

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING

by

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"I declare that **THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."


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DEDICATION

To my parents, always at my side, regardless.

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SUMMARY

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING

Educational authority in a situation where schooling is democratised is explored. The bases of authority such as social order, legal authority, knowledge, moral values and societal structures are established. The role of authority in education relationships and in the realisation of the educational aim is researched in order to attempt formulating criteria for accountable authority.

The basic tenets of democracy that included aspects such as involvement, consultation, communication and reflective decision making are explored. Since fundamental human rights is a critical issue and precondition for a democracy, a focus on Chapter Two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is related to the research. Attention is also given to the hierarchical school structure and the rights and responsibilities of those involved in this structure. Through an extensive literature study and a qualitative analysis of the responses to a questionnaire, conclusions are reached and recommendations made.

Key words

Authority, Democracy, Schooling, Democratic schooling, Accountable authority, Consultation, Involvement, Communication, Reflective decision making, Co-operative governance.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH STRUCTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

The establishment of democracy in many parts of the world implies a number of things. Amongst others it implies democratisation of existing social and governmental institutions through processes such as transformation and restructuring, indeed, such transformation and restructuring in a new democracy, is a matter of urgency.

Schools are, of course, social and governmental institutions. As such they are inevitably faced with the process of democratisation. School activities themselves have to be democratised, as does the organisation of the school and its administrative apparatus.

The process of democratising schools impacts on the schooling reality, including the concept of educational authority. In the modern world, educational authority, as a mechanism of maintaining an orderly teaching and learning environment, has come under scrutiny and has been given different meanings. Authority is often confused with authoritarianism, both in theory and practice, and as such is the opposite of democracy. Authoritarianism by its very nature, deems it not necessary to gain the consent of society or people to rulers and their decisions (Crystal, 1990: 92). Any discussion and popular representation that do exist are firmly under the control of the rulers, and it is usually no more than a mechanism designed to legitimise the status quo. This confusion of authority with authoritarianism has resulted in the majority of stakeholders in schooling associating authority with dogmatism and repression supported by threats, deprivation of privilege, and punishment or expulsion (Lloyd, 1976: 128). In a democracy, the whole concept of authority and what it constitutes, has to be radically reinterpreted.

Given the authoritarian tradition in South African schools, it is not surprising that pupils

and teachers continue to find themselves, despite South Africa's new democracy, operating in rigid hierarchies imposed on them by others. A significant factor here is their rejection on moral grounds of the view that non-participation is acceptable and is to be expected (Lloyd, 1976: 129). The rejection of authority in education is also based on the assertion that it deprives both pupils and teachers of participation in the school governance because it entrenches power in the hands of one person or a limited number of people who then take and implement decisions about what to learn, how to assess learning, and the nature of the learning environment without consulting the very people whom such decisions are going to affect (Harber and Meighan, 1989: 28).

Many educational stakeholders believe that it is only in a democratic schooling structure that the principle of co-operative governance can be adequately accommodated. Should such a form of governance be introduced, learners as the main stakeholders in schooling can share in some or even all decisions traditionally made by school managers. In many educational institutions, claiming to be very democratic, educational practices based on meaningful power sharing are rare and, indeed, usually met with irrational and sometimes even hysterical opposition (Apple and Beane, 1995: 3).

Given all this, the researcher has developed a keen interest in how authentic and meaningful educational authority can best be established and maintained in democratic schooling. The establishment and maintenance of authentic and meaningful educational authority is regarded by the researcher as an important and necessary precondition for any form of effective teaching and learning. This notion has however become a controversial issue in a democratic schooling. Authority has become a critical issue and resistance to all forms of authority have often been to the detriment of an orderly schooling environment. The researcher intended to look at how authentic and meaningful authority, which is characterised by legitimacy, can best be established and maintained in a democratic schooling environment, without encouraging a significant level of resistance. The researcher is convinced that, for any effective and orderly teaching and learning environment to occur, there must be some form of educational authority. Such educational authority needs to be transparent and legitimate if it is to be

respected and adhered to by various stakeholders in schooling.

1.2 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS IN THE TITLE OF THE DISSERTATION

1.2.1 Authority

According to Hornby (1974: 51) *authority* refers to power or the right to issue out orders and make others obey. The concept authority is defined by Crystal (1990: 92) as “the right to issue commands without that right being questioned”. In more a moderate vein he also explains authority as a form of legitimate power, in that those subjected to it voluntarily consent to its exercise. According to Peters (1973: 13) authority has something to do with the voice and countenance, but it is surely a mistake to conceive of it as a kind of a force. He avers further that to equate authority with force obscures what is distinctive about human nature and which makes it very much unlike anything that goes on in the physical or animal world.

In looking at these various meanings of authority it seems that the most pressing problem of the moment in schools as in other institutions across the whole spectrum of social life, is the search for a more acceptable meaning or form of authority. The desire as well as the attempt to arrive at a more acceptable explanation or clarification of the concept authority to those who are subjected to authority has been present in most social configurations, but it is one that has been consistently glossed over. To understand the current uncertainty over authority in schools, it is necessary to realise that such indecision reflects the doubt and confusion that exist in wider social spheres (Bantock, 1952: 183). This is probably due to South Africa’s troubled and much criticised political history.

There are certain social activities or habits which are maintained simply because they are accepted by society to be right or correct. This kind of practice in a society is linked to the idea of authority. Such standards and norms are man-made, alterable, and to a

certain extent arbitrary. Procedures are often needed for deciding which standards are acceptable and just, by whom are they to be created, who is to make a decision with regard to their application to certain cases and who is to effect changes. It is on the basis of authority that certain people are put in positions that allow them to make decisions and pronouncements in this regard (Peters, 1973: 14).

The most crucial and decisive aspect of authority has in most cases been undermined by those who thought that they could build law upon will alone. According to Friedrich (1972: 58-59) it is possible to maintain the notion that authority's main function is to relate laws and other kinds of commands to broader fundamental moral principles, to values and beliefs which transcend a particular judgement involved in a concrete situation. He maintains that these kinds of laws and commands should be preceded by an elaboration so that subjection is ultimately replaced with a proper understanding and interpretation of such laws and commands. This will lead to an understanding of authority (Friedrich, 1972: 79).

On the basis of the foregoing explication of authority, there are two basic ideas expressed underlying its meaning. In the first instance authority is typified as absolute ruling requiring absolute obedience which can be enforced. In the second instance authority is expressed as voluntary consent to legitimate ruling. Of these possible views of authority, the latter is in accordance with democratic principles. Consequently it should be indicated that when the researcher speaks of authority in the context of education, it would be this idea of authority that he would have in mind.

1.2.2 Democracy

The concept *democracy* is defined by Crystal (1976: 183) as referring to "a government by the people, that form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people as a whole and is exercised either by them, as in the small republics of antiquity, or by officers elected by them. It also denotes a social situation in which all the people have equal rights, without hereditary or arbitrary differences of rank or of privilege".

According to Hornby (1974: 229) the concept *democracy* is used to refer to a country with a government which encourages and allows rights of citizenship such as freedom of speech, religion, opinion and association, the assertion of the rule of law, majority rule, accompanied by respect for the rights of minorities. It is also used to refer to a society where citizens treat one another as equals and with absence of class feeling. According to Crystal (1990: 349) the concept of *democracy* is derived from the Greek concepts *demos* (people) and *kratia* (authority), hence rule by the people contrasted with rule by few or by one. According to this explanation the basic necessary conditions of democracy are the legal equality of citizens and the free flow of information to ensure that citizens are in an equal and informed position to choose and hold their rulers accountable. Crystal's introduction of the term *authority* to describe the origin of the idea of democracy, is of particular significance for this study, as it provides a conceptual link between the two key issues under investigation.

A similar exposition of the meaning of democracy is given by Baradat (1975: 56) who maintains that the concept democracy has its origins from the Greek vocabulary where its roots seem to be innocuous enough. According to the Greek vocabulary the word *demos* means the people and *kratien* means rule by the people. Democracy can then be understood as a form of political governance involving the consent of the governed and equality of opportunity (Apple and Beane, 1995: 6). Democracy denotes a kind of system that envisions an open and dynamic society in the governance of which individual citizens are privileged to play the deciding role, in contrast to an autocracy in which important decisions are made at the top and where most citizens are expected merely to be compliant. The citizens of a democracy are in the long run responsible for the policies and actions that are implemented by the government (Engle and Ochoa, 1988: 61).

Democracy can further be explained as an attempt to produce certain states or attitudes of mind in the citizen, such as independence, respect and tolerance of others; interest in public affairs; a willingness to think and discuss about them; and a sense of responsibility for the whole community (Taranta, 1989: 16). According to Dewey (1916: 87)

democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. He maintains that democracy is an extension in space of the number of individuals who take part in an interest, so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, which is equivalent to the breaking down of the barriers of class, race, and national territory which keep men from perceiving the full import of their activity.

Since the realisation and application of the idea of democracy differs in various societies and life spheres, some scholars prefer to view it as a fluid concept. In this study democracy will be used to refer to most of the ideas reflected in the definitions and explanations above, such as a system of governance involving the consent of the governed and equality of opportunity based on participation, consultation, transparency, reflective decision making and communication. It will however, be particularised to educational context and understood in terms of the schooling environment.

1.2.3 Schooling

According to Crystal (1990: 267) *schooling* refers to “the action of teaching, or the state of being taught in a school, of receiving the scholastic education”¹ schooling also refers to “a process in which children are being educated or given instruction usually of more elementary or more technical kind than that given at universities” (Feinberg and Soltis, 1985: 10). Feinberg and Soltis also describe schooling as a process through which modern society develops the skills and attitudes that are appropriate for a changing economic and social world.

Schooling can also be described as the most appropriate means through which a moral consensus, a shared commitment to the social order, basic social and vocational skills, would be achieved (Angus, 1986: 5). Although schooling is to a large extent understood

¹ See paragraph 1.2.4 in this regard.

as a process that is basically concerned with the inculcation of the three R's being reading, writing and arithmetic to the learners, it can however be interpreted and explained in different ways. In the contemporary world, for instance there are a number of different labels that are attached to the concept of schooling.

The various explanations which have been advanced to clarify the concept schooling can, according to Feinberg and Soltis (1985: 6), be classified into three main categories, namely functionalism, conflict theory and the interpretivist approach. According to the functionalist theory, schooling is a process whose main function is to socialise the learners to adapt to the economic, political and social institutions of their society and to impart the skills and attitudes that are appropriate for a changing economic and social world to the concerned learners. The conflict theorists interpret schooling as a process that serves the dominant privileged class by making provision for the social reproduction of the economic and political status quo in a way that gives the illusion of neutrality and objectivity. Feinberg and Soltis (1985: 7) explain schooling further as that part of the social world which is made up of purposeful actors who acquire, share and interpret a set of meanings and interpreting individuals who do interact in particular social contexts.

From these various meanings along which schooling is interpreted and understood, it is clear that schooling is a human invention. As a human invention it has a history and implies change, either in reaction to social forces or because of the society's deliberate attempt to bring about change. It is as such participants in schooling and society who give schooling a structure, but schooling as a process also has a tendency of structuring those who are involved in it. In this study schooling would be used to refer to a formal social process through which education and teaching of elementary and technical kind are given to the learners.

1.2.4 Democratic schooling

According to Apple and Beane (1995: 7) *democratic schooling* refers to the type of schools and situations which are basically meant to be democratic places, and in which

the idea of democracy is also extended to the many roles that are played by the various stakeholders in the schools. They further aver that democratic schooling entails a kind of a teaching-learning situation in which professional educators as well as parents and other members of the community have a right to be fully informed and engaged in critical participation in the establishment of school policies and programmes.

Based on the interpretation of Apple and Beane (1995: 9) democratic schooling, like democracy, is not something that happens by chance, but it is rather the result of explicit attempts by educators to try to put in place the type of mechanisms, arrangements and opportunities that work effectively. In order to accomplish this, they will have to involve two lines of approach. The first one is to establish the type of democratic structures and processes through which life in the schools is carried out. The second line of approach will involve the design and development of the type of curriculum that will provide young people with some real and meaningful democratic experiences. Most of the research in this study is going to focus on the first line of approach because the investigator believes that it is by such means that the basic ideas and tenets of democracy can be realised in schooling.

Democratic schooling is also explained by Freire and Shor (1987: 70) as involving the type of a situation in which the teacher seeks to gradually withdraw as the directive force in learning. They maintain further that it is a situation in which, as students keep on exercising more critical initiative, the teacher encourages their self-organisation and their participation in setting the agenda of the curriculum.

In Hartshorne's (1990: 13) explanation of democratic schooling, he focuses on the atmosphere that this type of schooling creates. It appears to be a kind of schooling in which the participants have developed the need to listen to and respect others, their beliefs and points of view, and to be tolerant of those who see things differently and to argue a case without becoming personal or abusive. He avers further that democratic schooling involves a situation which is characterised by the ability of the participants to accept dissent and remain friends and to negotiate with those who have different views

and try to find a common basis on which to act. He also describes democratic schooling as a situation in which the participants, especially the learners, have developed the capacity to deal with propaganda, slogans and rhetoric, by looking carefully at the language that is used and what in fact is being said.

The meaning of *democratic schooling* can also be interpreted and understood through Morrow's (1988: 253) explanation of the relationship between education and democracy in which he maintains that one of the central aims of education is to produce "democratic agents". Education should aim at contributing to people's autonomy, to their capacity for critical thinking, to the discovery of what is in their real interest, to the development of their moral and political sensibility. According to Gutman as quoted by Bilow (1988: 277) democratic schooling or education can be understood as a process in which the primary aim of education is not to offer solutions to all problems plaguing our educational institutions, but to consider ways of resolving these problems that are compatible with a commitment to democratic values. In Woodring's understanding of democratic schooling (quoted by Loureiro 1989: 15), democratic schooling can be interpreted as the type of schooling or education that liberates men from the bondage of ignorance, prejudice and provincialism. He maintains that it enables us to see ourselves in perspective and it is the type of situation appropriate for free men who must make wise independent decisions in the home, on the job, in the voting booth and on the jury panel.

In this study *democratic schooling* is used to refer to most of the ideas reflected in the definitions and explanations above, such as the type of schooling in which those who are involved in the schools have the right to participate in the process of decision making. It should also be understood as the type of schooling characterised by widespread consultation and involvement of the key stakeholders in issues of governance and policy making, with a view to upholding and promoting those principles which are basic for the survival of democracy in the schooling environment. It is also used to refer to a situation in which stakeholders are engaged in collaborative planning and striving to reach the type of decisions that respond to the concerns, aspirations and interests of all within the

school context. *Democratic schooling* in this context will also exclude any attempt which implies engineering of consent towards predetermined decisions which can be employed to create the illusion of democracy, and would rather include genuine attempts to respect the rights of people to participate in making decisions that have a bearing in their lives.

The definitions and explanations of the concepts used in this exposition are by no means conclusive and final but they serve to orientate the reader to how they will be used in the context of this dissertation. It is quite possible that more detailed and comprehensive descriptions may emerge in the course of the research.

3. THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY AND DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOLING - A TIME PERSPECTIVE

In educational context as is the case in many other social contexts, authority has often been viewed with hostility. In some educational institutions, authority has been denounced as the source of much, if not of all evil in education. It has even been interpreted along the same lines as royal absolutism during the eighteenth century and later, by some, in terms of the capitalistic enterprise in the twentieth century (Friedrich, 1972: 45). Friedrich maintains that in education there is always and has always been an implication that authority relates to unreasoning superstition, sometimes to thinly veiled despotism and exploitation. It is therefore argued that the method that is used to maintain authority should always be superceded by a clear voice of reason.

Throughout the Middle Ages Christendom was strongly cemented, and the Catholic Church provided the authoritarian framework within which education and other social services were to be developed. Although the advent of the Reformation divided the Christian church, the notion that educational authority ought to be based on the administration of the church persisted well until into the nineteenth century (Behr, 1988: 11).

In South Africa the first basis of formal education was laid down by the Dutch settlers who brought with them to the Cape the tradition of religious education as historical heritage. Immediately after their arrival in South Africa during the seventeenth century, it became their intention to perpetuate and maintain their tradition of religious education through schooling (Kallaway, 1984: 45).

After the introduction of the first phase of formal education in South Africa, education continued to be provided only on a small scale until well into the second half of the nineteenth century. This type of schooling was predominantly religious under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Church. The notion of secular schools was introduced in South Africa for the first time by De Mist at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was however, not until in the 1820's that a system of secular schools in the British tradition, sponsored by the Governor Lord Charles Somerset began to take shape with the appointment in 1839 of a full-time Superintendent-General of Education (Behr, 1988: 11-12).

The British idea of authority was different from the Dutch idea of authority. The main difference existed in the fact that the Dutch idea of authority, also of schooling, was based on strict Christian principles, that is, it was determined and guided by the principles founded on the Bible. The British idea of authority in schooling on the other hand, was determined and guided by liberal humanistic principles.

The role of authority in South Africa during the latter half of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century did undergo some marked changes of which most were political. This was due to the fact that it was an era in which the history of education in South Africa was changed to adapt to the conditions of a politically changing society. Various administrative measures were adopted with a view of providing education to a fragmented rural community. These education adaptations continued until towards the middle of the twentieth century (Behr, 1988: 13).

