisions of the school management team. Saphier et al. (1989) acknowledged the importance of involving other stakeholders in the process of decision-making. They argue that the more role players are involved in the decisions to be taken, the better the chances that decisions taken will be accepted and supported by the majority of people.

To maximise involvement, subordinates should be included in the process as early as possible (Hoy and Tarter, 1995:142). They must share in the definition and elaboration of the problem and then be involved in each successive step of the cycle. **Figure 21** in Chapter Two illustrates steps in the decision-making process. For example, if teachers are provided with data, are asked to define the problem, and are involved in each subsequent step of the decision-making process then their participation is extensive.

In this study it was realised that principals in both schools at times do not involve staff in the decision-making process as claimed. Instead, they employ the “telling and selling” type of strategies. The researcher viewed the strategies as non-participatory decision-making, following the contents of the previous chapter on SDM. However, when respondents were further probed with the questions such as “how do you feel about the way decisions are taken in this school?” it emerged that teachers, parents and learners at Alpha were generally satisfied about the way decisions were taken and it is evident below:

<p>I think it's good it's not one person making all the rules and the others must follow. It's a shared policy everybody has got a saying [TA]</p> <p>I think is quite good... All the stakeholders make inputs [PA]</p> <p>I think I am quite satisfied because I am part of the governing body and I am part of the decision-making and everybody seems happy because they have an input and choice in everything [LA]</p>
--

In order to verify the statements made by the respondents, the researcher was afforded an opportunity to attend a governing body meeting at Alpha as an observer by the principal and chairperson of the governing body. The researcher indicated to the governing body members that all information obtained would be treated with due confidentiality. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996 all school governing meetings are confidential and all school governing body members stand in the position of trust towards

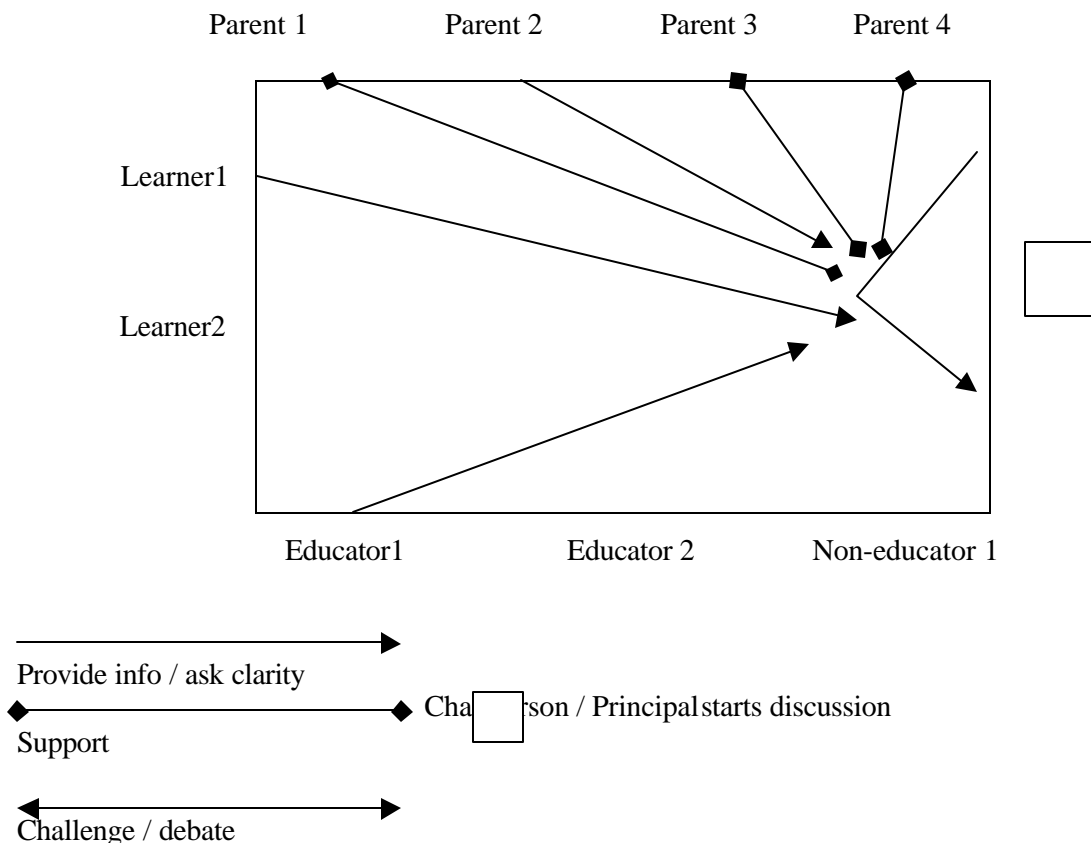
the school. However, the researcher indicated to the members at the meeting that he was rather interested in the process employed in taking decisions than in the issue under discussion.

School Governing Body Meeting : Attendance of the meeting at Alpha

Meeting	Attendance	
Second meeting of the year	Parents : 04	Non-educators: 01
	Learners : 02	Principal : 01
	Educators: 02	Chairperson : 01

At the meeting the researcher observed that written invitations were issued to the members prior to the meeting. An agenda was also attached to the invitation. The issue on the table was the “Financial Report”. Analysis of the discussion is presented by means of a socio-gram as follows:

Figure 5.2: Socio-gram: Communication flow leading to the decision taken



The information illustrated in **Figure 5.2**: Socio-gram is discussed as follows:

PROCESS ANALYSIS
1. Chairperson introduced the discussion
2. Parent 1 supported chairperson
3. Parent 2 provided more information
4. Learner 1 asked for clarity
5. Principal proposed a solution
6. Educator 1 asked for clarity
7. Chairperson proposed a solution
8. Parent 3 supported the chairperson
9. Parent 4 supported the chairperson
10. Consensual decision was taken

Analysis of the decision-making process

The communication flow indicated in **Figure 5.2** (socio-gram) above reflects a much greater level of interaction and discussion. Alternative solutions were proposed and discussed. Some members who did not contribute to the discussion were attentive and they participated through positive non-verbal signs. In the end, the decision taken was democratic and as such could be classified as a consensual decision. The researcher's realized that his presence in the meeting seemed not to have influenced the discussion.

However, what is essential with the consensual decision is that, a problem is shared with other members of the group, then the group generates and evaluates alternatives, and ultimately they reach an agreement on the proper solution (Herman and Herman, 1992:71). This was clearly indicated when the school governing body (SGB) of Alpha used a consensus decision-making style when they were discussing the school financial report. The researcher observed that each group member was given an opportunity to suggest his or her own solution, whether in favour or in opposition to an idea. The

decision, which was then made, was a group decision with sufficient support from the majority of group members. Everyone accepted ownership of the decision made.

Consensus does not mean that everyone thinks that the decision made is necessarily the best possible one, and that they are sure it will work. What it means is that in coming to that decision, no one felt that her or his position on the matter was misunderstood or that it was not given a proper hearing. Hopefully, everyone will think it is the best decision; this often happens because, when it works, collective intelligence does come up with better solutions than could individuals. Consensus takes more time and member skill, but uses lots of resources before a decision is made, creates commitment to the decision and often facilitates creative decision. It gives everyone some experience with new processes of interaction and conflict resolution, which is basic but important skill building. Finally the school governing body (SGB) reached consensus on the best way of handling the financial report.

The aforementioned discussion concurs with the views made by the respondents of Alpha. It emerged that generally they are satisfied regarding the way decisions are taken.

(i) Sub-category 1: Democratic leader

This sub-category relates to the issue of participative decision-making. From the interviews the researcher had with the parents, it emerged that the principal of Alpha is a democratic person.

The headmaster is a democratic person, he is not manipulative and he does not decide before hand what is going to be like and try manipulate us into it. Instead he involves us and together we reach a consensus solution [PA]

According to Wiles and Lovell (1967:127-128), a predominantly democratic style of leadership is best – not only for principals, but for the overall success of the school. It contains the best built-in guarantees for job satisfaction, since “democracy is based upon the assumption that the group has the right and capacity to make its own decision and that the leader’s function is to help it do so in the best way possible” (Haiman, 1951:47).

This type of leadership involves the staff by means of mutual consultation in decision-making (Getzels et al., 1968:37). A democratic leader shares the problem with his subordinates as a group. Together they generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach consensus on a solution. And this was demonstrated when the school governing body of Alpha used consensus decision-making style when they were discussing the school financial report. The role of the principal in that meeting was much like that of a chairperson. He did not try to influence the group to adopt his solution, rather was willing to accept and implement any solution, which had the support of the entire group.

A democratic leader also helps the staff to function better so that the school's activities can be conducted highly effectively in the spirit of harmonious co-operation. Supporting the latter statement, one teacher uttered the following words encapsulated as quotes:

...the school has a good record academically and on the sporting field eh...if running of the school had not been efficient eh... there wouldn't have been the successes that have been regular on a number of years and hopefully will continue. And I think that eh...the fact that we draw pupils from quite a wide area of the Free State means that the reputation of the school is good eh...again reflects on the good management of the school and if the management, which is after all the decision-making was poor then we wouldn't been drawing pupils from all over [TA]

On rare occasions it may be imperative for the democratic leader to act autocratically. A democratic leader can only act democratically to the extent that organizational rules and regulations and the orders of his superiors permit him to do so. Some leaders exercise democratic leadership to the extent that they feel that all groups should have a say at every level and in every detail of the decision-making process. In this regard, this behaviour may lead to disapproval from staff members since they could feel that the principal is paid to assume certain responsibilities and that he should therefore take such decisions on his own. The key to effective collaboration is knowing when and how to involve other people in decision-making. Section 3.9 of Chapter Two provides a comprehensive model that can serve as a guideline on when other stakeholders should be involved in decision-making processes.

From the individual interviews the researcher had with the principal of Alpha, it emerged that sometimes the principal adopts autocratic approaches in making decisions.

But there are certain decisions that staff can't take and the principal has to take and I take that decisions and I stand by my decisions [PRA]

Research indicates that there are times when teachers do not want to be involved in decision-making processes, and of course, times when they do (Bridges, 1967; McGrath, 1992; Vroom & Jago, 1988).

Having said that, in the interviews the researcher had with the parents, learners and teachers at Alpha, the following situation became evident, and justifies claims why the respondents seemed satisfied with their involvement in the decisions and the general running of the school:

Ja...another thing that is very successful here is that each morning we have got a staff meeting as well and we discuss matters that concern staff and jointly take decision [TA]
...at this school we speak to the principal and he too speaks to us, we have got staff meetings every morning and every body knows what's going on and if you have got a problem there is an open door [TA]
I think what is nice about school and the headmaster and so on he has got a post box where you can write him a letter and its confidential and nobody knows about it even the teachers. So if you have got a problem he will answer you in way of letter and you can discuss with him and in many ways you can be happy [LA]
The whole Governing Body , parents, learners, teachers and non-teaching staff is consulted most of the time and that's a reason why things are going well in this school.....eh... and if you don't get complains from the people then things are on the right track. No complains no problems [PRA].

Since other stakeholders seemed to have been accepted as participants in decision-making, a warm, and supportive climate prevailed in the school. The fact that there are open channels of communication and that other stakeholders are involved in decision-making processes contributes towards a healthy working climate. Healthy environments enable teachers in particular to work with greater willingness, confidence and co-operation. Research has shown that giving other people the opportunity to take part in the

decision-making process exposes their enthusiasm and enables them to make a contribution in the school (Snyder and Anderson, 1989:13-14).

5.4.2.2 Category 2: Concern about decision-making

Effective implementation of any decisions depends largely on the acceptance and support by the other people. It is important to consider other people's concerns because, as Woodward and Buchholz (1987:xvi) put it, "if people are angry regarding the way decisions are taken, and their views are not accommodated, such decisions will not proceed smoothly". Their feelings and perceptions account for the success or failure of the decision. It is against this backdrop that this study involved teachers, parents, learners and principals of schools. The rationale was that a multi-pronged strategy was essential for the researcher to find out how different participants think and feel about decision-making processes in their schools.

The need to understand other people's concerns is predicated on the notion that for a decision to be acceptable and supportable, it has to be properly communicated. Kassirjian (1992:28) suggests that before beginning to involve people in the decision-making process, it is important to check one's intentions as a manager. Does one involve them because one honestly wants to learn how they feel, or does one do it simply to protect oneself from criticism? Kassirjian goes on to say that many managers tried participative decision-making but failed because their underlying intention was to protect themselves, not to learn.

The researcher found evidence of some dissatisfaction from the interviews he conducted with the teachers at Omega about the way decisions were taken at the school. Unlike at Alpha where teachers, parents and learners seemed satisfied, teachers, learners and parents at Omega expressed some dissatisfaction and concerns regarding the way decisions were taken.

Teachers, learners and parents' concerns and dissatisfactions are encapsulated in the following sub-categories:

SUB-CATEGORIES
(i) Communication
(ii) Power sharing
(iii) Resources
(iv) School policy

(i) Sub-category 1: Communication

Communication is an essential management function aimed at achieving mutual understanding. All organizations have to rely on this crucial aspect to converse effectively with all their internal and external publics. Modern, dynamic and successful organizations use communication media such as memoranda, circulars, meetings, mass communication and information technology to send messages and receive feedback.

This is not the case with Omega. The interviewees, especially the teachers and learners at Omega, concurred with this very important aspect of management. However, they perceive the principal together with his management team as poor communicators – especially from an organizational communication perspective.

Sometimes we have crises in this school concerning behaviour of children, they have to be punished. Sometimes we as staff members don't even know of malpractices or whatever the children have committed. We hear it in town from the public [TO]

The only problem I have is communicating the problem or the outcome to all the people because I mean rumour spread very easily [LO]

The respondents regard the communication strategy within the school as highly ineffective and almost non-existent. Teachers in particular perceived it to be “top down”. They attribute this lack of proper organizational communication to inefficiency on the part of the management team of the school. The respondents expressed the concern that certain decisions are taken without them being consulted or information being communicated to them. This was a matter of great concern because they believed that

they were part of the school and they needed to be active participants in the decision-making processes. Their feelings are captured below.

They want to build a room and put all the trophies of the school in there. And that was never communicated to us and ask our opinion...[simultaneously – we are all in the dark] eh...they never ask us our opinions [TO]

In an orderly set up people have to communicate and children must know this is what had happened and the matter is being attended to and they will know of the outcome very soon that's important. But anyway I feel communication can still improve [LO]

It is clear from the statements made by the respondents that the management team has a problem of communicating or sharing information with affected people. Communication becomes a concern if there are dissatisfactions within an institution which culminate to accusations. In this case the school management team was accused of building a room without communicating the information to other stakeholders.

It also emerged in the interviews with teachers that the management team took a decision to cancel March examinations without consulting or communicating such a decision to the teachers. This decision created a feeling of disgust in the minds of teachers and this situation doesn't augur well for trust and morale. All the teachers wanted that exam because they really thought they needed it.

...at one stage the management team decided that we wouldn't write a March exam. But all the teachers asked for that exam because we really thought we need it. By the time we get instructions it was already decided so we got it as fact we did not have any input in that, and that is really a problem for us [TO]

And they took the decisions without communicating with the teachers [TO]

Huebsch (1986:3) asserts that communication is an effective tool for promoting understanding. It brings people nearer to one another. The animal world communicates. Without upward, downward and horizontal communication, a healthy community life is inconceivable. The continual and complex nature of mutual understanding and the need to be understood is of such a nature that where basic communication proficiencies are

lacking, the necessary understanding, insight, empathy, effective transmission of knowledge, feedback and social progress will never be possible.

