POSITION POWER OF THE PRINCIPAL

IN DECISION MAKING

BY

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DEDICATION

I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO

❖ My late mother Philisiwe Rose Mkhize for the love , support and opportnities she gave me.

❖ My late parents-in-law Emily ka Lujo and Kayward ka Phuthaz'iZulu. for everything they did for me.

❖ The schools where this study was undertaken.

❖ All the AmaNgcolosi ka Shongololo and AmaKhabazela ka Ngunezi.

❖ All the educators, parents, school management teams, and learners.

DECLARATION

I , THENJIWE OCTAVIA BHENGU , hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work in conception and execution, and that all sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of references.

Signed by me ....on the ....28..th.....

day of January 2002 at ....UMLAZI...............

ABSTRACT

The research examines the position power of the principals in decision making with a view to establishing how learners and educators respond to the principals' decisions. It also explores the principals' involvement with school management team and school governing body in decision making and how the Department of Education helps or hinders the principals in decision making.

Questionnaires were used by the researcher to establish the above scope of the study.

The researcher found that the principal's decisions are accepted by school management team, school governing body and learners if these parties were involved in the decision-making process. Educators were found to be sometimes difficult and, instead of contributing positively to decision making, they use the opportunity to criticise the principal and thereby hinder the decision-making process.

The study reveals that the respondents feel that the attitude of the principals towards learners, educators and parents contribute to how their decisions are accepted by all these parties. From the study it is established that principals use their skills and knowledge to facilitate the effectiveness of their position power, and thereby influence the decisions positively in order to get work done.

The study also reveals that the principals involve the school governing body in decision making. This improves the relationship between principals and school governing bodies and results in commitment to the implementation of decisions, and therefore the success of the school. There is a low involvement of school management team in decision-making, and this is a problem for the school community as a whole as it will result in poor implementation of decisions.

The study further reveals that the interaction between the Department of Education and the principals is inadequate. The principals are not involved in the policy-making decisions that affect their schools and this in turn causes problems for the principals in the implementation of these decisions. This results in principals having to contact the Department of Education requesting direction even on petty issues. Inadequate involvement of principals by the Department is disempowering, and threatens the fulfillment of the Department of Education's intention of empowering schools.

LIST OF TABLES **PAGE**

LIST OF APPENDICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

CHAPTER 4.

4.1 ANALYSIS AND INTEPRETATION OF DATA

CHAPTER 5

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African Schools Act (1996:4) regards the principal as the head of school and the one who is in the frontline in whatever is taking place in the school environment.

The challenges facing school principals in the present democratic period are far greater than those of the apartheid era. Before this era, most decisions were made by the Department of Education, but now they are made right in the school, e.g. local selection of educators and educators appraisals. Even when the Education Departments nationally or provincially do make decisions about governance or curriculum or resourcing, implementation of these decisions at a school level will be in the hands of the school principal.

This being the case, the principal as a manager is daily engaged in many different and discernible school activities which require him/her to make decisions. Bucle (1995:69) maintains that decision-making is the most crucial aspect of educational management because it permeates every part of the management practice.

Some problems at school demand instant decision-making e.g. if a learner has been assaulted by another learner the principal must decide immediately on what has to be done to both learners before arrangements can be made for the disciplinary hearing. In this instance Gorton (1972:80) speaks of an "on-the-spot-decision". In such instances, the principal as one in authority has to take the decision by himself on behalf of the school. Other problems demand a longer period for principal to decide, for example, in the case of an educator who has teaching problems, the principal is in a position to involve people

who may be affected by the decision to be taken. Rawlins (1992:48) maintains that no matter how the decision is, each decision contributes to the fundamental success or failure of the school.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

Schools operate in an environment characterized by increasing social and cultural diversity, constant calls for involvement, continued fiscal constraint and attention to social justice, issues of access, gender and equity (Murphy and Seashore-Louis 1994:136). Given such a complex environment, it is not suprising that school principals' lives are plagued by contradiction, tension, dilemma and paradox. Principals are caught in the simultaneous movement towards conformity and comfort on one hand, and diversity and change on the other, and tensions increasingly cause difficulty in the principals' decision-making. Fuhrman (1995:4) adds that principals face tension also between conformity and diversity in all areas of school life, from organisational structures and leadership to community sensitivity and involvement.

Schools have always been structured in a hierarchical fashion with the principal at the top, and decisions taken in a top down approach. The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 has changed this approach and now educators, learners and parents should be involved in decision-making process. Dimmock (1995 : 111) states that school leaders can confront these tensions through learning from the differences embodied in their school communities. The learners and the communities involved in schools come from a blossoming array of socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Decentralisation allows people from different classes, political affiliation and religion to influence schools. Principals are under pressure to involve these people with multiple values in their decision making processes without losing ground on decision making.

Also Villa and Thousand (1995:37) state that principals are uncertain whether to maintain traditional structures which provide at least some stability by being known quantities or to implement structures which, although holding promise, risk description for no

2

guaranteed benefit and such structures have not been tested. Traditional structures make principals more comfortable as they provide a conflict-free workplace where the staff members are not expected to voice their differing opinions. Walker (1994:214) summarises this perspective thus: some managers insist that the best way to reduce conflict and maintain harmony is to focus on the ways in which people (and structures) are alike. It is sometimes difficult to encourage diversity since success in schools is measured by harmony, conformity and team spirit. This results in some educators pretending to be part of the team for fear of challenging the status quo.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The traditional role of the principal as the master educator, competent enough to supervise all areas of instruction and making of decisions, seems untenable. A new role is emerging nowadays. Many decisions, e.g. fundraising, formerly done centrally by the principal have been decentralized with a parallel increase in decision-making for educators, learners and parents through governing bodies.

Bullock and Thomas (1994:131) argue that consensus is being rapidly established which supports the position that the effectiveness of school is primarily determined by the leadership of the principal. They further state that school achievement is related to the instructional leadership of the principal. The researcher believes that quality schools cannot be established without first staffing them with effective principals. Put differently, principals make significant contributions to quality life in schools and also to the quality of decisions taken.

The roles and functions of the principal have to be in line with the democratised school environment. Kevacic (1995:235) argues that the adoption of site-based management approach to the role of the principal has taken on a new collegial meaning and function. As more people get involved in the school management, the trend is nowadays towards participative management. Amongst other things, this means that decisions at school are

to be made by the principal together with the educators, parents, learners and other stakeholders. It is a drastic shift from the traditional role of principals as sole decision makers on all matters affecting schools. As a result many principals are experiencing difficulty with functioning of a shared governance model. Some principals are struggling to translate into practice the new education policy which requires them to run schools in democratic and participatory ways. Others are uncomfortable to change to power sharing because it , *inter alia,* demands transparency and openness.

It is becoming challenging and perhaps more difficult to be a school principal because of the opposition that they face. Every decision principals make is challenged and questioned by educators, learners and parents on the basis of high degree of control and power they exercise in schools.

Despite that in the past decision-making has never been easy, it is especially challenging for principals of today as they work in an era of change. In addition, they have to cope with complexity, legitimacy and uncertainty about their leadership role in general. Many a time, they feel bewildered, confused and also powerless in their positions. The role of the principal is indeed subjected to increased pressure both from inside and outside the school.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the above background information, the aims of this study are:

- ➤ to analyse how the principals can facilitate the role of others in the decision-making process on school related issues.

- ➤ to determine the school principals' behaviours / actions that may positively and/or negatively affect their authority in decision-making.

➤ to establish how school management structures (e.g. School Governing Body, School Management Team) impact on the principal's decision-making power as head of the school.

➤ to ascertain the mandate given to school principals by the Department of Education in making decisions about school related issues and the extent to which they use this mandate in day-to-day running of the school.

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE STUDY

➤ By virtue of his position, the principal has power in decision-making process.

➤ A good relationship between the principal and stakeholders is the basis for effective decision-making.

➤ Principals do not get help from the Department of Education to make sound decisions.

➤ Principals do not, in most cases, consult management structures (i.e. school governing bodies and school management teams) in decisions related to school matters.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

➤ On basis of the above aims and assumptions (ie. 1.4 and 1.5) the study will seek to address the following questions:

➤ To what extent do school principals facilitate the role of others (e.g. educators, learners and parents) in decision-making?

➢ How and when do principals' behaviours or actions affect their authority in decision-making positively?

➢ How and when do principals' behaviours or actions affect their authority in decision-making negatively?

➢ How do school management structures impact on the principals' decision-making power?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will help the principals to establish the importance of involving other stakeholders in decision making. It will also highlight the powers vested in principals as heads of schools and how they can use the power to coordinate people and tasks / activities they have to perform.

The limitations of the principals' powers would also be highlighted in terms of what powers are delegated to principals and what has to be referred to higher authorities. This would benefit the principals themselves, in that they would negotiate for more decision-making powers in order to minimise the problems they experience as heads of schools. It would also help the Department of Education to establish the problems the principals and schools face with regard to power and power basis of the different stakeholders in education.

1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS
For the sake of clarity, it is essential that certain relevant concepts used in the study be defined.

1.8.1 Position power
According to Hoy and Miskel (1978:238) "position power" refers to the degree to which the position itself enables the leader to get subordinates to comply with directives.

Further they maintain that organisational power is formal, that is, the authority is vested in the leader's office. For the purpose of this study, the concept "position power" will refer to the power attributed to the principal by virtue of his position as head of the school to make decisions.

1.8.2 Decision-making

Decision-making is "an action of taking decisions through which an organisation is regulated, governed and managed" (Mogose, van der Westhuizen 1997:196). According to Arnold and Feldman (1996:396) decision-making is (or should be) a process whereby decision-makers seek out and choose the course of action that is most likely to maximize the attainment of their goals and objectives. Musaazi (1982:75) considers the process of decision-making as a cycle of events that includes the identification and diagnosis of a difficulty, the reflective development of a plan to alleviate the difficulty, the initiation of the plan and the evaluation of its success. In this study the concept 'decision-making' will refer to the process of choosing one alternative from among a set of alternatives.

1.8.3 Management structures

The school management structure is formed by school management team and school governing body. These two bodies are parallel to each other. Gerzon (1997:19) points out that the South African Schools Act no.84 of 1996 vests a school's governance on decision-making in its governing body which stands in the position of trust to the school. On the other hand the same Act vests a school's professional management in its principal and his management team.

1.8.4 Stakeholders

According to Stoner and Freeman (1992:64) stakeholders are those groups or individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by an organisation's pursuit of its goals. Those who are directly affected are regarded as internal stakeholders and those that are indirectly affected are referred to as external stakeholders. Morris (1973:1255) refers to

7

stakeholder as anyone with an interest in an interprise In this study the concept stakeholders will refer to educators, learners, parents (internal) ; community and the Department of Education (external).

1.9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research methods

Research with regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

➢ A literature study of available, relevant literature will be undertaken.

➢ A survey whereby a questionnaire will form the basis for discussion between the researcher and respondents.

1.9.2 Sampling method

Respondents will be selected by means of the random a sampling method.

1.9.3 Permission

With the aim of administering questionnaires it will be necessary to first request the permission of the Regional Chief Director and District Manager of the district concerned (Maphumulo District).

1.9.4 Analysis of data

Questionnaires will be coded in preparation for data capture.

1.10 FURTHER COURSE OF THE STUDY

The next chapters of this study will treat the following aspects:

- In chapter two, a literature review on position power of principals in decision-making with reference to their roles and functions as school managers will be undertaken.

- In chapter three research methodology that will be used in the study will be presented. Amongst other things, the steps to be followed in conducting this research will be described and limitations in the methodology with regard to this study will be tabled.

- In chapter four, data will be presented and analysed.

- Finally, in chapter five, the main findings and conclusions of the study will be presented and recommendations based on the findings will be put forward.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduces the theme of the research project, namely: "Position, power of principals in decision-making". It presents the background to the study and the rationale leading to the study. Finally it outlines the procedure to be followed in the study.

In the next chapter a review of literature will be undertaken.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review literature on the position power of the principal in decision-making. The following sections will be covered:

➢ Centralisation and decentralisation dichotomy.

➢ The role of the principal.