One important divisive development that impacted on the democratic nature of schooling

was the Eiselen Commission of 1949-51 whose recommendations culminated into the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The Eiselen Commission was requested to formulate separate principles and aims of education for Blacks as an independent race in which their history, their inherent racial qualities, their unique features and aptitude as perceived by dominant Whites, and their needs under the ever changing social conditions would be taken into consideration. This was based on the assumption that Black children required schooling which was distinct from that of White children. As a result of the recommendations of the Eiselen Commission, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was finally adopted by parliament. The adoption of this Act placed the control of Black education entirely under the state which implied that missionary schools were generally compelled to hand over control of education to the state or face forceful closure. Some of the missionary schools, especially the Roman Catholic missionary schools, decided to go independent from government control and interference instead of handing control of education over to the state.

The adoption of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 had serious implications for the whole notion of schooling which formalised and legitimised authoritarian and undemocratic practices. As a result of the promulgation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, different systems of education for the four main racial groups in the country, namely, White, Black, Coloured and Indian were established. The pursuit of different systems and cultures of education led to different interpretations of authority by the people who were in the different systems of education. The varying interpretations in the long run resulted in confusion, abuse, and a strong resistance against authority in education. The basic reason for resistance against authority was that the type of educational authority and governance that was exercised was undemocratic and resulted in the unqualified benefit for one particular racial group. The reason for this was that it was not based on the same system of organisation and administration.

Another consequence of the adoption of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was that it caused serious imbalances in aspects such as the allocation of resources, staffing, funding and the quality of education. These imbalances were partly the consequence of

undemocratic rule and management. As a result of these imbalances, the vast majority of teachers in Black schools were hopelessly underqualified. On the side of Black education there was a scarcity of resources which made schooling for Black pupils very expensive. Inadequate teaching and learning was made even more difficult by the appalling over-crowded conditions. These unsatisfactory conditions can be attributed amongst other reasons to bad administration. As a result of the unsatisfactory conditions prevailing in Black schools, the notion of *authority* and what it represented in political terms, developed a negative connotation. Authority was associated with absolutist control with the object of promoting mediocrity and subservience (Nasson and Samuel, 1990: 18-20).

The introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was viewed by its pioneers as a mould through which the government attempted to shape education to ensure and perpetuate the exclusion of Blacks from all job categories except those of unskilled labour systems and the maintenance of the ideology of white supremacy. It was also aimed at restructuring the content of education with a view to inculcate the values of the Christian National Education. The aim of education in this context was to socialise other racial groups apart from Whites to accept their subordination within the Apartheid system of education. It was this aim of education that contributed greatly towards resistance against the notion of authority and type of “authorities” and what they represented at the time (Unterhalter, Wolpe, et al. 1991: 4).

The 1953 Act also determined that Afrikaans be made the medium of instruction for half of the high school subjects. The adoption of this ruling brought a turning point in education and evoked angry response from both teachers and pupils, culminating in the Soweto revolts of 1976, which seriously affected the history of the South African system of education. The 1976 revolts served as a strong indication of the failure of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and it also served as a platform for those who were disenchanted with the existing political dispensation to demonstrate their disapproval and rejection thereof (Hirson, 1979: 175-177). The 1976 revolts also had a serious impact on the existing political dispensation that wanted to steer educational authority in a particular

direction through the new medium of instruction policy, to the extent that even if the subsequent years were relatively calm years in schools, the legacy of the revolts continued to linger (Nasson and Samuel, 1990: 21). This made it impossible for the “authorities” and the system that they represented to establish authentic authority in the schools. The current problem of establishing authentic authority in most schools, especially in historically Black schools, can still be attributed to this legacy.

The promulgation of the new statute called The Education and Training Act of 1979 which was aimed at replacing the Bantu Education Act of 1953, was another important development that made the South African education system enter into another phase. This Act endorsed free and compulsory education. It also proposed the involvement of parents as well as the wider communities in the education system. Subsequent to the adoption of this Act, 1980 was characterised by large scale student rejection of the state’s education system. It started through a protest by students in the schools in the vicinity of Cape Town against inferior quality and inadequate provision of education which persisted, despite new legislation. These protests ultimately spread to many parts of South Africa and even affected some universities such as the Universities of Fort Hare, the North, the Western Cape, Zululand, Durban Westville and Transkei (Nasson and Samuel, 1990: 24).

The years 1981-83 were relatively calm in the schools. It was only towards the end of 1983 when the White Paper on the Provision of Education in the Republic of South Africa, was adopted, that another important development towards the whole notion of democracy in education was prompted. According to this White Paper on the Provision of Education in the Republic of South Africa, all educational matters that concerned solely a certain population group were declared “own affairs” of the concerned group, but those issues of education which concerned all groups, such as financial matters, standards, salaries, and conditions of service of staff would be controlled by the Minister of Education as “general affairs”. The adoption of this White Paper prompted a negative response from Black educationists which intensified resistance towards educational authorities and the political system that they represented. The subsequent years 1984 and

1985, witnessed a high level of the intensification of crisis in the South African education system. According to Nasson and Samuel (1990: 27), the 1984 crisis was sparked off by the poor Department of Education and Training matric results of November 1983 which repeated itself in 1985. These events reached a turning point with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1985 in thirty six magisterial districts. These events made the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the schooling crisis increasingly impossible, especially after the ban of Congress of South African Students by the state. The banning of the Congress of South African Students intensified the boycott and the state, in trying to normalise the situation, responded by applying the state of emergency to compel pupils to return to the classes. The result of this was a massive stay away from examinations throughout the country. Schooling, especially in the case of Blacks, had virtually come to a halt. This was mainly ascribed to a wider feeling of the student population which was captured by the slogan, "Liberation now - Education later" (Millar, Raynhnam and Schaffer, 1991: 243-244).

The foregoing exposition of the turbulent recent history of schooling in South Africa confirms to a large extent, Lloyd's (1976: 132) conviction about the crisis of authority in education. His conviction is that if authority breaks down and those in authority lose control and co-operation of their subordinates, they should as a matter of compulsion and of correcting the situation resort to the use of appropriate and justified force with the main aim of maintaining standards of behaviour which are necessary for effective teaching and learning to take place. His conviction is however based on a situation that is characterised by authentic authority and co-operative governance. This means that any attempt to resort to the use of force would be a joint decision by the various stakeholders in the school system and not by one stakeholder as was the case in the South African schooling system. Lloyd's viewpoint therefore does not justify the South African government's handling of the crisis as indicated above. This is because in as far as the organisation and administration of education is concerned, there were no adequate democratic structures in place in times of crisis. Inadequate democratic structures undermine the legitimacy of authority and breaks down authority and discipline in the classroom which ultimately places teachers in an undesirable situation.

In South Africa unfortunately, educational authority, as has been indicated above, was in the past mostly used as a retributive form of punishment by those who were in authority. Authority in the long run appeared to be acts of vengeance, hence it became strongly challenged and resisted. One important reason for this undesirable state of affairs was the manner in which education and schooling was controlled. Schooling was to a very large extent organised by means of authoritarian practices. As democratic structures and practices were inadequate in schooling, control in most of the South African schools was rarely based on the consent of the controlled ones, respect for the majority decisions, freedom of speech, tolerance of religious and racial differences as well as the value of decisions arrived at by common consensus but maintained rather by violence and brutality. This notion is supported by Apple and Beane's (1995: 12) view that in most places democracy had a minor role to play in schooling because most schools are not marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making. In most of the committees, councils and other decision making groups, it was only the professional educators who were included whereas pupils, their parents and other members of the community were marginalised. Personal frustrations with the unsatisfactory dispensation were over-shadowed by the more ambitious task of counter acting the non-democratic currents in public affairs and educational policy.

This brief account of the history of schooling in South Africa is by no means complete and conclusive. The investigator has focused on moments in the history of Black schooling in particular, to place the research problem in context, for it was especially in former Black schools that the authority crises originated and in many instances still prevail. In the new democratic South Africa former White schools have their own distinctive problems in accommodating democratic structures against the background of their history, but that does not fall in the scope of this research.

The researcher will proceed to deal with the particular scientific approach used in this research and the methodology associated with it.

1.4 SCIENTIFIC APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 1) *methodology* refers to “the way in which we approach problems and seek answers”. They maintain that in the social sciences, the concept applies to how one carries out research. In most cases it is our assumptions, interests, and purposes which shape the methodology we choose. *Methodology* in this instance will also indicate how the researcher is going to conduct research. It will refer to how the investigator is going to develop concepts, insights, and understanding from patterns in the data, in both literature study and empirical research.

The researcher plans to use a pluralistic problem-centred approach. According to Higgs (1997: 18) pluralistic problem-centred approach can be explained as the kind of approach that is marked by the following:

“a postmodern dis-position in which a sense of plurality, fallibilism, pragmatism and judiciousness operate, compelling a philosopher of education to recognise different perspectives, risk the possibility of error, address problems, and raise and deal with questions in every possible educational context. The main purpose of a pluralistic problem-centred approach to philosophy of education, is, therefore, one not primarily concerned with commenting on, or criticising existing work in philosophy of education as that subject now stands, but rather its purpose is to draw upon distinctively different sources or sites of knowledge production, for new perspectives on a variety of educational problems and themes”.

Through a pluralistic problem-centred approach the researcher will be in a position to analyse, investigate and reflect critically on the influence of different forms of reasoning. A pluralistic problem-centred approach will also enable the investigator to explore a broad spectrum of topical educational issues that impact on authority and democratic

schooling and to resort to a vast number of different approaches or methods which can be used in conducting his exploration (Higgs, 1997: 17). In making use of a pluralistic problem-centred approach, the researcher will concentrate mainly on four methods of investigation. These methods comprise, in the main, four processes, namely, analysis, historical overview, empirical methods and phenomenological reduction.

The analytical process deals mostly with literature analysis. According to Borg (1983: 14) literature analysis can be explained as that tool of research which involves the locating, reading, and evaluating reports of research as well as reports of casual observation and opinions that are related to the individual's research project. Borg also avers that the analytical process is of great significance in any research work as it helps the researcher to delimit his research problem and identify new approaches. In this study the analytical process will be significant as it will help the researcher identify and understand research that has already been done on the area of investigation.

The historical overview is included as one of the research tools in this study because some of the areas of concern in this study can best be understood through placing them in time perspective. In terms of this approach, history can be understood as a meaningful record of human achievement and failure, and not merely a list of chronological events, but rather as a truthful integrated account of the relationship between persons, events, times and places (Best and Kahn, 1989: 57).

In order not only to theorise about the research problem, an empirical study will also be undertaken. The researcher will make use of a questionnaire completed under controlled conditions as an empirical research tool. According to Borg and Gall (1989: 416) a questionnaire is a format containing a list of questions sequentially arranged to get information relevant to the objectives of the study. This method of empirical research will allow the researcher to explain clearly the purpose of the investigation and the type of information required. This method will also help the researcher to clarify some questions in the event where the subject misinterprets the question. A further advantage in this empirical research tool is stressed by Bailey (1966: 156). According to him

through the use of this method the respondent is able to answer the easy questions first and take time to think about answers to the more difficult questions. The use of this method will represent a qualitative study. The details of this research method will be elaborated in a further chapter² of this study, when a report of the empirical study is given.

The nature of the research problem requires furthermore that a phenomenological approach be adopted. A phenomenological approach as it focuses on the phenomenon of research as it appears in reality, against the background of other related phenomena will enable the researcher to give a clear exposition of the problem under investigation. This is because according to Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 6) phenomenological approach will enable the researcher to “suspend, or set aside, his or her own beliefs, perspectives, and predispositions”. It is on this basis that the researcher is convinced that in employing this method, his own opinions, ideas, beliefs, world-views, prejudices and the like can be placed in brackets or temporarily suspended in order to get to the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. With regard to this assertion concerning the phenomenological method Cairns (1973: 224) maintains that no opinion should be accepted as philosophical knowledge unless it is seen to be adequately established through observation of what is seen as itself given “in person”. This method will enable the researcher to adopt a philosophical attitude of neutrality with regard to opinions or different viewpoints, in as far as it is possible.

1.5 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND FOLLOWING STUDY PROGRAMME

From the foregoing introductory remarks and clarification of the basic concepts of the theme as well as the historical overview the researcher has attempted to indicate that an unsatisfactory situation exists in South African system of education with regard to the maintenance of accountable and authentic educational authority. That this is the case the researcher suspects is largely related to firstly, an illegitimate and racially motivated

² Chapter 4.

education system with authoritarian character. Secondly, the emerging advent of democracy has changed attitudes and perspectives of those involved in education and has further created opportunities for redress. The turbulent conditions in schools can be attributed to opposition against authoritarianism and an effort to establish democratic principles. It appears, however, from this provisional analysis of the problem that the maintenance of authority and the realisation of democracy in schools are juxtaposed and apparently irreconcilable conditions. One of the reasons why the majority of the schools experience problems in the execution of authority is because of the historical nature, interpretation and application of authority which is diametrically opposed to the democratisation process that is unfolding at present. Another reason for the conflict and unrest is the lack of trust and confidence between the old order structures and the progressive structures in schooling. This lack of trust and confidence becomes discernible in the way these different structures interpret basic concepts such as authority, democracy and democratic schooling which the researcher has already elucidated in the previous paragraphs. The inability to arrive at a common understanding makes it difficult for any form of meaningful and effective authority, which is central to successful schooling, to be firmly established and observed.

The researcher has also realised that one of the complicating factors in establishing a sound authority basis in most schools is that the majority of students with legitimate concerns and grievances are still living with the legacy of traditional authority as it was perceived in political context which the researcher has demonstrated. As a result of the foregoing observations, a number of problems emerge. For instance, what is wrong with educational authority and how best can it be implemented in democratic schooling without serious resistance to it? How can the whole process of democratisation be linked with responsibility and accountability in progressive democratic schooling? Possible solutions to these and other related problems will be attempted in the course of the study.

Apart from the orientation in chapter one, the research programme will be structured as follows: Chapter Two will focus on authority in education. In this chapter the investigator will attempt to explain and analyse the meaning and nature of authority in

education and attempt to formulate criteria for accountable authority in education.

Chapter Three will explore democratic schooling in contemporary perspective. In this chapter the investigator will focus on democratic schooling with reference to the current situation in South African schools. The investigator will further be looking into the bases of democracy such as involvement, consultation, communication and reflective decision making. In this chapter the investigator will also focus on fundamental human rights and education. The investigator will also attempt to reconcile it with a hierarchical school structure as well as rights and responsibilities in democratic schooling environment.

Chapter Four will record an empirical study and analysis of teachers' experiences of authority in relation to democratic schooling. In order to get the views and opinions of the teachers concerning their experiences and perceptions of authority in democratic schooling, the investigator is going to undertake qualitative research and make use of a questionnaire under controlled conditions to obtain the required data. An analysis and evaluation of the empirical study will conclude this chapter.

Chapter Five will give the summary of the research project, research findings and conclusions as well as attempt a synthesis of apparently conflicting issues. The researcher will conclude with provisional recommendations to the practice.

CHAPTER TWO

AUTHORITY IN EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING AND NATURE OF AUTHORITY

Although there may be a difference of opinion in different social contexts as to what constitutes a rule, there can be no hesitation over whether there should be rules or not. This is a consequence of the notion of human volition which is capable of deliberating and choosing a predisposition that differentiates humans from animals. The consensus about the need to control human behaviour according to rules guided by authority is central and unique to what is understood as a human society. Authority constitutes a basic characteristic of human society in that it implies rules which ultimately establish right and wrong manners of behaving in a particular social context. Authority depends on the participants sharing a conceptual scheme, so that to enter into a relation of authority implies a common level of understanding between the concerned parties in terms of a shared normative order. This means that any decision concerning what is right or wrong in a given social context can never absolutely be a matter of personal whim but rather a collective effort.

The concept of authority is used to describe the relationship that exists between two people or between a group of people or between different structures in society. Authority as a specifically human phenomenon is characterised by a variety of meanings. The variety of meanings is due to the different interpretations, understanding and application of authority and the way it is associated with other related concepts. One such a nuance of meaning, for example is the association between authority and power. Though different in meaning, there remains a tendency to link them to some extent. For instance, according to Benhamida (1973: 114), the relationship between the two concepts is often made to infer what is referred to as “willing submission”, “consent”, “acceptance”, and other similar concepts that render more palatable the disagreeable

implications of the concept power. He maintains that it is on the basis of such notions that authority becomes legitimate power. But in the same breath, he cautions that to consider authority as a species of power is to oversimplify the deep lying differences and antithetical ramifications of the two concepts.

In politics for instance, authority if it is understood authentically should not include the use of means such as force or manipulation through incentives or propaganda. Power, whether legitimate or not, does not hesitate to take recourse to these very means. The fact that authority is sometimes misappropriated and powerful means are used in its name, should not create confusion of the associated difference between authority and power.

Another subtle nuance in the meaning and nature of authority pertains to authority and influence. This notion is highlighted by Easton (1967: 98) in maintaining that authority is the kind of relationship that can be called influence with respect to another person when a person's behaviour modifies the behaviour of another person in some way. Easton contends further that the distinction between authority and power necessitates an attempt to link authority with influence. Concerning the link between authority and influence he maintains that as power is a sub-category of influence, then the transition from authority to influence requires an exit through power, although there is already a difference between authority and power. According to Winch (1958: 115) authority is neither a kind of influence nor a sort of causal relation between individual wills but an internal relation.