People communicate not because of similarity in their thoughts, but by the very reason of their differences, which they want to reduce (Wilson et al., 1986). In other words, mutual understanding - which is at the core of human communication – is still achievable even if the communicator and the recipient of the message disagree. They can even agree to disagree. Meetings – and by implication all communication tools – should be used to transfer information, exchange ideas, to discuss matters of mutual interest and to solve problems and make decisions asserts Huebsch (1986:376). Section 3.6.3 of Chapter Two outlines different forms of communication and how best this important tool could be used in an organization.

(ii) Sub-category 2: Power sharing

In research on teacher empowerment in the Republic of South Africa, it was found that school teachers felt that power was still largely in the hands of the principals (Steyn and Squelch, 1997:8). This finding corresponds with what emerged out of the interviews the researcher had with the teachers.

...certain decisions are made at the top and my concern is that they do not always know what's going on at the bottom and they take the decisions which sometimes feels to me like a stupid decisions [TO]
--

The statement made by the teachers showed that decision-making powers resided mainly in the principal and his team. There is minimal participation of the other stakeholders. Research has revealed that successful shared decision-making at school level is a function of the principal's readiness to share power with those whose commitment is necessary for effective teaching and learning (Lucas, Brown and Markus, 1991:56). Many principals believe that if they promote participative decision-making, their roles will diminish drastically with respect to power, control and authority (Erlandson and Bifano, 1987: 31; Cherry, 1991:34). Based on the concerns raised by the teachers, one might rightly link the Omega principal with this norm. Autocratic principals who cling to this belief do not

recognise that authentic leadership does not involve exercising power over people but rather empowering them to make appropriate decisions regarding the accomplishment of organisational goals.

Research has shown that when principals ask for staff members input and enhance team members' sense of control, team members are more likely to experience meaning, impact and autonomy in their work (Blase and Blase 1997:140; Kirkman and Rosen 1999:60). However, this practice was found to be lacking at Omega.

...they take certain decisions without taking the input from the teachers [TO]
--

This statement clearly indicates that the teachers experienced power out there and did not have influence in decision-making processes. However, if staff members have the authority of making decisions, they will be able to see their influence on the school and that in turn will increase the meaningfulness of their work (Herman and Gioia 1998:25). The principals have to trust staff members' ability to make the right decisions, while staff members must have a sense of trust that it is safe to risk decisions that might be wrong. Mutual trust and open communication are indispensable for such an exchange to be successful (Oakland and Oakland 1998:187; Spitzer 1999:13; Wheatley 1999:6).

(iii) Sub-category 3: Resources

The word "resources" as used in this study refers to financial, physical and human. These include per capita expenditure, equipment, infrastructure, and suitably qualified teachers. The resources of the school make it possible to provide education. According to Davies and Ellison (1991:4), teachers are the most valuable assets that the school can't do without. However, teachers at Omega raised a concern about their non-involvement in decision-making processes. They believed that they had the knowledge and the expertise that could be utilized so that the school management decision-making could be effective. They were concerned about the management team that took bad decisions while they actually could have taken good decisions if they had used the resources of the teachers' knowledge. Their concern was found legitimate by the researcher following **Table 5.4** and **Figure 5.1** above both outlining their qualifications and experience.

So big concern for me is that they do not use eh...the great input that the teachers can give them and that create a situation of taking bad decisions while they actually can take good decisions if they actually use the resources of the teachers' knowledge [TO].

...they must use their resources better and their resources here are the teachers, they don't use that. There is lot of decisions made here and some of them are really good but we can't implement it because they don't use other people's knowledge. That's our biggest concern [TO].

Effective principals see schools in terms of what people can offer (Sharpe,1995:19). The most common failure of most Free State principals including the one at Omega, stems from an inadequate understanding of when teachers should be involved in decision-making. There are times when teachers do not want to be involved in decision-making processes and, times when they do. The key to effective collaboration is knowing when and how to involve teachers in decisions. A concern raised by teachers clearly indicates an inability of the principal at Omega to establish when and how to involve his staff in the decision-making process. For example, the decision to cancel the March examination affected teachers directly, yet they were not at all involved, nor were their views considered important.

Clearly, teacher participation in decision-making can improve the quality of the decisions and promote cooperation if the right strategy is linked to the right situation (Hoy and Tarter, 1993:4). Section 3.9 of Chapter Three discusses the model designed to enhance the acceptance and quality of decisions – The Hoy-Tarter model of shared decision-making (1995). Following concerns raised by the teachers and failure of the principal to actually assess when and how to involve teachers in decision-making, it therefore suggests that intervention programmes are needed. Chapter Six of this study will focus on intervention strategies by way of recommendation.

(iv) Sub-category 4: School policy

School policy, like any other state policy, may be defined as a course of action adopted by the school governing body through a particular regulation, and pursued through administration and control, with the general assumption that it should be beneficial to the

school and its clients. Policy is therefore closely linked to decision-making, and to control of the structures where the decisions are made and of the people by whom they are made and carried out. Reviewing the contents of Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1, a school policy was classified under programmed decisions. Programmed decisions are those decisions that are made by following the policy and involve simple, common, frequently-occurring problems (Daft, 1994:251). Examples in schools include handling disciplinary cases, processing applications for admissions, re-ordering office supplies when inventory drops to a certain level. The researcher discovered that both cases had policies in place, especially on how to deal with disciplinary matters. However, at Alpha the respondents seemed satisfied about the disciplinary procedure in particular.

During the interviews, the parents and learners at Omega articulated worry regarding the existing disciplinary procedures at the school. The respondents felt that the whole disciplinary system was bad because a victim had to be subjected to a hearing and be cross-examined by lawyers and, if found guilty, have a record filed against that person. Learners, on the other hand, expressed a concern that the decision made by the lawyers was not always fair to some children.

<p>...these hearings its very bad for children and they feel like criminals eh...I think the old system worked better whereby they just got a little hiding and everything was just over. So this whole system I think is very bad in this school [PO]</p> <p>...I just think that the decisions made then by this lawyers and stuff like that is not always fair to the other children it's not always consistent that's my problem basically [LO]</p>

It is apparent from the foregoing citations that the present disciplinary procedure does not turn out well to the respondents and therefore it should be revisited. Steers and Porter (1979:38) stress: “managers of the schools have the responsibility to create a proper climate in which subordinates can operate pleasingly”. Under these circumstances it becomes very critical that the actual concerns raised by the respondents be investigated so that other measures could be introduced:

- Involvement of lawyers in the hearings
- Re-introduction of corporal punishment

Based on the dissatisfaction and concerns raised by the learners and parents at Omega, it is clear that other stakeholders were not involved during the drafting process of the policy. Further probing by the researcher affirmed the following situation:

We have a very elaborate system in place set up by lawyers [LO]

Following the quotes made by the respondents at Omega as sign of dissatisfaction it would seem that the principal operates somehow autocratically. Research has shown that an autocratic leader has the following distinct characteristics (Wiles & Lovell, 1967:71):

- He or she shares the problem with subordinates and obtains their ideas and suggestions and then makes decisions that may not reflect the subordinates' influence. This was clearly indicated when the teachers asked for March exam and the top management team decided against it without their input or consultation;
- There is lack of communication and all the channels of communication go via the principal;
- There is laxity when the superior is absent. This was clearly articulated by the teachers and their views are encapsulated in following quotes:

The management staff would tell you eh...O.K. I think in the meantime you can do this but wait until the principal is back and then we can ask him [TO]

Because of this tight control it is apparent that his management team is largely dependent on him.

- There is little if any sharing of authority – he does things without consultation. This was clearly demonstrated when the principal, together with his management team, decided to build a room in which to put all the trophies of the school. This kind of project in the first place needs money, and it is a long-term project which requires a lot of consultation.

Colgate (in Peters, 1976:110) has this to say about autocratic leaders:

Heads and schools cannot escape the challenge of changed circumstances. The traditional head who was a benevolent autocrat served his period exceedingly well. To my mind, however, the authoritarian head is obsolete today. To attempt this style would be to court disaster.

5.4.3 Theme C: Strategies for effective decision-making

Strategies in this research study may be described as mechanisms perceived to be essential by those who have had experience of decision-making in their settings. The strategies are encapsulated in the following categories:

THEME C: STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING	
CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Delegation	—
2. Changing school structure	—
3. Communication	—
4. Involvement	—

It is contended that these strategies will contribute towards addressing the dissatisfaction and concerns raised by the respondents during the interviews. Again, it is assumed that these strategies will contribute to the recommendations of this study.

5.4.3.1 Category 1: Delegation of decisions / duties

From the interviews the researcher conducted with the respondents in both cases, teachers, and parents in particular, seemed to be in agreement and suggested that for effective decision-making to occur in schools, principals must be prepared to delegate some of their responsibilities to their subordinates.

I think if the headmasters of secondary schools can delegate and can get people to do certain areas for them and leave them to do the work [PO]
...people are allocated certain areas and they can really give attention to that and the whole school must not be anymore depended on one person doing everything [TO]
The school should have committees in place and give them powers to make decisions [PA]
Delegating responsibilities to people you are working with to me is very crucial [TA]

Delegation of decision-making is regarded as entrusting authority to others. An administrator assigns specific decisions to others, usually subordinates (Hoy and Sousa, 1984:321). Under such circumstances, the subordinates are then free to make their decisions without further consultation with the supervisor. Principals who delegate recognize that they are yielding some of their authority and that, for the most part, they are bound by the subordinates' decisions. When a principal voluntarily delegates important duties to a teacher or group of teachers, the principal shows confidence in the ability of teachers to reach acceptable, reasonable, and useful decisions.

Unlike Alpha, where the respondents indicated that even if the principal is away things still run smooth, at Omega the researcher found evidence attesting that the principal is reluctant to delegate his decision-making responsibilities to other people.

If he goes away for the week we carry on with the school but we can't make any decisions. The management staff would tell you eh...O.K. I think in the meantime you can do this but wait until the principal is back and then we can ask him. That is just not good enough anymore not in this situation that we are in teaching these days in South Africa. [TO]

Research studies by Hoy and Sousa (1984:327-328) found that the willingness of principals to delegate important decisions to teachers can result in potential benefits for the school organization. First, teachers are less likely to perceive a strong authority structure and thus may be more apt to identify with the school and objectives of the school. Second, teachers gain a greater sense of job satisfaction, which tends to produce improved attitudes toward their work and the other people with whom they work. Third, teachers are more inclined to show loyalty to their principals.

The failure of the Omega principal to delegate duties resulted in dissatisfactions raised by respondents as discussed above. Given the many reforms in the democratic South African education, it is difficult to cope single-handed with all the functions that need to be performed. There is a need to share the reform overload with others. Doing more does not of itself mean doing better. If one does too much alone, nothing gets done properly and one may quickly get exhausted and then what was going well deteriorates (Hopkins et al., 1994:12). Apart from sharing responsibility, delegation can give others the opportunity to try their talents and skills. In the process, they are also afforded the chance to learn new skills by being exposed to new tasks

5.4.3.2 Category 2: Changing school structure

Mechanisms for teacher participation in school management, such as departmental structures, staff meetings and different school committees have existed for many years, although the degree of authority granted to teachers varies considerably (Kirby and Colbert, 1994:43). Such committees, however, are often chaired by the principals and do not operate under independent authority. Teachers are usually constrained by agenda items selected by the principal and they are only relegated to “fill in the details” (Conley et al., 1988:268).

In this study it was clearly demonstrated that the school management teams take most of the decisions at both cases. In spite of that, teachers at Omega felt that the existing structure was no longer applicable and should be revisited.

<p>I think the whole management structures in this school is totally outdated. They have changed the syllabus they have changed the school environment in South Africa but they have never changed the structures Now where in life do you get in these days a person in the business doing absolutely everything taking all the decisions [TO]</p>

The views uttered by the teachers encapsulated above are also supported by the view that democratising schools implies that schools structures need to change to allow for greater participation (Dimmock, 1995:172). The school structures should be organised in such a way that hierarchical differences are diminished and that teachers are given professional

autonomy and collegial involvement in decisions (Erlandson and Bifano, 1987:35; Evans, 1996:55). This is also confirmed by Smyth (1995:169), who advocates flatter organizational structure for the sake of effectiveness. Figure 3.4 in Chapter Three illustrates a flatter structure, showing the participation of other stakeholders in a school organizational set-up.

5.4.3.3 Category 3: Communication

Effective communication, according to Fielding (1997:3) is vital if an organization has to survive. It is critical to the success of an organization. Carrel (1997) contends that communication resembles a glue that binds various elements, coordinates activities, allows people to work together and produces results. Organisational communication is defined by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services (ACASA) (in Hannagan, 1998:266) as “the provision and passing of information and instructions which enable a company or any employing organization to function efficiently and employees to be properly informed about developments. It covers information of all kinds which can be provided; the channels along which it passes; and the means of passing it”

During the group interviews in both cases, the respondents seemed to agree on recommending this strategy for effective decision-making in secondary schools.

I think the most important thing it's communication [TA]
...if your are the headmaster ensure that there is good communication and working together between yourself and the governing body then you will be able to solve numerous problems jointly [PRA]
You must...eh...communicate information to all stakeholders [LA]
I think really there must be room for communication between all stakeholders [TO]
...certainly communication is important [LO]
Stakeholders must be informed all the times eh...headmaster must communicate information [PRO]

Communication, as Hannagan (1998:269) rightly points out, enables organizations to coordinate their activities. Through downwards, upwards and horizontal communication as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.6.3, top management and employees can come

to a common understanding about issues at hand through constant consultations and feedback. In this way the employees get a chance of making contributions.

5.4.3.4 Category 4: Involvement

Involvement means overt active participation in one or more of the phases of decision-making, as illustrated in Chapter Two, Figure 2.1, such as attending meetings, providing or gathering information or casting a ballot. Table 3.2 in Chapter Three provides much help in the consideration of who needs to be involved in what and to what end. Research has demonstrated that involvement in decision-making is associated with a number of individual and organizational school outcomes. Among these are greater teacher morale and satisfaction, organizational commitment and acceptance of change, and cooperation and reduction of conflict (Hoy and Sousa, 1984; Schneider, 1984).

During the individual interviews and the focus group sessions the researcher conducted in both cases, involvement of other people featured strongly and was recommended as one of the strategies that can enhance effective decision-making. The respondents agreed on this strategy.

Eh...consulting other people and involving them in whatever matters that affect them is important [TA]
Eh...I think all stakeholders must be involved in decision-making processes [PA]
...someone must not just make decision alone must involve other people [LA]
To me the involvement of other people in decision-making is the bottom line [PRA]
...all the parties must be involved [PRO]
That the principal consults and involves other role players [PO]
...other people's views must be considered [TO]
...the involved parties must have a say in decision-making that's why we feel strongly about it which has to improve at this school and other schools [LO]

Although the strategy above is being viewed as an effective mechanism for decision-making, it surfaced in this study that principals at both cases at times did not involve other people in decision-making processes. Instead, they resorted to “telling and selling” strategies. And this was viewed as non-participatory decision-making.

Where teachers are given an opportunity to participate in decision-making, indications are that they experience job satisfaction and higher morale (Vavrus,1978:40). In his study, Carpenter (1971) looked at schools with different organizational structures and found that teacher job satisfaction was greatest where there were fewest “layers” of authority. In the final evaluation of the Teacher Involvement Project, Emrick and Peterson (1978) state that teachers listed the following benefits of their involvement in school decision-making:

- improved staff morale;
- increased communications with administrators;
- more efficient use of meeting time;
- better sense of professionalism and job satisfaction, and
- protection of teacher interests.