➢ Strategies for sound decisions

➢ Stakeholder involvement in decision-making

2.2   DECENTRALISATION AND CENTRALISATION DICHOTOMY – A GENERAL REVIEW

The global call for the decentralisation of the education system, makes decentralisation an important phenomenon. Caldwell et al (1993: vii-viii) reveal that the most centralised of state education systems in Australia (New South Wales) for example, is being transformed, with a learner central arrangement directing and supporting schools which are moving toward self-management. In the United States, self-management or school-based management as it is called in that country, is emerging as a major element in a series of related reforms in a comprehensive restructuring of education.

In these countries and others, the central authority, wherever located, retains a powerful but more focused role, determining broad goals, setting priorities and building framework for accountability. At the same time, appearing paradoxical at times, major responsibilities are being shifted to the school level. There is thus simultaneous centralisation and decentralisation.

Caldwell et al (1993:4) claim that decentralisation is administrative rather than political, with decisions at the school level being made with a framework of local, state or national policies and guidelines. The school principal remains accountable to a central authority

for the manner in which resources are allocated. Given the historical background of the educational system in South Africa participative management advocates an administrative as well as a political dimension to the principle of decentralisation.

Dennison and Sherton (1997:216) argue that the more centralised and formalised schools tend to produce educators with less loyalty both to their senior colleagues (principals) and to the institution as a whole. Such "depersonalisation" in the bureaucratic sense, can place the school continuum in which, under threat or pressure, interpersonal relationships will be characterised by mistrust, lack of confidence and supportive behaviour, leading eventually to hostility.

The shift of power from a central locus to stakeholders eg. educators, learners and parents allows for a sharing of power. This is the direction the South African education system has been following since the post apartheid era as postulated in several pieces of legislation enacted concerning education. Decentralisation secures a balance of power and a sense of shared accomplishments. Consensus seeking has thus become the watchword (Huddlestone, Claspell and Killion, 1991:85). Caution must however be given that whilst one may have views, others espouse them. Put differently, Paisey (1992:122) insists that an important corollary is the right to disagree. Recognition must therefore, be given to the principle of dissent.

2.3 THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

2.3.1 Principal as a leader

Successful schools are realised because of the efforts of effective principals. Terms such as instructional manager, catalyst, co-partner, participative manager, initiator, visionary,

information manager and education advocate, have been used when describing or at least labeling an effective principal.

Authors such as Sergiovanni (1984:64), Caldwell and Spinks (1993:112), Bennis and Nanus (1985:134) and Bayne-Jardine and Holly (1994:72) maintain that leadership is one of the most important features in the management of educational institutions. Caldwell and Spinks (1993:114) argue that it is the leader who serves as catalyst to the making and implementation of decisions. It must be emphasized that the principal's role as a leader extends beyond the making of decisions and their implementation to effect participative management.

Participative management is part of transformatory policies. Once the policies are in place, the school principal becomes a co-partner in collaborative decision-making and governance. In the South African context greater pressure is placed on principals as a result of, amongst other things, increased power granted to learners, educators and parents. Wynn and Guditus (1994:33) provide a useful perspective of leadership and participation.They perceptively state that "sharing the decision-making does not imply abdication of the leadership responsibilities of the administrator" but " what it does require is a different attitude toward management and a heavier reliance on conceptual and interpersonal skills. Contemporary writers like Leithwood, Bedey and Cousins (1992:144-146) acknowledge this view on school leadership.

Gray (1992 :103) maintains that the key attribute of an effective principal is the skill he displays in personal relationships and the effectiveness of his human relations. Thus, the capacity of work with and through others, assumes paramount importance. His role is thus transformed from exclusive leader to co-partner by developing mechanisms to broaden participation in decision-making processes This is contrary to the management style displayed by the traditional, or as Keith (1991:62) calls him/her the heroic leader who adopts the technicist mode of controlling the school. Of significance in schools is that the leader's role as participative manager is weighed with educational functions in

the sense that it extends beyond the functions, tasks and duties afforded the co-partners of the school.

It is the view of Poster and Day (1988:59), Jenkins (1991:111) and Parsey (1992:76) that the leader (principal) should promote a participative ethos. Hence the principal is the initiator of shared decision-making and shared organisational goals. Looking at the principal as a leader the researcher feels that in the participative context, the role of the principal is an all –encompassing one that cannot be defined by means of specific duties and functions. The principal therefore needs to be flexible in his approach to his subordinates and the manner in which he manages the decision-making processes.

Notwithstanding the individual within the school as co-partner, the principal becomes a visionary who identifies and acknowledges the capabilities and expertise of individual partners and matches these with relevant tasks. The participative management approach adopts Bayne-Jardine and Holly's (1994:24) view that "visioning is an effective method of not only climate setting but also uniting the staff as it sets out on the first stages of its developmental journey". Hence both the school as well as the individual within it are beneficiaries of school principal who are visionaries and who can make sound decisions to achieve school goals.

The researcher believes that leaders may indeed feel that the decisions concerning the direction in which things should go ought to be taken democratically. It is important however that such decisions are reached on the basis of maximum information about the school needs. Decisions also need to be effectively disseminated to all relevant stakeholders in response to the current call for transparency. The school principal therefore serves as an information manager.

2.3.2 Principal as a chief executive officer

Dubin (1991:1) refers to principal as a chief executive officer . Stoner (1992:20) states that a chief executive officer is in charge of the organisation and is responsible for its

present and future performance and as such needs to make sound decisions. He further states that the chief executive officer spends most of his time developing, guiding and implementing strategy. The principal, as chief executive officer, needs to positively drive the organisation and create a good impression to all stakeholders both internally and externally so that his decisions may be accepted. The researcher feels that it is the principal, as a chief executive officer who, through sound decision-making, creates an atmosphere conducive to student learning, educator involvement and growth, community support and high expectation.

Principals, like corporate chief executive officers, have autonomy, responsibility and accountability for the decisions made on school issues. This role places them "on top of" all events and the information flow of the school enterprise in order to effectively discharge this responsibility. The principal is charged with control of all school functions and operations. Dubin (1991:13) states that principals as chief executive officer will need to have knowledge and skills in order to plan and decide, implement and monitor many decisions that are made to improve the future of the school.

The researcher maintains that the principal needs to look where the school is and develop strategies to achieve his vision. There are a lot of changes happening in and around the school that the principal cannot continue to succeed by doing the same thing every day and every year. The principal as chief executive officer should continually revise and improve his decisions to suit the changing conditions. Naegley (1989:13) agrees that the principal should lead an organisation from one state of being to another, from one point to another, and this he calls "purposeful action". Every decision, every action, that the principal takes must consider the effects on the institution and must result in continuous improvement. This will culminate in what Stoner (1992:223) terms "competitive edge"

2.3.3 Principal as a decision-maker

As decision-making is involved in all management tasks, which in turn facilitate and support the implementation of a decision, management therefore involves the making of

14

decisions in various activities. Writers such as McLagan and Nel (1995:172), Jenkins (1997:163) and Van der Westhuizen (1991:40) acknowledge that principals as leaders of the schools are faced with major challenges of amongst other things as being effective as leaders and decision-makers. Robbins (1980:4) further states that decision-making is the means by which principals plan, organise, lead and control. Principals are thus regarded by various writers as decision makers.

The researcher maintains that for the principal to be effective in his decision-making, it is essential to understand human dynamics within the school community; and he can only do this by reaching out to feel the pulse of the school, not just once, quarterly, but on a daily basis. Feedback from others may be given to the principal, but might not be sufficient as people tend to avoid giving negative feedback.

The principal as a decision maker should blend the institution and individuals into a productive and harmonious entity. Dubin (1991:28) confirms that the principal needs to balance the organisational goal attainment with employee job satisfaction. The principal uses his professional ability, experience and management strategies to make sound decisions that will take the school to great heights.

Dubbin (1991:3) identified three main components in effective decision making :
➢ Identifying various information sources in the school and how they interrelate;
➢ having timely access to this information, and
➢ systematizing the information process so that he can signal potential problem for pre-emptive decision-making at least provide relevant information to be utilized for planning and analysis.

Stoner (1992:224) maintains that successful decision makers are those that make proactive decisions. It is deadly to make a decision when everything has gone wrong. Van der Westhuizen (1991:412) emphasises that the principal should bear in mind that decisions made today sets a scene for the future. The principal's most important element

15

of success in his task is the making of sound decisions. Van der Westhuisen (1991:58) further mentions that sound decisions are made because administrators are aware of information flow upon which to make decisions, have access to it and in a timely manner. Hallowitz and Dubin (in press) states that there is a continuous flow of critical information at each school and principals become aware of the on site problems through reports by educators, learners, parents and community sources, newspapers and therefore appear to be reactive than proactive.

The researcher believes that if critical information is identified, interpreted and responded to, systematically and timeously, the skill of the principal becomes real. If the principal knows where to look for information, is able to analyse it and apply it to various decisions, his school can function more in efficient and predictive ways. If a principal has an understanding of the information flow sources, he could begin adapting leadership and decision-making style in accordance with school needs.

The researcher is also of the view that the principal, in his position, may use available resources in terms of involvement of educators, management team and governing body but retains the accountability for the decision and its effects. Other people involved in the making of decisions are not accountable at the time of reckoning. Therefore the principal must always bear in mind that involvement of others does not in all instances take away his role of being the ultimate decision-maker.

According to the South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996 making of decisions is the responsibility of all stakeholders. However in practice it is almost invariable that the principal takes the initiatives and leads the decision-making process and eventually takes the final decision. Without the commitment of the principal, it is very difficult for others to make effective and sound decisions. Keith and Girling (1991:332) maintain that creating decision-making mechanisms in schools can be regarded as one of the important tasks of principals. The researcher believes that the decision-making skills that the principal has may make him an effective leader and decision-maker .

2.4   STRATEGIES FOR SOUND DECISIONS

Much research evidence suggests that effective schools are characterized by more participative organisational processes. For example Beare et al (1989:68) see such schools as having less centralized decision-making structures but with more formalized general rules and high professional activity.

A similar perception is confirmed by Hall et al (1986:188) who maintain that "best run schools have clear decision-making processes". A principal of such a school, according to them, discusses things with stakeholders. He is democratic, prepared to listen, uses meetings to arrive at a consensus. A successful principal will insist on sharing his power with stakeholders in the school decision-making process.

2.4.1   Collaborative power sharing

Collaborative power sharing arises as educators, learners and parents learn how to make the most of their collective capacity to run the day-to-day affairs of their school and to solve problems through sound decisions being taken.

If educators and learners are involved in the running of the school, they are challenged in a number of ways, such as learning new ways of doing things and even new values and attitudes. Often, lack of involvement results in fear and uncertainty which induce reluctance to change eve if the fruits of change may be somehow desired.

Chalker (1992:12) agrees that collaborative power is of utmost significance if the school must succeed. He further comments that this form of power is unlimited because it enhances productivity in the school. His other view is that, whereas top-down leadership

may have a role in managing a school, a principal as a collaborative leader has to find the right balance between top-down and bottom up approaches so that the school meets its challenges through collaborative decision-making. His conclusion is that schools that are moving closer to the collaborative end of the power continuum are the ones that will succeed.

Leithwood (1992:93) supports the idea of collaborative and illustrates it in an analogy of A-type and Z-type organistions. He says the A-type organisations centralise control and maintain differences in status between workers and management, and rely on top-down decision process. Such organisations are based on competitive and top-down power. The Z-type organisations on the contrary rely on strong cultures to influence employee's directions and reduce differences in the status of organisational members, emphasizing participative decision-making as much as possible. They are based on radically different forms of power that is "consensual and facilitative" in nature, in other words a form of power manifested through other people, not over them.

Power, in Z-type organisations, arises, for example, when stakeholders are helped to find greater meaning in their work by being involved in decision-making processes. Whitaker (1993:138) in support of the practice in Z-type organisations argue that openness and interaction in the process of decision-making allows expression and sharing of individual and group preferences. Collaboration is, therefore, seen as reducing the chances of misunderstanding because all parties are presented with information on which preferences of colleagues are based.

Making reference to Little (1981:24), Barth (1980:120) concludes that when the principal works collaboratively with his stakeholders sound decisions are taken.

Caldwell and Spinks (1993:75) make a distinction between directive leader and collaborative leaders. They say that whereas directive leader tell subordinates what is expected, which is achievement oriented and expect high achievement from subordinates.

Supportive leaders treat subordinates as equal and use their suggestions and inputs in decision-making situations. This reinforces collaboration and participation.