Another question that surrounds authority is its possible effect on behaviour, resulting in some form of obedience. According to Freud (1968: 222) authority is concerned with vague and undetermined character of notions of obedience and assent on which the exercise of authority is based. He maintains that a person in command possesses authority, irrespective of the reasons and circumstances which prompt people who are subjected to such authority to submit. Despite Freud's position, it is however, legitimate to argue that a disregard for the reasons why an order is carried out renders indefensible

the claim that the relation between the commander and the executor of an order is one of authority.

Giroux (1989: 71) states that authority can be understood as a historical construction shaped by diverse, competing traditions which contain their own values, and views of the world. Authority as a social concept has no universal meaning waiting to be discovered. This is because the concept itself is a focus of intense competing theoretical perspectives whose meaning and nature will keep on shifting depending on the theoretical context on which it is based.

The nature of authority is explained further by Winch (1971: 50), when he maintains that authority is a crucial and main concept that controls the circumstances under which a group of individuals is entitled to be called a human society. He states that it is the existence of authority relations that interferes with unity as a characteristic of a civil society from the one referred to as a “natural whole”. It is this profound difference that makes rules be understood only in specifically social contexts. Such a basic difference also makes rules never to function to explain human behaviour in the same way that nomological statements attempts to establish causal relations between variables. They may as such only provide some reasons for deciding how to act in a particular manner.

Authority like any other concept of social category has its own nature. Its nature can be interpreted from different social levels. For instance, there is always talk about “**the authorities**” or of people being “**in authority**”. This is usually expressed when the right of people to command and to make decisions as well as pronouncements is being derived from the established rules of procedure. For instance, there is usually reference to commands and decisions. People speak of someone being an authority on a particular academic discipline or subject. Such a person does not exert power, nor is he in possession of any kind of authority based on a system of rules. It is his level of training, competence, expertise, and success that makes him to be regarded as an authority, as someone who has a right to make certain pronouncements. This kind of a person derives his authoritative right from personal achievements and history in a particular

sphere of performance (Peters, 1973: 16).

According to Peters (1973: 44) it can be maintained that for authority to be rationalised, it must first be related in its structure to the purpose or purposes of the institution concerned. For instance, he maintains that an authority structure which is appropriate for an army is completely and manifestly different from that which may fit a state, an industry or school, for their purposes are completely different. This suggests that reflective questions should be asked about the distinctive purposes of the various institutions, including schools, before anything significant can be said about the authority structure which is thought to be appropriate.

In the school environment, for instance, there is a talk about a teacher being in a position of authority. In such a context a teacher can only be regarded as being in an authoritative position when he plays the role of a group leader, that is, when his main aim is to lead and guide learners in the study of problems which are relevant to the type of knowledge that he wants them to grasp. His/her efforts will have to presuppose mutual respect between the teacher and the learners. This will then encourage learners through hinting, prompting and guidance to think for themselves. In such an event the teacher is basically responsible to facilitate learning. The way in which the teacher, through his expertise and competence, facilitates learning in a school environment, will ultimately justify him as an authority in such a sphere.

The nature of the kind of authority that prevails in an educational context is a dynamic one. This assertion is supported by Freire and Shor (1987: 92) in maintaining that the teacher's authority should prevail, but it must keep on changing as the learners and the study evolve, as they emerge as critical subjects in the act of knowing. In such a situation the learners will have to know that in some instances freedom must be curtailed, for instance, when it goes beyond the limits of reasonable behaviour. In such a situation it could imply that a form of punishment needs to be executed.

According to Hartshorne (1990: 13) in looking at the nature of authority people should

guard against confusing authority with authoritarianism. This confusion results from the association of authority and power mentioned earlier. Hartshorne asserts that there is a place for authentic authority of the teacher in the learning situation which is quite distinct from the traditionally hierarchical or positional authority on which many teachers depend. He maintains further that authentic authority is authority won by respect and co-operation, that which comes from knowledge and skills shared, instead of being used to entrench power. It is furthermore only part of distributed authority, not autocratic authority contracted at one central point in one person.

Authentic authority is democratic authority and accountable to learners, parents, the community, the teaching profession, and ultimately to the broad national purposes of the government that provides resources for schooling.

In practical terms, much will therefore depend on the level of the democratic spirit exercised by everyone in the interrelationships that is prevailing and present amongst all who have a say and are central in the accomplishment of the schooling mission.

The distinction between authority and authoritarianism is further clarified by Nash (1996: 104) in maintaining that authority is often necessary while authoritarianism is always harmful. In highlighting the significance of such a distinction he contends that:

“The belief in the value of order for its own sake is a basic feature of an authoritarian philosophy. At a lower level, this becomes the exercise of authority and the achievement of order for one’s own sake, rather than for the sake of the other person or the group. There is a constant danger in schools that authority will degenerate into authoritarianism, because teaching unfortunately attracts those who consciously or unconsciously wish to exercise authority in order to satisfy some unfulfilled needs within themselves. The authoritarian demands unquestioning obedience

and is prepared to impact fear and punish severely in order to produce it”.

The real authority to which the learner must submit to is not the arbitrary authority of the teacher, but the authority of a third party, the norm or criterion beyond both the teacher and the learner. This kind of authority is found in the necessities of the situation, and the teacher must himself submit to it. It is only when the teacher indicates that he is not looking for his own power, but is acting selflessly in the disinterested pursuit of common ends that the learner will willingly submit to the discipline necessary for the attainment of those ends. Instead of demanding obedience, the good teacher encourages cooperation rather than exerting his power over his pupils, he creates new power relations with their assistance. It is the teacher's responsibility to generate the development of cooperative authority. Educational authority dissolves without respect, especially when it is reduced to whatever obedience people feel inclined to give, but, on the other hand there are unwanted consequences of respecting it uncritically without the demand for the rational justification which serves as a characteristic of a critical, normative discourse or democratic thinking (Nyberg and Farber, 1986: 10).

2.2 THE BASES OF AUTHORITY

According to Giroux (1989: 72) the bases of authority through which school life is structured, are rooted in notions of ethics and power. He maintains that central to the understanding of the structure should be the development of an understanding of the type of authority and ethics that defines schools as part of an ongoing movement and struggle for democracy and furthermore defines teachers as intellectuals who initiate the learners in a particular way of life. The kind of authority which is aspired to should be the one that legitimates schools as democratic, public spheres, and teachers as intellectuals who should work towards the attainment of their ideals of community, social justice and empowerment as well as social reform. In order to attain this kind of authority, any structure or enterprise that has to do with authority should be linked with the bases of authority. This will help to safeguard against the abuse of authority because it would

serve as normative checks and balances. The various bases of authority which are implied in this instance and which will consequently be discussed are social and legal authority, knowledge, moral values and societal structures.

2.2.1 Social order and legal authority

According to Hirst and Peters (1970: 133) institutions are based on certain rules and purposes. It is through rules and purposes that institutions can function properly and attain their main set objectives. But behind the idea of a rule stands a view of there being the correct and wrong way of approaching and doing things. It is only through an appeal to some or other manifestation of authority that a person can determine whether the way things are approached is acceptable. In almost every country a formal legal system has been developed. The main idea behind this is to determine which patterns of social behaviour can be considered correct or wrong, and which rules should ultimately be binding and enforced in the area over which it extends. This is in a way a process of determining which rules should be adhered to. In order to interpret and implement rules where necessary, the necessity to enforce them which is again highlighted, be made clear.

In most educational institutions the decisive aspect of the legality of authority has been undermined by those who thought they could build law upon will alone. On this basis, according to Friedrich (1972: 58), it is possible to make an assumption that authorities' functions to relate law and other types of commands to broader verities, to values and beliefs that transcend a particular judgement involved in a real concrete situation. He maintains further that the complex and interactive relationship of loyalty and authority can be understood by an analogy to family life based on the relationship of parents and children. Such an analogy is in most cases invoked by "**in loco parentis**" but it is frequently misinterpreted as an overemphasis of the power of the parents. During the early stages of a child's development, he or she is helplessly dependent on and in the power of the parents. Initially the power of the parents is absolute and unlimited. The complete and unrestricted nature of parental power ultimately necessitates some form of

legal order to control or supervise it. However, such power does not persist as the child develops. In this kind of a situation a sensitive parent will gradually substitute command with persuasion. This means that he will attempt to develop authority by way of providing reason for actions and rules. Through an advancement and elaboration of his reasons, he is also busy replacing subjection with understanding. This means that even in the type of a situation where authority is legally applied, it must still be guided by logic.

For order to prevail in a particular situation like in the school environment, there must be a legal and rational context where a claim to legitimacy rests on a belief in the legality of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to expect adherence to them. Authority therefore, has its natural home in legal systems to which the community entrusts the right to lay down what is correct in general, to apply rules to particular cases, and even to enforce them if needs be through disciplinary action. In the school environment, this would imply entrusting the exercise of authority in the hands of teachers who are thought to have a unique insight and understanding of the dynamics of schooling. On this basis, according to Peters (1966: 239) whenever there is an appeal to a special person as a source, originator, interpreter, or enforcer of rules, the concept of authority, in a social and legal sense is being properly applied.

In an educational context the implication of the social-legal basis of authority is that teachers as the employees of the government are required to teach the learners in accordance with the aims and objectives of the curriculum, and the syllabus which are provided to them by the concerned department of education. They are also expected to conduct themselves and to treat the learners in accordance with their professional ethics as is spelled out in a code of conduct. Teachers in this instance, are also charged with the social responsibility of teaching the learners in a way that the learners are initiated into the basics of their culture and the transmission of the kind of skills and knowledge that will ultimately enable them to emerge literate and numerate at the end of their schooling.

2.2.2 Knowledge

Although authority is basically a social construct, it cannot however, be confined to a sphere of social control only. It can also be linked to other spheres of life like that of knowledge which is very relevant in educational context. In the sphere of knowledge, a person can be regarded as an authority on the basis of his high level of understanding and expertise on a particular aspect or field of study. Such a person has a right to make pronouncements because of his acquired competence, training and insight. In this case authority is based on rationality and logic, and not on a person's right to issue out orders, as has been indicated earlier.

In the sphere of knowledge the pronouncements of any person who is regarded as an authority can be challenged by appeals to evidence (or grounds). If there are not enough grounds to support pronouncements, they cannot claim to be authoritative. According to Peters (1966: 240) the authority of the people who are treated as authorities in the sphere of knowledge emanates from their special training and vantage point and also because of having been proved right. He maintains that authoritative pronouncements should always be treated as provisional in which case their status would rather be like that of reliable evidence. This is based on the assumption that knowledge is not static but dynamic. It means that if knowledge is not provisional, it can become outdated and rendered irrelevant. The other reason why authoritative pronouncements are provisional is that once they are permanent, they may be abused and ultimately turn into authoritarianism.

In the educational context, knowledge through expertise serves as an authoritative base for the teachers, because it is through teachers' expertise that they can be in a position to conduct their teaching and learning activities with the kind of efficiency that is required. Schools as educational institutions are expected to introduce the learners into worth-while forms of life, thought and activities including an awareness of what is valuable in life. Schools in this instance are faced with an enormous task of transmitting the kind of knowledge that preserves the ultimate values of society. Values do not reside

simply in the content or body of knowledge and skills which are transmitted. They rather reside in the principles of procedure and forms of thought that enable such a body of knowledge to develop and to be adjusted to some new circumstances (Peters, 1966: 252).

In the school environment the teacher, as a result of his expertise based on his knowledge has a dual role to play. In the first instance, the teacher is an authority on the basis of his knowledge is expected to initiate the learners into what is regarded as worth-while in itself. In the second instance, he is expected to prepare people for certain occupations and even to act as an agent of selection in the competition for jobs and for higher education. Both these tasks require a specific knowledge based on a particular expertise. It is on the basis of the teacher's acquisition of such kind of knowledge that he is regarded as an authority (Peters, 1966: 252-253).

2.2.3 Moral values

Authority can be said to be an appeal to an impersonal normative order or a value system which regulates behaviour. Moral values in this context will refer to those principles of right and wrong which are considered worthwhile and are accepted by society. Moral values also imply that human behaviour is judged from a normative perspective. The meaning and significance of moral values is elucidated by Kohli (1995: 133) in maintaining that people need "**foundations**" even if of a provisional nature in order to give direction and meaning to life. It is on the basis of moral values that people can be in a position to give meaning and direction to their lives. He contends that people want to see patterns in what they and others need in life and how to achieve it in order to know what is moral and how to live the good life. Sensitivity to moral values will enable people to identify basic values in life such as health, happiness, friendship, community, discovery and fulfilment, that is, aspects which ultimately make life seem good and worthwhile.

Moral values are regarded as one of the bases of authority. According to Giroux (1989:

58), it is because moral values serve as principles and practices that are constituted through the relationship between knowledge and power, on the one hand, and larger social, cultural, political and economic consideration on the other. He avers that moral values enable an educator to link a theory of ethics and morality to a politics in which community, difference, remembrance, and historical awareness become foundational in education. He states that in doing so, educators can start to engage in the task of developing an ethical discourse in which radical or utopian human satisfactions and needs, together with the visions of good life, can build around historically informed and culturally specific aspects of human struggle. Moral values in a social context serve as strong basis of authority because it is only through the understanding of moral values that people can develop and link a theory of ethics and morality and that they can be in a position to understand some basics of life such as society, remembrance, difference and historical consciousness.

In a school setting the teacher has an important role to play as far as moral values are concerned. His role includes that of acting as a representative of society, especially the adult members of the community. He has to ensure that the moral values that are deemed high by different societies from which the learners come, are passed on to the learners. In this sense, he will be expected to serve as the transmitter and upholder of those moral values which are regarded as important and necessary in building the character of the learners.

In educational context, the teaching of moral values through moral education should not be seen as one of moralising and preaching in order to scare children into unselfishness against their inclinations, but rather of assisting to extend their sympathies and loyalties. To a very large extent, this can be achieved through formal study and discussion, but perhaps even more through developing warm genuine relationships in the school and classroom which lead naturally to greater mutual understanding and inclusiveness (Kohli, 1995: 135).

2.2.4 Societal structures

“Societal structures refer to those formal and informal groupings in society which fulfil a social role or function such as home, family, church, school and in broader context government with its branches, business and industry” (Peters, 1973: 42). Various societal structures are stakeholders in the continuing existence and progress of a particular society and as such serve as a collective basis for authority.

The justification of authority embodied in societal structures should always be determined within the context of a particular societal structure. This can be ascribed to the fact that each societal structure differs from another in terms of its demands and the expectations that it presupposes. Societal structures such as government, school, family, industry, church and others are different in nature. Although human beings have always been sufficiently aware of the role of societal structures, the rationale for authority in such structures is almost unquestionable even if all sorts of disagreements are possible about the relative weight to be given to different fundamental principles determining authority.

If societal structures are organised on principles of logic, it would imply ensuring that those who are authorities on various matters are given the opportunity to manage the structures and to be part of them. For this to happen, those who are authorities should be put in positions of authority at a level which is consistent with the principle of accountability. If inappropriate persons assume authority in societal structures like educational institutions, the development of knowledge may be distorted by too much concern for what is of immediate use and of personal interest. This can in turn contribute towards the collapse of the concerned societal structures and the societies that uphold them (Peters, 1966: 251).

The school as a societal structure is charged with the responsibility of imparting norms and values, and the appropriate skills to the young people in society. At times it is however, not possible for the school to fulfil this responsibility because of the conflicting

stakeholders' views of the role of the school. On the one hand there are those people who believe that educational institutions such as schools are necessarily coercive, authoritarian instruments of a reactionary establishment. On the other hand there are those who are convinced that the fabric of society is threatened by democratic methods in the schools (Peters, 1973: 43). On the basis of these conflicting opinions about the role of the school it is not always possible for the school to succeed in its attempt to impart norms, values, and skills which are required in democratic societies. For the school to succeed in this mission, it requires the assistance as well as co-operation from other societal structures such as the state, church, business, industry, government and non-governmental organisations. The school as a societal structure has to share with these other societal structures the task of transmitting and preserving the ultimate values of society. This can be ascribed to the fact that in every society the values reside not simply in the content or body of knowledge and skills which are imparted, but they also reside in the principles of procedure and forms of thought that enable a body of knowledge to develop and to be adapted to new circumstances (Peters, 1973: 44).

Schools are basically concerned with the advancement and transmission of various forms of knowledge and skills. It then follows that this overriding purpose should determine the structure of authority within such an institution. The implications of an attempt to relate the authority structure to this purpose will enhance academic autonomy and provisional authority of educators and teachers.

2.3 THE ROLE OF AUTHORITY IN EDUCATION

According to Rich (1982: 1) the public's perception of education as a glowing source of hope and faith for the nation's progress and a brighter future for one's children is diminishing. He ascribes this kind of a situation to the problems of discipline which develop out of an institutional framework in which patterns of authority can be discerned. In order to revive the public's deteriorating hope and faith in education as an asset for a nation's progress, authority in education should be restored and observed. The restoration and observation of authority in education is central because it is the

framework within which discipline is defined and acceptable behaviour can be prescribed. Parents, teachers, learners, and administrators in education constitute authority figures holding differing amounts of power and whose authority is recognised as possessing varying degrees of legitimacy. This means that power and legitimacy among other conditions are required to exercise disciplinary controls. In education, authority figures are expected to exercise power, impose sanctions, and thereby seek to control institutional structures with a view to achieving the selected ends.