Bridges (1964) found that teachers’ attitude toward principals were more favourable where opportunities for their involvement were greater. This was clearly demonstrated by Alpha respondents who claimed that they were satisfied regarding the way decisions were taken at the school. On the contrary, the respondents of Omega registered great concerns and dissatisfaction regarding the way decision processes unfolded. That created a feeling of disgust among the respondents.

However, Pejza (1985) has this to say about involvement in decision-making processes:

A principal has to learn that he or she can’t do it all. The old style of one-man leadership does not work in this day and age...People who participate in and help formulate a decision will support it...they will work hard to make it go because it is their idea and has become part of their life.

Drawing on this view one may conclude that open, collegial, and participative relations between the principals and other people are necessary if schools are to become truly professional organizations.

5.5 SYNTHESIS OF EMERGENT PATTERNS

The main purpose of this chapter was to analyse and interpret data obtained by way of the questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire in this case was used specifically to elicit background information about the secondary schools under investigation. An attempt was made to present the research findings as factually and as objectively as possible in order to enhance trustworthiness.

Each of the research questions addressed the research problem: *‘How do secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province make decisions?’* Three themes, namely, “definition of SDM”, “Decision-making” and, “Strategies for effective decision-making” were developed. Each theme gave rise to categories and sub-categories and these were discussed. Relevant quotes from respondents were made and this was principally aimed at presenting a coherent, disciplined, defensible and scientifically sound argument. Literature control was also done in respect of each theme, category and sub-category to establish whether other researchers found it important or not. However, as indicated below, the following areas needed to be addressed in order to enhance the effectiveness of the whole process of decision-making in the secondary schools under study and elsewhere.

The findings have revealed that both cases had a problem of **racial conflict** among the learners. As schools integrate in terms of learners from different backgrounds, there is a need for developing a strategy to equip managers and other role players with skills for managing cultural diversity. Gene and Galluzzo (1991:57) argued that “If the culture inside and outside the school does not change,” “those inside the school will find it difficult to take charge of shared decision-making.” The authors further argued that if mistrust and apprehension exist among the people, SDM is not easily accepted. Consequently, principals need to build trust among the participants prior to their involvement in decision-making processes.

Again, it was discovered that **autonomy**, as far as recommendation for appointment and dismissal of staff are concerned, is limited and the SGBs are bound by the FSED rules

and regulations. There is a need for greater autonomy in areas such as appointment and dismissal of staff in order to increase number of successful schools in the Free State Province.

Also in both schools it emerged that there is **common understanding** of the concept SDM. This indicated that democratic structures entrenched in the South African Schools Act of 1996 were in place. Although the democratic structures existed, it surfaced that decision-making processes were still carried out according to the **hierarchical structures** of the schools with the principals and their management teams taking most of the decisions. At Omega in particular, the respondents registered deep **concerns regarding the way decisions are taken** in the school. Their reasons for dissatisfaction included **lack of communication** on the part the principal, inability of the principal to utilize other **people's knowledge** (human resource), unpreparedness of the principal to **share power** with other people, unacceptable **disciplinary policy and procedure**. On the contrary, respondents at Alpha seemed **satisfied** regarding the way decisions were taken. The fact that there were **open channels of communication**, and other stakeholders were **consulted and involved in decision-making processes** that on its own created a healthy working environment.

The last part of the interview questions invited opinions and suggestions for effective decision-making in the secondary schools in general. Suggestions proposed by the respondents included the following:

- **delegation of duties by the principals;**
- **changing of the existing school decision-making structures to be flatter, downward, upward and horizontal communication within the school; and**
- **involvement /participation of other people in the decision-making processes.**

The next chapter provides the findings and makes recommendations based on the above discussions and the suggestions proposed by the respondents for effective decision-making in the secondary schools under study.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, CONCLUSION, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDICES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study the researcher set out to investigate and explore effective decision-making of principals in secondary schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District (THMOED) of the Free State Province. A deliberate attempt was made to find out how teachers, learners, parents and the principals perceived and experienced decision-making processes in their settings. The results were analysed by presenting themes, categories and their respective sub-categories. Relevant quotes from respondents were cited as a way of presenting defensible and scientifically sound arguments. This was done with reference to the aims and objectives of this study as stated in Section 1.5 of Chapter One. These included the following:

- to describe key issues and strategies of effective decision-making with view a to producing a conceptual framework.
- to explore decision-making strategies in place at secondary schools in the THMOED.
- to review participation of stakeholders within the school organizational structure.
- to describe strategies for effective decision-making perceived by the respondents in secondary schools in the THMOED.
- to capture the views and opinions of the respondents regarding the way decisions are taken in their settings.

Following the theoretical discussions in Chapters Two and Three, and the empirical findings and discussions in Chapter Five, a summary of the major findings, recommendations, issues for further research, study limitations, fulfillment of the research objectives, conclusions are provided in the next section.

6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

This section provides a summary of the research study. It gives a general overview of what is contained in each chapter of the study.

The entire research process unfolded as follows:

Chapter One attempted to situate the study within the broad milieu in which it is concerned. This chapter also covered the context of the research problem. The problem was formulated and discussed in depth and the research question was demarcated. The objectives and the significance of the research were covered and a brief description of the research methodology employed. Finally, the chapter outlined the presentation of the entire study.

Chapter Two mainly aimed at providing a conceptual framework of decision-making. The chapter gave an exposition of decision-making in terms of its definition, major types, and techniques associated with group decision-making. It was again necessary to provide an aspect of decision-making styles in order to facilitate a proper understanding of the concept and its application by principals in schools. The chapter closed with an exposition on selecting the appropriate decision-making styles. However, much of the research studies done nationally and internationally seemed to indicate that democratic and participative approaches are the most effective decision-making styles.

Chapter Three provided an overview of the concept of shared decision-making in the South African context. Traditionally, in South Africa, school governance and management have been hierarchical and authoritarian in nature. Locus of control and decision-making powers had resided mainly in the school principal, with minimal or no participation from teachers, learners and parents. With the introduction of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), South African schools moved towards increased decentralized and democratic school governance. The rationale for the introduction of the Schools Act was essentially to ensure that teachers, learners, parents and non-teaching staff actively and democratically participate in the governance and management of their

schools, more specifically in the decision-making processes. Research has shown that participative decision-making has the potential to improve the quality of decisions. However, participatory decision-making does not materialise within the framework of an autocratic decision-making style. In their research work on the perception of staff on their involvement in decision-making, Steyn and Squelch (1997:7) found that teachers wanted a say and not a mere adherence to autocratic decisions of the principal. Therefore, this finding necessitated an empirical investigation of effective decision-making of secondary school principals in the THMOED of the Free State Province (See chapter 5).

Chapter Four focused on the entire research design and methodology. This entailed individual interviews with principals and focus group sessions with groups of learners, parents and teachers. Basically, the respondents were asked to respond to four questions that would help the researcher to assess how they perceived decision-making processes in their natural settings. The following questions were posed:

1. *What is your understanding of the concept shared decision-making?*
2. *Could you tell me how decisions are taken in this school?*
3. *Could you tell me about a real problem or any incident that has occurred recently in this school and how it was dealt with?*
4. *What strategies would you recommend regarding implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?*

The interviews were recorded on audiotapes and transcribed verbatim. Relevant respondents' quotes were used in the data analysis in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five dealt with the discussion and interpretation of the respondents' views and the results. Themes, categories and subcategories were determined and clustered according to their degrees of relevance to each theme. These themes, categories and subcategories were discussed individually and the relevance of each theme to the research problem was shown, and in turn, each category or sub-category was connected to its theme. Where applicable, each theme, category or sub-category was discussed with the

support of relevant literature and pertinent quotes from the respondents. This style contributed immensely to the coherence of the argument during the discussion of the results.

Chapter Six contains a summary of the chapters, a synthesis of the major findings of the study, recommendations, study limitations, fulfillment of the research objectives, conclusion, bibliography and appendices.

6.3 SYNTHESIS OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings, for which specific recommendations are proposed later in this chapter, are the following:

6.3.1 Need for racial and cultural tolerance

Both schools experienced problems of racial conflict among learners. Black learners expressed a concern that they were not adequately represented in the decision-making structures of the schools. Their plight was further exacerbated by the fact that the entire teaching personnel was of one race. According to the black learners, schools should not discriminate on the basis of colour, race and culture. They believe that staff composition and the student body would have to be more diversified in terms of race, gender, and culture as prescribed by the South African Schools Act of 1996 (see 5.2.1.2, table 5.1).

6.3.2 The need for greater decision-making powers

It emerged in both cases that autonomy as far as appointment and dismissal of staff are concerned was limited. In this regard, the School Governing Bodies are bound by Free State Education's rules and regulations. Decentralised school governance presupposes a devolvement of power from the central level down through the system to the local level. According to Hanson (1998:12) devolvement of power refers to the transfer of authority to a unit (school) that can act independently, or without first asking for permission. Thus, the unit (school) functions in its own name and accepts far greater responsibility for its actions (see 5.2.1.6, table 5.6).

6.3.3 The need for proper understanding of SDM

There is a common understanding of the concept SDM among all the participants at both cases. The participants viewed SDM as a process of making decisions in a collaborative manner in a school. Their views concur with the view that: “One of the first steps to the success with SDM is understanding what it is” (Glickman, 1993:80-87). Again, their views were in agreement with the contents of the South African Schools Act of 1996. The Act advocates the establishment of democratic structures for school governance and management composed of learners, teachers, parents and non-teaching staff. Such a type of governance was created with the purpose of reducing and eliminating apartheid bureaucratic control in order to enhance SDM in post-apartheid schools. This study discovered that such governance structures (hereafter called school governing bodies) existed in both cases. Again, the governing bodies were composed of all the stakeholders i.e. learners, teachers, parents and non-teaching staff. These structures met once in a month to communicate about school issues, or to respond to crises (see 5.4.1.1)

6.3.4 Call for greater participation in decision-making

The decision-making processes in both cases were still carried out according to the hierarchical structures of the schools. Most of the decisions were mainly performed by the school management teams i.e. the principal, deputy principal and heads of the departments with minimal or no participation by other people. This was viewed as non-participatory decision-making. Non-participatory decision-making is characterized by leader-centred, telling and selling approaches. The situation was found to be prevailing in both schools, but was worse at Omega. Our view is that the more power is centralized in one or a few individuals the more likely it is that they will dominate the decision-making process. The situation is evident at Omega where teachers complained about the top management giving instructions on issues already decided upon without their inputs. That was really a problem to them (teachers) (see 5.4.2.1).

6.3.5 Enabling leadership

The participants in Alpha were generally satisfied regarding the way decisions were taken at the school. The members of the SGB, parents in particular, were perceived to be satisfied and proud of the way the school ran. Teachers indicated that the inputs from other people were readily accepted and feedback given in every morning staff meetings by the leadership. Communication seemed flourishing (see 5.4.2.1).

6.3.6 Pivotal factors for dissatisfaction with regard to decision-making

The participants in Omega appeared dissatisfied and expressed some concerns regarding the way decisions were taken at the school. Their concerns were directed at the management and encompassed issues such as ineffective communication, lack of transparency, unacceptable disciplinary procedure, autocratic leadership style and undemocratic centralized decision-making. Teachers and learners complained about poor communication and lack of transparency in the school. Parents and learners complained about the existing disciplinary procedure in the school. Finally, the teachers viewed the principal as autocratic (see 5.4.2.2).

6.3.7 Strategies for effective decision-making

The participants in both cases agreed on the following as effective mechanisms to enhance decision-making in secondary schools: delegation of duties and sharing of power, changing of the school structures to become flatter, communication – upward, downward and horizontal, and finally involvement or participation of other people in decision-making processes (see 5.4.3).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to specific strategies for effective decision-making proposed by the participants in both schools in Chapter Five, the following general recommendations are made to ensure that shared decision-making in secondary schools succeeds:

6.4.1 Recommendations for the secondary school principals

6.4.1.1 Intergroup Development

Intergroup development is premised on the fact that there is a dysfunctional conflict existing between groups. Intergroup development seeks to change the attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes that groups have of each other, according to Carrel (1997:53). Principals can introduce various activities in which learners from different backgrounds in terms of race, gender, politics, education and culture can participate. In that way it is presumed that conflict can be managed and groups helped to tolerate one another. Recognition of other languages and cultures can be given a major boost through organization of cultural days in which activities include display of attires and other rituals. Again, by introducing language lessons and communication with speakers of other languages, intergroup relations WOULD be enhanced.

6.4.1.2 Communication

In a democratically managed school, lines of communication between the different systems should be as open (transparent) as possible, to facilitate maximum participation in the life of the school. It is therefore recommended that the existing communication channels such as staff meetings, team briefing, group gatherings, circular letters, minutes of meetings and intercom be used effectively so that people should be kept informed about issues that affect the school and their lives.

6.4.1.3 Create a climate for risk-taking

Principals should take into account that their staff members have the ability to make good decisions, and that they should participate in decision-making and that better decisions could be made as a result of their participation. This might imply staff training or creating opportunities for staff to develop. Making mistakes should also be seen as learning rather than inability.

6.4.1.4 Provide an opportunity for collegiality

It is often difficult for principals to share responsibility with other people. Baker and Gaunt (1996:20) define organizations like schools as collected groups of people that are constructed to achieve specific goals, which cannot be met by individuals alone. It is therefore recommended that teachers, learners, parents and non-teaching staff, through their legitimate representative (herein called school governing body) should participate in decision-making processes that affect them.

6.4.1.5 Networking

Networking is a powerful way of providing informal opportunities for communication and support between groups with similar interests. Principals in secondary schools in the THMOED need to strengthen their network. Networking in education at local level holds the possibility of drawing a wide range of community and other interest groups with some specific skills into strategic partnerships. In the light of the above, it is recommended that a database of contacts be created in a school and communicated to other stakeholders. The database of contacts should include: principals of successful schools, governing bodies, teachers' organizations, tertiary institutions, businesses, NGOs and other interest groups in education. A growing collaboration with these contacts can assist with advice and support systems.

6.4.1.6 Avail professional development opportunities

One of the most important concerns about implementation of shared governance in South African schools is the issue of expertise and the availability of parents. School governing bodies are made up of individuals who possess different levels of expertise and experience and who have various goals for being school governors. Therefore, schools are encouraged to invest in their training and development to ensure that school governors have the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to participate more meaningfully in decision-making processes of the school.

6.4.1.7 Access to resources

Access to resources and information is considered a prerequisite for effective shared governance. According to Guskey and Peterson (1996:13), school governing body members must ensure that they make decisions based on valid evidence rather than persuasive opinion. It is therefore suggested that principals need to ensure that relevant information is collected and disseminated so that people are kept up-to-date with developments and issues and are in a better position to make informed decisions.

6.4.2 Recommendations for the Department of Education

6.4.2.1 Sensitivity to diversity

Since schools integrate in terms of teachers and learners from different background, the department should put in place a policy on diversity management. A task team should be instituted with its main focus on diversity management issues. It is critically important for the department to set up policies, which will guide interest groups in education on how to maintain relations in schools in order to avoid racial conflicts.

Some of the interventions necessary to manage diversity in the school environment include the following:

- the inclusion of diversity management in pre-service and in-service training;

- training programmes in diversity management for governing body members;
- the establishment of specially constituted human relations committees in a school to deal with problems related to diversity.