Principals and educators together with learners and parents, working together can create within their schools an ecology of reflection, growth and refinement of practice- a community of collaborators. To this effect, Hargrove (1994:132) concludes that successful principals follow a leadership style they call "authoritative democracy". These principals involve all their departments in school decision-making process and encourage genuine exchange among stakeholders. The researcher maintains that educators, learners and parents see these principals as open to suggestions, willing to consider alternatives, strong, decisive, and always in control of the situation at hand. This clearly suggests that a principal as one in authority need to strike a balance between openness and decisiveness. Exemplary principals make their intentions clear but also consult with stakeholders about their intentions.

2.4.2   Leadership styles

Van der Westhuizen (1991:189) states that the way in which a manager executes his leadership determines the effectiveness of decisions he makes. Oldrough et al (1991:32) confirms this by arguing that the seriousness and purposefulness with which the principal approaches his tasks, are communicated by sound and quality decisions he takes for his school. House and Howell (1992:114) warn that decisions taken by principals can be accepted without being rigid, oppressive and generally conducive. Docking (1989:97) is even bolder when he argues that some principals operate a series of structures which subsequently lead to over-rigidness which unfortunately "breeds alienation and evoke confrontation."

The above arguments emphasise to the principals not to use their position power negatively and rigidly; but need to allow for flexibility in the acceptance and implementation of the decision they have taken. Hoffman (1993:201) maintains that today's educators and learners are extremely sensitive to distinction between authority

and naked power. Their perception of the principal's authority in decision-making is well summarised by House & Howell (1992:93) who argue that educators and learners will often distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate exercise of authority and will also discriminate between an acceptable and an unacceptable manner in the way decision are taken. On this very point, Hoy and Miskel (1996:51) citing Gouldner's view regarding exercise of authority present a point of view which is more adamant when he states : "authority is not alien to the nature of both the educator and the learner, provided it is exercised in a sympathetic, wise and meaningful manner".

In contrast to this perception, the researcher maintains that a principal needs to exercise authority rigidly because authority is concentrated in him to ensure effective and quality decision. Shipman (1986:79) states that in order to maintain and understand the structure of schools, one must know that schools are organised on the authority principle and hence the principal needs to be rigid. For an example, to the question: "Should the principal involve educators, learners and parents in decision-making processes?" the researcher refers to Steyn (1998 : 134) where a direct answer to this question as cited by Steyn is "It depends". Steyn is thus in support of the authority principle.

Mintzberg (1989:97), an exponent of rigidity in exercising authority, supports the view that the principal needs to exercise authority in decision-making by virtue of his symbolic position of being a figurehead. As such there are times where he has to take decisions as the representative of the school. For example, he must be backed by his positional authority if ever he needs to take decisions which could create conditions that will lead to effective teaching and learning. All this must be accomplished under due process of rigidly applied authority. The researcher believes that authoritarian leadership will never disappear completely because situations arise in schools where any other style of leadership would not work. Mosoqe and van der Westhuizen (1995:14) point out that the introduction of legislation (as stated in 2.5); which is a framework for democratic governance and management was, made against a background of authoritarian modes of management in schools.

Hoy and Tarter (1993:26) developed two rules (i.e. the relevance rule and expertise rule) in an attempt to answer the question: "how the would principal know where a decision falls?". The two rules are described as follows:

"the personal relevance rule"   :   Do educators, learners and parents have a personal interest in the outcome of the decision?

"the expertise rule"   :   Do educators, learners and parents have expertise to contribute to the decision ?

Steyn (ibid) associates these rules to the situational theory of Hersey Blanchard (1997) which acknowledges that leadership styles must be matched with the requirements of the situation as well as the level of maturity of the followers.

Hersey and Blanchard (1988:176) maintain that it is the principals who know that maturity level of their subordinates in decision-making and they must adopt their leadership style accordingly; since there is no single leadership style appropriate to all situations. The researcher believes that the principal should have sound relationship with his subordinates and must be able to discern the situation to be in a position to share the concept of situational leadership. In that case his subordinates will understand that if they behave in a mature, responsible manner, he will eventually involve them in decision-making process whenever it is necessary.

2.4.3 Developing sound human relations

A principal's management approach that attempts to develop sound human relations within a school, is indeed certain to result in effective and sound decisions. Newman (1963) as cited by van der Westhuizen (1991:294) reminds us that every educational leader, like all managers, has "people as his chief resource,....they are primary raw material with which he works", hence it is imperative that he becomes sensitive about

21

creating and maintaining good human relations. Musaazi (1982:38) argues that it is therefore erroneous to regard people in an organisation as merely "cogs in machine". They should be seen as active human beings who have feelings.

In the pursuit of the same argument, Gabela (1983:53) states that, that is not an exclusive privilege, nor is the one of chief or group of top managers; but is rather one which involves relationship with the head and other members who together make the whole social structure of the enterprise such as the school...hence, one of the principal's most challenging task is to harness all people happily and efficiently in a team for the realization of the school's objectives and aims. The principal can only succeed in this by making a sound decision which will enhance the progressive running of the school.

Jones (1987:170) develops this point along the following lines "if a principal builds an atmosphere of trust in which he recognises his own as well as educators', learners' parents' and community's strengths and limitations, they will be more able to help each other and build a more genuine and realistic sense of cooperation". Cooperation creates a sense of belonging and commitment which help prepare educators and learners to positively accept the principal's decisions.

Basically, what the foregoing arguments underline, is the fact that a sound human relations approach, is an essential feature for the principals to have their decision being accepted. A principal who lacks in human skills, is bound to encounter endless problems in his administrative and management task, one of which is decision-making. The researcher believes that it is immaterial how good the other management techniques are, if the head is lacking in the skill of relating to people: all his work will be of an uphill nature and not reach a satisfactory level.

Cumming (1986) as cited by Van der Waly (1995:13) reviewing successful institutions in education, records three main principles upon which a human relations policy should be based:

➢ All employees should be treated with justice

➢ No favoritism or antagonism should be shown towards individuals

➢ The needs of members of the organisation must be recognised, particularly their desires for knowledge of what is going on within the organisation, and for consultation before decisions affecting them are taken.

The basic reward to a principal who succeeds in human relations, is well explained by Caldwell and Spinks (1991:69). They argue that if interpersonal relationships are positive and harmonious, every school member will instinctively want to give his best contribution towards effective and sound decision-making.

2.5 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

The dawn of a new South Africa as Mosoge and Van der Westhuizen (1997:196) put it, has seen a proliferation of legislation specifying the participation of stakeholders in school governance and management. Many policy documents are examples of such legislation, e.g. South African Act no 84 of 1996, Employment of Educators Act no. 76 of 1998, Education Labour Relations Council Resolution no. 8 of 1998 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108, of 1996. The fundamental thrust of the above pieces of legislation is the role which stakeholders who are involved in education have, in the transformation of education yet.

Principals and school governors may not have the experience and theoretical grounding in the principles of participatory management. Burke (1992:40) states that principals as head of schools must agree with the values implicit in participatory democracy, and possess the necessary knowledge and interpersonal competence to involve, value and incorporate the contributions of stakeholders in decision-making process. Ogawa (1994:531) concurs that principals must have the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate devolution to stakeholders in progressive, orderly, accepted and workable manner.

Research regarding effective school has consistently identified decision-making as the area of administrative and educator, learner and parent concern. When, to what extent, and in which issues should stakeholders be involved, are questions which principals need to answer when evaluating their decision-making processes. Katz (1991:130) argues that shared decision-making is of primary importance to a holistic approach to school improvement. Through shared decisions he believes, there will be a better practice of integration leading to progress of the reform embarked upon. Bezzina (1993:53) concur that empowering of a wider group gives rise to the free expression of available ideas in education, providing a more diverse information base for processes, outcomes and future directions of schools, at local and system levels.

The researcher argues that individual stakeholder should be empowered to participate in the making of decisions. She favours stakeholders empowerment and argues that although the legislation and regulations may endorse greater decentralisation of decision-making, this does not however mean that all stakeholders will be more empowered than previously. The power remains with principals who are able to determine the degree of stakeholders-participation.

Shared decision-making emphasizes a fresh conception of the principal's role in school management and a different kind of relationship in the stakeholders. In his writings about the principal's role in building democracy in Australian schools setting, Dimmock (1995:172) states that the principals of democratic schools are themselves democrats. These principals involve all stakeholders in governance and management of their schools where possible. They motivate educators, parents and learners in the maintenance of culture of teaching and learning and also ensure the commitment of diverse groups and individuals to central core values. These democratic principals delegate leadership. They aim to empower others to lead and thus share power.

In his concluding remarks, Dimmock (1995:173) argues that principals are the key participants on building democracy in schools. He further argues that through direct

personal actions and through indirect empowerment of other stakeholders, the principals can encourage or prevent democratic values practices in administrative decision making.

The researcher believes that a very important aspect is that empowerment of stakeholders does not imply disempowering principals. It implies rather that, there should be an encouragement for joint decision-making. As such empowerment requires a participatory leadership style which creates opportunities for encouragement and joint decision-making. In support of this argument, Bernd (1992:64) maintains that stakeholders empowerment loses its effectiveness if the stakeholders do not have an instructional leader to keep them on track, well informed and involved. The researcher is also of the opinion that principal who shares power with the stakeholders is still a leader. The principal is more effective instructional leader because empowered stakeholders are more likely to maximize their potential.

From the above reviewed literature it appears that principals are of cardinal important to enable empowerment of stakeholders in decision- making process. Thus there is a close correlation between the quality and degree of leadership on one hand and the standard of empowerment on the other.

2.5.1 Principal and educators

Reep and Grier (1992:263) regard educator empowerment as the fundamental transfer of authority that includes the following :
➢ the process by which educators are allowed to make decisions regarding assigned tasks,
➢ educators' involvement in creation of ways to maintain a productive and satisfying work environment
➢ educators involvement in daily problem-solving and decision-making.

Educator empowerment, therefore refers to giving traditional and non-traditional authority to people of groups who in the past did not have the authority to make

25

decisions. Reep and Grier's (1992) definition of educator empowerment shows clearly the role by principals in educator empowerment as well as the implication of educator empowerment for managerial decision-making and leadership in schools.

Democratising schools as Steyn (1998:35) puts it, implies that school structures need to change to allow all greater participation in decision-making . Such structures need to be designed in such a manner as to promote educator empowerment. For many years the mechanism for educator participation in school management has been through staff meeting and committees. Rubin in Chapman (1998:176) states that viewing educators as subordinates who merely carry out wishes of their principals is no longer tenable. The change in school structures imply, *inter alia,* diminishing hierarchical differences in school organisations giving educators professional autonomy and collegial involvement in decisions. The researcher maintains that this is possible where a principal by virtue of his position promotes corporate decision-making in schools by delegating some of his authority to others down the management chain. This ensures that educators understand the reasons for decisions and by being involved in making them become more committed to them and their implementation. Their involvement increases their interest in a satisfaction with their job and motivates them.

2.5.2   Principal and learners

Provision has been made by virtue of South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, for learners in the eight grade or higher to become actively involved in decision-making with regard to policies affecting them. Their representation as mandated in section 23 of the South African Schools Act (1996:18) on the School Governing Body, signifies a major shift in management and governance structures. The Representation Council of Learners (RCL) is seen as a full partner through the School Governing Body in leading the school and making of decisions. It is for the principal as head of the school to consciously develop their decision-making skills and give them increasing responsibility.

The South African Schools Act (1996:26) states that in the light of the trend towards decentralized school management in South Africa, learners need to be empowered to participate fully in decision-making. It further states that one of the aims of education in the new paradigm is to develop responsible future citizens. Educators and Educationists in South Africa also share a common view that learners of new South Africa need to be socialized into the school culture that will be in line with the wider national values of democracy, accountability and respect for all (City Press October 2000). To achieve this, principals as head of the schools need to involve learners in the design of a democratic school policy and vision. Supporting this view, Ngcongo (1986:60) believes that learners being involved in the election of prefects is a step in offering students representation in democratic leadership of a school.

It is important to note that the nature of participative educational leadership binds the school and the principal in particular, to involve learners in their education through offering them opportunities to make decisions. This offer by the principal can open up healthy communication channels between the principal and learners.

2.5.3 Principal and the Department of Education

The Education White paper 2 (1996) issued by the Department of Education and Culture indicates transformation in the organisation .The Former minister of Education ,Professor S.M.E. Bhengu states in the introduction to this document that education in the past was "...a legacy of apartheid system and must be transformed in accordance with the democratic values and practices, and the requirements of the constitution (1996:2). In this introduction Professor Bhengu highlights "...the development of capacity for school leadership throughout the country...."