Educational institutions by implication involve certain purposes which are distinct by nature. They also entail rules and regulations by which members should abide. Basically all these rules and regulations should be closely linked to the purposes of educational institutions or they should be part of the more general and legal code of the community. Authority in this kind of a situation should be used to regulate the arbitrary arrangements and to ensure that the various rules and regulations are adhered to.

In the educational context the role of authority is central. It is through authority that educational institutions can be in a position to determine the kind of rules which should ultimately be binding and the extent to which they should be enforced can be determined. Establishing and maintaining authentic authority in the schools, enables the teacher to interpret and understand his role as that of a representative of society, upholder of moral values and principles, and an example to the pupils, hence his development of a sense of responsibility and accountability. In the educational setting, authority based on rationality will help the stakeholders including teachers, learners and parents to develop mutual trust and confidence. It will also help them to become accountable to one another. This is because whatever form of order that will be issued, knowledge and skills that are to be imparted, will to a very large extent be a consequence of their shared responsibility.

2.3.1 Authority and the education relationships

According to Mann (1986: 41) authority relations in public schooling are up for grabs.

He maintains that neither teachers, parents and learners nor legislators, business interests nor administrators can any longer claim an unambiguous base for assertions of authority in and over schooling. The complexity of authority relations is also highlighted by du Plooy, Griessel and Oberholzer (1982: 102) in regarding authority as a basic problem in education and educational thought. The reason for this problem is because of the different interpretations that are attached to the notion of authority by different people and the differing relationships that emanate from such different interpretations. In schools there are key stakeholders in the persons of learners, teachers and parents. In most cases these different categories of people do not share the same understanding of the meaning and the manner in which authority should be applied in education. This differing understanding in the long run makes it difficult for the different categories of people to relate well. It is however, only on the basis of the ability of these different groups of people to relate well that meaningful educational relationships can be established.

Educational relationships are often adversely affected by the tendency to regard teachers and learners as equal participants in the educational endeavour. This idea is echoed by Morrow (1988: 253) when he maintains that educative relationships cannot be relationships between equals. He avers that it is misleading to suggest that learners can manage their own education. He however, cautions that even if the learners cannot manage their own education, educative teaching is however at the same time anti-manipulative. The fact that education relationships cannot be relationships between the equals rests on the fact that the educator is more knowledgeable and experienced. The idea of authority would assist in defining the expected position and roles of both the educator and the learner in their relationships in education. Once a learner and educator are able to understand their positions and roles in the way they should relate, it would create the possibility to establish a relationship of mutual trust and understanding. If the relationship is one of mutual trust and understanding, the education situation would to a very large extent become conducive to effective teaching and learning.

This understanding of the role and significance of authority in education relationships

does not apply to the teacher and learner only, but it extends to all participants in the educational context. If the participants in education do not have a clear vision of the nature and significance of authority, the relation has a potential of resulting in conflict and tension. This point is illustrated by Hartshorne (1992: 334) in maintaining that:

“Schooling is taking place within an untidy maze of interactions that are generally volatile and often unpredictable. They differ radically from place to place, from event to event, often at the whim of the security apparatus officials, youthful activists, or young thugs who delight in mayhem and violence. It is not only schooling that is being rent asunder, but also the fabric of society in which it is taking place. In this constantly changing set of interactions the main participants are the State, the education departments, education leaders, community and parental groupings, teachers associations and unions, political forces, students and pupils in both organised and spontaneous action, the street children, the trade unions, industry and commerce, trusts and foundations both domestic and foreign.”

In looking at the various participants mentioned by Hartshorne in education, it becomes evident that all of them in one way or another have a concern in education, and exercise an influence to a greater or lesser degree on what happens in the schooling system. It is only through the establishment of clearly defined interests and relationships that these different participants can manage to reconcile their varying concerns and influences and work towards a common vision in education.

2.3.2 Authority and the realisation of the educational aim

According to Brubacher (1965: 179) educational processes are many, and of different kind and content. He maintains that the same is true of educational aims. The variety of educational activities is productive of many different aims and objectives. One is

justified in referring to *an educational aim* only to the extent that one views it as a general direction or as a unifying outlook. The multitude of educational aims may range from the most specific, such as the fostering of a certain habit or skill required by a particular society, to the most general, such as efficient citizenship, self-realisation of personality, effective sharing in life, depending on which specific process or specific body of the processes of the total educational activity is singled out. The theoretical problem, in facing a multitude of aims is not subordinating all specific aims to one single unifying one, or of denying specific aims their right of operating, but of developing some form of authority that will help to regulate and weigh one aim against another, and of seeing every single one in the light of all the rest.

According to du Plooy, Griessel and Oberholzer (1982: 102) the establishment of authority in education is one of the fundamental aspects of educative action. They maintain that it is only in a situation where there is some form of authority as well as sympathetic and authoritative guidance where an aim of education can be attained. This means that for any form of effective teaching and learning which are geared towards the attainment of an educational aim to occur, there must be some form of authority aimed at regulating the teaching and learning activities in a particular school system.

The educator's educative task of helping and providing guidance to the learners means that he is a person of authority, that is, a bearer of authority. Authority in this instance enables him to convert his association with the learners deliberately into the type of education situation that will be conducive to the attainment of the aim of education. If this kind of a situation has been established, the educator and the learner could be aware of each other's intentions. Ideally this will enable them to become aware of the significance of their association and they will ultimately attempt to consolidate their relationship with a view of achieving their common goal which is the realisation of the aim of education (du Plooy, Griessel and Oberholzer, 1982: 103).

The teacher and learners' mutual acceptance of authority will enable the educator to intervene in an educational situation. Such an act will be of significance in the event

where the educative purpose and process are in danger or unattainable because of the learners refusal to act in accordance with certain principles. The learner could be consciously or unconsciously indulging in certain actions which are not in line with the attainment of the aim of education. The educator's acceptance of his position will also enable him to realise that he is dealing with someone who is not on the same level with him as the learner will be in need of his authoritative guidance and assistance. The learner could be acting in this manner because of his insufficient knowledge, experience, self-control and vision as compared to that of the educator.

2.4 ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUTHORITY IN EDUCATION

According to Lessinger as quoted by Lucas (1976: 118) accountability is the product of a process. He maintains that at its most basic level, it implies that an agent, public or private, entering into a contractual agreement to conduct a service will be held answerable for conducting it according to agreed upon conditions, within an established time frame, and with a stipulated use of resources and performance standards. Apart from being a highly complex aspect, accountability is also a very sensitive issue, fraught with confusion, inter-human conflict, and a potential for confrontation between special interest groups.

According to Morrow (1989: 4) the idea of accountability is strongly rooted in the notions of justification and obligation. He avers that if a person is accountable for something, it means he is obliged to provide a justification for what he does in relation to it. He maintains further that to conclude that a person can be held accountable only for something that was within his control, and that to be accountable is to be under an obligation to provide justification for what one does, is already to have taken a major step towards indicating that accountability and autonomy are inseparable. A claim of being autonomous also means a claim of being accountable and governed in a particular way. This is so because an accountable person does not ignore and act against the wishes and interests of others but he reserves the right to consider wishes and interests on the basis of appropriate criteria.

In terms of the relation between authority and autonomy it is significant to note that for an autonomous person, authority and an approved law are never ultimate. This means that although they serve as important pillars for controlling the society, they are however, also open to question. An autonomous person is not opposed to authority and law, but he reserves the right to judge such form of authority and law in the light of external criteria. Any person acting autonomously is not acting under the dictates, constraints, or control of others. This does not mean that such a person should be disobedient and insubordinate. In the actions of an autonomous person, autonomy should never be associated with anarchy. To associate autonomy with anarchy would be similar to saying that unless a person is obedient to some or other moral rule, a person cannot act morally (Morrow, 1989: 5).

In education it is of utmost importance to establish a type of authority that will give strength and meaning towards the child's free development that will allow him to become true self. If one looks at the problem of authority one realises that educational authority and the notion of autonomy are inseparably linked, although this link is not adequately emphasised in educational practice. For educational authority to be authentic and acceptable, authority must be subject to autonomy. The educator as one of the main bearers of authority in education introduces a human element. The educator is at once an individual and an agent. In this dual role, accountability and autonomy are linked and are preconditions for authority in educational context in general as well as in the particular role of the teacher.

The complex nature of the question of educational accountability in relation to authority is also highlighted by Theobald and Mills (1955: 462) when they maintain that educational accountability, in and of itself, is hardly controversial because everyone would like the public schools to be accountable to the public. However, because of the way in which people exhibit themselves, educational accountability hinges on beliefs about what constitutes knowledge and how it can be demonstrated, an issue that is non-controversial in theory thus becomes extraordinarily divisive in practice. A struggle has developed as a result of the growing polarisation over the question of accountability.

That struggle becomes evident in battles between teachers and administrators, between group of community members and administrators, between students and teachers, and between students and administrators. Although these groups have always been divided to some degree, the question of accountability seems to have brought an intensity to these struggles that is unequalled in the history of education.

Communities can be well served by linking accountability to those issues that constitute authority in education and that proceed towards making an educated person. Creating this kind of a link requires purpose, and this ultimately returns the common unity that youth represent back to the life of a community. Of necessity these kind of links also reinsert a facility for discussing issues of ethics, compassion, justice and democracy (Theobald and Mills, 1995: 466).

What authority and educational accountability imply is that an educator is not only an individual, but a representative of human heritage and tradition. As a bearer of authority the teacher must more be guided by the element of accountability than by individual preference. Authority associated with accountability will enable the educator to look at himself as a person who, in accordance with his responsibilities, should go beyond personal whims in executing his duties. He will be accountable if he realises that he is not just a representative of something that contains within itself the possibility of man's essential development and freedom (Bantock and Faber, 1952: 184-202). In short it can be said that accountable authority is always humane authority.

Education as an activity that takes place amongst human beings need to be accountable to society. Accountable authority will encourage its acceptance by those who are obliged to observe it because of its rational basis. The educator needs to be aware of the fact that any form of authority which is not based on a reasoned elaboration cannot be qualified as an accountable authority as it will end up being feeble and short-lived.

2.5 CRITERIA FOR ACCOUNTABLE AUTHORITY

In the previous paragraphs of this chapter the investigator has attempted to show the inseparable link between authentic authority, accountability and autonomy. It has been demonstrated that authentic authority merges the notions of both autonomy and accountability. In order to supply operational criteria for evaluating accountable authority, two further aspects need to be examined. There are two main aspects that can be used as yardsticks for accountable authority. These are responsibility and justification.

The idea of responsibility as a criterion for accountable authority is echoed by Lucas (1976: 121) when he maintains that responsibility is the main issue in the accountability controversy. He avers that teachers have been intimidated by emphasis on accountability and their concerns are genuine. In most cases they feel that they can be held responsible for something over which they do not have control. It needs to be emphasised that authentic authority is always coupled with responsibility towards the child, the institutions and the values of the wider community. Authentic authority as viewed from this perspective creates a lot of concern for public school teachers. Their concern emanates from the fact that they have almost no authority over the design and administration of the institutions in which they exercise their “**educational authority**” as subject matter specialists and as adepts in pedagogy. Criteria for determining class composition and size, scheduling, curriculum and text content, the training, evaluation and promotions, delegating workloads, planning and allocation of space, all are controlled by legislatures, provincial departments of education and their administrators. It is no wonder that teachers are interested in winning the right to control themselves and the job they do. This right is necessary if teaching is to attract young professionals who have responsibility and respect for their work.

According to Peters (1966: 122) justification can be regarded as one of the criteria for accountable authority in education. It can be regarded as such because of a shift that has occurred from predominantly social control which was based on the tradition which

prescribed man's status and the roles that he had to play in the various areas of life such as the political, social and economic spheres, to more individual control. He maintains further that as a result of the development of individualism and the new economic order, life gradually became rather like a race. This new development has created a situation in which an individual effort rather than traditional status, came increasingly to determine a person's place and life in the world. As a result of these conditions self-made men of the professional classes started to ask some fundamental questions about the justification of authority in general and even to education in particular, and the limits to which it could legitimately be extended, hence justification is regarded as a criterion for accountable authority in education. Without any form of justification it would become difficult to accept authority that is exercised in education because such kind of authority would be void of a reasoned elaboration behind it.

Applying justification as a criterion for accountable authority will imply authority which is characterised by consultation. Consultation in this regard will enable those over whom authority is exercised to be fully informed about any act or procedure that is to be applied and followed. All those involved need to be party to the decisions that lead to the definition of the authoritative relationship and the adoption of procedures. Once the concerned people have been consulted and involved in taking decisions about the type of procedures that are to be applied, those involved will be obliged to honour their decisions, agreements and promises.

The necessity of justification will further compel those who are in authority to make their actions transparent. This is because they will realise that as long as their actions are not based on consultation and transparency they will not be justified, and consequently, not acceptable. This could result in tension and conflict. In order to avoid such an undesirable situation, those who are in authority will be obliged to consult and be transparent in whatever they are supposed to be engaged in. Transparency in this kind of a process will help to clear up some doubts and reservations that might exist with regard to the type of authoritative procedures that are to be taken. Being transparent will encourage the spirit of openness and closeness. On this basis it will become increasingly

difficult for any of the parties involved to denounce educational authority.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Authority is a familiar concept that is prevalent in most societal structures and is based on a need for social order and individual protection. Authority which is not authentic gives way to authoritarianism in which the elements of power and control associated with authority are overemphasised. For authority to be authentic, it needs to synthesise the opposing notions of autonomy and accountability.

Educational authority, like any other form of authority, needs to demonstrate responsibility as well as justification. These two criteria would determine that any educational practice or action that takes place within the sphere of authority need to be transparent, based on consultation and consensus in order to be acceptable and legitimate.

As will hopefully become evident in the next chapter of this dissertation, responsibility, justification, consultation and consensus form the backbone of what is considered democratic practice. The following chapter will reflect on democratic schooling in a contemporary perspective.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING : A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The inauguration of a democratic government in South Africa in 1994 has among other impacts, resulted in a widespread call for the democratisation of the entire schooling system. This call has left various stakeholders in education with complex and politically compelling problems. According to Morrow (1989: 135) the process of democratising schooling involves the broad area of schooling policy. He maintains that the sensitive details associated with the need and the attempt to democratise schooling pose a serious challenge to those who are adjusted and comfortable with the status quo. This challenge is bringing in a new kind of discourse to the educational debate which forces those who are satisfied with the status quo to confront uncomfortable questions about their position and actions in a transitional period.

The government's decision to democratise schooling is based on the premise that it is only through democratic schooling that any country that prides itself on being democratic can succeed to produce democratic citizens. Democratic citizens would in turn serve as the agents of democracy, a valuable asset in any country that is struggling to establish a democracy. The idea to democratise schooling is also based on the understanding that it is through democratic schooling that a particular education system can produce people who are critical, creative, innovative and responsive to the on-going challenges posed by a democratic society. Morrow (1989: 135) maintains that democratic schooling involves not only the broad area of schooling policy, but also the sensitive details of our practices as educators, and opens up significant and challenging lines of enquiry at a time when there is a need to think about our practices and convictions as educators.

According to Goodman (1989: 49) one of the most important issues facing those who propose democratic schooling is the question of the authority of teachers. He avers that the radical reform of schooling for critical democracy projects an active role for teachers to create the much needed educational environment. Teachers need to deliberately create rituals and structures and act with reasoned authority in order to nourish hope and commitment within learners. A liberalistic notion that learners do not require deliberate, adult intervention concerning social values and interaction stems from the sentimental and problematic assumption that learners will, if only left alone, naturally become concerned with the well-being of their environment. Learners in most societies have difficulty in putting the common good before their own immediate desires and as such a situation of extreme forms of individual freedom will just as likely if not more so result in anti-social, egoistical posturing among learners.

An important aspect in the process of democratising schooling is transformation and the manner in which transformation is handled. Transformation involves a number of inherently individualistic human characteristics such as behaviour, attitudes and interests. It is only when human beings are prepared to change their well established behaviour patterns, attitudes and interests in those areas of schooling that are to be transformed, that schooling can be democratised. In most cases it is however, difficult to transform these attitudes and behaviour patterns, especially when they have become part of the rules and regulations that govern social systems, including educational institutions.

As indicated, the democratisation of schooling will firstly require a change of established behaviour, attitudes and interests. It will also involve a critical evaluation of the existing situation in schools in order to change it and entrench sound democratic principles. Democratic procedures will involve *inter alia* consultation, communication and reflective decision making. It will also involve a schooling system and education in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the White Paper on Education and Training which has consequently become an act known as the South African Schools Act of 1996. Any attempt to democratise schooling will also have to consider the relationship between democracy and a hierarchical school structure, a

definition of rights, limits and responsibilities.