6.4.2.2 Greater autonomy to schools

Decentralising power and authority to schools has become a cornerstone of the systematic education reform movement worldwide. Reasons for devolvement of power include:

- moving decision-making and accountability to schools would improve performance and
- moving decision-making and accountability to schools meant redistributing power among local stakeholders such as teachers, learners and managers.

This would make schools more responsive to the educational needs of local communities. Orstein (1989:1) maintains that injection of resources (material and human) without devolving relevant decision-making powers and functions to schools will contribute little to systematic education change. The Free State Education Department will need to accept that school personnel will only be effective if relevant decision-making powers and functions are transferred to schools.

6.4.2.3 Flattening the hierarchical school structure

With the introduction of the South African Schools Act of 1996, the post-apartheid South African schools have subsequently moved to shared school governance. However, there remains within the governance model a hierarchical structure of authority. In other words, decision-making practices still adhere to formal lines of authority, with the principal largely retaining final authority over decision-making processes. Democratising schools implies that school structures need to change to allow for greater participation. It is therefore recommended that the school organization should be structured in such a way that hierarchical differences are diminished and that teachers are given professional autonomy and collegial involvement in decision-making processes. This is also confirmed by Smyth (1995:169) who advocates flatter organizations structures for the sake of effectiveness.

6.4.2.4 In-service training of principals

In-service training is seen as an indispensable contribution of education departments towards the empowerment of principals. If principals are not empowered in decision-making skills, it follows that they cannot practice what they do not know. It is therefore recommended that the education department should set up training programmes that will provide principals with the necessary knowledge and skills to work collaboratively. Courses in leadership, human relations and group process are crucial for empowerment.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research had the following limitations:

- The study focused only on two secondary schools. The results may therefore not apply to all other secondary schools in the Free State Province or country. However, there may be great similarities between what was happening in the secondary schools investigated in terms of decision-making and other secondary schools in the Free State and the Republic of South Africa.
- The research study relied mainly on the interviews conducted with the participants and, therefore, the findings reflect the views and the opinions of the people captured at that time.
- The data gathered through personal interviews may be biased by various factors e.g. a tendency of the researcher to seek answers that support the researcher's preconceived notions; misunderstanding, by the respondent, of what was being asked for; and misinterpretation by the researcher, of what the respondent is saying, to mention but a few. Through a process of member checking and verifying meanings of respondents, this was reduced.

6.6 FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

It is the researcher's view that the objectives of the study have been satisfied in so far as it is possible to conduct an academic enquiry of this type. The researcher was able to draw on a fairly wide range of literature in the field of decision-making and shared decision-making. The researcher was able to utilize data gathered through questionnaires, observations, documentation and interviews. Schools were readily accessible for investigation considering co-operation accorded in order to conduct the research. A conclusion can therefore be drawn: The whole research process was a successful venture.

6.7 ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- The research indicated that there were mixed feelings (satisfaction and concern among the participants) regarding the way decision-making processes are carried out in their schools. Therefore, it is critical that on-going studies be conducted to assess what other people perceive to be occurring. The participants' aspirations in the area of decision-making need constant review.
- Critics of the way schools are governed and organized, amongst others Kartz (1992), cited the exclusion of teachers from school decision-making process as part of their arguments: It is suggested that exploratory inquiries be conducted to reveal the extent of teacher participation in the various categories and phases of decision-making processes. The guiding research question should be: "What types of participation do teachers want and which do they find most satisfying?"
- Another program of research must seek to determine if and how the principal's role in post-apartheid school decision-making can be changed to achieve desired transformation. The guiding questions should be: 1) should principals be trained or the organizational structure of the school be changed to allow for greater participation? 2) should teachers and other stakeholders be trained to participate more effectively in decision-making process?

6.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The research study attempted to explore effective decision-making of principals in secondary schools in the Free State Province, more specifically in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The major findings regarding the way decisions are carried out in two schools were outlined. Thereafter the researcher proceeded to make certain recommendations, which could be of some use to the principals and the education authorities. Finally, the researcher outlined the limitations of the study and commented on the objectives of the research.

Following the contents of Chapter Five and the major findings listed in section 6.3 above it is evident that democratic models of decision-making were insufficiently used or completely overlooked by the principals. Concerns raised by the participants at Omega were clear indications that much needed to be done to change the mind-set of some principals.

This research can only be regarded as a breakthrough by revealing that control and decision-making powers are still mainly resided in the school principals with minimal participation from teachers, learners and parents. However, it is contended that the success of democratic school governance will depend on various factors such as the structures and processes created to help governors to operate, the maximum use of resources (financial and human) available and the training opportunities for principals in the transformative governance of schools.

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APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION: QUESTIONNAIRE (Code:001)

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Year in which the school was established	
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1.2 Location	
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SECTION 2: LEARNERS

2.1 Number of learners:

2.2.1 Full-time learners

2002 - Across all subjects	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Grade			

2.2 Racial composition of learners attending your school, 2002:

Category	% of the total learner population
Black	
Coloured	
White	
Indian	
Other specify	

2.3 Other information on learners:

2.3.1 Estimate the percentage of learners attending your school from other provinces.	
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2.3.3 Does your school register part-time learners?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, provide details in terms of grades, and the number of part-time registered learners:

Details: Grade	Number of learners

2.3.4 Please indicate the range of pass rates, in 2001 across all subjects by grades:

Grade	Pass Rates (Percentage)

SECTION 3: STAFF INFORMATION

Teaching Staff

3.1 Number of staff:

a. Number of full-time teaching posts at your school	
b. Number of part-time teaching posts at your school	

3.2 Post structure:

Description	Post level	Number of posts
a. Principal		
b. Deputy Principal(s)		
c. Head of Department		
d. Teachers		
e. Other specify		

3.3 Teaching staff details (Use a separate paper):

Post at School	Degree(s) completed	Professional qualification(s)	Teaching experience		Qualification Category REQV 10-17	Population Group	Male / Female	Appointment P-Permanent T-Temporary
			School	Other				

Administrative Staff:

3.4 Administrative staff details

Description of post	Vacant Posts	Number of males	Number of females	Number of persons appointed according to population group			
				Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians
a. Senior administrative							
b. Senior clerks							
c. Clerks							
d. Typist							
e. Other specify							

3.4.1 Computer facilities:

a. Number of computers for administrative purposes'	
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Rate the computing resources available for administrative purposes:

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Non-existent
-----------	------	----------	------------	--------------

3.5 Number of maintenance and cleaning staff:

Description of post	Vacant Posts	Number of males	Number of females	Number of persons appointed according to population group			
				Blacks	Whites	Coloureds	Indians
a. Caretakers / supervisors							
b. Cleaners of buildings							
c. Ground staff							
d. Other specify							

SECTION 4: SCHOOL FACILITIES

4.1 Teaching facilities:

Kind of facility	Number
Classrooms	
Laboratory for teaching science	
Laboratory for teaching biology	
Rooms for technical subjects	
Rooms for Home Economics	
Typing rooms	
Computer science rooms	
Special rooms for needle work	
Special rooms for arts	
Library	
Other (specify)	

4.2 Residence (Hostel) accommodation:

4.2.1 Any residence accommodation at your school

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, give details

	Male	Female
a. Total number of residences (Hostels)		

4.3 Does your school have the following:

a. Electricity	Yes	No
b. Running water	Yes	No
c. External security fencing	Yes	No

4.4 Printing and photocopying facilities:

a. Does the school have a photocopying room?	Yes	No
b. How many photocopying machines does the school have?		

Rate the printing and copying facilities:

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Non-existent
-----------	------	----------	------------	--------------

4.5 Rate the sporting facilities at your school:

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Non-existent
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4.6 Who is responsible for organizing extra-mural activities at the school?

	Yes	No
a. Principal		
b. Students		
c. Teachers		
d. Democratically elected committees		
e. Other (specify)		

SECTION 5: ADMISSION AND SELECTION OF LEARNERS / CURRICULUM

Admission and selection of learners:

5.1 Indicate whether any of the following admission criteria applies at your school:

	Yes	No
a. Tests constructed by the school		
b. Tests constructed by an outside agency		
c. Use of personality profile		
d. Departmental selection (i.e. school has no say)		
e. Based on previous grades examinations results		
f. Interviews organized by the school		
g. Language proficiency tests		
h. Other specify		

5.2 Applications for places:

	2001 Intake	2002 Intake
a. Total number of applications received by your school		
b. Total number of learners actually admitted		

Syllabus and Curriculum Design:

5.3 Who is responsible for school's curriculum?

	Yes	No
a. Department of Education		
b. School governing body		
c. Other (specify)		

5.4 Do the learners play a role in this process?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, please describe this role:

5.5 Do professional organizations play a role in this process?

Yes	No
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If yes, please explain their role:

5.6 State communication medium used at the school

SECTION 6: SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

School Governing Body:

- 6.1 Does your school have a school governing body?.....**
- 6.2 If yes, when was the governing body established?.....**
- 6.3 Under what legislation was the governing body established?.....**

- 6.4 How many members serve on the governing body?.....**

- 6.5 What stakeholder groups are represented on the governing body?**

	Yes	No
a. Teaching profession		
b. Local community		
c. Department of Education		
d. University representatives		
e. LRC		
f. Non-academic staff		
g. Other (specify)		

6.6 Complete the following table regarding the powers of the governing body:

	Considerable Say	Some say	Little say	No say	Not applicable
a. Financial affairs of the school					
b. Appointment of staff					
c. Disciplining of staff					
d. Dismissal of staff					
e. Overall management of the school					
f. Disciplining of students					
g. Appraisal of staff					
h. Other (specify)					

6.7 Does governing body have any committees that report to it?

Yes	No	Not applicable
-----	----	----------------

If yes, please list them:

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Learners Representative Council (LRC):

6.8 Does your school have an LRC?

Yes	No
-----	----

6.9 How was the LRC chosen?

	Yes	No
a. By the Principal		
b. Nominated by the staff but elected by students		
c. Democratically nominated and elected by students		
d. Elected by staff only		
e. Elected by staff and students		

6.10 What are the powers of the LRC?

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6.11 How is the LRC financed?

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6.12 What authority does the LRC exercise over its budget?

Complete authority	Some authority but subject to the Rector's approval	Little authority	No authority
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6.13 Does the LRC serve on any of the committees / structures of the school?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, please list them:

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SECTION 7: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

School Management:

7.1 Are there committees that assist with the management of the school?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, please list them:

--

7.2 Indicate whether your school is autonomous in the following areas?

	Yes	No
a. Examinations		
b. Syllabus		
c. Selection of textbooks		
d. Other (specify)		

Capacity building:

7.3 How regularly is staff appraisal carried-out at your school?

Annually	Every second year	Every fifth year	Seldom	Never
----------	-------------------	------------------	--------	-------

7.4 Who are involved in the appraisal of staff?

	Yes	No
a. Learners		
b. Management		
c. Colleagues		
d. Heads of Departments		
e. The community		
f. Department of Education		
g. Other (specify)		

7.5 What programs for staff development does your school provide?

	Yes	No
a. Internal school workshops		
b. University courses		
c. NGO programs		
d. Attendance at seminars / conferences		
e. Inter-school subject workshops / seminars		
f. Funding of local conference attendance		
g. Funding National Conference attendance		
h. Funding International Conference attendance		
i. Other (specify)		

7.6 Is assistance provided for staff development in the form of:

	Yes	No
a. Bursaries granted by educational authorities		
b. Staff development fund established by the school		
c. Study leave		

7.7 What procedures exist for settling grievances:

(a) Between staff and learners:

(b) Between learners and the administration of the school:

7.8 What use, if any, does the local community make of your school?

Extensive use i.e. almost daily	Some, perhaps once per week	Very little, perhaps once per month	No use
------------------------------------	--------------------------------	--	--------

7.9 Indicate the extent of community service projects which your school provides to the local community.

Extensive service	Little service	No service

7.10 Comment on the use that local schools and the rest of the community make of your school.

7.11 Rate the following in terms of the importance which you attach to each:

	Very important	Important	Not important
a. Governance structure			
b. Major curriculum revision			
c. Maintenance of school buildings			
d. Provision of new infra-structure			
e. Staff development			
f. Shared decision-making			
g. Other (specify)			

SECTION 8: FINANCING THE SCHOOL

8.1 Do learners pay school fees at your school?

Yes	No
-----	----

8.2 Who is responsible for determining the school fees?

Educational authorities	Governing body	Other (Specify)

8.3 Do you receive a per capita grant from the Education Department?

Yes	No
-----	----

8.4 Given your present administrative resources would your school be capable of assuming responsibility for the financial affairs of the school (Assume that salaries are paid by educational authorities but that school administrators all other financial affairs)

Yes	No
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If yes, comment on the ability of your school to administer its financial affairs :

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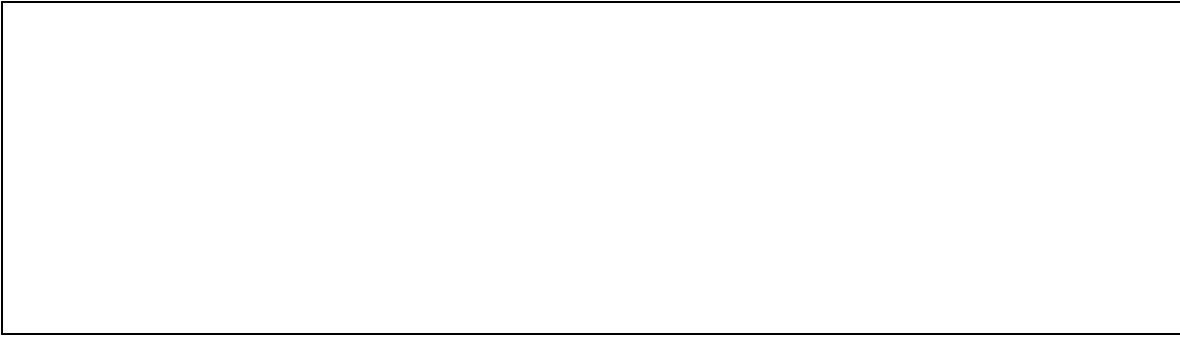
9. COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL:

9.1 State the strong points of your school (i.e. those points that have put your school in a better position than other schools)

9.2 State the weak points of your school (i.e. those points that have put your school in a weaker position than other schools)

9.3 What threats exist that can harm your school?

9.4 What opportunities exist that can benefit your school?



APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?
2. Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?
3. Could you tell me about a management **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how you dealt with it?
4. What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?
2. Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?
3. Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how it was dealt with?
4. What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIBED VERBATIM REPORT OF ALPHA

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND EDUCATORS AT ALPHA SECONDARY SCHOOL

KEY: R= RESEARCHER T1, 2 & 3 = TEACHER 1, 2 & 3.

R: Thank you very much for making your time available to me for this interview on the subject: Decision-making in secondary schools. Firstly, what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

T1: Eh...I understand the concept to mean that decisions concerning the school should not be made solely for example by principal or any individual teacher, that there should be a management team for day to day running of the school who will make decisions but they too would consult with the rest of the staff or with learners if relevant and eh...other matters will be referred to the governing body and the decision-making in that way would be shared. Eh...not an individual decisions that concerns the school.

T3: One thing about shared decision-making is that school leaders must get as much information as possible about the subject and you will not gonna be informed if you have not taught everybody involved eh... I think it's important...

R: Any other addition to the understanding of the concept?