Lemmer and Squelch (1994:23) mention that the principal is formally delegated by the board of governors and Education Department and superintendent to look after the well being of the school in all its aspects. He may use the resources available in terms of involvement of educators, management team and governing body but retains

accountability for the decision and its outcome. The principal cannot bail himself out and blame others for the decision that was taken as a team, for which he was a team leader.

The Education Guide on School Management Team (2000:2) states that school leaders and managers are in the frontline of the struggle to develop new ways of decision making. These decisions are a pre-requisite for dealing with challenges that face the institutions in a present climate of change. It becomes imperative that the principal engages in positive and creative use of this opportunity to achieve better results by making effective and sound decisions.

Oosthuisen (1994:142) maintains that the principal, by virtue of his position, is empowered to make decisions at school site level. Keith and Girling (1991:iv) claim that school- site empowerment has virtually no universally accepted meaning. It means what the speaker want it to mean. Furthermore, it is often confused with educator empowerment and shared decision making at the school site, without any attempt to build the capacity of the school to make shared decisions. The researcher believes that school leadership is unprepared for such a process and the Department of Education does not have the resources to provide the information, technical assistance and systematic staff development in decision making to support that process.

The Regional and District offices however, are going on with this "empowering", empowering their schools and principals to take responsibility for school outcomes without providing resources, decision –making direction and systems of accountability for decisions principals have made. It is difficult for principals to work under such conditions. This becomes a wave of empowerment with good intentions but no direction for practicality.

2.5.4 Principal and school management team

Valentine and Bowman (1991:1) maintain that the management team occupies a unique leadership position. It provides the direction to develop goals and establish expectation (Badenhorst and Scheepers 1995:25). According to Pillay (1998:60) members of the

28

School Management Team must be both educational managers and leaders in order to make effective decisions.

The members of the school management team are appointed in a managerial position. De Witt (1993:8) states that the school management team consists of the principal, deputy principal and the heads of departments (cf:1.5.4).Each member of the school management team is charged with specific duties involving organisation and decision making. The principal , by virtue of his /her position is a leader of the school management team. He manage the school as an enterprise so that the functional task of the school is realised . Kruger (1995:7) and Pillay (1998:59) maintain that the school principal is both a professional leader and a manager of the school, and his leadership and management style also affect his decisions. As the manager of the school, the principal can never escape his leadership task (Oosthuisen 1994:14).

Lemmer and Squelch (1994:11)maintain that the principal is not the only person who is responsible for the making of decisions. The principal should be supported by the Deputy Principal and Heads of Departments. According to Canradie (1990:26) a leader is a visionary that energises. Principals with a vision of a better school must have knowledge, understanding and skills to make decisions; and skills to inspire Deputy Principal and Head of Departments to make sound and effective decisions in order to make that vision a reality.

The effectiveness of the school management teams will be largely determined by sound and successful relationship among the principal, the Deputy Principal and Head of Departments. Van der Bank (1997:117) states that the principal should take a personal interest in the development of the members of the school management team. He should also make continuous efforts to utilize all of the members of the school management team by establishing a major role for them in the making of decisions. The members of the school management team on the other hand must cooperate and diligently carry out all the responsibilities assigned to them in a way that complement the principal's effectiveness in the decision making process.

2.5.5 Principal and the school governing body

The school governing body makes decisions on behalf of parents and sees to it that the school is properly administered. On the other hand, principals as heads of schools must ensure that schools are managed in accordance with all applicable laws as well as with the proper personnel and correct labour relations practices. This helps the principal to handle situations and take decisions knowing that he has a full backing of the parents whose children will be affected by these decisions.

However, Foster (198:27) raises an interesting point when she questions the status of parental involvement in schools. She asks whether the governing body councils are real school partners or "handy puppets" to be manipulated by the principals. The parents are seen by both principals and educators as intruders in the world of professionals, and outsiders who should not be allowed to control the school activities through their decisions. The researcher maintains that the proposals to bring parents to participate in the decision making process undoubtedly cause uneasiness to many principals. She believes that the parental powers in decision making process should be used with care and sensitivity. These are their children and they should have a say in the making of decisions. Leonard (1989:85) concurs that principals should discuss with parents and do not do whatever they feel without explaining to the members of the governing bodies the reasons for their actions.

Parents as primary educators and principals should work in conjunction with each other in the making of decisions and a spirit of partnership should exist between the family and the school for the benefit of the educational tuition of the children. Principals should then use this partnership to give strength to the decisions they make.

In order to satisfy the needs of the learners, the main thing should be the provision of education in a responsible manner. Van der Westhuizen (1991:407) states that parents

must ensure that their children's potential is used in an optimum way for their benefit, and for the good of the country, and to honour God. To achieve this they (parents) have to become actively involved and have a say in the decision making process. The principal will develop confidence in the parents if he involves them in the decision making process. He will also develop added authority if the learners are aware that these decisions are sanctioned by the members of the governing body.

2.6. CONCLUSION

The South African Education System is under extreme pressure to improve the quality of education and produce capable leaders of the future. Central to this improvement, is the effectiveness of the principal in decision making.

This chapter has reviewed the principal as one in authority who should empower and involve others and encourage participation, but there are areas where participation of educators and learners should be limited. This will facilitate cooperation in decision making.

With this theoretical background in mind, the researcher will, in the next chapter, proceed to describe the empirical procedures that were followed in investigating the research topic.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the position power of principals in decision making and the various relationships that affect their decisions were analysed . In this chapter an account of how the study was designed and conducted will be discussed.

3.2 PREPARATION FOR THE RESEARCH

3.2.1 PERMISSION

In order to conduct research amongst the principals of Maphumulo District, it became necessary to write letters requesting permission from both the Regional Chief Director (Appendix B) and the District Manager (Appendix C). A copy of questionnaire (Appendix A) was enclosed with the letters.

Letters granting permission were received from both the District Manager (Appendix D) and the Regional Chief Director (Appendix E). Arrangements to administer the questionnaire were then made.

3.2.2 SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

The researcher decided to conduct the study in Maphumulo area because in the workshops that she had attended while she was an educator in that area, concerns were raised by educators about the principals' decision-making process. Principals had also expressed their concerns about communication problems they have with the Department of Education that caused uncertainty in their decision-making.

Furtherthe researcher felt that most researchers tend to concentrate on urban areas rather than rural areas when conducting research. Places which are in rural areas (e.g. Maphumulo) are left out because of distances involved and accessibility, thus putting these areas at a disadvantage. The researcher also felt that findings on Maphumulo District could be applicable to other districts and therefore were generalisable in terms of the nature of the problemof the study.

3.2.2.1 Population and sample

The Maphumulo District has 142 principals comprising of 94 principals of primary schools and 48 principals of secondary schools. These schools are scattered over a large area. Both Gay and Ary (1990:169) state that the sample selected must be representative of the population. The researcher ensured that this was observed as far as practicable. A randomly chosen sample of 73 principals which equals (51,4%) of the population was used. Of the 73 questionnaires sent out, 53 questionnaires were completed and returned and this constitutes 72.6% response rate which was considered reasonable and adequate. Gay (1976:77) states that the minimum number of subjects acceptable as representative is 10% for a large population and 20% for a smaller population. Since small and big population has different interpretation to different people, the researcher aimed for minimum of 30%. The response rate for the study (53 principals) constituted 37.3% of the population which is way above the minimum requirement of 20%.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Consistent with the aim of this study, it was decided that a survey would be used. The surveys, as Cohen and Manion (1995:83) point out, are used for gathering data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared or determining the relationships that exist between specific events. This viewpoint is underscored by Lovell and Lawson (1990:72) by stating that descriptive survey research focuses on prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, attitudes, processes and emerging

trends. Such a method enabled the researcher to obtain data and evidence concerning an existing situation regarding the nature of decision-making processes in schools.

3.4 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument that best served the needs of this research study was the questionnaire. A questionnaire is an instrument with open or closed questions or statements to which a respondent must react. The researcher decided to use the questionnaire method to collect data, more so because this method still continues to be, if properly constructed and administered, the best available instrument for obtaining information from widely spread course. (Behr 1983) as quoted by Khathi (1994:97). Van Dalen (1992:156) is even bolder and unequivocal about the advantages of this method. He claims that for some studies or certain phases of them, presenting respondents with carefully selected and ordered questions, is the only practical way to obtain data.

The basic objective of using questionnaire in this study was to obtain facts and opinions about the use of position power in decision-making from the principals themselves. This would give the principals an opportunity to comment individually and confidentially on their experiences in decision-making as heads of schools. Mahlangu (1997:79) is also supportive of this perception when he argues that "the completion of a questionnaire is done without any outside influence, is efficient and practical and is widely employed in educational research." Tuckman (1987) as cited by Mahlangu (1997:82) affirms that questionnaires are used by researchers to convert the information directly given by people into data by providing access to what is inside somebody's mind. This approach makes it possible to measure what the person knows (knowledge and information), what he likes or dislikes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs). This information is transformed into number or quantitative data by using attitude scaling or by counting the number of respondents who give a particular response, thus generating frequency data. Hence, the questionnaire as a research tool, affords a good measure of objectivity in soliciting and coding the responses of the population sample.

3.4.1 Weaknesses of questionnaire as a method and how these were overcome

Written questionnaires do not allow the respondents to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that they have about the questionnaire. This may result in respondents answering questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misunderstanding. To overcome these weaknesses a pilot study was conducted.

Structured questions do not give opportunity for respondents to express the situations in their own words and thereby confine the respondents to the statements as stated by the researcher.

The open ended (unstructured) questions take too long to respond to and may cause delays in the return of questionnaire. If misinterpreted by respondent, he / she may give answers which are not pertinent to the topic and its aims. Also open ended questions are broad and may be cumbersome to analyse.

The inclusion of both open and closed questions was made in order to complement each other. The closed questions would speed up the response rate and the open ended questions would give the respondent a free expression.

The open-ended questions were structured with follow up questions where the respondents had to give examples and or explanations for their responses. In this way the researcher was able to establish the respondents understanding of the questions and improve on the richness of the data collected.

Enough time was given to the respondents to respond so that they would not give hasty responses. The researcher also gave herself time to analyse the responses so as not to miss the important points.

3.4.2 Construction of questionnaire

Cohen and Manion (1996:92-93) cite Davidson (1970), who claims that an ideal questionnaire is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. Its design must minimize potential errors from respondents and coders. The researcher took into account the above qualities of a questionnaire when she was designing the questionnaire. She used simple language and short questions to make understanding easy.

An attempt was made to ensure that the researcher produce a design and lay-out of the questionnaire which would attract a high level of response. Cohen and Manion (1980:111) state that the appearance of the questionnaire is vitally important. It must be easy and attractive. They reiterate that a compressed lay-out is uninviting. The researcher, therefore, provided a questionnaire with plenty of space for the questions and answers, so that the respondents could communicate as much information as possible.

The construction of a questionnaire as an activity should not take place in isolation because it is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objective, formulating the problem and generating the hypothesis (De Vos 1998:156). In order to achieve this the researcher formulated the questionnaire as follows:

The questionnaire was sub-divided into two sections:

➢ **Sectin 1:** focused on respondents' biographical and experiential background

➢ **Section 2 :**was divided into four sub- sections (A, B, C, D) with each sub-section focusing as far as possible to the aims of the study.

➢ **Sub- Section A** consisted of question 2.1 to 2.11. This section dealt with sharing of knowledge and skills in decision-making. It further looked at involvement of educators, learners and parents in decision-making process and what problems were experienced by principals in exercising their position power in decision- making.

36

➤ **Sub- Section B** consisted of question 2.12 to 2.22 and focussed on actions and behaviours that may impact on the principal's authority in decision making. This included the principal's attitude towards educators, learners and parents, his relationship with them and the use of his position to influence decisions to go his way.

➤ **Sub- Section C** consisted of questions 2.23 to 2.35 and dealt with the involvement of school governing body and school management team in decision-making, their contributions and how they impact on decision-making process related to the school.

➤ **Sub- Section D** consisted of question 2.36 to 2.43 and looked at policies and guidelines from the Department of Education which helped principals in decision-making and what support systems were available to principals from the Department of Education.