3.2 TENETS OF DEMOCRACY

Although hard to define, democracy, like other social constructs has core notions or tenets which underly its meaning, interpretation, understanding and application. It is these core notions which are used as yardsticks in determining whether democratic principles can or are applied in different life situations of which democratic schooling is but one. The tenets which serve as the determinants of democracy are amongst others involvement, consultation, communication and reflective decision making. Democratic schooling like democracy, does not happen by chance but involves determined efforts by educators and administrators to put the kind of arrangements and opportunities in place that will bring democracy to life in schools.

3.2.1 Involvement

According to Benhamida (1973: 94) involvement is used to refer to the support, approval and obedience to government policies, as well as to the mobilisation of the people whom policy makers engage in an attempt to guarantee the desired responses to their policies. Involvement in the latter instance is taken to imply a discussion based decision of those people participating in a particular problem situation. It is as such a function of the relationship that prevails between the people involved in particular steps necessary for the improvement of that problem situation. It is also a function of the relationship that exists between the people involved and conditions that are worthy of their actions. The concern is not whether or not people should be involved in the improvement of their problem situation, but rather, what kind of involvement and under what conditions. It should be emphasised that involvement with which the investigator is concerned is specifically that of the people on the receiving end since the administrators, especially those on the upper echelons are already involved.

When it is maintained that someone is involved in an activity, it means that he takes part

r for people to be in a position to improve their problem situations, it is necessary for policy makers to understand and accept involvement of other participants as a right to be exercised and not simply as a function and obligation to be discharged unquestioningly. This realisation and acceptance are all the more necessary, since involvement aims, ultimately at benefiting all the stakeholders by empowering them to improve their problem situations.

Like all rights, of course, the right to involvement is subject to moral and legal definitions according to which it can be executed. These definitions however, should not be used to change its meaning, misrepresent its scope and weight, and still less to set obstacles that would make its execution impossible. It may appear that accepting involvement as a right and permitting it in matters of policy-making would imply a loss of power to the people at the grass roots of the education system and a betrayal of the commitment to democratic ideals and to building viable notions, but if properly administered, it supports and enhances democratic ideals (Benhamida, 1973: 97).

A normative conception of involvement also entails a dimension of freedom. The recognition of a right to take part in something already involves the freedom of exercising it. For instance, it would not make sense to talk of someone's having a right if he is not allowed to exercise it or if that right is infringed upon by means of coercion or manipulation in a way that such a right can only be partly or inconclusively exercised. The freedom to be involved is concomitant to the right with involvement.

In educational context involvement of key stakeholders especially the main "clients" in the education system, namely, the learners, is crucial and central. This point is highlighted by Goodman (1989: 50) when he maintains that there is no discussion of democracy and education that can take place without first and foremost addressing the issue of student power. He points out that the only element that separates traditional schooling from democratic schooling, is a commitment to involve the learners in substantive decision making processes. Although recognising that the legitimate authority of teachers is crucial for establishing a power structure in schools, it is also

imperative to provide avenues for learners to engage in the responsible exercise of power. While having learners involved in decision making processes is important, this process needs to achieve more than giving learners the power to vote in order to promote a representative power structure. The main focus of collective deliberation should be to help learners understand the relationship between freedom, the exercise of power and social responsibility.

If there is serious commitment to the establishment of democratic schooling, attention should be given to all the competing notions of democracy. There should be a clear expression of a vision of democratic arrangements that promote involvement of people and a commitment to eliminate all forms of racial, gender and class oppression. However, the idea of democratic involvement and the moral foundation upon which it is built cannot be discussed in a vacuum. Concepts such as equity, freedom, justice, or liberty have no meaning outside specific historical and social contexts.

The notion of a widespread involvement of the main stakeholders in school matters as a characteristic of democratic schooling is not as simple as inviting participation. According to Apple and Beane (1995: 10) this is because a person's right to have a say introduces questions about how different viewpoints fit into fragile equation balancing special interests and the larger common good of the democratic community. In these forms of arrangement and the policy decisions that support them, people in democratic schools would need to deliberately emphasise structural equity.

3.2.2 Consultation

According to Benhamida (1978: 94) consultation is a requisite to any situational improvement because it primarily focuses on support, approval, or obedience to institutional policies. Consultation is an aspect of democracy which, in principle is very closely linked with authentic authority. Consultation is taken to imply the need and attempt to get and share the views and inputs of the people involved in the decisional and practical steps of a particular problem situation in order to improve it. Consultation in

this instance is as such determined by the relationship that exists between the people involved and conditions which are in line with the latter's actions.

The concept of consultation has a normative connotation. It is normative because it implies a pattern of relationships which is closer to association, co-operation, and partnership than it is with subservience, dependence or passivity. Whenever someone is being consulted in a particular decision, it means that he has taken part in supporting, approving or rejecting such a decision. Participation in supporting, approving or rejecting a particular decision is an act of special significance in respect of the ends and means of the decision in question. When someone is consulted about something, it is implicit that the idea that he is doing so stems out of a right that belongs to him, a right that is appropriately acknowledged by those who are also engaged in the participation relationship through consultation. If it were not so, the consultant in question would not have been permitted into the relationship in the first instance. On the basis of these grounds, it becomes evident that in order for both teachers and learners to be in a position of improving the teaching learning situation, it is necessary for their policy makers and leaders to come to understand and accept consultation as a right to be exercised and not simply as a duty and an obligation to be discharged unquestioningly.

In a school context, consultation would help to enhance democratic procedures. This would contribute towards the establishment of an orderly climate conducive to effective teaching and learning, because all the various groups would have been consulted to support, approve or reject a particular decision before it is taken as a ruling. Concerned groups will feel obliged to abide by a decision and honour it because they would have been consulted before it is approved. It will become part of all concerned groups' responsibility to see to it that such a decision is adhered to.

Consultation of the learners in a decision making process about academic matters such as the curriculum, teaching methods and strategies is likely to be more limited in scope. But even so there is a great deal of scope for joint decision making and consultation about school rules and discipline, out of school activities, relationships with the outside

community, and other similar activities.

In contrast to the democratic procedure of consultation, too many schools provide fitting targets for the tirades of deschoolers about regimentation, the alienation of pupils, and the stifling of their initiative. According to Peters (1973: 53) the atmosphere in this regard is more like that of an academy because in the hands of progressivists, "the school seems more like a vast supermarket in which the customers are tempted to try out what has been laid on in the hope that it will appeal to them". In neither case the teachers and pupils feel that they are co-operators in a joint enterprise. Any institutional arrangement which can assist to generate a feeling of mutual involvement and co-operation in the purposes of the institution and which is consistent with the academic autonomy and provisional authority of teachers, is surely to be welcomed on the understanding that it will contribute to improving the relationship between teachers and pupils.

The main issue confronting any educational institution is to attain some point of equilibrium between those principles derived from its specific purpose and the general democratic idea of consultation in a decision making process. In most cases when mention is made of the authority structure in schools, what people have in mind is the authority of the teacher in the classroom. In this sphere too, there is enough scope for the rationalisation of authority. A teacher is put in a position of authority by the community in order to assist the children to learn whatever they are supposed to learn. In order to facilitate this joint venture in a confined space, there must be certain minimal conditions of order for effective and meaningful learning to take place. There must therefore be some rules and regulations which will have to be discussed and agreed upon through consultation rather than through enforcement. Enforcement of rules may create the kind of social control which promotes authoritarian acts. Rules should rather be negotiated and agreed upon so that they can ultimately be seen and understood to be related to the educational purposes in the classroom or to the effective running of the school along democratic lines. To delight in issuing orders and in making rules for the sake of making them and not for the benefit of the parties affected by those rules, or to provide backing for rules only by appealing to a status is to be authoritarian and

undemocratic.

3.2.3 Communication

According to Benhamida (1973: 102) communication implies the passing on of information, the act of bringing to the attention of concerned groups all the declarations, decisions and achievements that involve them. In the context of education and schooling, this would refer inter alia to behavioural guidelines, decisions taken about the curricula, teaching methods, school participation in sports and cultural events as well as to acknowledging the problems and achievements of the school. He avers that the purpose of communication should be to create concern, to increase interest, involvement, and to promote commitment to the improvement of problem situations. In order for these purposes to be attained, more knowledge should be made available. On the other hand he maintains that it can be argued that the more knowledge is available, the less likely it is that consensus can be achieved. This argument is valid, of course, since increase in knowledge is accompanied by the increase in the variety of interpretations and conclusions which create a lesser chance for extensive agreement. No one is however naive enough to believe that unanimity of views can prevail in respect of major issues.

The importance of communication as one of the tenets of democracy especially where there are conflicting interests and tension is further underscored by Harber and Meighan (1989: 32) in maintaining that the proliferation of functionally differentiated systems increases the need for communication between them. They maintain that the logic of the organisation is to initiate and support communication horizontally, less and through "official channels", and not through routine but through informal, accidental and spontaneous contacts between members of the various sections and levels. Although Harber and Meighan use this in an organisational and industrial context, it can also be said to apply to the educational enterprise. On this point Luhman as quoted by Haber and Meighan (1989: 32) maintains that the traditional methods for consolidating the authority of those in command impede the upward flow of information inputs to a

system. Internal and external information are increasingly generated at the lower levels rather than the top which rationally motivates the need for learner involvement and communication in educational authority structures. This has consequences for the sources of initiatives and demands changes that are in line with a democratic way of conducting schooling.

Communication as the basis of democratic practices would enable stakeholders at various levels to relate to the environments that are increasingly differentiated as social evolution progresses. It will also enhance the levels of flexibility and responsiveness amongst the concerned stakeholders. This makes decisions in the form of initiatives to adjust the functioning of the system of ever greater importance. Child-centred teaching, process learning and experimental projects will generate more information from below as well as lead to conflicting interpretations. In other words reflection upon such approaches to learning is crucial but different (Harber and Meighan, 1989: 33).

In educational context, operational needs and relevance of communication in democratic institutions leave little alternative than to introduce a process of constant open communication. In a school situation, communication can be advanced through information exchange, debate, reflection, conflict and consensus through conflict. Communication in this manner will enable schools to respond positively to an increasing complex and sophisticated educational environment, and ultimately to distinguish themselves as democratic institutions.

According to Harber and Meighan (1989: 40) schools, in relationships amongst staff and pupils are one of the most improved forms of social evolution in modern society. This is a complex statement. Although it recognises both teachers and pupils as main stakeholders, it however underscores the difference between these two main stakeholders. This difference is in most instances enforced and policed in the sense that pupils are not considered part of the system especially in matters of difference in interests and opinions with teachers. They are not empowered to transmit into the system the significant messages about means and ends. Concepts of debate, action and

conflict involving pupils over the meaning and direction of school, are regarded by most teachers as a ludicrous anathema. This needs to be resolved through communication. Once this kind of situation is resolved, pupils will feel an internal part of the school and not merely external objects. As such a situation will be of significance to the schooling process in a democratic environment, logic would suggest an urgency about including pupils as part of the system's internal environment.

Conflict with the pupil population could of course loom so large in everyday interaction that adjusting efforts to effectively manage such a situation can amount to total forces of the school and certainly to the individual members of staff. The way in which questions of discipline and system lead to problems is testimony to the danger of objectifying the children as environment.

A refusal of communication means that the dominant form of interaction between the two systems is one of unproductive conflict. By contrast, one might instead seek to accept the pupils as part of the school system in the sense of being stakeholders with their own specific messages to input in their own relevant way. This would not of course terminate conflict, it would however, ensure that the creative management of that conflict is part of the activity of the school system and that the conflict would not be a source of crisis within the school system. This is not difficult as it might first appear. It does not imply a process of complete enfranchisement of all pupils on an equal status with staff. Limitations upon the political participation of any member of the political community, in a representative democracy is accepted for very good reasons, *inter alia* that elected representatives will have greater access to political deliberations and decision-making than the electorate themselves. Democracy in this sense is encouraged by Harber and Meighan (1989: 40) in maintaining that "imperfect" democracy is still democracy and perhaps the only kind that will function. It becomes clear that the definition of roles and functions in a school system becomes crucial to define the extent of participation through communication without compromising the principles of democracy.

A school may be procedurally and communicatively egalitarian. This does not imply that there can be no differences of status or of executive power. Even if this can be the position of a particular school system, communication and negotiations over professional matters such as school policy should be acceptable and appropriate. This will ultimately become a process of genuine representation and consultation despite the quite likely possibility that the process of schooling will come to include comments upon the performance and competence of teachers themselves.

3.2.4 Reflective decision making

According to Engle and Ochoa (1988: 61) democracy envisions an open and dynamic society in the governance of which individual citizens are entitled and privileged to play the deciding role. They maintain further that in contrast to an autocracy where important decisions are made at the top and where the majority of the citizens are expected merely to be compliant, the citizens of a democracy are in the long run responsible for the policies and actions decided and implemented by their government. It is only through reflective decision making as one of the tenets of democracy that citizens can be in a position to account for the policies and actions that will be implemented. Reflective decision making refers to a process of decision making based not on position, status or whim, but on well-informed, justified and founded deliberation. The implication is that all individuals and groups involved in decision making must be adequately be informed about the issues at stake.

It is essential that stakeholders in democratic schooling differentiate between the two levels of decision making involved in a democracy. At one level people must decide on the dependability of the information that they use as evidence to support their positions on complex social problems. Amongst competing claims of truth, they must decide what to believe and what not to believe. They will also learn to draw a distinction between claims to truth that have validity from those that do not. At a second and higher level people must decide how to deal with complex social problems. This implies that they must be in a position to know how to define problems, what values should be pursued,

what public policies should be supported, what candidates should be elected to office, and what actions should be taken with regard to social concerns. These tasks are critical to the effective functioning of a democracy. The knowledge exceeds the boundaries of any one discipline or field of knowledge or expertise. The quality of decision at the first level described above contributes to the quality of decision making at the second level. In order to avoid ignorance in dealing with social problems, improvement in the quality of decision making at each of the above mentioned levels can best be gained by seriously engaging in the kind and nature of the envisaged problem solving mechanism (Engle and Ochoa, 1988: 62).

In a classroom setting, a lot of information is impressed on the learners with rare opportunities for them to question or examine its validity and authenticity. With little or no opportunity to validate information as evidence in support of one action or another, it may well do more to hinder the development of reflective decision making skills in the learners than prepare them for life as citizens in a democracy. Education that over emphasises isolated facts is not only useless, but it is above all harmful and also an impediment towards the development of reflective thinking skills. If education is to go anywhere, if more skilled decision making is to result from education which is in line with democratic principles, there must be an engagement of pupils in democratic decision making processes at all levels. Introducing reflective decision making at school level will enable the pupils to be critically, creatively, innovatively and responsively engaged in the type of accountable decisions that affect their way of schooling and ultimately their way of understanding and approach to life in a democracy.

3.3 FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND EDUCATION

Democracy as a political notion is fundamentally grounded on basic human rights. Acknowledgement of the rights of the individual presupposes a democratic system which will allow the individual to voice and claim his or her rights and a system that will uphold and protect these rights. In order to understand the scope of new legislation, it is necessary to look at the basic rights that underlie them to see to what extent it reflects

the democratic spirit and provides the rationale for democratic schooling. In order for schooling to be democratic in nature and promote democratic principles, fundamental human rights such as equality, the right to life, human dignity, freedom and the security of the person, privacy and other principles should be protected and endorsed on all levels within the school environment. In education such fundamental human rights can only be endorsed through the adherence to and application of democratic principles such as emerged in the previous paragraph. These democratic principles are reflected in the spirit and scope of the second chapter of the new constitution of South Africa.

3.3.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa : Chapter Two

Chapter Two of the Constitution deals with fundamental human rights. The Bill of Rights as it is commonly referred to, is aimed at serving as the hallmark of democracy through the establishment of equality before the law and equal protection by the law to all South African citizens irrespective of grounds such as race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language (Government Gazette, 1996: 8).

According to the Bill of Rights as outlined, any such grounds for discrimination shall not be tolerated because it shall be presumed to be adequate proof of unfair treatment. In order to guard against such unfair treatment, each and every person is therefore entitled to have the right to respect and protection of his or her dignity. A person's right to respect and protection of his or her dignity is endorsed by giving each and every individual person the right to freedom and security. In the New Constitution an individual's freedom is extended by allowing each and every individual to have freedom of expression and freedom of association (Government Gazette, 1996: 5-6).

With reference to education, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa maintains that every person shall be entitled to basic education, including adult basic education and training, and to equal access to educational institutions. It is also maintained that in educational institutions each and every person shall have the right to instruction in the

language of his or her choice where this is reasonably practicable. The state must consider and take the responsibility to establish, educational institutions based on a common culture, language or religion, on condition that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, sex and creed, taking into account equity, practicability and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminating laws and practices. It endorses the right of every person or group of people to establish and maintain, at their own expense, private or independent educational institutions on condition that such educational institutions do not discriminate on the basis of race, are registered with the government, and maintain standards that are not lower than standards at comparable public educational institutions. The constitution also protects the right of children against neglect or abuse and subjection to exploitative labour practices and the right not for them to be required or permitted to perform any task which is dangerous to their education and health or well-being. The state in this regard is charged with the responsibility to take reasonable measures to make education progressively available and accessible to all the people of the country (Government Gazette, 1996: 13).