T2: Ja...my understanding of the concept is that there must be wide participation in decision-making. Persons who take part in making a decision usually must feel more enthusiastic about accepting and executing it. Eh...decision-making must not only involve top structure of the school but must include representatives of all levels of the school. Group participation must play an important role.

R: O.K. Thanks very much. Any other input? All right. Let's move on to the second question, which is the way decisions are taken in this school? "Could share with me how **decisions** are taken in this school?"

- T2:** Well, eh...the principal and the management team set up meetings twice a week to discuss certain things and bring it to the staff and if we can't solve it or its more important matter then it's referred to school governing body to make a decision. Eh...it's not a single person that makes the decision, all parties are consulted for their inputs. That's how decisions are taken here.
- R:** Any other input? Eh... generally what do you think regarding the way decisions are taken in this school eh...how do you feel?
- T2:** I think it's good it's not one person making all the rules and the others must follow. It's a shared policy everybody has got a saying.
- T3:** Ja...another thing that is very successful here is that each morning we have got a staff meeting as well and we discuss matters that concern staff and jointly take decision for any problem surfacing or which maybe there. We meet for about ten to fifteen minutes each morning and on Wednesday we have got half an hour meeting with children. Eh...I think that's important to meet and share ideas and it's a continuous thing and it is not a once thing.
- T1:** I think the proof of the pudding we eating is that the school has a good record academically and on the sporting field eh...if running of the school had not been efficient eh... there wouldn't have been the successes that have been regular on a number of years and hopefully will continue. And I think that eh...the fact that we draw pupils from quite a wide area of the Free State means that the reputation of the school is good eh...again reflects on the good management of the school and if the management, which is after all the decision-making was poor then we wouldn't been drawing pupils from all over.
- R:** Thank you, any other input? Let's move on to the third question. Could you tell me about any real **problem** or **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how that particular problem was dealt with?
- T2:** Ok, there was stealing problem two weeks ago we found that one of the computers their mouse were damaged and in one of the electrical classes some of the appliances have disappeared. So the principal called the staff and informed us about the matter as well as the children and told them that if they have information must come forward. And at the end he got the information and got the

two children who stole the things and he contacted their parents so they came in and the matter has been referred to the governing body so they will take decision and see what punishment they will have to get. In fact the matter is now in the hands of the disciplinary committee. According to me the problem is solved because we got the guilty parties and the stolen things have been returned.

T1: And the culprits admitted guilty...

[Disturbance by intercom]

R: Any other problem or incident?

T3: I think if there is anything that needs to be solved or discussed we are informed and it is important to keep everybody positive about you.

T1: I will say problems are largely avoided before they occur like as mentioned earlier we have a short staff meeting every morning so if you have any grievance you are invited to voice it there or if it's a private matter to voice it in the principal's office before the problem arises eh...it can be addressed and I think it's a very successful management tactic.

T3: Another problem, eh...last year the school next door had its toilets damaged causing mess around here and there was threat like fight here. And way the principal actually handled it he called the staff meeting immediately and contacted the police so as to calm down the situation and the matter was solved in that way. So in the emergencies you can't go through all the procedures because you have to act quick but at least at the end of the day the whole thing was solved and it was discovered that our children did not break those toilets. And the staff decided that children of that other school could use the toilets at our sporting fields until theirs are repaired. So that is crisis management any decision made can divide or unite.

T1: So I can comment on that one because I was involved in that incident where our principal invited the principal of the neighbouring school with his learners' council and members of his staff and we had a joint discussion eh...I think as the later speaker mentioned there were some members of police service present but the whole thing that could have been an inflammable situation was solved through a joint discussion with the neighbouring school and a lot of misunderstanding was

cleared up. Eh... because in this case it was found that the toilets had been broken had if fact been smashed but it was not pupils from this school who had done it eh... but the assumption had been it was and just eh...sort of a friendly gesture to neighbouring school the principal offered them the toilets at the sports field until theirs have been repaired. That's sort of eh...joint decision-making going beyond the confined of the school as unit joining hands with the neighbouring school.

T3: And we never had that problem again since....

T1: Another thing that I have to mention is that the learners that come from this school and the learners that come from the neighbouring school had been invited on several occasion to get together on social basis at this school to have cold drinks and snacks where they can share their feelings about each other. Because sometimes children can rub each other at the wrong and spread false stories about themselves and I think in that way you promote peace among them.

T3: Another thing is communication, there must be open communication otherwise you won't solve the problem eh...especially in this case and the social gathering is also very important because when you socialize you are more relaxed and that helps some decisions and...

[cellphone rings]

Sorry eh...in the social conversation the problem is addressed easier and you can identify a problem as soon as possible and it's an important part of decision-making and at the end now you can go make decision proactive.

R: Maybe what you have said is part of strategies, and we are coming to that. Eh... generally what do you think about the way problems are solved in this school, eh...how do feel?

T1: I think it's very successful and for that reason anyone eh...it will be unreasonable and unhappy with the system as it is eh...the system isn't hard and fast I am sure that if the situations were to change and adjustment was necessary rules and stance can't be changed and that's what staff appreciates and accommodation is made as the situation may change. Eh...consulting other people and involving them in whatever matters that affect them is important.

- T2:** Ja...[inaudible]...of the school shows that there has been problem that we couldn't solve and the management of school is good.
- R:** Thank you, any other input? All right let's take the last question. What **strategies** would you recommend regarding implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?
- T2:** I think the most important thing it's communication. I mean at this school we speak to the principal and he too speaks to us, we have got staff meetings every morning and every body knows what's going on and if you have got a problem there is an open door so that you can solve it quickly I think that's the most important thing.
- T1:** Eh...as schools are required to have representative council of learners, we also have which is elected body of learners elected by the learners themselves. But we have additional body of the senior learners which is an internal arrangement eh...where the matric pupils elect the body of what in the old days would have been referred to as prefects but they assist in the communication process and they can bring problems that arise among the learners to the attention of the principal and the staff. They assist the staff in a day-to-day mass control because in a relatively large group it is impossible for the staff to keep an eye on every learner so they assist in that field. And the other point is that the school is becoming more and more racially mixed and is getting large elements of other races and the principal is considering a way of ensuring they can be represented to satisfy their needs.
- T3:** Another strategy that is very successful here is that what the principal does he speaks to different grades at times separately so that if they have anything to rise they can do so and in that way learners feel accepted. Another thing at this school as mentioned by my colleague here we have got different cultures we have got Whites, Blacks, Indians and Chinese so if you don't have the right strategies you gonna have explosive so the communication is very important in this case, depending on what kind of problem might rise sometimes you will talk to African kids in a particular grades and sometimes to Afrikaans speaking to give them

chance to raise their opinions as well. And this strategy is working well at this school.

T1: Eh...above all we have got policies, rules and the staff, learners eh...everybody including the governing body know exactly how the school operates, how things are done and that makes the decision-making easy.

R: Any other strategy. All right. So in the absence of further inputs I have to thank very much once more and I hope your inputs will make a difference elsewhere.

All: Thank you, good luck.

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY AT ALPHA SECONDARY SCHOOL

KEY: **R = RESEARCHER** **P1, 2 = PARENT 1 & 2**

R: Thank you very much for making your time available to me for an interview on the subject: Decision-making in secondary schools. Firstly, what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

P2: My understanding of the concept is that all members of the school governing body should have an input and voting powers regarding final decisions. The principal must investigate the problem then reports and refers the matter to the governing body for consideration and final decision by majority vote. That's my understanding.

P1: When all the stakeholders in that problem you go to them and ask them their opinion and they are part of the decision-making it depends on the problem and who the stakeholders are is going to be and you contact them to give their input as well.

R: Any other understanding of the concept? All right, let's take the second question: could you share with me how **decisions** are taken in this school.
[Disturbance by intercom]

P2: The governing body takes decision by majority vote, that's how we do it here eh...the principal of the school of course discusses the problem with whoever, the children or whatever the case firstly and then takes the problem to the governing body and the governing body makes the decision by majority vote. That's how we make decisions.

P1: What we have got in the governing body is different committees and depends on the problem that committee looks at, say it's a financial problem then is referred to the financial committee they will look into matter, they will discuss it and

- sometimes they will make a decision and sometimes they will refer the problem back to the whole governing body. So in the governing body we have got different committees to look into the matter and finally make decision.
- R:** OK. Any other input? Thank you. What do you think about the way decisions are taken in this school eh...how do you feel?
- P1:** I think is quite good because all the stakeholders are represented especially in the governing body where most of the decisions take place. It is not the kind of decision taken solely by one person and implements it in the school. All the stakeholders make inputs and all the committees in the governing body discuss the problem and then make decision.
- P2:** For instance, we have got a disciplinary committee and when there is discipline related problem before hand they will seat for hearing and discuss the matter first and if necessary they will refer it to the whole governing body for final decision.
- P1:** We also have learners' council represented in the governing body and they too also have inputs in decision-making.
- P2:** That's very important because at meetings we hear things from this learners' council they tell us exactly what we could not have heard from anybody because they are all the times among other learners and they know more than we know as far as learners are concern. So that's very important to have learners represented in the governing body.
- R:** Thank you, any other input? All right, can we take the third question? Could you tell about any real **problem** that has occurred recently in this school and how that particular problem was dealt with?
- P2:** Eh...we had a fighting at the school here and it was investigated by the principal where after it was referred to the disciplinary community eh...and then after the disciplinary committee looked at it listened to what the problem was and then it was referred to the governing body who interviewed the scholar and parents where after punishment was decided upon by the governing body. And eh...we have got rules and policies that assist us to handle various kinds of problems and learners, teachers, everybody is aware of school rules and policies. They know exactly how the school operates.

- P1:** I think one of the biggest things here in October to November is the budget and the way we are doing it eh...the financial committee sits and work out the school budget and what the school fees is going to be and then we refer it to the governing body for approval and their inputs. Thereafter the meeting with the parents is called and budget is discussed with them and if accepted it is approved. In fact their inputs are very important for the smooth running of the school.
- P2:** Eh...we have plenty of incidents happening at the school all the times plenty of bothering but they are handled by the disciplinary committee and of course the governing body. One interesting incident for example, we had a request from Indian parents sometime ago eh...they wanted us to change the school wear of the Indian children not to be the same as the normal school wear we are using here because they wanted their legs covered and all that and eh...that was decided against it because we did not think at that stage it could be the right thing to have different school wear in your school then that will set precedence and everyone would come and want the uniform changed and remember we have different cultures here. It became a real problem and we decided against it so we told Indian parents that there is only one school uniform and it is stated in the school prospectus and they must be happy with it if they are not happy they must tell us and they accepted the decision. That's some of things we encountered at this school and we deal with each problem to the satisfaction of everyone.
- R:** Thank you, eh...generally what think about the way problems are solved in this school, eh...how do you feel?
- P1:** I think definitely I am satisfied and very happy because the results and the outcomes every time is positive so I feel we are on the right track.
- P2:** What is important is that the parents are with learners in the disciplinary committee and of course they are allowed to bring their own lawyers to represent them in a particular case, but we never had problem leading to that. But we do tell them that if you want a representative you are allowed to do that eh...we are open with the parents and everybody.

- R:** Any other thing. O.K. Let's move on to the last question. "What **strategies** would you recommend for effective implementation of decision-making in secondary schools?"
- P2:** What I can say here and this is very important is that if you are the headmaster ensure that there is good understanding and working together between yourself and the governing body then you will be able to solve numerous problems jointly. But if there is no good understanding between the headmaster and the governing body then you have got a problem, because those two people should work hand in hand all the times. Eh...whatever goes wrong at the school the headmaster is the first person to know about that then he consults with the governing body for joint decision on the matter. To me a good relationship between the two bodies is very important.
- P1:** I think first of all eh...all the stakeholders must work together and try to work together because it's for the betterment of the whole school not for an individual. Also I think the committees we have got here are very efficient, it is not whole lot of people who will drag and argue about the problem instead of giving quick fix. And that makes our governing body to work very efficient eh... the number of people elected to work in a particular committee I believe should be manageable.
- P2:** Eh...what is also important but is really a problem are the parents. The parents of the school must help the school they must be there all the time for the school and for the education of their children. That's something you do get it eh...you find same type of parents willing to help the school, what about others? That's a real problem, you know the headmaster writes letters and send out to all the parents but very few will turn up. I have spoken to various headmasters and they also complain about the parents who do not want to get involved or be active in the school activities. For instance when we have the end of our financial year and eh...the day that you arrange a meeting for the parents to be here because that is their monies they must know how the monies are being utilized its unbelievable you only get 15-25 parents of the whole school that attend the meeting. It shows that they are not interested. And the problem does not lie with the headmaster because he writes letters and every learner at this school gets a letter and

eh...there is little slip that a parent must sign and return it back to school to show that he or she received the letter. Others do sign and other do not even sign or come to the meeting. I don't know what else one can do to encourage parents to attend meetings and be actively involved in their education of their children, it's a problem all over. So I still believe that parents play a significant role in the smooth running of the school.

- P1:** I think most of the time things are running smooth at this school and if things do not go well then you will get more parents being involved. As long as things are going well they are happy they don't want to take part in decision-making. That's how I see it. When we have got meeting and they are happy the way we are doing things only few will attend.
- P2:** I give my vote on that one because it is true that things are going very well in this school and if you don't get complains from the people then things are on the right track. No complains no problems.
- P1:** Other thing that we have got here and that I think is excellent for all the learners, sometimes you can't see the headmaster or they are afraid to see him. We have got the post box where they write letters to him. If they have got a problem about a teacher or any other problem they write to him and put the letter in his post box. So he answers every letter that he receives. Although they have got RCL to refer their problem, but this method also assist those learners who would want to share their problems directly with the principal. And since the method was put in place many problems come forward and are solved and learners are happy because they feel accepted and can communicate with the headmaster. That's one strategy I will recommend to other school as a way to assist the RCL.
- P2:** Eh...lastly and this is very important, I think training is very important because sometimes you get teachers being appointed into senior posts at some schools and they don't have necessary training in management and problem solving and the whole kind of that. Therefore I think before they assume their posts they should be trained properly. That is what I found to be lacking in some schools. Proper training. In fact they should be trained how to identify problems, they should be trained to see eh...there is a problem coming in advance. And if the problem

strikes they should know what is the next step and then how are they going to solve the problem and what is the best solutions to the problem that will satisfy everybody not one person only but everybody around you as the headmaster.

R: Thank you, any other strategy. All right, this brings us to the end of our discussion, thank very much once more.

All: Pleasure.

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE LEARNERS AT ALPHA SECONDARY SCHOOL

KEY: R = RESEARCHER L1, 2& 3 = LEARNER 1, 2 & 3

R: Thank you very much for making your time available to me for this interview on the topic: Decision-making in secondary schools. As a first question, what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

L2: Eh...we have school governing body where various parties are represented and if there is a problem is being shared among all the parties and decision is not taken by one person but by the majority vote.

L1: Shared decision-making is where everybody says something and the decision is made through wide spectrum not just eh...one person's point of view. So that's where everybody says something about the decision that is going to be made eh...everybody becomes involves in a decision-making.

L3: I think is very good because like say now there is something new to be introduced in our school like uniform, the principal will ask us what do you think about it and you let us know what have decided about it and if we say yes he will carry it through and be implemented and if we say no then it will be looked into again jointly.

L1: With shared decision-making everybody is happy at the end everyone agrees to the decision taken.

R: Any other addition to the understanding of the concept? O.K. let's move on to the second question. Eh...could you share with me how **decisions** are taken in this school?