3.4.2.1 Closed questions (structured questionnaire) and their coding

McMurtry in De Vos (1998:160) advises that researchers must aim at using many closed questions as possible, although there will always be information which is difficult to generate by closed questions, so that open questions are unavoidable in those cases.

As the term suggests, structured questionnaire gave the respondent a statement stating a certain position. The respondent was offered alternatives to choose from and gave his response by placing a cross (X).

In each of the questions (2.1 to 2.8, 2.12 to 2.17, 2.23 to 2.31 and 2.36 to 2.43) the respondents were given the following four response options.

Strongly Agree (SA) = when the respondent felt that, that statement happens **always**.

Agree (A) = if the respondent felt that, that statement happens **often**.

Disagree (D) = if the respondent was of the opinion that the statement is **seldom** applicable.

Strongly Disagree (SD) = if the respondent was of the opinion that the statement is **never** applicable.

The in between option of uncertain or unsure or neutral was not used because the researcher felt that it would give the respondent a chance to avoid taking a stand in those answers. The principals are affected by these situations on daily basis and should be firm with their standpoint. The option of uncertain would also offer little use in the analysis of responses.

Structured questionnaire would be easy for respondents to fill and therefore would not discourage them from completing the questionnaire as it would take little of their time. Options were in coding only, and this would minimise semantic and synthetic misinterpretation. Hence it would be easy to analyse the questionnaire as these could be fed into a statistical analysis system. It however, did not give an opportunity for the respondents to express the situations in their own words and thereby limited the scope for the researcher to know more about the topic at hand, either than the statements she gave. To prevent this from happening the researcher included both close and open ended questions.

3.4.2.2 Open-ended questions (unstructured questionnaire)

Open-ended questions were necessary because the researcher sought to explore variables that were unknown to her. De Vos (1998:163) asserts that the open question has

advantages when a variable is relatively unexplored or unknown to the researcher. In such a case the open questions would enable the researcher to explore the variable better and to obtain some idea of the spectrum of possible responses.

For open-ended questions, the researcher asked a question and the respondent had to freely express his feelings by explaining and giving examples of his experiences. Interrogative words such as : Why?, How?, What? were used thereby allowing the respondents to comprehensively give reasons for taking a stand or acting in a certain way.

It does take too long to respond to and may cause delays in the return of questionnaire. If misinterpreted by the respondent he may give answers which are not pertinent to the topic and its aims, and thereby not be usable in the analysis of the problem. Since it is broad, it is cumbersome to analyse. However, exhaustive coding minimises this problem.

3.4.3   VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Validity and reliability are two concepts that are critical for the measurement and understanding of research (Husamen 1989:213). Best and Laer (1986:144) concur that validity and reliability are essential to the effectiveness of any data collecting procedure. Validity and reliability are two different terms but they are interrelated.

Validity of research is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Van Rensberg *et al* (1994:560) defines validity as the extent to which an instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. In this study the questions were formulated in such a way that principals would give information required without misunderstanding, as they asked about their day to day activities.

Reliability as defined by De Vos (1998:85) is the accuracy or precision of an instrument and the extent to which independent administrations of the same instrument yield the similar results under the comparable conditions. This will result in the confidence of the

conclusions to be drawn. Van Rensburg *et al* (1994:512) defines reliability as a statistical concept and relates to consistency and dependability. In this study the questions were formulated in such a way that they would be analysed by means of frequency distribution which complies with what De Vos and Van Rensburg state above.

Be that as it may,it is difficult for the researcher to guarantee reliability as this will, *inter alia*, be affected by the following situations.

➢ The respondent's mood or alertness which could be caused by his condition at a given moment e.g. bad experience, illness, etc.

➢ Differences in scoring and interpretation of results and problem of respondents who give answers to questions without thoroughly considering their meaning.

3.5   ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

3.5.1 THE PILOT STUDY

Before the questionnaire could be finalised, the researcher conducted a pilot study. The objective was to establish if the interpretation of questions was clear and consistent with what the researcher intended.

Researchers generally agree that a pilot study or trial run is important because it helps the researcher, to decide whether or not the study is feasible and whether or not it is worthwhile to continue (Khathi, 1990:80; Ary *et al*, 1992:109). The pilot study provides the researcher with an opportunity to assess the appropriateness and practicality of the data collecting instrument. Unanticipated problems may be solved at this stage thereby saving time and effort.

Regarding the selection of people on whom the pilot study should be tested. Tuckman (1978:225) suggests that the pilot study should use a group of respondents who are part of the intended test population but will not be part of the sample. This reasoning is

appropriate because people of the intended population would undoubtedly have a clear understanding of the nature of the questions being asked in the questionnaire. Testing a pilot on friends and neighbours as suggested by Leedy (1974:157) could result in distorted findings. Thus, the researcher decided to conduct a pilot study with the approval of the District Manager on four principals, namely two principals from secondary schools and two from primary schools which were not going to form part of the final sample.

From their responses it became necessary to couple the open questions together with the close questions that fall under the same aim. This, would make the respondent's life easy to answer all the questions while his mindset is on a certain aspect.

The researcher also decided that since the research is about the **principal** and **decision-making** the reference to the stated terms (principal and decision-making) should as far as possible be included in each question so as to help the respondent to focus on the subject.

One question was answered as intended by three of the four principals and the other one principal answered in a completely different way. This was scrutinised and seen to be having a double meaning. This ambiguity was corrected in the final questionnaire.

In terms of relevance of questionnaire and clarity they stated it was right and the terminology used was clear and understandable.

3.5.2 THE ACTUAL STUDY

The researcher was faced with a mammoth task of distribution of questionnaires and encouraging principals to respond timeously. In some areas it was difficult to drive and reach the schools.

The above stated problems caused the researcher to request the assistance of the superintendent at the District to distribute and encourage the principals to respond to the survey. The superintendent included this in her agenda in the principal's meeting. This follows a view by Fraenkel *et al* (1990:336) that if the research project is administered through a person in authority it will yield a higher response rate. The superintendent further assigned a clerk to monitor the distribution and collection of these questionnaires. The researcher visited the district several times to collect these questionnaires.

The researcher also visited some principals of the schools within reach and encouraged them herself. This was further facilitated by the fact that the researcher had been in the Maphumulo District as an educator and could still associate with the people and principals in the district.

3.6   THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

The study that was conducted would fit into descriptive analysis as it described and summarised observation. Van Rensburg *et al* (1994:355) concurs that a descriptive research determines and reports the way things are i.e. current status. Frequency distribution was used to organise data obtained from questionnaire to simplify statistical analysis.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:65-76) stress that the frequency tables are very useful as they provide the following information:
▪   How many times the response occurs.
▪   What is the percentage of that response to total responses.

The collected data was captured so that it could be analysed and interpreted. This data was sent to Department of Information Technology and statistics in the University of Durban Westville for statistical analysis. This would give or detail the following information.

- ➤ Frequency of responses (options per question).
- ➤ Bar graphs

The unstructured / open questions would be analysed thematically. The comments would be put together for a certain theme and question and they would be summarised.

The researcher would also look at the influence of principals' experience in the position and see whether it has any bearing on the principal's authority in decision-making.

3.7   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following factors significantly constrained the investigation.

The timing of the study was problematic since the questionnaire was approved in September. The study had to be conducted in the October / November period which was the time when examinations were taking place and principals, as chief invigilators were busy, administering examinations. Some principals were writing examinations themselves and therefore not available at their schools. Cohen and Manion (1989:109) has this to say about the surveys; "open ended questions are demanding too much time of respondents. Nothing can be more off putting than when the respondent needs to think and consider." The response rate was lower than expected as some questionnaires were not returned.

The geographical position of some schools in Maphumulo District was prohibitive because of the terrain, and in times of rain it became difficult to do follow up or collect completed questionnaires.

The researcher noted that some principals felt insecure about answering some questions. The researcher had to further assure them of anonymity and confidentiality, sometimes even showing them a batch of questionnaire already completed.

Some principals had little interest in the survey and spent as little time as possible. This was evident from their responses of open questions. This was the case despite that elaborate explanations had been given about the nature and significance of the study.

3.8   CONCLUSION

The planning and design of empirical research was discussed in this chapter. These included permission and selection of respondents. The researcher also looked at the questionnaire as a research instrument, how questionnaires were structured and how they focused on different themes. Limitations to the study were also discussed.

The next chapter will focus on the analysis and interpretation of data.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data that was collected will be analysed and interpreted. This will include the biographical data on section 4.2.1 and data on section 4.2.2 regarding the experience of respondents as principals of schools.

The data of the research in section 4.3 are presented in the following themes which are the aims of the study.

➢ Facilitating the role of others in decision making by principals.
➢ Behaviours / actions that may positively /negatively affect the principals' authority in decision-making.
➢ Involvement of management structures (school governing bodies and school management team) in decision making by principals.
➢ The mandate given to school principals by the Department of Education in decision making

4.2 ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS AS PRINCIPALS

4.2.1 BIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

This section presents the biographical data of respondents. Table 1 shows the age-range of respondents.

TABLE 1: AGE-RANGE OF RESPONDENTS.

(n = 53)

AGE CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	%
Under 30	02	03.77 %
31 to 40	15	28.30 %
41 to 50	27	50.94 %
Over 50	09	16.99 %
TOTAL	53	100.0 %

The age of principals is reflected in Table 1 above and it shows that the majority (50-94%) is between the ages 41-50 and 28.3% between the ages 31-40. Only 16.9% of principals were over 50 years of age.

This represents a mature age group but relatively young and easy to adapt to changing conditions in the Education Department.

Table 2 presents the experience of respondent as principals

TABLE 2: EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS AS PRINCIPALS

(n = 53)

EXPERIENCE IN YEARS	FREQUENCY	%
LESS THAN 5	18	33.96 %
05 TO 10	21	39.63 %
11 TO 15	08	15.09 %
OVER 15	06	11.32 %
TOTAL	53	100.00%

The experience of respondents as principals is shown in Table 2. (54.72%) of respondents have between 05 and 15 years experience in positions as principals. This is a good background for principalship in the region. It is noted that 33.96% of respondents have less than 5 years experience as principals whilst only 11.3% have

over 15 years experience as principals. The above proportions could be caused by the fact that over the last 7 years a high percentage of principals have taken voluntary severance package, and new appointments have been made to replace these principals.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE (OPEN AND CLOSED QUESTIONS)

4.3.1 FACILITATING THE ROLE OF OTHERS IN DECISION-MAKING

This section shows the responses to how the principals facilitate the role of other stakeholders in decision-making

4.3.1.1 **Responses to closed questions**

Table 3 consists of questions 2.1. to 2.8 which required the principals to choose their options on how they (principals) facilitate the role of others in decision-making.

TABLE 3:HOW PRINCIPALS FACILITATE THE ROLE OF OTHERS IN DECISION-MAKING

(n = 53)

STATEMENTS	Strongly Agree /Agree		Disagree/ Strongly Disagree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Q 2.1 Learners accept decisions more easily if they have been involved	53	100.0 %	0	00.0 %	53
Q 2.2 Principals allow educators to decide on matters that affect them	32	60.4 %	21	39.6 %	53
Q 2.3 Principals share knowledge on problem solving with educators to facilitate sound decision-making	42	79.2 %	11	20.8 %	53
Q 2.4 Principals share knowledge on problem solving with educators to facilitate sound decision-making	40	75.5 %	13	24.5 %	53

Q 2.5 Decisions made by the principal are accepted by educators	30	56.6 %	23	43.4 %	53
Q 2.6 Decisions made by the principal are accepted school governing bodies	41	77.4 %	12	22.6 %	53
Q 2.7 Workshops conducted by the Department of Education provide parents with the necessary skills to help the principal in decision-making process	31	58.5 %	22	41.5 %	53
Q 2.8 Schools will only succeed if participative decision-making is practiced	37	69.8 %	16	30.2 %	53

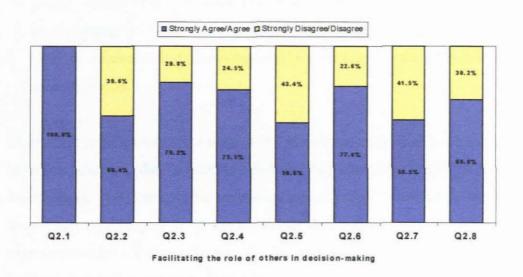Facilitating the role of others in decision-making

Table 3 above depicts the level of acceptance of the principal's decisions by learners, educators and members of the governing bodies. It is noted that 100% of principals agreed that learners accept decisions if they have been involved in making those decisions. Fifty six percent (56.6%) of principals felt that educators accept decisions made by the principals and 77.4% maintain that decisions made by the principal are accepted by the members of the school governing body .