On the basis of these key aspects of The Bill of Rights, the South African Government intends to bring about democracy to the level of each and every individual's social, economic and political experience. According to the Bill of Rights, every citizen is entitled to be respected, equally treated before the law and to have access to basic education with a view of combatting illiteracy and ignorance. One important implication of the Bill of Rights is that education shall not be interpreted and understood as a privilege of some individuals but rather as a birth right to which all the citizens of a democratic country are entitled. Another educational implication of the Bill of rights is that there will no longer be discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief or language with regard to access to educational institutions as it was the case in the past.

3.3.2 The White Paper on Education and Training

The democratisation of education is further advanced by the White Paper on Education

and Training of 1995 which has subsequently become the South African Schools Act of 1996. At the time of the research, the Act had not yet been ratified but it reflects the same spirit as indicated in the White Paper on Education and Training. One of the major aspirations of the South African Government is to provide universal basic education for the people of South Africa. The White Paper on Education and Training is primarily aimed at the provision of an equitable system of education through the reconstruction and development of education and training programme, the establishment of the constitutional and organisational basis of the system, the funding of the education system, and the reconstruction and development of the school system. The White Paper on Education and Training not only emphasises the importance of establishing formal access to transformed educational structures for all learners, but insists that this access must be to quality education.

“The paramount task is to build a just and equitable system which provides good quality education and training to learners young and old throughout the country” (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: 17).

As South Africans never had a truly co-ordinated national system of education, the White Paper on Education and Training is aimed at initiating and developing steps that will transform the entire system of education that will serve all the people in the country equally. The White Paper on Education and Training is proposed as an outline for the development of an education system that will benefit the country as a whole and all its people. It is also aimed at fulfilling the vision to “**open the doors of learning and culture to all**”. This vision can be fulfilled by a way of laying down the foundations for building a just and equitable system of education that will provide quality education and training to all learners irrespective of race, religion, sex, ethnic and social group (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: 8).

In terms of the reconstruction and development of the education and training programme, the White Paper on Education and Training addresses issues such as the

transformation of the legacy of the past, an identification of the values and principles of education and training policy and an outline of the developmental initiatives. In transforming the legacy of the past, the Ministry of Education is attempting to take into account the impact of different educational histories experienced by the South Africans as an inevitable factor in the transition to a single, non-racial national system of education. This attempt is aimed at laying down the bases for joint responsibility of all South Africans who have a stake in the education and training system to help in building a just, equitable, and high quality system of education for all South Africans, with a common culture of disciplined commitment to teaching and learning (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: 5-14).

The development initiatives which are identified in the White Paper on Education and Training are in line with the government's reconstruction and development programme, which is designed as an integrated, unified socio-economic policy framework. The developmental initiatives outlined include aspects such as the National Qualification Framework, which is aimed at extensively upgrading the knowledge and skills base of the working and unemployed population, and the creation of better opportunities for the young people who are still at school so that they can have the advantage to continue with the education and training. Other important aspects included in the developmental initiatives are curriculum development, National Opening Learning Agency, Education Support Services and Education for Learners with Special Education Needs. Curriculum development in this case advocates the type of situation in which the teaching profession, teacher educators, subject advisors and other learning practitioners along with academic subject specialists and researchers should play a leading role (White Paper on Education and Training, 1995: 19-25).

In February 1996, Part Two of the White Paper on Education and Training was adopted. Part Two of the White Paper deals specifically with the organisation, governance and financing of schools, only two categories of schools, namely, public and independent schools will be recognised in future. Public schools will comprise all varieties of state and state-aided schools, including former Model C schools, while independent schools

are the schools currently known as private schools. Collectively, public schools comprise more than 98% of all schools, with independent schools making up the rest. School premises will be owned by the state. In terms of the proposals, school premises ceded to Model C schools will most likely be transferred back to the state without compensation, but with the express purpose that they determine their own admission policy, mission, character and ethos in accordance with the constitution, while teachers may be appointed only on the recommendations of and in consultation with the schools (Education White Paper II, 1996: 13-15).

Schools will also have a legal persona, which means they can acquire rights and incur obligations. Public schools will be run by bodies which will be comprised of parents, teachers, pupils in the case of secondary schools, non-teaching staff, the principal and the members of the community. Members of the governing bodies will be elected with the parents comprising the majority. Each governing body will be vested with “basic powers” to undertake more functions (Education White Paper II, 1996: 16-18).

The running of public schools by bodies that consist of the stakeholders listed above, as a bold attempt, aimed at establishing co-operative governance as a principle of democratic control in educational institutions. This attempt will help in establishing accountable and authentic authority in schools as democratic educational institutions. The provision of a legal persona to schools will compel the schools to be run in accordance with and to uphold fundamental human rights as are enshrined in The Constitution. Schools henceforth will acquire rights and incur obligations that will compel them to be accountable to the public at large.

On the basis of the foregoing exposition on the aims, objectives and principles of the White Paper on Education and Training, it becomes evident that the White Paper on Education and Training is aimed at democratising the entire education system in the country. In attempting to democratise education and training it also seeks to turn the control of education in such a way that it will ultimately be more representative, transparent, consultative and accountable to all the various stakeholders in education.

It is also aimed at guarding against the abuse and violation of basic human rights by promoting and protecting freedom and democracy in education. The upholding and protection of these fundamental human rights will in the long run serve as a hallmark of authentic authority in the entire school system of the country.

3.4 DEMOCRACY AND A HIERARCHICAL SCHOOL STRUCTURE : RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING

According to Page (1985: 43) the notion of hierarchy implies that the importance of a decision is perfectly correlated with the hierarchical level at which it is taken. This means that it can be expected that the most important policy decisions are taken at the apex of an organisation, whether by an official or a politician in which case those who are lower down in the hierarchy would merely be expected to carry them out. The significance of hierarchy within an institution like a school is unlikely to emerge in a particularly visible form of subordinates anticipating the reactions of hierarchical superiors. It is as such a mistake to look for direct assertion of authority in order to establish its existence because to do so is to forget that the subordinate is likely to have some idea of the disposition and values of his superior, and know the constraints within which his superior operates. A subordinate is therefore unlikely to waste time making proposals which will in turn be completely rejected.

Concerning the hierarchical school structure, Page (1985: 44) maintains that in democratic schooling such a structure should not be directed towards the conservation of existing arrangements, but it should rather, subject to other important conditions, be constructively directed towards a pattern of political and social change that puts greater emphasis on the ideals of social justice. A hierarchical school structure in democratic schooling should also be used to heighten the general level of political and social consciousness, in order to increase the possibilities of political and social involvement. It should endeavour to develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills in learners that will enable them to be socially and politically sensitive, and if they decide to act politically and socially effective (Brenna, 1981: 12).

An acknowledgement of responsibilities and rights in democratic schooling should help to guard against a situation where other stakeholders in schooling are led and guided by experts whose duty is to implement technical and instrumental solutions to practical problems. This should be guarded against because it could create the kind of situation in which individual responsibility is placed at the lower levels of the hierarchical structure. Teachers could then be expected to adopt the established logic of the broader education system without unduly questioning it. This will in turn make teachers subject to scrutiny much of what is taken for granted in education and to be initiative in critically appraising their teaching practice and experience of schooling (Angus, 1968: 20-25).

In democratic schooling, responsibilities and rights should be in line with the principles of genuine democracy and equality in education that will transform schools and classrooms into places in which essential concerns of what it means to be a person, a citizen and a member of cultural community, would be central. Rights and responsibilities in democratic schooling should be directed at establishing the kind of climate that will facilitate a true participation in school and social affairs. This will make the relationship between schools and society, and taken for granted notions of curriculum and pedagogy to be problematised and subjected to scrutiny. In democratic schooling, responsibilities and rights should be exercised in such a way that they turn schools and classrooms into places of collective social action in which administrators, teachers and pupils would promote co-operation, genuine social learning, and individual as well as social responsibility. This kind of approach will contribute in endangering commitment to the principles of democracy and equality (Angus, 1986: 26).

Responsibilities and rights in democratic schooling should also be exercised in such a way that teachers, pupils, administrators and the members of the community function in an environment of democracy and critical scrutiny rather than in a hierarchical and institutionalised practice. These kind of responsibilities and rights should help in the establishment of an education system that will assist in the continuing process of social reconstruction by helping the pupils and other members in the school system to become creative, critical thinkers and active social participants, to become capable of redefining

the nature of their own lives in the society in which they exist. This kind of a social reconstruction should be gradual as it will be building upon the positive elements in existing practice, flawed though they might be, so that eventually all the people might be better served by schools as democratic institutions.

3.5 DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING : THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African government's commitment to democratise schooling is exemplified by the ministry of education's effort to establish a system that will fulfill the vision to "open the doors of learning and culture to all". The ministry of education is at present campaigning vigorously to establish such a system in an attempt to build a just and equitable system of education with a sound democratic footing. The ministry of education is faced with an enormous task of redress to ensure equity in education. This involves a number of related aspects in reorganising the schooling system such as racial integration of schools, division of schools into two main categories, namely, private and public, revised administration, governance and funding of schools as well as the ownership of school premises, admission policy, and the revival of the culture of teaching and learning.

It has to be acknowledged that the "ideal" situation envisaged by legislation and evoked by the rhetoric of educational policy as explicated above does not translate into practice without difficulty and often opposition. In the current process of transition many problems emerge.

Racial integration of schools is one of the major developments which are underway in the present South African schooling system. Before the inauguration of the government of national unity, schooling in South Africa was divided into eighteen different departments of education. After the inauguration of the government of national unity, South Africa for the first time had one ministry of education. It is mainly the principle of redress and equity within the new school system that has necessitated the new

structure of educational reform.

The process of integrating schools racially is, however, characterised by a degree of resistance and tension in some areas in the country. The tension and the acts of resistance are for the most part based on racism and conservatism that prevail in some traditionally white communities. In one of the schools where tension is reflected was reported in the *Mail and Guardian* (1986: 10) that if a child could speak Afrikaans he would be admitted. The report maintained further that the consequence of this policy of admitting only those children who can speak Afrikaans was the blocking of black children by the khakhi-clad white parents from entering the primary school. The obvious intention and consequence of this policy was to have a school that remains 100% white. The attempt to block or resist the admission of children who were from other racial groups is an indication that certain members of the community are still attempting to perpetuate racism because of their fear and uncertainty. To block children who belong to other racial groups is however unconstitutional and at odds with education policy. Though one can suspect that the motivation of these actions were primarily racist, the parents were also quoting the constitution in maintaining that they have the right to education in their mother tongue. Part of their fears were founded on the fact that the majority of non-Afrikaans speaking children might force the school to change its language of instruction.

The most notable consequence of racial integration of schools is the movement of black pupils in large numbers away from their former schools to the traditionally white schools, particularly those that were referred to as model C schools. This movement has prompted many of the white parents, especially the wealthiest ones, to withdraw their children from the former model C schools and send them to the prestigious private schools. This point is well illustrated in the *Mail and Guardian* (1986: 11).

“In yet another irony thrown up by our skewed education system, many previously crowded Soweto schools have been abandoned by the township constituency. Instead parents are sending their

children to the schools in the former White, Indian and Coloured suburbs in Johannesburg where English is the medium of instruction. And the drift away from township school to former White, Indian and Coloured schools is being echoed in formerly white schools too, with increasing numbers of white parents trying to get their children out of these schools into the private schools.”

The majority of the black parents single out a decline in the culture of teaching and learning as one of the main reasons that compels them to send their children to the former model C schools. On the other hand parents whose children were attending the former model C schools before the process of racial integration was launched, feel uncomfortable when their children are to merge with those who are from rural and township schools. Some are under the impression that an integration between their children with those children who have a social and language disadvantage will have a negative impact on standards in the education of their children.

The movement of black pupils away from township schools in large numbers to former White, Indian and Coloured schools is in a way an acknowledgement of the fact that the crisis is still continuing in most of the traditionally black schools. This fact is also supported by Gauteng Province’s MEC for education, Mary Metcalfe, in her reaction to this situation. She maintains that although the parents are entitled to send their children where they want, socially and politically they are not contributing to good public schooling. Ms Metcalfe avers that instead of taking their children to other schools, they should be looking for solutions to the education crisis in their own schools. Parents should stop running away from the problems and start assisting to normalise the situation in the township schools (Mail and Guardian, 1996: 11).

Another major issue that is linked to the migration of pupils to “superior” schools, is the unavailability of basic resources as well as an imbalance in available resources. The issue of the imbalance and unavailability of resources is much more discernible in

historically black schools. This unsatisfactory situation is illustrated in the *Mail and Guardian* (1996: 14) where a principal airs his frustration because of the lack of library, science laboratories, overhead projectors, and even textbooks for the new syllabus. Although not up to standard, facilities at the schools are still far much better than others because in most of the schools in the Northern Province, a school meant a patch of shade under a tree. It is also stated that the vast gap in resources between the historically white and black schools in the province has posed a dilemma for the Northern Province government.

Concerning democratic practices and structures in schools, the Ministry of Education through the Provincial Departments of Education is engaged in the process of setting these up. One important indication of the Ministry of Education's attempt to put democratic practices and structures in schools in place is an establishment of the school governing bodies in all the public schools. Through this effort the Ministry of Education is turning schools into true and meaningful democratic institutions in which all the various key stakeholders in the school system will be represented in the governance of the schools. The establishment of school governing bodies will also make co-operative governance in schools become a reality.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters of this thesis, an attempt has been made to analyse the concepts of authority and democracy in order to come to an understanding about the scope and nature of justified, accountable authority in the school environment that reflects the spirit of democracy. A philosophical analysis of both concepts does, however, not capture the intricate nature of educational practices where authority needs to be exercised in a democratic manner. Whether this is at all possible, only hands on experience will indicate. In order to test these notions in reality, the investigator will continue in the next chapter to give evidence of educational practices, attitudes and experiences that display views on authority and democracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF AUTHORITY IN THE SCHOOL SITUATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

An empirical study refers to any procedure of controlled experience, observation, or experiment used to explain how and why events occur as they do. In the context of the scientific method, empirical study depends not on an armchair theorising, political persuasiveness, or personal position, but on observation and measurement. Empirical study calls for a reliance on techniques that are available to anyone who is skilled enough to apply them in order to open up the world for scrutiny and investigation (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996:7).

Having presented a theoretical exposition of the topic of research, the investigator felt compelled to make use of the empirical study to affirm theoretical findings even if according to the tradition of the perspective from which the investigator is conducting this research, he could have confined himself to a theoretical analysis and discussion of the problem under investigation. The researcher realised that without empirical affirmation, this dissertation through its analysis, findings and conclusion will remain only on a theoretical level. It may have, as such, run the risk of losing sight of the practical reality and implication of the main issues that have been raised in the previous chapters. Through the use of the empirical study the investigator attempts to verify and compare the main issues that have already been raised in the previous chapters such as the meaning, nature and role of authority in relation to democratic schooling with what is practically going on in the school situation. The investigator also attempts to verify whether there is relationship between the assumptions and conclusions that he has arrived at in the previous chapters with the views of those who are practically confronted with the raised issues. Through the use of the empirical study the investigator wants to test

the hypothesis of the dissertation which is formulated on the basis of the crisis of educational authority and how best authentic authority can be implemented in democratic schooling without resistance to it. In this dissertation the investigator also wants to determine whether the entire process of democratisation can be linked to responsible and accountable authority in democratic schooling.

4.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Empirical research methodology consists of two main types, namely, the qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984:5) qualitative methods refer in the broadest sense to the kind of research that is based on people's own written or spoken words or observable behaviour. They maintain that in a qualitative approach, researchers develop concepts, insights, and understanding from patterns in the data, rather than collecting data to evaluate preconceived models, hypotheses or theories. According to Creswell (1994:7) the purpose of a qualitative method is to develop generalisations that contribute to the theory that enables the researcher to be in a better position to predict, explain and understand some phenomena. These generalisations are improved if the information and instruments used are valid and reliable.

Contrary to the qualitative approach, according to Creswell (1994:4) the quantitative approach is the type of approach that is referred to as the traditional, the positivist, the experimental, or the empiricist tradition. He avers that in the context of research, quantitative approach views reality as "objective", "out there" independent of the researcher. This means that reality can be measured objectively by using a questionnaire or a similar measuring instrument. The quantitative approach also maintains that the researcher should remain distant and independent of that which is being researched, hence in surveys and experiments, researchers attempt to control, select a systematic sample and be "objective" in assessing a situation.

In executing this empirical study the investigator has decided to make use of the qualitative research approach. What has compelled the researcher to make use of the

qualitative research as opposed to the quantitative research method is his conviction that the only reality is that constructed by individuals involved in a research situation. Thus multiple realities exist in any given situation, the researcher, those individuals who are being investigated and the reader or audience interpreting a study. The qualitative research will enable the researcher to report faithfully these realities and rely on voices and interpretation of informants. Another reason that has made the researcher opt for qualitative research is because of his realisation that through this kind of research he will be in a position to interact with those he is studying. In short, through the use of this type of research, the researcher is convinced that he will better minimise the distance between himself and those he is investigating.