L2: Like as I said we have got the governing body and is responsible for most of the decisions eh...in the governing body we have got the parents involved some teachers and the learners and the headmaster. So they take the decision like what's going to happen and everybody has a vote in decision-making and majority rules.

L1: Eh...we usually what the children want they come with ideas to the RCL and we take it further to the principal and if we have to take it to the governing body we

do so. Eh...it is like a snowball effect, one idea starts on the ground and it goes further and further and at the end everyone decides about one thing and everyone is happy at the end. Eh...nobody decides about something if everyone is not happy. First we must get to a point whereby everyone is happy before we decide on something. The teachers must be happy, the learners the governing body that is the parents eh...everybody and all stakeholders are represented in decision-making in this school

L3: I just think it is good here because they ask everyone's opinion before decision is taken and everyone has an input in whatever decisions eh... decision it is not solely made by one person.

R: O.K. Eh...generally how do you feel about the way decisions are taken in this school?

L1: I think I am quite satisfied because I am part of the governing body and I am part of the decision-making and everybody seems happy because they have an input and choice in everything.

L3: I think it is very good that the teachers and principal ask the children what they want and they do not just make decisions and let the children do what they say eh...I think it's okay.

R: Thanks very much, any other input? All right, let's take question three. Eh...could you tell me about any real **problem** that has occurred recently in this school and how that particular problem was solved?

L1: Eh...we had some a racial conflict [coughing]...people were fighting the black guy and white boy and it was a very bad situation because ultimately there were two teams fighting. And then the principal called all the white children into the hall and he talked to them and asked them what ideas can they give him to solve our problem. Then he called all the black children or the African children and then he asked them and he called all the Indian or Asian children and asked their opinion and they gave out their ideas and at the end he talked to everybody. I think we came to a point where everybody just came to a conclusion to bear with one another and just to try to make it easy to all of the parties at the school. So that's one of the problems that occurred recently in this school and it was solved by shared decision-making.

- L1:** Again on discipline of school if you are not happy about something or you do something wrong in the school you get points which would ultimately results into detention. But you can always write letter to the principal and if you think that they are not fair or they are asking too many things and the matter will be discussed with you.
- L2:** I think what is nice about school and the headmaster and so on he has got a post box where you can write him a letter and its confidential and nobody knows about it even the teachers. So if you have got a problem he will answer you in way of letter and you can discuss with him and in many ways you can be happy. If you have got a problem at home or any other problem he will discuss it with you if your are afraid to go straight to him. I think that builds a bond between learners and the headmaster.
- R:** Thank you, eh...generally how do feel about the way problems are solved in this school?
- L1:** We are happy because we are consulted most of the times.
- L2:** Ja...we are satisfied so far.
- R:** O.K. Thanks very much. Let's take the last question which has to do with some strategies for implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools. "What **strategies** would you recommend regarding implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?"
- L1:** You must...eh... you always start at the bottom, with the learners and teachers and then the school governing body. So the learners must come with the idea to the RCL and the RCL can take on so everyone will take it on starts small and goes to the big decisions.
- L3:** They must ask everyone's opinion, what do they think about the matter eh... someone must not just make decision alone must involve other people.
- L1:** The part of the school that makes the school a success is the learner not the teachers because there is no school without learners so you must involve them ask their opinion start with there and take it further.
- L2:** I think you must get the opinion of everyone in the school the learners, teachers everybody, what do they think about a particular issue.

R: Any other strategy, All right that brings us to the end of our discussion, thank you very much once more.

All: Thank you.

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE PRINCIPAL OF ALPHA SECONDARY SCHOOL

KEY: R = RESEARCHER P= PRINCIPAL

R: Thank you very much **Ntate** for making your time available to me for an interview on the subject: Decision-making in secondary schools. Firstly, what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

[Disturbance by intercom]

P: Well everybody must have say, that's why we do school rules we go to the pupils and say these are the school rules they have to say they are okay and they are not satisfied they vote on it every year if they have problem with any school rules. I see the school not just as my school the staff and the school management team (SMT) have a big say on how we run matters. What I like about this is that we have got two pupils on the school governing body and that helps a lot. The school governing body is actually the decision-making body most of the time because it represents parents as well. So to have two pupils there is ideal. On the disciplinary committee we have got one of these pupils represented when disciplinary committee sits in. With the governing body and the principal so we can arrive at the decisions. That's how I understand shared decision-making everybody must have a say.

R: O.K. It is how you understand the concept?

P: Ja...the bottom line is that everybody must have say in decision-making.

R: All right, could you share with me how do you go about in taking decisions at this school eh...in other words how **decisions** taken in this schools?

P: Right mostly well the decisions that involve staff we vote on it and the majority rules. What I mean is that if there is anything to vote on it for learners they vote on it and if its anything from the staff they vote. It happened in the staff room I remember clearly I thought one matter is a very good matter and I lost the vote twenty three one and I was the only one thought was the right thing to do and the whole staff thought you can't do it and it had to do with sport. I wanted to give a

child colour for sport although she did not play in the match she was selected for that team staff felt she had to play and I lost the vote twenty-three to one. It goes on that type of thing we vote on matters and on decision-making. We discuss the matter properly and vote about it and majority decisions rules. But there are certain decisions that staff can't take and the principal has to take and I take that decisions and I stand by my decisions. But if it's a matter for the staff I take it to staff for discussion and if necessary we vote on it in order to reach a decisions. Again I have pupils voting on matters sometimes too, eh...like I allowed my children to colour their hair at school. You wouldn't say that if you look at the colour of the hair of children from different school. And that decision we had to vote on. The staff had to vote on, would we allow them to do that, I couldn't take that type of decision. That's one of the decisions I feel staff takes. Then we go to children, would they like to colour their hair, obviously they want to, they voted all for and they are colouring their hair. So that's a type of decision I would say everybody takes. But eh...for instance decision on the discipline sometimes I have to take on my own. And then I bring in my deputy principal and the two of us actually take decision. I just need a sounding board sometimes I am very worried about principals who just take decisions on their own you must use sounding board if its SMT or your staff or your deputy principal just hear somebody else opinion on the matter and I think its better.

R: O.K. "Could you tell me about a management **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how you addressed that problem?"

P: Ja...there is a of lot incidents from learners side. For instance we decided we had a windbreaker for instance at this school as a uniform staff got together we decided we would rather wear school blazer because we have got a very nice school blazer and phase out windbreaker and that's the decision staff takes not me, I can't take such a decision I think, staff takes that decision. Disciplinary problems come to me if necessary I always have a witness I don't see any child with disciplinary problem without a witness you also see I have a closed circuit TV in my office, everything that happens in my office is always in closed circuit TV. It helps me to behave properly in my office because I also appear on the

screen, it helps parents and pupils to behave properly and everything that you say is recorded on video in the office. It's a mechanism that protects the school and myself because principals are in a very difficult position these days but its both ways it helps me to behave properly too. Generally I don't normally experience major problems at this school. Another disciplinary problem say for instance children drink at a school function, how I handle that, the children will be called my deputy principal will be with me and we will hear the evidence and get their parents and if necessary it goes to the disciplinary committee. And there are rules and policies in place to handle each case and everybody is aware of the rules and policies. But like as I have said we don't experience serious problems at this school.

R: Thank you eh...let's take the last question. Eh...what **strategies** would you recommend for implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?

P: I would say you must let your staff feel that they are part of the school that's the most important thing. The staff must feel they are part of the decision-making process even if you don't take everything to them. There are few things you keep to yourself and you do yourself obviously but the majority of the staff should feel they are part of decision-making including SMT otherwise they will not support the decision if you exclude them. To me the involvement of other people in decision-making is the bottom line, it keeps the staff happy and they do their work because they are part of planning of the school and the management of the school.

R: So that brings us to the end of our interview and I have to thank very much once.

P: It's a pleasure, good luck in your studies.

APPENDIX E
TRANSCRIBED VERBATIM REPORT OF OMEGA

**VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESERCHER AND THE
PRINCIPAL OF OMEGA SECONDARY SCHOOL**

KEY: R = RESEARCHER P = PRINCIPAL

R: Thank you very much for making your time available to me for an interview on the subject: Decision-making in secondary school? Firstly, what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

P: Well I see shared decision-making as a concept where everybody in the school meaning learners, teachers, school management team (SMT) eh...principal as well as school governing body (SGB) as well as parents eh...should come together and make certain decisions in connection with the school. In other words it comprises everybody inside the school in making decisions eh...everybody must be involved. Eh...sometimes shared decision-making is not an easy thing because you sometimes get a feeling that this thing wouldn't work and you must be very sensitive to say this wouldn't work. You have got to work out strategy on how to do it. But you must do it in such a way that everybody get a feeling that is part of the decision-making otherwise they will not support the decision. But the bottom line is that everybody must have a say in decision-making.

R: O.K. Thanks very much. Let's move on to the second question which has to do with how you go about in making decision at this school, "Could you share me how **decisions** are taken in this schools?"

P: Eh...it all depends at which level it is eh...we have got different levels of decision-making. Say for example if it's SMT, yes members of the SMT would come together and in that meeting certain decisions are taken. Eh...it all depends on which levels as I have I said, if it's the staff we eh...that's very important we are very open with the staff they must all be involved in the decision-making they

must always feel they are part of the decision-making. If it's the learners eh...the representative council that is the big council, the president, vice as well as the secretary and the fourth any way they are four they are representing the learners, we get them together decide about certain things eh...we make certain decisions and then information goes back to RCL as a whole because all of them they have got to make an input in decision-making. The same applies with my non-teaching staff eh...I usually never make contact with them all the time but I have got someone who is quite capable of making that type of decision because it is impossible to be involved in every part of decision-making process, but they usually give me a feedback if they had a meeting and took certain decisions. But all the parties are involved in decision-making. If it is the hostel, the hostel manager is in charge of the hostels there he makes the decisions. If it is a crucial issue I am always part of it eh...if it is a daily organization I am not always involved in that because I cannot be involved in every decisions that's impossible. I would say various stakeholders most of the times are consulted before any decision can be made. Eh...let's say for example prize-giving function. I have got a teacher who is responsible for that. Eh...the SMT will get together eh...they will work a plan, for example identify one teacher responsible for typing the information then carry on to identify other portfolios like who will be responsible for flowers, who will be responsible for welcoming the people, who will be responsible for scripture reading and so on. So we have got different types of things that are involved in the prize-giving function. As the SMT we think we must do it in that way then now we get back to the staff with the proposals or suggestions. Eh...say for example will Mrs X be able to take care of the flowers on the stage. And then the staff will say Sir I don't mind doing that but I know there is one of our parents who would love to do it. Is it fine with you that I can ask this parent to do it for us? Then we have a discussion as a staff around the issue then agree on the matter then ask Mrs X to approach the parent. Right that's one typical example showing how we go about with decision-making. Eh...SMT is laying down the background and then get back to the staff with the suggestions and the staff will look into the suggestions. That's the way we take all the

decisions. Then of course all the teachers are in some way involved not only in decision-making but in some work as well eh...it is not one person doing the decisions others are as well involved and jointly reach a consensus.

R: Thanks very much. Eh...generally what do you think about the involvement of ordinary teachers not heads of departments in decision-making?

P: That's very important. Weet jy Meneer if you don't involve them they don't feel part of the decisions they don't feel part of everything you organise. Eh...it can happen sometimes while you are busy discussing eh...let's take prize-giving function again. They will say all right we have taken care of the flowers, we have taken care of computers, we have taken care of the discipline in the hall, then somebody from the staff but Sir we forgot something who is going to take photos, you see they immediately feel responsible. It can happen that I leave something out I am not perfect. You see that's the benefit of involving other people. The moment you get to the staff and involve them they feel are all responsible for the success of the event. The event is not going to be successful unless you involve various people eh...they bring to you all sorts of inputs. For example, one would arrange for someone to take photos and one would say about the microphone and all sorts of things for the event. You see they all feel part of decision-making and all want to feel proud of the event because it is not the principal prize-giving function. The SGB, non-teaching staff, hostels managers the parents all of them must be involved. That's the big advantage of involving all the different levels in decision-making. Learners too must also be involved it is very important. I believe eh...I am not going to mention the school's name when I did this the first time eh...of involving learners. The parents were a bit skeptical and said how can you involve learners that's before RCL, long before this, long before 1994 even before there was ever mentioned of RCL. You must bear in mind the only way to get a full co-operation of any party it does not matter who it is you must get them involved. Just packeting them say all right we are going to have this event is it fine with you because it is impossible to ask the opinion of every learner but if you have got someone representing them then makes things easier. In fact it is not just getting them involved but they feel they are responsible afterwards. Now I get

the learners involved eh...I have to see them today about something it is in my diary. Eh...what I do at least once a week if possible I get them together and say all right I have got nothing on the schedule is there anything that you want to discuss with me. So most of the times there wouldn't be anything but it can happen that they have something they want us to discuss and we discuss it and jointly make a decision.

R: Thanks very much, any other thing on how you go about with decision-making?

P: I think I have elaborated enough on that I don't have anything.

R: O.K. lets move on to the second question "Could you tell me about a management **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in the school and how you dealt with it?"

P: Eh...about ...let me say this for few years we had quite emphasis placed on our sport without giving much attention to our culture, choir, drummers all that sorts of things and eh...I decided to appoint someone whose responsibility will be on culture that's where I started. I realized that's part of school when I looked at my management plan and I saw we lacking someone taking responsibility on that and I appointed someone specifically responsible for culture for example. Eh...it is not really a management problem eh...you see what we do if we experience a management problem we discuss it with the SMT and we solve it. Eh...what I do at the beginning of the year I give hand outs eh...the year plan. Eh...most of the times you know we for see all the loopholes or the problems we might have. And if for example I had a management problem this year eh... what I do I make a note of it this year and make sure that I do not have that same problem next year. Eh...big management problem we do not usually experience that because we do our planning in the beginning of the year as to...not to fall into the same trap. We do a thorough planning, we take almost three months eh...we should have started already but I had quite number of things to do. But anyway we have got a year plan and we for see all the loopholes that we have experienced and we try to arrange plan in such way that the following year we do not experience the same management problem. The management problem that I mostly experience is not under my control, for example eh...staff that do not get appointed then I

experience a management problem because I have to get someone that's the type of decision you will take and that is also crisis management. You have to get someone now in the classroom and in the meantime you are struggling with the Education Department. Eh...my biggest crisis lies with a teacher not being appointed eh...that's my main crisis.

R: Thanks very much. Eh...beside what you have mentioned eh...tell me about any **incident** that has occurred recently and how you dealt with it?