About seventy nine percent (79.2%) of principals felt that they share knowledge that they have on decision-making with educators in order to facilitate sound decision making; and 75.5% maintain that principals share skills required for decision-making with educators. A high percentage of principals (69.8%) believe that participative decision-making is a recipe for success while 60.4% state that they allow educators to decide on matters that affect them (educators).

48

4.3.1.2 Responses to open ended questions

In the open questionnaire section the respondents were asked to voice their opinions on exercising their position power in decision-making and also in the involvement of educators, learners and parents.

This is what the respondents had to say:
- "I always involve educators in decision-making because I want them to be part of the solution."
- "Some educators are negative and misuse their involvement to show how powerful they are."
- "I involve learners in decision-making because they are the main reason for the schools to exist"

Most of the principals saw the need to involve educators in decision-making. They, however, claimed that educators tend to defy decisions made without their involvement. Principals further expressed concern that if educators are given an opportunity to take part in decision-making, they expect to have the last say, and give excuses for not doing their work. If the principal gives advice and direction he/she is labelled an autocrat. This is because educators misunderstand participative decision-making.

Principals maintain that learners must be involved in decision-making at all times. They state that if learners are involved they become part of the decision, become positive and conflicts are prevented in this way. Since they are stakeholders they have to know the reasons for changes that affect them e.g. if there is an increase in the school hours they should be explained why that change is necessary.

A view was also expressed that learners should be involved through representatives as it is difficult to involve the whole school. Most principals felt that learners may not be involved in the decisions that do not favour them (learners) or in decisions that are to discuss them and their actions especially misconducts. This is because they become negative and disruptive and the decision-making process is disturbed.

Some principals expressed that the learners may not be involved fully as they are minors who require a lot of guidance from the adults.

When requested to give examples of educator involvement in decision-making the respondents cited that educators tend to do well in extramural activities. The educators take initiative in areas like sports, excursion's and are able to persuade and convince learners to participate. However, in academic matters educators fail to commit themselves and cite work overload and unco-operativeness of learners. Principals also expressed that educators form informal groups among themselves. These informal groups affect the decision-making negatively since the "group" members will react positively/negatively to a point depending on who came with the idea.

4.3.1.3   Discussion

There is a high level of acceptance by learners and governing body members of decisions when they have been involved. This is mainly because the sense of ownership is built by this involvement and everybody wants to be part of success, hence a high level of co-operation. However, there is a problem with some educators in accepting the principals decisions.

The educators on the one hand seem to misunderstand the objective of their involvement in decision-making and want to use the involvement as a platform to criticise the principal or take over the management of the school. Educators have not been involved in the past and have not been prepared to participate positively in decision-making. This causes them not to commit and adhere to objectives of the school.

The principals on the other hand, having been sole decision-makers in the past, it is still difficult to let lose the powers and authority by involving others in decision-making. This makes them feel they are not in control anymore. The principals will have to change their mindset and understand that, though others will be involved in decision-making, the authority still rests with them.

4.3.2 BEHAVIOURS / ACTIONS THAT MAY POSITIVELY AND / OR NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE PRINCIPALS AUTHORITY IN DECISION-MAKING.

This section deals with the actions and behaviours of the principals and how they may positively and/or negatively affect the principals' authority in decision-making
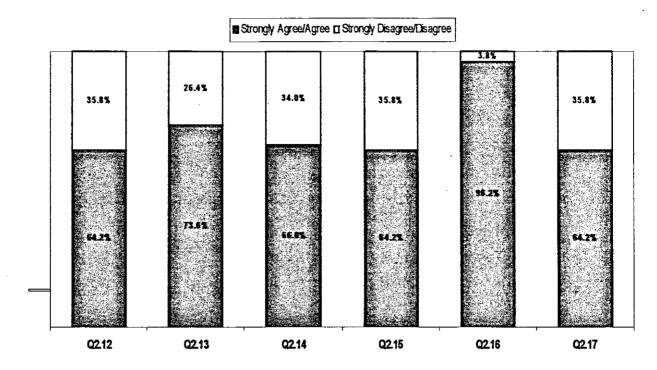
4.3.2.1 Responses to closed questions

Questions 2.12 to 2.17 required the principals to choose their options on the impact of their behaviours and attitude towards educators, parents and learners during the decision-making process.

TABLE 4: THE IMPACT OF HOW PRINCIPALS' BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES AFFECT HIS AUTHORITY IN DECISION-MAKING

(n = 53)

STATEMENTS	Strongly Agree / Agree		Strongly Disagree /Disagree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Q 2.12 Imposed decisions disempower certain categories of educators	34	64.2 %	19	35.8 %	53
Q 2.13 Principals use their positions to influence decisions	39	73.6 %	14	26.4 %	53
Q 2.14 A close relationship between the principal and educators is detrimental to the decision-making process	35	66.0 %	18	34.0 %	53
Q 2.15 A close relationship between the principal and the parents is detrimental to the decision-making process	34	64.2 %	19	35.8 %	53
Q 2.16 The attitude of the principal towards learners will influence the way they accept his decisions	51	96.2 %	02	03.8 %	53
Q 2.17 Principals regard themselves competent enough to make decisions without involving others	34	64.2 %	19	35.8 %	53

35.8%	26.4%	34.0%	35.8%	3.8%	35.8%
64.2%	73.6%	66.0%	64.2%	96.2%	64.2%
Q2.12	Q2.13	Q2.14	Q2.15	Q2.16	Q2.17

Behaviours/Actions that may positively and/or negatively affect the principal's authority

Table 4 above shows that 72.6% of principals use their positions to influence decisions to go their way. On the same table 66% of principals feel that a close relationship between principal and educators is detrimental to the decision-making process whereas 64.2% expressed that a close relationship with parents is detrimental to the decision-making process. A very high percentage (96.2%) regard the attitude of the principal to the learners as a contributor to the way the learners accept the principal's decisions.

It must be noted that, in contrast to 64% of principals who believe that imposed decisions disempower educators, 64.2% of the principals feel that they are competent enough to make sound decisions without involving others.

4.3.2.2 Responses to open ended questions.

Questions 2.18 to 2.22 required the principals to comment on the extent to which they use their position power to influence decisions.

The following were some of the quotes from responses:

➤ "where I think the group needs direction, I use my position power to influence a decision to be taken."

➤ "when I feel that the decision they make is not beneficial to the learners I use my position power to influence a decision to be taken ".

➤ "I always use my position power, and if I don't, nothing happens because the educators will look for the easy way out, resulting in work not being done."

The above extracts from the principals' responses show that principals use their position power to influence decision, in order to redirect the group to desired goals. It is interesting to note that principals maintain that the educators will want to do only interesting and easy tasks. However, Stoner (1992:492) stresses that in order to be successful, workers involved in decision-making must be able to motivate themselves to perform both tasks that are naturally appealing to them, and those that are necessary but not naturally attractive. In terms of the principals the latter does not happen unless they use their power to influence decisions.

Questions 2.19 to 2.22 looked at the principals' behaviours and how they affect the others in decision-making. The principals cited examples like suppressing others opinions, getting short tempered as negative contributors to the decision-making process.

The principals expressed that a positive behaviour by the principal will encourage the educators. Examples cited were that principals should treat everybody the same, value every contribution as important and lead by example (e.g. principals should not expect educators to do what they (principals) would not like to do. Getzel et al (1968:37) maintain that decision-making must be done through mutual consultation and voluntary communication. The principal must provide educators with opportunity to make decisions.

4.3.2.3. Discussion

The comments from principals show that they use their position power to influence decisions in order to get work done. There is a strong belief though, that principals feel that they are competent to take decisions without involving others. Principals are confident in themselves and their ability to run the schools. Be that as it may, this could lead to principals not involving the available stakeholders and thus run the schools autocratically.

It is, however, interesting to note that most principals feel that involving others in decision-making is the right thing to do. This means that these principals seem to reap better results by involving others in decision-making.

On the question of close relationships principals maintain that these relationships result in favouritism and make it difficult to make objective decisions. This may even cause a problem in acceptance of decisions by educators, parents and learners.

4.3.3 INVOLVING MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES e.g. SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB) AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT) IN DECISION-MAKING

4.3.3.1 Responses to closed questions
Questions 2.23 to 2.31 required principals to state desirability of involving school governing bodies and school management teams in decision-making and how the involvement of these bodies enhanced the quality of the decisions taken.

54

TABLE 5 : INVOLVEMENT OF MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES IN DECISION-MAKING.

(n = 53)

STATEMENTS	Strongly Agree / Agree		Strongly Disagree /Disagree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Q2.23 Principals consult the school management team in all decisions related to school matters	27	50.9 %	26	49.1 %	53
Q2.24 Principals consult the school governing bodies in all decisions related to school matters	36	67.9 %	17	32.1 %	53
Q2.25 The school governing bodies has greatly contributed towards sound decisions being taken	43	81.1 %	10	18.9 %	53
Q2.26 The reason why principals leave out members of the school governing bodies is because members of the school governing bodies lack knowledge required in decision-making	16	30.2 %	37	69.8 %	53
Q2.27 The reason why principals leave out members of the school governing bodies is because members of the school governing bodies lack skills required in decision-making	18	34.0 %	35	66.0 %	53
Q2.28 Members of the school management teams are not involved in decision-making process because they lack skills required in decision-making	19	35.8 %	34	64.2 %	53
Q2.29 The involvement of members of the school governing bodies enhances the quality of the principals' decisions	47	88.7 %	06	11.3 %	53
Q2.30 The involvement of members of the school management teams enhances the quality of the principals' decisions	44	83.0 %	09	17.0 %	53
Q2.31School management team supports principal's decisions	44	83.0 %	09	17.0 %	53

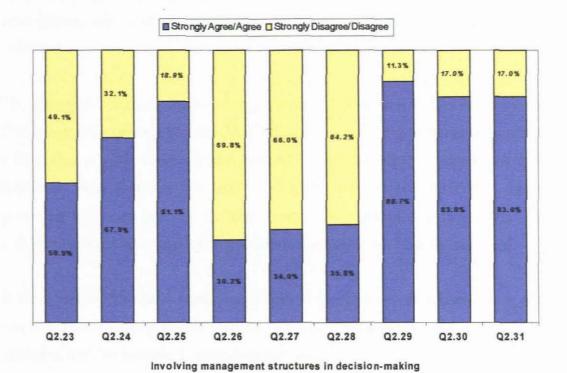**Involving management structures in decision-making**

Table 5 above shows that 67.9% of principals believe that they consult school governing bodies on matters related to the school while 81.1% maintain that school governing bodies have greatly contributed towards sound decisions being made. 88,7% of principals maintain that the school governing bodies have knowledge required in decision-making.

On the involvement of school management teams only 50.9% of the principals consult the school management team on decisions related to school matters while 83% contend that school management teams involvement in decision-making enhances the decision-making process. A further 83% maintain that the School Management Teams support the decisions made by the principal.

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4.3.3.2 Responses to open ended questions

The open ended questions 2.32 to 2.35 required the principals to comment on the impact of the involvement of school management teams and school governing

bodies in decision-making. They also had to comment on the issues that the school management teams and school governing bodies should be involved in the decision-making.

The principals maintain that involving the school governing bodies enhances the decision-making process because the school governing body is a parent body which would like to have their children succeed. They therefore support positive decisions. The decisions that have been made with the involvement of school governing bodies are good for the learners and will be accepted by parents and the community as the school governing bodies will clearly explain to all concerned.

With regard to the school management teams' involvement the principals express that the school management team is the link between the principal and the educators and / or learners. I quote from their responses:

➢ "The school will not succeed without the support of the school management team."

➢ "The school management team understands the requirements of the principal on the one hand, and of the educators and learners on the other hand."

If the school management team is involved they support the decision and make sure that it succeeds. The principals also state that if the school management teams are not involved they will side with the educators and even influence them against the principal's decision and cause problems for the school. Van der Westhuizen (1991:155) concurs that conflict is reduced through involvement, and decisions coming from the top are problematic.