In an attempt to obtain qualitative information, the researcher has relied on a questionnaire as a means of collecting information.⁶ According to Borg and Gall (1989:416) a questionnaire is a format containing a list of questions arranged in a sequence to obtain information which is relevant to the objectives of a study. They maintain that a questionnaire enables the researcher to ask each respondent a brief series of questions that can be answered by indicating either yes or no, or by selecting one of a set of alternative choices. The respondent's answers are not followed up to obtain greater depth and the data could be collected quite satisfactorily with a mailed questionnaire. They also maintain that the main advantage for this type of data collection is that the investigator is likely to get fewer "don't know" and unusable responses. In contrast to this view, the researcher values the possibility for clarification and a follow up. The strictly objective procedure described by Borg and Gall, was consequently amended.

In executing this empirical study , the investigator has decided to make use of a questionnaire which was filled out by respondents under controlled conditions. The researcher has realised that using a questionnaire under controlled conditions would

⁶ See an addendum 1 at the end of the dissertation of the copy of the questionnaire

provide him with an opportunity to establish rapport with the respondents before they answer the questions and encourage trust and co-operation often needed to probe and clarify sensitive areas. It also provides the researcher with an opportunity to assist the respondents in their interpretation of those questions that seem to be difficult to understand. It minimises the risks of having unreturned questionnaires as the researcher could give the respondents an opportunity to fill out the questionnaires and collect them immediately. A questionnaire conducted under controlled conditions would also give the researcher greater control over the situation.

4.3 THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE AND A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

In conducting the empirical research the investigator distributed the questionnaires to forty eight teachers from six high schools. The schools were selected in terms of their performance based on the 1996 standard ten results in a particular area of the provincial department of education in the Northern Province called Mankweng circuit which for practical reasons was accessible to the researcher. Of the six schools, the first two's performance in terms of the 1996 standard ten results was poor, the second two's performance was average and the last two's performance was the best. Performance of schools can be attributed to many factors that fall outside the ambit of this particular investigation, but the investigator is of the opinion that a sound basis of authority in schools could be one of the factors that determine the academic success of the school.

All six high schools are schools which are still attended only by black pupils. The investigator's reason for choosing schools that are still homogeneous in racial representation is primarily because it is in the former predominantly black schools that the educational crisis in South Africa is perceived to linger despite the democratic structures that have been put in place in terms of educational administration and policy making. According to Hartshorne (1980: 6) this is because of the previous government's failure to address the issue of separation and isolation of the black education system and to meet the needs and aspirations of the people it was supposed to serve. The

investigator furthermore did not want factors such as pupils' initial problems with adaptation to a multicultural school environment to obscure the issue of authentic authority which is the major concern of this research.

4.4 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

4.4.1 Teaching experience of the respondents

Of the forty eight respondents, the teaching experience of eleven teachers ranged between one and four years, twelve ranged between five and seven years, nine ranged between eight and ten years. Sixteen had eleven or more years of teaching experience. The investigator's intention in asking this question was based on an assumption that experience is regarded as one of the criteria for quality teaching. The investigator was also interested in establishing whether there is a relationship between teachers' experience and their understanding of some of the topical problems in democratic schooling such as authority. The investigator concluded that there is not always a relationship of such kind. Some of the teachers with less teaching experience demonstrated a better understanding and insight into the crisis in education than some of the teachers with more teaching experience.

4.4.2 Academic qualifications

The academic qualifications of the respondents varied. Seventeen teachers had only standard ten, twenty two teachers had an academic degree as their highest qualification. Eight teachers had an honours degree, and one teacher had obtained a master's degree. The investigator's interest in academic qualifications in this context was to establish whether there is a relationship between teachers' level of academic training and their understanding of, and ability to, confront critical issues in education such as authority, authoritarianism, democratic education and the implementation of democratic practices in the entire schooling system. As far as this variable is concerned, the investigator has found that there is not a significant relationship between a person's level of academic

training and his or her insight into the above mentioned critical and topical issues in education. Through the responses of the teachers on this item, the investigator has realised that what matters most is a particular teacher's level of exposure to and engagement in debates on the above mentioned critical issues in education in order to develop insight. On the basis of the teachers' responses on this item, the Outcomes Based Education as articulated by the COTEP 1996 documents, which proposes that teachers' performance should be measured by outcomes rather than qualifications, seems to be justified.

4.5 AUTHORITY AS STRUCTURE

4.5.1 Teachers' perceptions of authority problems based on authority as structure

4.5.1.1 Respect for authority

In response to whether a teacher should encourage pupils to respect authority by way of instilling self-discipline amongst them, the majority of respondents indicated that self-discipline is one of the key aspects of the establishment of accountable authority. One important reason that has been highlighted by the respondents for the motivation of their position was that if the pupils have developed self-discipline they will also develop an understanding of sound authority as a basis for effective teaching and learning. Having developed this kind of understanding, authority problems in schooling especially those that are based on confrontation between teachers and pupils could be minimised.

4.5.1.2 Motivation of pupils to obey school rules

There was no divergence of views on this issue amongst the respondents. This means that all the respondents supported the idea that pupils should be motivated to obey school rules. The respondents were convinced that it is only when pupils are motivated that they can understand the rationale behind the significance of school rules and develop a positive attitude towards school rules and ultimately obey those rules. From an analysis

of the responses to this item, one can conclude that teachers should take the initiative and responsibility of motivating pupils to obey school rules in their respective schools. This can be done in a number of ways. For instance, it can be done by way of highlighting to the pupils the necessity of rules in a school environment and the relationship between school rules and meaningful teaching and learning. Once such an attempt has been made the majority of the pupils will understand the indispensibility of school rules. This will in turn encourage them to take responsibility to obey those rules. A further motivating factor can be the involvement of pupils in the formulation of rules which will be highlighted in the discussion of the following item.

4.5.1.3 Involvement of the high school pupils in the formation of rules

The teachers' responses to this item have indicated that although there are still those teachers who believe that it is not important to involve high school pupils in the formation of school rules, the majority of the respondents are however, of the opinion that it is necessary and important to involve high school pupils in the formation of school rules so that those rules can be regarded as reasonable and ultimately be acceptable to the pupils. When rules are deemed reasonable there will be less resistance to and violation of them. This will in turn help to minimise authority problems in schooling such as discipline, control, establishment of order and other authority related problems.

4.5.1.4 Reading of literature on authority

Although there is a divergence of views on this item, the majority of the respondents believe that the reading of literature on authority problems in schooling can provide them with more knowledge and insight into how to handle and minimise such problems.

4.5.1.5 Imposition of authority measures on pupils

The respondents expressed divergent views on whether teachers should impose authority measures on pupils or not. The differing views expressed by the respondents indicate

that there are on the one hand still teachers who believe that authority problems which serve as a hindrance to effective teaching and learning can be minimised through the imposition of authoritative measures which are not subject to ratification and approval by the pupils. On the other hand there are those teachers who believe that given the democratisation of the schooling system, the imposition of authoritative measures can no longer be used as an effective means of reducing authority problems because they constitute part and parcel of an autocratic way of handling situations, even in a school context.

4.6 AUTHORITY AS INTERVENTION

4.6.1 Comparison of present authority problems with a situation where there was no democratic schooling in South Africa

In analysing the response pattern of the respondents on this item, it becomes clear that the majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there were less authority problems when there was no democratic schooling in South Africa than is currently the case. This implies that the majority of respondents are still grappling to find ways through which they can effectively control classroom situations and thereby minimise authority problems in a situation where the entire school system is being democratised. The response to this issue also indicates the uncertainty that prevails amongst the majority of the people on the effect of change, that is, whether change in the country, including in schooling will bring about the expected results or not.

4.7 AUTHORITY AS CONSISTENCY

4.7.1 Consistency of the application of the teacher's authority practices amongst the pupils

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that in order for the teacher's authority to be acceptable to the pupils, it must be applied consistently especially in situations that are similar. Teachers who are in favour of consistency feel that in most cases pupils resist the authority of teachers if such authority is based on differential treatment in a situation where the infringement of rules is the same. They maintain that differential treatment of pupils in similar cases in most instances discourages pupils to observe and respect the teacher's authoritative practices. On the basis of this kind of a situation teachers should always attempt to apply their authoritative practices consistently. This will encourage pupils to obey and respect the teacher's authority as they will not associate it with unfair practices such as differential treatment.

4.7.2 Consistency of the teacher's authoritative practices with those of other teachers

The response pattern on this aspect indicates that most of the teachers maintain that the teacher's authoritative practices should mostly be consistent with that of other teachers in the school, with the view to establishing some uniformity of approach to the treatment of pupils by teachers. They are of the opinion that if there is no consistency with regard to the way teachers apply authoritative intervention, there is a strong possibility that pupils could be confused by what they experience as differential treatment, which they in turn could exploit. Some teachers could be perceived to be very strict while others are seen to be lenient and caring which may result in resistance against and conflict with those teachers who are perceived to be too strict. They maintain that this kind of a situation can be avoided by encouraging consistency amongst teachers in their exercise of authoritative practices.

4.7.3 Consistency of the teacher in handling similar cases of the infringement of rules by the pupils

In responding to this item, the respondents had two main differing viewpoints. On the one hand there were those who maintained that the teacher should sometimes handle similar cases of infringement of rules by pupils consistently. On the other hand there were those who maintain that the teacher should consistently handle similar cases of infringements of rules. Those who maintain that the teacher should sometimes handle similar cases of infringements of rules by pupils consistently, their reasoning is based on the fact that pupils may commit similar cases of infringements of rules due to different contributory factors. Any attempt to handle their cases consistently will be unfair and unjustifiable. Those who maintained that the teacher should always consistently handle similar cases of infringement of rules, based their reasoning on the motivation that such an attempt would help reduce any form of differential treatment of pupils by teachers particularly in those instances where infringement of rules by pupils is more or less the same. From the responses of the respondents it is clear that before handling similar cases of infringements of rules by the pupils consistently, attention should be given to the merits of each and every case even if at first observation they might seem to be alike.

4.8 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO PROBLEMS OF AUTHORITY IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

4.8.1 Teachers who read books on Authority approach authority problems of pupils with empathy

An analysis of the responses on this item indicates that the majority of the respondents think that the reading of books on Authority can enable them to have a better understanding of authority in terms of its meaning, nature, dynamics and the way in which it should be exercised. Such an understanding will in turn enable them to handle authority problems of pupils successfully and positively, that is, with empathy.

4.8.2 Teachers who prepare lessons before going to class report no problems of authority from their pupils

The respondents expressed differing viewpoints on this issue. On the one hand there were those who strongly feel that teachers who prepare lessons before going to class report no problems of authority from their pupils. On the other hand there were those who indicated that even some of those teachers who prepare lessons well before going to class, report problems of authority with their pupils. The differing viewpoints expressed by the respondents on this item indicate that it is not only a teacher's expertise and his or her commitment that will enable him or her to encounter fewer problems of authority but that it is also his or her capacity to maintain effective classroom control and discipline that plays a role in the general order and learning atmosphere in the classroom.

4.8.3 Reporting of more authority problems with pupils by female teachers than their male counterparts

Many of the respondents have indicated that female teachers report more authority problems in their interaction with pupils than is the case with their male counterparts especially in the senior classes. An analysis of the responses on this issue indicates that the majority of teachers hold the view that sex has a contributory factor towards the maintenance of effective classroom control and discipline.

4.8.4 Authority problems are many when pupils are not participating in the school's decision making processes

Most respondents agreed that authority problems are many when pupils do not participate in the school's decision making processes. Their reasoning is based on the fact that given the current situation in which democratic procedures are in place, decisions that are taken without the participation of pupils cannot become binding to the pupils. This position is officially supported since repressive measures such as coercion,

corporal punishment and other related measures are legally forbidden by both The South African Schools Act and The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. An analysis of the responses of the teachers on this issue also indicates that participation of pupils especially in a classroom situation will assist the teacher to gradually withdraw as a forceful director of learning. They maintain that in such a situation consultation will assist the pupils to keep on exercising more critical initiative, self-organisation and participation in setting the agenda of the curriculum. This will ultimately result in a situation where pupils are able to account for their actions with regard to issues of governance.

One important conclusion that one can draw from the responses of the teachers to this issue is that participation of the pupils in the decision making processes of the school will help in addressing the essential task of preparing young people for democracy by democratic decision making in a school situation. Currently, there is a debate going on whether young people, without some preparation and guidance can be ready for participation in the democratic processes within the school.

4.8.5 Authority problems are many when the governance of the school is not transparent and accountable to the main stakeholders

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that authority problems are many when the governance of the school is not transparent and accountable to the main stakeholders. This means that in order for authority problems in schools to be minimised, the governance of the school should be transparent and accountable to the main stakeholders of the school. They maintain that the transparency and accountability of the governance of the school will assist the pupils to develop the capacity of redefining the nature of their own lives in the society in which they exist. Such a process of social reconstruction and development would necessarily be gradual because it would build upon the positive elements in existing practice, without necessarily being free of error as they might be, so that all the stakeholders through their being actively and appropriately exposed to these kind of democratic practices may eventually be better served by the school. If the

governance of the school is transparent and accountable, the stakeholders will feel obliged to support and uphold its decisions and become less suspicious and hostile towards its decisions.

4.8.6 Authority problems are many when enrolment in the school is large

The majority of the respondents agree that authority problems are many when enrolment in the school is large. Their reasoning is based on the fact that when enrolment is large it is difficult to have an effective classroom control and discipline. If a teacher cannot manage to maintain effective classroom control and discipline, the whole teaching learning situation will ultimately be disorderly. According to the views of the respondents this aspect can be handled by way of establishing and maintaining a balanced teacher-pupil ratio.

4.8.7 The viewpoints of the teachers on authority problems in democratic schooling

At the end of the questionnaire, the investigator gave each one of the respondents an opportunity to note anything about their views in relation to authority problems in democratic schooling which is additional to or clarifies the issues raised in the questionnaire. The following are their views on the above mentioned aspect.

Some of the teachers, in giving their views, have indicated that authority problems in democratic schooling are many because individual teachers who are to apply authority, abuse it. They believe that this abuse is due to a lack of understanding of its meaning, nature, role and scope within the context of democratic schooling. They maintain that this results in unacceptable practices and ideas that lead to confrontation with pupils under the banner of authority which however does not qualify as authentic authority.

It has been indicated that authority should be regarded as an important aspect of effective teaching and learning. Every teacher should know that he or she will have to maintain a relationship of authentic and accountable authority with his or her pupils if he or she

wishes to avoid resistance towards his or her authoritative practices. Respondents indicated that any teacher who starts to teach without being in a position to conceptualise the meaning, nature and role of authentic authority in teaching, will ultimately end up in a situation where he or she cannot attain the desired teaching learning outcomes.

In other instances the respondents have indicated that it is difficult to exercise authority in democratic schools because the pupils over-exercise their rights due to their lack of clear understanding of what human rights entail. They maintain that teachers also find it difficult to exercise authority in some schools because pupils threaten them when they reprimand them. Pupils carry dangerous weapons such as knives, guns to school with the aim of threatening any person in authority when he or she gives them instructions which are contrary to their wishes and expectations. This makes many schools unmanageable and ungovernable.

Another factor expressed by the respondents is that pupils in a changing schooling environment are becoming more and more critical. They do not accept rules as it used to be the case before the advent of democracy. They question everything that is imposed on them. This leads to a situation where authority is more readily challenged and often rejected especially when it is not authentic in nature.

Another aspect that was expressed by the respondents is that as a result of the establishment of democratic schooling, some of the teachers no longer have respect for the existing authority system in the school. This is because of the tradition of oppression, coercion and dictatorship to which the majority of the teachers were subjected before any attempt was made to democratise schooling. The majority of teachers who come from a tradition of oppression, coercion and dictatorship interpret the ushering in of a new dispensation of democratic schooling as a relief from their past experiences. Teachers themselves feel politically correct to challenge any form of authority even if it is justifiable. In most instances, respondents mentioned that this kind of practice has the tendency to serve as a precedent to pupils. This means that as a result of the pupils' awareness of the defiance of authority by some of their teachers, they also

do not feel obliged to respect authority.

Some of the respondents expressed the view that authority problems in democratised schools will continue to escalate as long as educational administrators and policy makers continue to impose authoritative practices on teachers. They mentioned the fact that educational administrators and policy makers should have a wider consultation with teachers in the implementation of new policies and procedures. They maintain that an attempt to refrain from wider consultation with teachers as key stakeholders will result in a situation that will be characterised by negative criticism, demoralisation and resistance to democratic policies and procedures.

Some respondents also indicated that democratic schooling calls for transparency and accountability. Owing to lack of consultation with some of the main stakeholders in the school system, this requirement is not realised. They argue, for example, that it was never officially announced that corporal punishment had been abolished. It was only through media reports that mention was made with regard to the abolition of corporal punishment. In abolishing corporal punishment, educational administrators and policy makers have failed to come up with alternative means of discipline that can be used to ensure the maintenance of authority. The respondents contend that as long as this kind of a situation continues to exist, authority problems will never be minimised.