P: All right eh...before you arrived this morning I had the parent in my office who was quite upset about the teacher eh...making remarks at the parent saying the child does not get involved in the matric farewell he wants to be involved at rugby etc. All right the parent any way was quite upset...right what I usually do I let him speak that's the way of calming himself. I never interrupted him let he speaks out, let his emotions go out. And then I write everything down say for example the teacher said this and that I write all down. What I then do I give the parent assurance that I will attend to the matter as soon as possible it can take time but I will attend it. What I usually do I called the teacher into the office, right Mevrou I had a parent this morning he was quite upset about you making some remarks about the child. What do you have to say? Then the teacher would say if its true or its not true and she said this and that. Then I will say for example Mevrou I just want to ask you to make sure about things you say and you are not sure off because you are not informed about everything. You made a remark about the child who was not involved in the matric farewell. I know for sure he is going to take the video, do you know that, no I did not know that, did you know that he was playing rugby, no I did not know that, did you know that he was singing in the choir, no I did not know that. So please Madam in the future make sure of anything you say because is creating problem for me. The assumption that the parent have is that I have said that and I have never said that because you created the idea that the child was discussed in the staff room and we said that and that was not the case. That is the way I the matter was handled. Eh...as far as...
[Knock on the door]

As far as children are concerned more or less the same method will be followed if I experience problems. Say for example eh... we had a function last week and two of the children had beers to drink and it is not acceptable at our function. All right eh...what we do in such a case we follow the procedure as prescribed in the code of conduct. We will phone the parents and inform the parents that the child had beers to drink and ask them do you want him to be driven home because he is not going on with the party or will you fetch him and he must leave immediately. Then we go to the code of conduct and see under which paragraph must we fine him and then write a letter to the parent. Eh...I have a meeting this afternoon about that eh...this is the procedure we follow. Then parents are also involved they are welcomed to seat in the hearing and there are other people that seat in the hearing as well who are not involved in the school just to make sure there is enough transparency. They will make a decision to the parents and say the child is guilty and then according to our code of conduct he must take a week and then after a week we will tell the parent what type of punishment will be give to the child. That's more or less the procedure followed by the disciplinary committee.

R: Thanks very much. Are learners aware of the procedure normally followed in case they have committed an offence?

P: Thank you very much, that's a very good question. Before the code of conduct was accepted it went to the governing body eh...in fact first the attorney must check it to make sure that there are no loopholes as far as law is concerned. Then the attorney one of our SGB members set the code of conduct and then went to the governing body that worked through it thoroughly. The second thing we did, we called the parents meeting made copies for them and they worked through it and all accepted it. And then we went to learners and discuss it with them and then...

[Phone rings]

All right to the learners eh...learners here is the code of conduct how do you feel about it, they worked through it and all accepted it. It is interesting to note that they felt some of the punishments were not harsh enough eh...it is interesting. They felt that we should be more stricter than what has been set out in the code of

conduct. They were very much involved and it is interesting to note they felt that we are not strict enough eh...they said that if this and that happens you must expel a child. But we know of course it is not easy to expel the child is the responsibility of the Free State Department. All right that's all.

R: Thanks very much. All right let's move on to the last question which has to do with strategies for implementation of effective decision-making. "What **strategies** would you recommend regarding implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?"

P: Eh...I think I mentioned that a bit eh...however it is very important that your strategy must be open you must have nothing to hide. You must make sure that all the parties are involved there is no way that you can leave out one of them in any decision-making. And...

[Knock on the door]

Ja...and then of course you must accept the fact they will differ from you and it's right if they differ from you. And they might be right sometimes and you must accept the fact you cannot agree with all what has been discussed. That's the way I do it. What also can happen you must bear in mind it is impossible for me as a principal to take care of everything that happens in the school. As I have said to you eh...there is a hostel manager who is in charge of hostels. And I have got four heads of departments and each one of them is responsible for a certain part of school management and that's part of my strategy. For example I have one person responsible for administration, he must get hold of the statistics for learners and the subjects they do. The next person is involved in finances, the next person is involved in relations eh...for example if a press or radio contacts me he is the person in charge of that eh...what he has to say to media people after consulting with other people. The last person is in charge of children eh...for example if a child commits an offence he is responsible for such things and from there he will give me the report back. Eh ...the only thing that I do during the disciplinary hearing I am an observer just to make sure that they will not say Mr X was influencing the decision of the committee. Eh...if I delegated a job to a person say to take care of the statistics of the school or anything I must not interfere otherwise it will create

a feeling that I don't trust them if anything goes wrong then I have to carry the blame. I feel very strong about that.

R: Thanks very much once more eh...that brings us to the end of our interview.

P: Thank you very much Sir, you did very well.

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY AT OMEGA SECONDARY SCHOOL

KEY: **R= RESEARCHER** **P1, 2 = PARENT 1 & 2**

R: Thank you very much for making your time available to me specifically for this interview on the subject: Decision-making in secondary schools. As a first question, could you share with me your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**. In other words what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

P1: All right shared decision-making if you look at the word shared in the concept it means that decision must be shared among certain people. Those certain people in my honest opinion are the stakeholders at this particular school. Stakeholders we start from the level of parents, teachers as well as learners should be involved in a lesser or largely pertaining to the sharing of decisions.

P2: I also share the same view all parties like the parents, teachers and learners all of them must give an input in decision-making.

R: Any further addition to the understanding of the concept? O.K let's move on to the second question. "Could you share with me how **decisions** are taken at this school?"

P1: Which decisions?

R: There are various kinds decisions any school might take to ensure that things run smooth for example decision on admissions, budget etc.

P1: Yes we know how everything is done eh... there are committees chosen for certain duties and they have powers to take responsibilities for those eh...everything is in order everything is regulated we know who is responsible for what everything is in place. For money matters we have two people working with that they have to

sign cheques, for the sports we know who to go to for decision I do hearings for the school they come to me for such decisions so we all work together. But everything is in place everybody knows what to do where. I think the decision-making is being regulated quite clearly here and put down so everybody knows what's happening. The headmaster knows up to where he can go and we know up to where we can go with the decisions and who has to take them.

P2: But we are not involved in teachers' job description in classes that's the headmaster's job. We are actually involved if there is a problem somewhere along the line from a parent to the headmaster about the child if there is this and that about the child so there is committee in charge of that and we are involved. The running of the teachers totally in the classroom the syllabus they are doing the teaching work all that kind staff is the work of the headmaster he is running that. But we are involved say at the backstage of that if there is a problem from the parent then he will come to us and then we will go to the headmaster and say this what happened and we have got monthly meetings where we discuss various matters. So we are not involved in matters relating classrooms, that's the headmaster's work.

P1: But we are involved in teachers' appointments we help in that regard but as far as the running of the school the teaching part of it we are not involved and we chose not to be involved because we were not educated to be involved and we know that teachers and the headmaster are trained for the job.

R: Thanks very much. Let's move on to the third question. Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how it was dealt with?

P1: I am involved in that eh...there was a problem with a teacher the other day who mishandled the child and then the parents came in together with the child. So what we did we gave the teacher a form to fill in and respond within seven days about the matter and thereafter we held a disciplinary hearing for the teacher and he was found guilty and the necessary discipline was given. And we do the same with the kids if the children do misbehave and do not want to adhere to the school rules we give them necessary forms to complete and thereafter have a proper

hearing and then we will give necessary discipline. Eh...we would like to give them a hiding but we are not allowed any more to do that now we will let them seat in class for study or give them an area for cleaning so that's the only way we can do it. But any way we are involved in disciplinary hearings and decision-making. Just to elaborate further on that say for example a child was found stealing or drinking during school function we would give him a form and tell him that there will be hearing on a certain date and we would tell him that he can bring his parents or his attorney if he wanted to and on that date he will have proper hearing if he says that he is not guilty we would bring in witnesses and we will have a hearing where we can cross examine the witnesses otherwise. If he says he is guilty he will in any case tell us what happened because perhaps he is not guilty even though he thinks he is. And after that if we found him guilty we will tell him that seven days later there will be a punishment and everything is in the school policy. And seven days later we will call him with his parents and tell him his punishment that the school has given him and he has to adhere to that. Eh...these hearings its very bad for children and they feel like criminals eh...I think the old system worked better whereby they just got a little hiding and everything was just over. Now they feel like criminals because I am a lawyer they seat there and they are scared and they are being cross examined and their parents seat there and they feel bad because children are very naughty at times. So this whole system I think is very bad in this school but it's a system that we have to follow and that's the only way. I do not think is good for the children I think I prefer the way whereby they are punished and is forgotten. Now its not forgotten the record is filed and is like a criminal procedure and I think is not good.

R: Thanks very much. Eh...generally what do you think about the way problems are solved and decisions are taken in this school eh...how do you feel?

P2: Actually I think everything is running smooth because in our meetings, governing body meetings there is secretary everything is minuted and decision that is taken is not the decision that one is forcing down into another one it's a consensus decisions. If we have to make decision about something if its money or discipline we have got committees for that and the committees have got to report back to the

governing body and the governing body makes final decision. And we are working according to the School Act prescribed by the government for all of us. And if there is hearing of some kind people from the Education Department also seat in that hearing so its not the matter handled by the principal alone other people are involved as well eh...its an open hearing.

P1: I can tell you why it works well in our school its because the headmaster is a democratic person, he is not manipulative and he does not decide before hand what is going to be like and try manipulate us into it. And he has really good people working with him and that is why problem solving and decision-making is working very well, everybody has his own position and he has a lot experience about running the school and...

[cellphone rings]

Sorry eh....everybody knows exactly how the school operates, teachers, learners everybody.

P2: The only time we sometimes have got a problem with decision-making is if something must come down say from the Department down to us and we have to give them feedback and they have to decide about the matter. That sometimes is giving a little bit of problem because a time delay you know eh...some people can make a decision in a month, some in two weeks and some in just one day and that sometimes worries us. Eh...why some of the things Department require from us we give them in time and they cannot come back to us in time if we have a problem it takes so long, that worries us. But beside that, things are running smooth and we try so hard to ensure that things are always on the right track and problems that may crop up are addressed accordingly.

R: Thanks very much. Any other input? All right lets move on to the last question which has to do with strategies for implementation of effective decision-making. “What **strategies** would you recommend regarding the implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?”

P1: I think if the headmasters of secondary schools can delegate and can get people to do certain areas for them and leave them to do the work. People that have the knowledge then it will be better. The principal can seat in every decision-making

meetings but let people with the knowledge to take care of certain aspects, like auditors to do money and lawyers to do hearings and all other things not try to cover or do all the work alone. And secondly it is good for the governing body not to interfere with the school process, the process of teachers and learning telling them how things should be done. Some governing bodies do that they want to tell the headmasters how to run the teaching part of the school and we don't agree with that at all. We are not educated to do that. Everybody on his own grounds it works very well and everybody being positive and working together.

P2: The organizational structure of the school is also important. How the various parties in the structure interrelate with each other. Here we have the headmaster his two assistants, heads of departments, teachers and other structures and committees such as for sports, disciplinary, finance and many others. And all these committees have to report back to the governing body and we have meetings monthly or every six weeks and they must give feedback to the governing body. If things go wrong in a particular committee and they can't handle it its being referred to the governing body and if the we can't handle it we take it further to the Department and that makes things easier eh...working together as a team.

R: Thanks very much. Eh...that brings us to the end of our discussion and I have to thank you very much especially with your contributions I am really impressed.

All: Thank you, good luck in your studies.

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE EDUCATORS AT OMEGA SECONDARY SCHOOL

KEY: R = RESEACHER T1, 2 & 3 = TEACHERS 1, 2 & 3

R: Thank you very much for making your time available to me for this interview on the subject: Decision-making in secondary school. As the first question, “ Could you share with me your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?”

T2: That’s where is not only one person making the decision, so not the principal alone instead he is going to ask teachers what do they think and maybe the governing and the learners as well. So its not just one person making the decision.

T3: Eh...I share the same view its not one person or one body making a decision about other people that is going to affect them. All roleplayers must be involved.

R: Any other view? All right lets move on to the second question. Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?

T2: My colleague is in the governing body I think she can voice that.

T3: In the school we have the management team consisting of the principal, two deputies and then heads of the departments. Eh...usually what they do if there is some decisions to make they come together talk about a thing make some decisions and give it through to us eh...members of staff. If its something that they think they can’t make a decision on they take it to the governing body but usually things like building something new or money matters or something like that. But the day to day running they decide on their own and they give feedback to teachers.

T1: It depends on what types of decisions you are talking about eh...because certain decisions for example matric farewell eh...they got all the matrics together and grade eleven as well I think and ask them their opinion and they have saying in decisions on that. Sometimes on certain decisions they talk to us in the staff room

- and then ask us our opinion and we take decisions together. So it depends on what type of decisions you are talking about.
- T2:** Sometimes I must tell you I feel I don't know how other people feel sometimes I feel we as staff members are left out. We hear of something the last minute we have not been part we are not really part of it. I really feel sometimes we are left out.
- R:** Could you clarify me on that one, left out in which way?
- T2:** Sometimes we have crises in this school concerning behaviour of children, they have to be punished. Sometimes we as staff members don't even know of malpractices or whatever the children have committed. We hear it in town from the public I know if children do wrong things you want to sort of cover it up don't you that's natural. But I think we as staff members we are family here we should know things we shouldn't hear it in town. And then how can we defend our school how can we write about the matter if we don't even know what it is about.
- T3:** I can give another example eh...at one stage the management team decided that we wouldn't write a March exam. But all the teachers asked for that exam because we really thought we need it. By the time we get instructions it was already decided so we got it as fact we did not have any input in that, and that is really a problem for us.
- T2:** Because we have to deal with day to day work of the children.
- R:** Any other input? All right. Generally what do think about the way decisions are taken at this school eh...how do feel?
- T2:** We feel that there should be more communication.
- T2:** Yes, we should be more involved I think especially because some of the teachers work constantly with the children they know better what's going on what's the feeling is with the children what the children are going through. And sometimes the people at the top take decisions while the general teachers eh... would actually know more about the situation. And they take certain decisions without taking the input from the teachers and sometimes I feel that they take the wrong decisions because I don't really know what's going on while if they actually really eh...communicated with the teachers first before taking the decisions it

would be the better one because they would had the input from the teachers. Actually eh... we are closer to the children and closer to the situation of teaching and time factors with subjects and all of that. Teachers know exactly what's going on in their classes.

T2: We also need more feedback of the decisions taken.

T3: I can give you another example the parents committee they are working for things at school they raise funds and they use these funds to the benefit of the school. Now at this stage we heard the other night at the function that they are planning a room for trophies between the two halls. They want to build a room and put all the trophies of the school in there. And that was never communicated to us and ask our opinion....[simultaneously – we are all in the dark] eh...they never ask us our opinions. A long time ago we talk about it and we said the other hall that they use it for hotel evening things like that eh...hotel school they must change that hall into something like sports restaurant put all those things in class cases against the wall. And then its really there when people come and people would look through that and they will see and they will really realize these things are there etcetera. Now if they build the room between those two stalls we need a lot of space in this school eh...my colleague here is teaching at this stage in singing class. There are desks in the singing class eh...going like this is totally unsuitable. But she is teaching there because there is no enough space here but now they want to build a room for trophies and there is much better ways to do it but we were never consulted.

T2: There is much better ways to utililise that money than for a room.

R: O.K eh...

T3: And you see... eh...the parents the governing body they are here for the time their children are here say for example the child comes to this school at grade eight and leaves at the end of grade twelve its five years. They know the school only for five years and some of us have been here for thirty years and more and we know the school for a very long time we know type of people we are working with we know type of parents we are working with. And I for the fact know that the moment you build a room like that you will have all the parents on their feet

saying “what are you doing now?” we are struggling with school funds and other fees and you build a room like that. And they don’t realize that they think that they can come in here and make decisions do it and go and its not with them anymore and we are sitting with the consequences. We don’t want to be in some of the position of power or whatever but we want to have more saying because we really know the school and we really care about the school the children as well as the school as whole.

R: O.K. any other input? All right lets move on to the third question which has to do with the way problems are solved at this school. “Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently at this school and how that particular problem was solved?”