Item 2.34 asked about areas of involvement for school governing bodies and the principals maintain that the school governing bodies should be involved in all school matters including discipline, improvements, funding and budgeting. There is also a feeling that school governing bodies should be involved in all school related issues ,including even professional matters as can be seen in this response:

➤ "The school governing body is a powerful body that is there for the good of the institution; involve them in everything".

In question 2.35 the principals maintained that the school management team is an integral part of management and should be involved in all matters concerning the school. This involvement of school management team in decision-making will enhance the decisions made and help the principal to delegate duties easily since the school management team will be part of the decisions.

4.3.3.3 DISCUSSION

The school governing body and school management team stand out as important components of the principals decision-making team and principals believe that these bodies should be involved in all decisions. This will ease conflicts and result in the smooth running of the school.

The school governing body is the parent mouthpiece and therefore best represents the interests of the learners and the school community. In terms of skills and knowledge required for decision-making the principals maintained that the school governing body has adequate skills and knowledge to contribute to the decision-making.

The principals believe that they are just individuals who cannot be directly in touch with all educators and learners to implement decisions. The principals also express that school management team involvement creates smooth flow of decisions from the principal to other stakeholders. They further maintain that the school management team want a say in the decision-making, and not merely accept autocratic decisions that have already been made by the principal

4.3.4 THE MANDATE GIVEN TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN MAKING-DECISIONS ABOUT SCHOOL RELATED ISSUES.

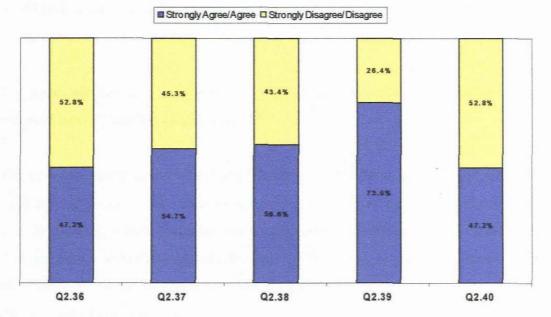### 4.3.4.1 Responses to closed questions

This table shows the interaction between the principal and the Department of Education.

Questions 2.36 to 2.40 required principals to state their perception on the part played by the Department of Education in the decision-making process of schools.

TABLE 6: THE RELATIONSHIP AND INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PRINCIPALS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

(n = 53)

STATEMENTS	Strongly Agree/ Agree		Strongly Disagree /Disagree		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Q2.36 The Department of Education makes policies that hamper decision-making powers of principals	25	47.2 %	28	52.8 %	53
Q2.37 There era clear guidelines for principals to follow in making decisions related to the school issues	29	54.7 %	24	45.3 %	53
Q2.38 It is difficult to make decisions related to school issues without consulting the Department of Education	30	56.6 %	23	43.4 %	53
Q2.39 Poor communication between the Department of Education and principals causes delays for principals in making decisions	39	73.6 %	14	26.4 %	53
Q2.40 The Department of Education supports the decisions made by principals	25	47.2 %	28	52.8 %	53

	Q2.36	Q2.37	Q2.38	Q2.39	Q2.40
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	52.8%	45.3%	43.4%	26.4%	52.8%
Strongly Agree/Agree	47.2%	54.7%	56.6%	73.6%	47.2%

The mandate given to principals by DoE in making decisions about school related issues

Table 6 above shows that 47.2% of principals felt that the Department of Education makes policies that hamper their decision-making powers. Only 54.7% stated that there are clear guidelines for principals to follow in making decisions whilst 56.6% maintained that it is difficult to make decisions without consulting the Department of Education. 52.8% of the principals maintained that the Department of Education does not support the decisions they (principals) make. About seventy three percent (73.6%) of principals stated that poor communication between the Department of Education and principals causes delays for the principals in making decisions timeously.

.4.3.4.2 Responses to open ended questions

On the question of how much help is given by the Department of Education to the principals to make sound decisions the principals felt that the Department formulates policies and rules without consulting and these become impractical to implement at school level.   The principals also state that the Department confuses the principals with the information that arrive too late at schools and to be submitted back to the district office on the same day. They state as quoted below:

60

➤ "Everything that comes from the Department of Education is overdue."

➤ "The Department of Education does all the thinking and policy-making and the school principals must figure out how to implement these policies

The principals maintain that it takes too long for the Department to act on issues eg. reported cases of teacher misconduct.

The principals were asked which policies they would like to see changed and they cited the redeployment of educators since they are still not clear on what criteria to use in deciding which educators are to be transferred. The principals also stated that policy on school fees should be that 'all learners pay' or 'free education for all'. The present one is very vague and the principal has to take each case one by one without clear guidelines.

The principals stated that the issue of pregnant learners is still a problem that principal faces and does not know exactly what to do. The respondents maintain that the Outcome Based Education should be revisited with proper training of everybody involved.

4.3.4.3 Discussion

The principals are very concerned about the Department of Education's non consultative process. They maintain that they are managing their schools on trial and error basis and hope that they do not make blunders.

The principals feel that they are not given guidelines to follow in making decisions related to school issues; and their decisions are not supported by the Department of Education. The principals deal with adolescents most of the times and issues such as learner pregnancy face them. The vague policies formulated by the Department of Education keep on frustrating the principals.

4.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

From the above analysis it became evident that learners accept principals' decisions if they are involved in the decision-making process. The school principals have difficulty in getting their decisions accepted by educators whilst they (principals) use their position power to influence decisions in order to meet school objectives. The principals do, however, involve the school governing bodies and school management teams in the decisions related to school matters. The principals' behaviours and actions influence the way their decisions are accepted by stakeholders.

The findings also revealed that the Department of Education does not consult the principals in policy decision-making and that the communication from the Department is poor.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter an interpretation and analysis of the data was undertaken. The close questions were analysed in the form of frequency distribution tables. The open ended responses were analysed thematically following the actual responses from the respondents and the researcher interpreted and analysed these responses.

In the next chapter conclusions will be drawn from the research and recommendations will then be made.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will draw her conclusions and recommendations based on analysis and interpretation of data that was done on the previous chapter.

At this stage it is important to restate the aims of the study and the questions which the study sought to explore. This becomes important to help to ascertain the extent to which the findings relate to the aims and questions of the study. Also this will help to ensure that the recommendations are in line with the problem of the study.

Aims of the study

➤ To analyse how the principals can facilitate the role of others in the decision-making process on school related issues.

➤ To determine the school principals' behaviours / actions that may positively and/or negatively affect their authority in decision-making.

➤ To establish how school management structures (e.g. School Governing Body, School Management Team) impact on the principal's decision-making power as head of the school.

➤ To ascertain the mandate given to school principals by the Department of Education in making decisions about school related issues and the extent to which they use this mandate in day-to-day running of the school.

Questions which the study seeks to address:

➤ How do principals facilitate the role of others in decision-making?

➤ How do principals' behaviours affect their authority in decision-making?

> Involvement of management structures by principals in decision-making

> The interaction between the principals and the Department of Education

Findings

> School principals experience difficulty in getting their decisions accepted by educators .

> Learners accept principals' decisions if they are involved in the decision-making process.

> Principals use their position power to influence decisions

> The Department of Education does not consult the principals in policy making.

> Behaviour by the principal influences the way stakeholders accept his decisions.

> The school governing bodies are involved by principals in the decision-making process.

5.2 FINDINGS

The following findings were drawn after the data had been analysed.

5.2.1 School principals experience difficulty in getting their decisions accepted by educators.

In terms of the analysis only 56.6% of principals have their decisions accepted by educators. The remaining principals (43.4%) maintain that their decisions are not accepted by educators ; and this is a problem for those principals and their schools. This could be caused by principals using "too much" position power and becoming autocratic and thereby make educators resistant. It could also be caused by educators who want to defy the authority of principals. This would result in over forty percent of schools dysfunctional because decisions being taken are either not sound, or not implemented properly.

5.2.2 Learners accept principals' decisions if they are involved in the decision-making process.

Involvement of learners in decision making gives them a sense of ownership and belonging and they always make sure that their decisions are fulfilled. The study reveals that a 100% response rate of principals maintain that learners accept decisions when they have been involved. This shows that principals realise the importance of involving learners in their decisions and hence a conducive environment is created for the implementation of decisions.

5.2.3 Principals use their position power to influence decisions.

A high percentage (72,6%) of principals responded positive to this point. Examples cited in the analysis show that principals use their position power to influence decisions in order to achieve school objectives. The analysis also shows that educators lack the drive to commit themselves to the making and implementation of decisions if the principal does not use his position power.

However , still on the same point the analysis revealed that a great number (64;2%) of principals believe that they are competent enough to take decisions without involving others. By this the researcher concludes that there is still a high level of autocracy in the school decision-making process (as practiced by principals)

5.2.4 Behaviuor by the principal influences the way stakeholders accept his decisions.

The analysis showed that successful principals lead by example and do not expect the educators and learners to do what they (principals) would not like to do. It further revealed that close relationships with educators, parents and learners end up

in favouritism which, when noticed by stakeholders, affect the way principals' decisions are accepted.

5.2.5 The school governing bodies are involved by principals in the decision-making process.

The researcher concludes that the school governing body is the integral part of the school decision making body and believes that involving the school governing body results in quality decisions that are not resisted by parents and learners. This is supported by the high percentage (88.7%) in the data analysis of principals who believe that school governing body involvement enhances decision-making process. This is a good reflection for schools' decision making process which is also supported by a 67.9% of principals who maintain that they consult and involve school governing bodies in the making of decisions related to school matters.

5.2.6 There is a low involvement of school management team in decision making.

The researcher found that 50,9 % involvement of school management teams is low in this day and age of education management. The school management team helps the principal in the management of the school and in making decisions; and if their level of involvement is so low, principals will have problems in running the school.

This will result in resistance from the educators and learners, not because they want to, but because the management of the school is not part of the decisions This is coming from the principals themselves that 49,1% of them do not involve the School Management Team in the school decision making process. This would lead to confrontation.

5.2.7 The Department of Education does not consult the principals in policy making.

The researcher concluded that there is minimal or no consultation of principals by the Department of Education when policies are made. About forty seven (47.2%)

of principals felt that the Department of Education makes policies that hamper decision making powers of principals and 45.3% felt that the guidelines from the Department of Education are not clear. This poses a problem for principals in particular and for the school community in general.

The principals are expected by all stakeholders (school management team, educators, school governing body, and learners) to make sound decisions and involve them in the decision making process, whilst the Department of Education does not practise this involvement and consultation.

The working environment of principals is not conducive to sound decisions being made. This study has also shown that the Department of Education still practices top down decision making and hopes that the principals will involve stakeholders. This is concurred by Mosoge and van der Westhuizen(1997:201) that authoritarian mode and individualistic approaches to management are entrenched behaviour patterns in the Republic of South Africa.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Recommendations for Principals

5.3.1.1 School principals must involve educators in the decision-making process.

Principals must involve educators in decisions they make and in everything they do This will create a personal and professional attitude towards their work.Van der Westhuizen (1991:204) concurs that involvement means responsibility and pride in the quality of work done.

5.3.1.2 School principals must involve learners in decision making

The principals must involve learners so that they feel part of the bigger whole. No matter how small and petty the decisions may be, but this will go a long way in making learners feel that they are recognised.

5.3.1.3 Principals must retain their authority to make final decisions.

Principals must still use their position power to influence decisions because, by virtue of their position, they are still custodians of authority in decision-making. They (principals) need to be careful that they do not become autocratic. There is a very fine line between using position power to influence decisions and being autocratic and prescriptive.

5.3.1.4 Principals' behaviour must be acceptable to the school community.

Principals must display professionalism in whatever they do and behave in a manner that is exemplary. They are part of the community and they are expected to behave well. The principal's behaviour is associated (by community, educators, learners) with his position wherever he is , and this includes after hours and outside the school premises. They have to preserve the dignity, respect and authority that is associated with the position of principalship.

5.3.1.5 Principals must involve the school governing bodies in decisions made at the school.

School governing bodies are not an interference in the schools. They are principals' helping hands and the principals' support base, therefore they need to be involved by principals in decision-making. If this does not happen the principal will experience resistance from the school governing body.