4.9 CONCLUSION

In this empirical study the investigator has made an attempt to ascertain the views of teachers and their experiences with regard to topical issues around the whole notion of authority in democratic schooling. In order to get the views of teachers on these issues, the investigator firstly started with an identification and explication of the research methodology that he has relied on in capturing the views and perceptions of the respondents. Secondly, the investigator has concentrated on the questionnaire which was filled out by the respondents under controlled circumstances. This means that the investigator was available while the respondents filled out the questionnaires. The investigator has found out that those schools that performed better do not have as many

serious authority problems in terms of discipline, poor attendance, punctuality and other related factors. Those that performed badly are the ones with serious authority problems. This observation is an indication of the centrality of sound and authentic authority towards effective teaching and learning. The overarching general view of teachers is that as long as there is no sound and authentic authority in the school environment, authority problems such as poor attendance, punctuality, indiscipline and other related issues will continue to persist. The persistence of these authority problems will impact negatively on the expected teaching learning outcomes. When considering these responses the investigator realised that even in a situation where the whole schooling system is completely democratised there is no way in which effective teaching and learning can be expected without the existence of sound and authentic authority as a precondition.

The foregoing exposition was an attempt by the investigator to get the ideas, perceptions, and recommendations of teachers on their experiences with regard to an ongoing attempt by the National Department of Education, through the Provincial Departments of Education, to democratise schooling by way of doing away with autocratic and old practices. Old practices in this instance encapsulate a number of issues such as imbalances and distribution of resources based on racism, tribalism, gender, religion and other related aspects. In order to eradicate these practices the Department of Education has found itself with no option but to transform the entire school system. It is the manner in which and the pace at which the Department of Education is transforming the school system that induces some teachers to feel left behind. Consequently some become critical, sceptical and in some instances even without hope about the Department of Education's new policies and procedures which are aimed at transforming and democratising the school system.

In the following chapter of this dissertation the investigator will summarise the findings that emanated from both the research of relevant literature as well as the empirical research, in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations concerning the exercise of accountable authority within the framework of a democratic schooling system.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PROJECT

In the previous chapters it has emerged that authority in democratic schooling is a pervasive social construct that depends on how its meaning, nature and role are interpreted and understood within a broader context of a democratic country. In the course of his study of relevant literature, the investigator found little evidence of research undertaken from a philosophical educational perspective that investigates the meaning, nature and role of authority within the context of democratic schooling.

In this research therefore, in recapitulation, the researcher has attempted in chapter one, to give an outline of the orientation and research structure. This outline included basic issues such as clarification of key concepts in the title of the dissertation, namely, authority, democracy, schooling and democratic schooling. The many different nuances of the relevant terms were explored and the investigator has demarcated the parameters of meaning attributed to the key concepts, in particular authority and democratic schooling which determined the basic structure of this research.

The investigator also focused briefly on the role of authority and democracy in schooling in a historical perspective. The historical overview revealed that although the concept of authority has generally been associated with schooling practice, the idea of democracy in schooling context is relatively recent in origin. Historically speaking, schooling has been perceived as an event that requires a clearly defined authority if not authoritarian structure. The progressively emerging spirit of liberation, however, has impacted on many areas with a call for democratisation of social structures and practices, including schooling.

In view of the analysis of the key concepts and a historical exploration of its meaning in

schooling, the investigator has formulated his research problem focussing on what is wrong with educational authority and how best authentic educational authority can be implemented in democratic schooling without serious resistance to it. The investigator set out to determine if the entire process of democratisation can be linked with responsibility and accountability in progressive democratic schooling. In order to highlight this problem from all possible angles, the investigator has adopted a pluralistic, problem-centred research approach.

In chapter two attention has been given to authority in education with regard to its meaning and nature. The bases of authority such as social order, legal authority, knowledge, moral values and societal structures have been established. The role of authority in education relationships and in the realisation of an educational aim has been researched in order to establish the necessity of an authority structure in education. The researcher has depicted his understanding and application of the term authority in the context of this study. In terms of this specific application, the idea of accountability and authority has been explored in order to attempt formulating criteria for accountable authority.

In chapter three the investigator has looked at democratic schooling from a contemporary perspective with reference to the current situation in South African schools. In an attempt to understand the above-mentioned issue, the investigator has explored the basic tenets of democracy which included aspects such as involvement, consultation, communication, and reflective decision making. Since a definition of fundamental human rights is a critical issue and precondition for democracy, the investigator has focused on Chapter Two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and on the White Paper on Education and Training.⁵

In an endeavour to make this research practical and relevant, the investigator has conducted an empirical study based on teachers' experiences of authority in the school

⁵ Since this research was undertaken the White Paper has been adopted by parliament and has become the South African Schools Act since 15 November 1996.

situation in Chapter Four of the dissertation. Recourse was made to an empirical research methodology, the design of the research questionnaire, and a qualitative analysis of the responses to the questionnaire. The empirical research set out to find the views of teachers on authority issues in a situation where the schooling system is democratised. In encapsulating the responses of the teachers, the investigator realised that such response confirmed what was found in the literature study.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS - A SYNTHESIS OF APPARENTLY CONFLICTING ISSUES

5.2.1 The actualisation of democracy in schooling context

In concluding this research, the investigator has discovered that while the idea of democracy lay more emphasis on co-operation, many schools have before the democratisation process fostered competition for status, resources and better results, and this has turned into a legacy. While democracy depends upon caring for the common good, the investigator has realised that many schools, stimulated by the influence of political agendas imposed by the previous government, have emphasised an idea of individuality based almost entirely on self-interest. The investigator has also discovered that while democracy prizes diversity, many schools, have largely reflected the interests and aspirations of the most powerful and influential groups in the country and ignored those of the less powerful especially the marginalised members of the community.

5.2.2 Conflict between traditional ideas of schooling and democracy

The researcher has found out that those who are committed to democratic schooling are often placed in a position of conflict with the dominant traditions of schooling in South Africa. At almost every turn, their ideas and efforts are likely to be resisted by both those who benefited from the inequities of schooling under the previous government and those who are more interested in efficiency and hierarchical power than in the difficult work of transforming schools from the bottom up. The frustrations involved in creating democratic schools are exceeded only by the more ambitious task of maintaining them

in the face of the public which is unfamiliar with what democratic schooling means and entails. Fortunately democratic educators understand that democracy does not present an “ideal state” crisply defined and waiting to be attained. Rather, a more democratic experience is built through their continual efforts at making a difference. According to Greene (1985: 12) an understanding of this kind of a situation is not an easy one because it is full of contradictions, conflict and controversy.

5.2.3 The difference between political democracy and educational democracy

In the process of conducting this research, the investigator has realised that education cannot be democratic in a political sense of the concept democracy. Education cannot be democratic in a political sense because educating involves imparting to a pupil something which he has yet to acquire. The imparting has to be done by someone who possesses what the pupil lacks. The transaction is therefore inevitably between unequals. The value of the transaction cannot be known to the pupil in advance. Since it will result in a change in the knowledge, wisdom and values of the pupil, he or she cannot truly assess what the worth of that change will be for him or her. Others more experienced than he or she, must make that judgement. Education, then, is irretrievably not democratic in a political sense of the concept democracy. In a political sense democracy assumes equal rights, interests, status as well as responsibilities of all involved.

5.2.4 Teacher professionalism and authentic authority

An interesting observation that the researcher has made especially in conducting the empirical study is with regard to the professionalism of teachers. The professionalism of teachers, defined as a vocation of authentic guidance and leadership of child development, serves as a safeguard against repression and discrimination. But professionalism, even in this sense, erects another barrier to democratic schooling. The professional autonomy of teachers stands in tension with democratic schooling to the extent that teachers could invoke their professional competence to deny pupils any influence in shaping the form or content of their own education. The solution to this problem cannot be to grant pupils equal control over the conditions of their schooling.

Pupils, as already indicated in the previous paragraph, lack the competence necessary to share equally in making many decisions. Giving them equal control of all matters would mean denying teachers even a minimal degree of professional autonomy. The problem of authority within schools, therefore, does not lend itself to the alternative solution of political equality. Yet, neither does it lend itself to the most apparent alternative to democratic rule. In as much as professional autonomy teaches deference to authority, it teaches a lesson in conflict with conditions of democratic deliberation. Whether professional autonomy or respect for high intellectual standards is partly an empirical question concerning the effects of different approaches of teaching, it is partly also a normative question of what professionalism requires.

5.2.5 Teachers' perceptions of their primary role in teaching

The investigator discovered that many teachers conceive of teaching participatory virtues as lying beyond or at best on the periphery of their professional obligations, the core of their professional obligation being to teach disciplinary virtues geared towards sound authority in the school environment. This understanding is based on two misconceptions. The first is related to the means and the second to the ends of democratic education. Pupils generally learn best when they have a prior commitment to what they are being required to learn. Many, perhaps most, pupils enter school lacking such a prior commitment. Allowing pupils to participate in determining aspects of their schooling generally serves to develop a commitment on their part to learning. Among less motivated pupils, however, a participatory approach can lead to compromising what many teachers consider the demands of professional competence. The investigator through the responses of the teachers in his empirical research, observed that teachers committed to participatory approach occasionally permitted their lower-track pupils to engage in some classroom activities that were not officially acceptable but harmless in order to elicit concentrated effort in academic activities teachers deemed educationally important. A participatory approach enables teachers to get their pupils to work seriously for a longer proportion of their time in class than did teachers who officially required them to work all the time but were pushed by constant disruptions into using up their resources for control on matters other than directly

academic. The investigator concludes that more democratic methods may be a means of motivating pupils to develop the disciplinary virtues that would serve as the basis for a sound authority.

5.2.6 A culture of learning, authority and democratic schooling

The investigator has found that pupils who are predisposed neither to participating nor learning present a great challenge to a democratic conception of the culture of teaching and learning because their negative attitude towards schooling can readily reinforce a purely disciplinary method of teaching. Teachers will assert their authority first to produce order, then to funnel a body of knowledge into pupils. Some teachers who are otherwise not committed to an authoritarian teaching approach use it when they teach pupils in the lowest academic tracks. It could be argued that this approach may be the easiest way to educate pupils who do not want to be educated. Perhaps more importantly, if education fails, disorder does not ensue, at least not in the classroom. The investigator believes that the confusion of authority with authoritarianism contributes greatly towards the existing crisis in a situation where schooling is democratised. This confusion creates a situation where teachers, in order to maintain authority, end up resorting to authoritarianism without being well aware of the substantial difference. This in turn results in a situation where teachers are viewed as abusing authority that is entrusted to them, bringing about tension in the school environment.

Teachers who are committed to a more participatory approach appear to be more successful both in getting their pupils to work and in increasing their commitment to learning than teachers who take a more authoritarian approach. Participatory approach aims to increase pupils' commitment to learning by building upon and extending their existing interests in intellectually productive ways. To the extent that it builds upon learners' interests and elicits their commitment to learning, it may be considered more democratic than an authoritarian approach. A participatory approach gives priority to cultivating self-esteem and social commitment over humility and order, a priority presumed by the democratic goal of educating people willing and able to participate. Because not all good things go together in education any more than in life, this priority

is not absolute. In the investigator's view, it should be overridden when disorder and arrogance are so great as to threaten the very enterprise of education within schools.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the conclusions above the investigator will attempt to present a number of observations as recommendations. These recommendations are not prescriptions that could guarantee a cure for an ailing educational system, but suggestions which need to be considered by all the stakeholders in education and especially by those who are steering the transformation of the schooling system in South Africa.

- 5.3.1 Education in democracy has to empower the young members of the public, to participate and play articulate roles in the public space. Those committed to creating democratic schools with authentic authority as their main feature should understand that doing so involves more than the education of the young. It should be understood that democratic schools are meant to be democratic places. The idea of democracy also extends to the many roles that adults play in the schools. This means that professional educators as well as parents, community participants, and other members of the society have a right to fully and critically participate in creating school programmes and policies.

Proponents of democratic schools should also realise that exercising democracy involves tensions and contradictions. Democratic participation in decision making, for example opens the way for anti-democratic ideas such as the continuing demands for the maintenance of historical inequalities in school life based on racism, ethnicity, religion and other related aspects. Furthermore it should be borne in mind that there always looms the possibility of the illusion of democracy in which authorities may invite participation as to "engineer consent" for predetermined decisions. Such contradictions and tension point to the fact that bringing democracy to life is always a struggle.

- 5.3.2 Democracy is not simply a theory of self-interest that gives people the right to pursue their own goals at the expense of others, the common good is a central feature of democracy. For this reason, democratic schooling should be marked by cooperation and

collaboration rather than competition. People should see their stake in others, and arrangements should be created in order to encourage young people especially learners to improve the life of the community by helping others. Although valid, these points refer only to democratic schooling and do not link it with accountable authority.

5.3.3 In all policy decisions and arrangements that support them, structural equity should be persistently emphasised. While initial access alone is not considered sufficient for the realisation of the mission of democratic schooling. In an authentically democratic community, all young people are also considered to have the right of access to all programmes in the school and to the outcomes of school values. For this reason, it should be assured that schooling includes no barrier to young people. Such a barrier can create tension which will ultimately threaten the existence of authentic authority in a school environment.

5.3.4 Stakeholders in schooling should note that the ends of democratic schooling are not limited to teaching disciplinary as distinct from participatory virtues. This is because even the ability to think critically about politics is an incomplete virtue from a democratic perspective. If schooling leaves pupils without a capacity for political participation or authority, it will have neglected to cultivate a virtue essential to democratic schooling. Although there is lack of enough evidence to say how much internal democracy is necessary to cultivate participatory virtues amongst pupils within schools, political participation points to the conclusion that the cultivation of participatory virtues should become prominent. As pupils mature intellectually and emotionally, and become more capable of engaging in free and equal discussion with teacher and their peers increasing participation should be encouraged.

It should be understood that in its authentic sense authority, as education is a process of emancipation. The unequal relationship becomes gradually equal and where initially the child is guided by another voice he or she needs to use his or her own voice in a democracy.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this research a modest attempt has been made to address the notion of educational authority in a South African education system that is undergoing a process of democratisation. The principles of democracy requires that governance of the schooling system should be democratic, representative and participatory. Structures and procedures should ensure that those affected by decisions have a say in making them, either directly or through their elected representatives. It requires that decision making processes are transparent, and that those taking and implementing decisions are accountable for the manner in which they perform their duties and use resources.

It is this kind of democratic practice that will ensure the establishment and maintenance of accountable and authentic authority in the schooling system which is in line with the South African Schools Act of 1996. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996 this kind of approach will create partnership amongst all people with an interest in education which will result in co-operative governance. The joint efforts of parents, educators, learners, members of local communities and provincial departments of education will greatly contribute towards the improvement of schools. Key stakeholders in education will be encouraged to accept responsibility for the organisation of schools including the establishment and maintenance of accountable and authentic authority that will lay the basis for effective and meaningful teaching and learning in the school environment.

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ANNEXURE A : QUESTIONNAIRE**THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING**

N.B.: All questions are considered strictly confidential and your name should not appear on this questionnaire. Please answer all questions sincerely.

SECTION A : DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Complete the following items by writing the number of the response applicable to you in the square at the right-hand side of each question.

1. How long have you been teaching []

1. Between 1 and 4 years
2. Between 5 and 7 years
3. Between 8 and 10 years
4. From 11 and above

2. What is your gender []

1. Male
2. Female

3. What is your highest academic qualification? []

1. Std 8
2. Std 10
3. A degree
4. Honours degree
5. Master's degree

6. Doctor's degree

SECTION B : QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS ON AUTHORITY AS STRUCTURE

Following are some items on the perception of authority problems in schooling based on authority as structure. Indicate your view by making a cross (X) on the scale provided for each item below.

- SCALE UNITS ARE:
1. Not important
 2. Less important
 3. Important
 4. Very important

IS IT IMPORTANT THAT A TEACHER SHOULD:

4. Instill self-discipline in pupils, e.g. respect for authority?
5. Motivate pupils to obey school rules?
6. Involve pupils especially high schools in the formation of rules?
7. Read literature on authority?
8. Impose authoritative measures on pupils?

SECTION C : AUTHORITY AS INTERVENTION

Write the number that corresponds with your view in the square provided on the right-hand side.

10. When I compare overall authority problems when there was no democratic schooling in South Africa, I conclude that the situation today is: []

1. Much improved
2. About the same
3. Slightly improved
4. Slightly worse

5. Much worse

SECTION D : AUTHORITY AS CONSISTENCY

ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS ARE:

1. Never 2. Sometimes 3. Always

SHOULD A TEACHER AS A WIELDER OF AUTHORITY IN SCHOOL:

11. Expect his/her authoritative practices to be consistent with those of the pupils' parents?

1. Never
2. Always

12. Expect his/her authoritative practices to be consistent with those of other teachers in the school?

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Always

13. Consistently handle similar infringements of rules by pupils alike

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Always

**SECTION E: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT MAY
CONTRIBUTE TO PROBLEMS OF AUTHORITY IN
DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL**

INSTRUCTION:

Put a cross (X) on the letter indicating your point of view or perception on each of the statements below:

KEY: SD = Strongly Disagree
 D = Disagree
 U = Uncertain
 A = Agree
 SA = Strongly Agree

14. Teachers who read books on Authority, approach authority problems of pupils positively, i.e. with empathy

SD [] D [] U [] A [] SA []

15. Teachers who prepare lessons before going to class report no problems of authority from their pupils

SD [] D [] U [] A [] SA []

16. Female teachers report more authority problems with pupils than their male counterparts

SD [] D [] U [] A [] SA []

17. Authority problems are many when pupils are not participating in the schools' making processes

SD [] D [] U [] A [] SA []