T3: Eh...I can’t think of any recent problem eh...we try hard to maintain necessary discipline among the children. And there is code of conduct it specifies the way children have to behave. Say again for example, a learner commits a certain offence maybe found drinking beer at school function or happen to fight at school. What actually happens the culprit will be given a form to complete explaining exactly what happens and all that sort things. And his parents will be informed as well about the offence committed by the child. Thereafter there will be a disciplinary hearing and the child together with his parents will be called for disciplinary hearing. Of course you are allowed to bring representative like lawyer to the hearing. And the decision will be taken and the parents together with the child will be informed of the decision taken by the disciplinary committee after a certain number of days. But other problems are solved by the principal himself or together with the management teams. But like as we said earlier on some of problems we hardly know about it and how they have been solved and that’s our main concern. Let there be communication.

T2: We are concern with day to day running of the school we experience all the problems day to day we don’t live up there so communication between all stakeholders is important. We part of this business we are not just here to convey the academic part only we part of this business, school is now a business we need to know how certain things have solved.

R: O.K. it looks like you have some concerns regarding the way problems solved and decisions taken at this school eh...do you mind sharing with me your biggest concerns eh...although you somehow raised them in way under question number two but can we discuss that further?

T1: Eh...I think my biggest concern is that the teachers have the knowledge eh... like my colleague said the day to day running of the school and what the people want what the school needs what we need to generate the knowledge in the school. But then certain decisions are made at the top and my concern is that they do not always know what's going on at the bottom and they take the decisions which sometimes feels to me like a stupid decisions to make if I to put it like that. Eh...they don't see what we see and we see the bigger picture and then we see if they take this decision this is going to affect this child or this will create a bad situation for group and that or whatever eh...at the top they don't always see that. So big concern for me is that they do not use eh...the great input that the teachers can give them and that create a situation of taking bad decisions while they actually can take good decisions if they actually use the resources of the teachers' knowledge.

R: Do you want to say something?

T3: Yes, I wanted to say they must use their resources better and their resources here are the teachers, they don't use that. There is lot of decisions made here and some of them are really good but we can't implement it because they don't use other people's knowledge. That's our biggest concern.

R: Thanks very much. Eh...any other concerns? All right lets take the other question eh...the last one eh...which has to do with some strategies for effective implementation of decision-making. "What **strategies** would you recommend regarding implementation of effective decision-making in secondary schools?"

T1: Eh...I think in the first place the schools should go and really analyse their strengths and their weaknesses and they should do that with the teachers as well. They should know in what situation or in what area they have strengths and weaknesses because certain teachers will be great in certain situations while others will be great in another situation. And they should know the teachers so

well that they know that if we have to handle this specific situation or this specific eh...concern or we have to make a decision on something specific and they should know o.k. these teachers are our strengths in this situation we need their inputs. And in another situation they should know eh...this and this teachers here they our strengths in his situation. Do you understand what I am trying to say?

R: Absolutely, continue.

T1: So the schools should know where and how to implement the knowledge of teachers and when to use it and use whose knowledge. They should know exactly where the strength of each teacher lies.

R: Thank you. Do you want to say something?

T3: Yes, I think the whole management structures in schools are totally outdated. They have changed the syllabus they have changed the school environment in South Africa but they never changed the structures. Now where in life do you get in these days a person in the business doing absolutely everything taking all the decisions? One person does eh...must really look after everything in that business from staff management to money management to public relations work I think it's totally impossible. And I think our principal really is a very strong man because to do all those things at the same and stay the same I think he must be a very strong man. My recommendation for a new strategy in South Africa to change the structure of schools there must not be principals anymore there must be academic council and there must an administrative person in the school and there must a financial person and school manager and it must not be the same person, you know.

R: Do you have such a differentiation in this school or are all these things you mentioned handled by one person?

T3: In all the schools in South Africa I don't about... O.K. except private schools there you get these things done by various people. But in all the other schools you get the principal on the head and he must be the observer of all these things. If goes away for the week we carry on with the school but we can't make any decisions. The management staff would tell you eh...O.K. I think in the meantime you can do this but wait until the principal is back and then we can ask him. That

is just not good enough anymore not in this situation that we are in teaching these days in South Africa.

R: O.K. do you want to say something?

T2: So what she said all that it boils down to is that Education Department must give each school a bigger staff number. We can't cope with the staff we have now really we can't and what you want to do you can't do properly because you have to do other things we even have to do things we are not qualified for. So the Department must start from the top give us more staff eh...differentiation of staff as my colleague said in these four categories. So each one will be more specialized to handle what he has to handle and then things will run smoothly.

R: Thanks very much. Any other input?

T3: Ja...the strategies for effective decision-making from my point is the change in structures in schools so that people are allocated certain areas and they can really give attention to that and the whole school must not be anymore depended on one person doing everything. And then communication I think really there must be room for communication between all stakeholders and the Department as well.

R: O.K. any other input. All right that brings us to the end of our interview. I really appreciate your inputs thanks very much once more.

All: It's pleasure. Good luck.

VERBATIM REPORT BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE MEMBERS OF REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS AT OMEGA SECONDARY

KEY: R = RESEARCHER L1, 2 & 3 = LEARNER 1, 2 & 3

R: Welcome to this interview and thanks very much for making your time available to me specifically to share with me your views on the subject: Decision-making in secondary schools. Firstly, what is your understanding of the concept **shared decision-making**?

L2: I understand it as all involved parties must have a say in decision-making that is, they must have an input in decisions that affect them.

L3: Eh...basically what I understand by the concept is for example if the decision has to be made and the people who will be affected by this decision such as for example the teachers or the learners must be involved or someone must represent them on the school governing that has to make the decisions. I mean there is vast different decisions at times these people are not needed, but if the decision is going to affect them I feel that they be involved in making that decision or rather have a say at least in making that decisions.

R: O.K. any other additional understanding to the concept.

L1: I think I agree with what has been said and that's more or less the way we understand the concept that everybody affected must have a say in decision-making.

R: All right lets move on to the second question which has to do with the way decisions are taken at this school. "Could you tell me how **decisions** are taken in this school?"

L2: Primarily the governing body takes most of the decisions

L3: Ja...primarily by the governing body together with the...I mean if the learners will be affected the learners will be represented on the governing body or the

teachers will be represented. Other governing bodies there is someone already representing teachers irrespective of what decision has to be made already representing parents irrespective of decisions and the learners. I mean there is representation of teachers, learners and parents in the governing body. In our case for instance when decisions are made regarding learners we are involved in that.

R: O.K. any other input? Eh...generally what do you think about the way decisions taken at this school eh...how do you feel?

L2: I am satisfied because I think there is enough representatives on the governing body eh...various people are represented on the governing body.

L3: Eh...I also think that eh...as children of the school we primarily here to learn for nothing else and I feel that concerning decisions that have to be made that concern us certainly we need to be represented. But at times I also feel it is not necessary that we should be at every meeting of the governing body and every time decisions have to made after all we are learners. At times certain decisions have to be made by the headmaster and the governing body after all they are responsible for the running of the school and we can't really seat and be primarily involved in every meeting which could mean a turning point. But if its issues that affect the learners lets be involved but otherwise lets give it to the governing body and the headmaster.

R: Does **i** mean that you are satisfied about the way decisions are taken at this school?

L3: Yes...we are satisfied.

R: Thanks very much. Lets move on to the third question which has to do with problem solving at this school. "Could you tell me about a real **problem** or any **incident** that has occurred recently in this school and how that particular problem was solved?"

L1: Eh...we had a problem with colouring hair and then we decided that the involved parties meet the headmaster the RCL and we decided that no one would be allowed to colour their hair and those that who clour their hair would be punished accordingly.

- L3:** Eh...the three of us represented the matrices who wanted to colour their hair and we spoke to them in the hall listen to their views why they wanted to colour their hair and others said they don't want to colour their hair because that might tint the image of the school because as a learner you are representing the school and people would be watching you and that was the general view we took it up with the headmaster. So basically we felt that because we are representing our school it would be safer to rather not colour the hair and the decision was made and it was taken through the same way to the matrices. Although some learners irrespective of what we agreed upon coloured their hair and that's why we thought that they should be punished accordingly or steps be taken against them because the decision has been made and they decided against it.
- R:** Was the decision taken accommodative enough eh...in other words were people somehow not pressured to agree with you?
- L1:** In our school we the student council represents the children so eh...they are allowed to say what they think but we are there to decided for them and basically they don't vote about it we decide about it, the student council.
- L2:** Eh...I just wanted to say that they voted for us they have chosen us to represent them so they must be satisfied with the decision we followed.
- L3:** Eh...I feel we have eh...particularly a large student council I mean the RCL that came into being eh...every standard is represented. We have meetings every Tuesday of every week every morning the twenty one of us come together and we discuss things. The representatives from other Grades have chance to say something and say for example these students have problems with this and this and then decisions or consensus will be reached in there and the three of us would take the matter further to the headmaster or to the governing body and the final decision would made there.
- R:** Thanks very much eh...in case learners commit an offence tell me about a procedure normally followed?
- L3:** We have a very elaborate system in place set up by lawyers eh...they are called by the headmaster and they are given forms to sign which has to go to the parents clearly stating what they did wrong and the form comes back and they set a date

for hearing basically where there can be lawyers or the parents can also seat in. Eh...in that meeting the principal would be there and we are also represented in that meeting not necessarily on their behalf but because I think we have a broader vision of I mean if they give reasons for why they did it or what was the motive of doing it we can associate with that much easier than for instance the headmaster or the lawyer sitting there. And then the hearing, it is conducted as a proper hearing and so the verdict is also reached.

R: Thanks very much eh...generally how do feel about the way problems are solved at this schools?

L3: The only problem I would have is communicating the problem or the outcome to all the people because I mean rumour spread very easily eh...if someone we have to hear in this school I mean this guy did this and that and then rumour would spread that he did that and then nothing happens to him and that happens very often at this school. And then all of sudden they feel now people are not being equal and consequent. And eh....so I feel that the decision that has been made I can see an improvement than last year because that's basically what we trying this year to bring across to the governing the issue of communication. In an orderly set up people have to communicate and children must know this is what had happened and the matter is being attended to and they will know of the outcome very soon that's important. But anyway I feel communication can still improve but it has improved drastically than the past years.

L1: Eh...something that bothers me a lot is that some children have money they go and get themselves lawyers and then other children who did something wrong they don't have the money to go and get themselves lawyers eh...I just think that the decisions made then by this lawyers and stuff like that is not always fair to the other children it's not always consistent that's my problem basically.

L3: If I can add to that at these hearings some people bring as much as two lawyers with him and we had problems with it. We as learners we may say no these children are wrong and they are so wrong in what they did and they simply deny it and the lawyers find the way to say there is no proof against it. They take it extremely far when we know that something has been done wrong and these are

the unfortunate cases of these big hearings. The lawyers take it up according to law as well and the learners are wrong but they have these lawyers to protect themselves from their rights being taken away or being expelled from school. And if they are not proven wrong according to the constitution there is nothing that we can do about. Although in essence we know that they did something wrong. The point is just that they deny it and they are proven not guilty and based on that basically they have been consistent because they did the hearing and there has been a verdict.

R: Thanks very much. Eh...can we move on to the last question or is there any other input? All right lets take the last question which has to do with strategies regarding implementation of effective decision-making in view of some problems you raised. “What **strategies** would you recommend regarding implementation of effective decision-making in other secondary schools and also at this school in particular?”

L3: Eh...the problem that we have mentioned about the consequences of the hearings there is not much that we can do as students in as much as the headmaster in changing the constitution I mean it's the way is given by the Department. As far as the Acts are concerned I don't think there any school that can change that. But apart from that of the strategies we can give certainly the involved parties must have a say in decision-making that's why we feel strongly about it which has to improve at this school and other schools. There are times that decision is made and we as representatives feel that we haven't been informed enough or we should have been more involved in making the decision. That's the thing, the parties have to have a say in decision-making that is probably the biggest strategy I can recommend and communication of course. Communicating the problems and communicating the decisions even if it remotely affect the learners just to let them know that there are decisions made and that things are being done accordingly.

L1: Eh...in our school we have communicating period every Wednesday and all learners have a say, they speak directly to RCL members. I think eh...we must improve that because is not done enough and was not the most important thing

and when something more important comes up that has to be done it is usually cancelled and that's the main problem communication is not enough.

L2: When they improve that then the representatives of each Grade can come to us and then we can take it further but if it does not come to the point of improving that then we wouldn't be able to know and take problems of learners further.

L3: Just to add on what they are saying I think the learners should also have knowledge that they can come to us I mean they shouldn't worry about where should go if I have a problem with this or I would like to mention this or I think they can improve this. They shouldn't be decisive on where to go they should know they can come to us or they can go to this teacher who represents...if fact there are teachers who are allocated for certain duties. If they feel that the information is too confidential to can come and talk to us they can talk to the teacher who seats in governing body meeting and certainly communication is important.

R: Thanks very much, any other strategy? All right, that brings us to the end of our interview, thank you very much once more.

All: Thank you.

APPENDIX F

The Head of Education
Free State Education Department
BLOEMFONTEIN

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESREARCH

I am presently studying towards a DEd in Educational Management at the University of South Africa. The title of the thesis is: *The implementation of effective decision-making strategies by secondary school principals in the Free State Province*. In this respect, I would like to conduct research in a sample of schools in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District.

I would therefore be grateful if you could grant me permission to undertake such research among secondary schools in the afore-said district. The procedure involves principals, teachers, learners and parents participating in the individual and focus groups interviews.

In keeping with good research practice, your department has my assurance that:

1. All information pertaining to schools will be treated confidentially and used for academic purposes only.
2. Participation in the interviews will be purely on voluntary basis.

Kind regards

Sello P. Mokoena

FREE STATE PROVINCE



Enquiries : Mrs M V Wessels/
Reference no. : 16/4/1/2002

Tel : (051) 404 8075
Fax : (051) 4048074

2002-04-15

Mr S P Mokoena
P O Box 15005
WITSIESHOEK
9870

Dear Mr Mokoena

REGISTRATION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

1. This letter is in reply to your application for the registration of your research project.
2. Research topic: **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES BY SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE.**
3. Your research project has been registered and you may conduct research in the Free State Department of Education under the following conditions:
 - 3.1 Principals, educators, parents and learners participate voluntarily in the project.
 - 3.2 The names of the schools and participants involved remain confidential.
 - 3.3 The interviews take place outside the normal tuition time of the school.
 - 3.4 You consider making the suggested changes.
 - 3.5 This letter is shown to all participating persons.
4. You are requested to donate a report on this study to the Free State Department of Education. It will be placed in the Education Library, Bloemfontein.
5. Once your project is complete, we should appreciate it if you would present your findings to the relevant persons in the FS Department of Education. This will increase the possibility of implementing your findings wherever possible.
6. Would you please write a letter **accepting the above conditions**? Address this letter to:

The Head: Education, for attention: CES: IRRISS
Room 1213, C R Swart Building
Private Bag X20565, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9301

7. We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

HEAD: EDUCATION

Department of Education ∇ Departement van Onderwys ∇ Lefapha la Thuto

Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 • Republic of South Africa • Riphabolike ya Afrika Borwa

APPENDIX H



UNISA

Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Studies

Fax: (012) 429-4919

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde

Departement Opvoedkundestudies

Tel: (012) 429-4585

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FREE STATE PROVINCE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/ Madam

I hereby want to inform you that mr SP Mokoena (studentnr: 3318-221-3) is a registered doctoral student at Unisa. He is currently doing his thesis, entitled: *The implementation of effective decision-making strategies by secondary schools principals in the Free State Province*. This study involves research in schools in the Free State.

As supervisor I trust that you will grant him the necessary permission to gain entry into the selected schools. By so doing the worthy cause of improving the quality of education in the Free State will be served.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours Truly

Dr MP van Niekerk
(supervisor)