5.3.1.6 The principals must involve the school management team in decision-making.

Involvement of school management team increases team spirit and eliminates tensions. School management teams are a link between educators and learners and therefore are the principals' tool in implementing decisions. The school cannot succeed if they are not involved. Milstein (1980:251) concurs that one of the advantages of participative decision making is the increased ownership that the group members feel, concerning decisions that they helped to make. This deepens the commitment to make decisions work.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Educators.

5.3.2.1 Educators must welcome their involvement in decision-making by principal.

Educators need to appreciate their involvement in decisions when extended by principals and use the opportunity positively. Their involvement must be to achieve the common goal and encourage the principal to involve them more and more. Educators, however, need to realise that the principal still carries the authority and he still has to guide decisions to a certain direction. He is the leader. Hetcher (1981,353) states that involvement and participation satisfy the need for educators to have a say in the matters that affect them. Educators must not use this opportunity as a platform to criticise the principal.

5.3.2.2 Educators must take responsibility and accountability for the implementation of decisions

Educators' role and duty is to action the decisions that have been agreed on. They need to contribute to the decisions in order to make implementation easy. They also need to take responsibility and accountability for the decisions they implement. Educators need to realise that they are part of the school and participation in decision making is a requirement in terms of the South African Schools Act (1996).

5.3.3 Recommendation for the Department of Education.

5.3.3.1 *The Department must involve principals in policy making.*

The Department of Education must review their policy-making procedures and involve the principals in their future decisions. This should start from the planning stage (idea stage). Rue and Byers (1980:102) believe that policy provides general guidelines and contributes to sound decisions being made. Robbins (1980:73) states that policy making is essential as part of planning action, since the implementation presupposes a unique policy.

The involvement of the principals in policy making is a matter of priority since they are expected to improve education in the country. They cannot do this without knowing the objectives of the policies. The principal is at the cold face, where real implementation happens and therefore must be clear of what he is doing otherwise the education as a whole will collapse.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has drawn conclusions and made recommendations on the study. The study was about analysing the position power of the principals in the decision making.

It looked at how a principal would facilitate the role of others in his decision making process. This included the involvement of school governing bodies, school management teams, educators and learners in decision making. The role of the Department of Education in decision making at school level was also looked into and also how the principal's behaviours would affect his decision-making.

The researcher believes that the findings and recommendations of the study will be invaluable information for principals and the Department of Education. It will also

help improve the interaction between all the stakeholders in education in order to make sound decisions to the benefit of all learners.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The research has revealed that further study is necessary in the field of education management concerning decision-making. The study has established what principals do in terms in terms of relationship with learners, educators, school governing bodies, school management teams and how these affect the decision-making process.

It would be essential to do research on the other stakeholders and establish what their contribution is in decision-making in schools. It would be interesting to find out how they feel about their involvement in decision-making.
e.g.

➢ Are school governing bodies involved in decision-making in schools?

➢ Are school management teams involved in decision-making in schools?

➢ To what extent do principals involve learners in decision-making? What do the learners say?

➢ What do educators say about their involvement in decision-making?

The principals have stated who they involve, and what problems they experience. The other stakeholders need to state their involvement and the problems they experience with the principals and amongst themselves in decision making pertaining to schools. The success of schools depends on all interested parties playing a positive role in the progress of schools.

The researcher would also appreciate if studies are progressed to find out what expectations do these stakeholders have of principals and what expectations do they have on schools as such in terms of decision making.

The Department of Education is the custodian of policies which need to be implemented by principals. Further research into their policy making and how these

policies affect decisions at schools level will help shed light in the dilemma that faces principals (as stated by principals).There may also be problems that the *Department of Education experiences with the principals and schools structures* which could be included for further research.

Further research would help highlight areas of concerns and problem areas and thereby make it possible to deal with these. It will also reveal the positive actions that are performed by all interested parties and thereby help the school communities to reinforce these. In this way strengths will be reinforced and weakness will be improved.

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Questionnaire for Principals

Dear Respondent

Thank you for taking time to answer my questionnaire. The fact that you have been chosen as a respondent is quite coincidental. The school in which you are, as well as you, have been selected randomly for the purpose of this survey.

I would like to assure that all the information you provide will be regarded as strictly confidential. Thus, to obtain reliable, scientific information, it is necessary that you answer the questions as honestly as you can. **Your opinion is important.**

Please answer ALL questions in the following way:

Place a cross, e.g. **X**
Where a question requires comments, write in the space provided

KEY

SA	=	**Strongly Agree**
A	=	**Agree**
D	=	**Disagree**
SD	=	**Strongly Disagree**

Question 1

1.1

School Level		
Primary	A	
Secondary	B	

1.2

Age Group in Years		
Under 30	A	
31 – 40	B	
41 – 50	C	
Over 50	D	

1.3

Gender		
Male	A	
Female	B	

1.4

Experience (As a principal) in Years		
Less than 5	A	
5 – 10	B	
11 – 15	C	
Over 15	D	

A.   Facilitating the role of others in decision-making

		SA	A	D	SD
2.1	Learners accept decisions more easily if they have been involved				
2.2	Principals allow educators to decide on matters that affect them				
2.3	Principals share knowledge on problem solving with educators to facilitate sound decision-making				
2.4	Principals share skills on problem solving with educators to facilitate sound decision-making				
2.5	Decisions made by the principal are accepted by educators				
2.6	Decisions made by the principal are accepted by members of the Governing Body				
2.7	Workshops conducted by the Department of Education provide parents with necessary skills to help the principal in decision-making process				
2.8	Schools will only succeed if participative decision-making is practised				

2.9   What problems do you encounter in exercising your position power in decision-making?

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2.10   What experience have you had about involving educators in decision-making?

Positive Experiences (Please relate and give examples

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Negative Experiences (Please relate and give examples)

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2.11   Do you consider it essential that the learners be involved in decision-making? Explain.

_____
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B.   Behaviours/Actions that may positively and/ or negatively affect the principals' <u>authority</u>

		SA	A	D	SD
2.12	Imposed decisions disempower certain categories of educators,				
2.13	Principals use their position to influence decisions				
2.14	A close relationship between the principal and educators is detrimental to the decision-making process				
2.15	A close relationship between the principal and parents is detrimental to the decision-making process				
2.16	The attitude of the principal towards learners will influence the way they accept his decision				
2.17	Principals regard themselves competent enough to make decisions without involving others				

2.18   To what extent do you use your position to influence decisions to go your way ?

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2.19   Give examples of such issues / decisions

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2.20.   What behaviours / actions on your part have helped you to get others to co-operate and participate meaningfully during the decision making process ?

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2.21   What behaviours / actions on your part **have not** helped you to get others to   co-operate and participate meaningfully during the decision making process ?

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2.22 How have you handled these experiences ?

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C. Involving management structures (e.g. School Governing Body, School Management Team) in decision-making

		SA	A	D	SD
2.23	Principals consult the management team in all decisions related to the school matters				
2.24	Principals consult the SGB in decisions related to the school matters				
2.25	The Governing Body has greatly contributed towards sound decisions being taken				
2.26	The reason why principals leave out members of School Governing Body is because members of SGB lack knowledge required in decision-making				

		SA	A	D	SD
2.27	The reason why principals leave out members of School Governing Body is because members of SGB lack skills required in decision-making				
2.28	Members of School Management team are not involved in the decision-making process because they lack skills required in decision-making				
2.29	The involvement of members of SGB enhances the quality of the principal's decisions				
2.30	The involvement of members of SMT enhances the quality of the principal's decisions				
2.31	School Management Team support principal's decisions				

2.32   In what ways has the involvement of SGB impacted on your decision-making powers as a principal?

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2.33 In what ways has the involvement of SMT impacted on your decision-making powers as a principal?

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2.34   On what issues do you think the SGB should be involved in decision making , and why ?

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2.35   On what issues do you think the SMT should be involved in decision making , and why ?

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D . The mandate given to school principals by The Department of Education in making decisions about school related issues

		SA	A	D	SD
2.36	The Department of Education makes policies that hamper decision-making powers of principals				
2.37	There are clear guidelines for principals to follow in making decisions related to school issues				
2.38	It is difficult to make decisions related to school issues without consulting the Department of Education				
2.39	Poor communication between the Department of Education delays principals in making decisions				
2.40	The Department of Education supports decisions made by principals				

2.41 In what ways and issues does the Department of Education help the principals to make sound decisions?

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2.42   In what ways and issues do you find the Department of Education **not helpful** to principals in decision making in school related matters ?

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2.43 If you were given the opportunity to change the policies which affect the principals' powers in decision-making, what changes would you make ? (Please cite policies in your response)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

T.O. Bhengu

P. O. BOX 24253
ISIPINGO
4110
22.10.2001

The Regional Chief Director
Durban North Region
Truro House
Private Bag X 54323
DURBAN
4000

Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently conducting a Research Project aimed at examining how principals use their position power when making decisions on matters concerning the management of schools. Permission is therefore requested to conduct such research in the schools under your control. This research is towards completion of my M.ED degree and is being carried under the supervision of Prof. R.G. Ngcongo at the Umlazi Campus of the University of Zululand

The topic of my dissertation is: ***Position Power of principals in Decision Making.*** For the purpose of this research a questionnaire will be developed which will be administered to principals located in the Maphumulo District. All the information elicited in this research will be treated in strict confidentiality and anonymity .

Information gathered in the research will provide invaluable assistance to the principals as well as to the Department of Education and Culture in South Africa.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

T.O.BHENGU (Mrs)

P. O. BOX 24253

ISIPINGO

4110

22.10.2001

The District Manager
Maphumulo District
Private Bag X 9217
MAPHUMULO

Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently conducting a Research Project aimed at examining how principals use their position power when making decisions on matters concerning the management of schools. Permission is therefore requested to conduct such research in the schools under your control. This research is towards completion of my M.ED degree and is being carried under the supervision of Prof. R.G. Ngcongo at the Umlazi Campus of the University of Zululand. Permission from the Chief Regional Director of Education to embark on this project has been requested.

The topic of my dissertation is : *Position Power of principals in Decision Making*. For the purpose of this research a questionnaire will be developed which will be administered to principals located in the Maphumulo District. All the information elicited in this research will be treated in strict confidentiality and anonymity.

Information gathered in the research will provide invaluable assistance to the principals as well as to the Department of Education and Culture in South Africa.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours faithfully

T.O.BHENGU (Mrs)

| PROVINCE OF | ISIFUNDAZWE | PROVINCE |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | SAKWAZULU - NATAL | KWAZULU-NATAL |

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & CULTURE
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTMENT VAN ONDERWYS & KULTUUR

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ISIPHINGO
4110

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above matter has reference

2. The permission to conduct your research in the schools under Maphumulo District Office has been granted .

3. I wish all the best in your research

Yours faithfully

N.W. MZONELI
DISTRICT MANAGER

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

NORTH DURBAN REGION   ISIFUNDAZWE SENYAKATHO NETHEKU   NOORD DURBAN STREEK

Address: Ikheli: Adres:	Truro House 17 Victoria Embankment Esplanade	Private Bag: Isikhwama Seposi: Privaatsak:	Private Bag X54323 Durban 4000	Telephone: Ucingo: Telefoon: Fax:	(031) 360-6265 (Exams Help Desk) (031) 332-1126
Enquiries: Imibuzo: Navrae:	Dr D W M Edley 360-6247	Reference: Inkomba: Verwysing:	2/12/2/3	Date: Usuku: Datum:	26 November 2001

Mrs T O Bhengu
P O Box 2453
Isipingo
4110

Dear Mrs Bhengu,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : NORTH DURBAN REGION

1.   Your letter dated 22 October 2001 received in my office today, refers.

2.   You are hereby granted permission to conduct research in Schools in the North Durban Region , as set out in your letter of application. The permission is subject to the following conditions:

   a.   No school/person may be forced to participate in the study;
   b.   Access to the schools he wishes to utilise is to be negotiated with the principals concerned by yourself;
   c.   The normal teaching and learning programme of the schools is not to be disrupted;
   d.   The confidentiality of the participants is respected; and
   e.   A copy of your research findings must be lodged with the Regional Chief Director, upon completion of your studies.
   f.   **Kindly note further that if you are an educator in the employ of the Department of Education and Culture, KZN, you NOT utilize teaching time for this research.**

3.   This letter may be used to gain access to the schools concerned.

4.   May I take this opportunity to wish you every success in your research.

Yours faithfully,

Dr D W M Edley
Regional Co-ordinator: Research
For REGIONAL CHIEF DIRECTOR