Journal of Education

Educational Leadership
special issue

Guest editors: Thandi Ngcobo and Kholeka Moloi

Contents

Editorial

Thandi Ngcobo and Kholeka Moloi

We, the guest editors for the *Journal of Education* special issue on Educational Leadership, express our appreciation to all the members of the editorial board for initiating this issue, the scholars who submitted their articles for publication and all the reviewers of these articles for their very valuable insights. Without your contributions and commitment to educational leadership and management this task would never have been realized. We appreciate the varied perspectives expressed in the different articles about the important function of school leadership, without which no school would realize its, and the country's, educational vision, mission, values and strategic goals.

Leadership is not an easy or straightforward task. This is especially the case in today's schools in that they are bereft with social, cultural, political and economic complexities that make huge demands on those who are given the task of leading our schools. The challenges of globalization, knowledge economy, transformations in geo-politics, governance and citizenship in an era characterized by migration, flight, asylum, multi-culturalism and diversity, and incessant conflict between the youth and their teachers – as well as among the learners themselves – make the task of leading schools even more complex and difficult. These difficulties and complexities have changed the face of organizational work in many ways, including how teachers teach and whether learners and their societies do benefit from the teachings. Leadership thus becomes a crucial but contested terrain of survival, struggle, multiple meanings and an agenda of who has influential power and what that power does to those who experience it.

Given these difficulties and contradictions, the search therefore is for optimum social, educational, cultural, political and economic conditions for sustainable, effective and efficient educational leadership. Emergent questions include those that point to how men and women experience the leadership challenges in today's complex and changing educational landscape and whether leadership is structurally located or, for that matter, a gendered based battle? For example, regarding the latter research has, according to Chisholm (2001), seemingly intractably linked leadership in educational management to gendered character of organizational culture and the way in which women

negotiate these conditions. Her argument is that organizational culture and structural conditions occur simultaneously with the global processes of restructuring education in which asymmetrical and unequal nature of social relations of gender are reconstructed through 'discourses of masculinity, rationality and leadership'. Given the nature of these changes, she makes the point that the stage is set for conflict and contradiction between policy goals and outcomes. In South Africa, she argues, a powerful agenda for social justice has emerged and is shaping the re-composition of the state and bureaucracy while, simultaneously, new discourses of leadership undermining the position of women have emerged. In this regard, feminist theory deconstructs the systems of knowledge by bringing forth their masculinist bias and knowledge biases. Knowledge thus has to be deconstructed to find the 'hidden' behind what is presented to the masses by those who are in power (Ritzer, 2008).

Bernal (1999) argues that epistemological concerns in schools are inseparable from cultural hegemonic domination in educational research. Arguably, the way educational research is conducted contributes significantly to what happens or does not happen in schools. Bernal (1999) further argues that, in education, what is taught, how it is taught, and whose fault it is when what is taught is not learned are often manifestations of what is considered to be the legitimate body of knowledge, an epistemological issue of power, ideology, ethics, politics and survival. Furthermore, Bradley (1999) claims that current changes in organizational work in schools are altering class and gender relations that influence the way researchers theorize them. She argues, for example, that Sociology is no longer exclusively preoccupied with class but has now turned its attention to other forms of inequality especially those of gender and race or ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, region (geo-politics) and religion. Arguably, Bernal (1999, p.301) asserts that most feminists of colour recognize that gender, race, ideology, class and sexual orientation determine the allocation of power and the nature of any individual's identity, status and circumstance within the education sector. He further points to the "endarkened" feminist epistemologies that he deems crucial in this debate because they speak to the failures of traditional patriarchal and liberal educational scholarship to examine the intersection of race, class, gender, ideology, power and sexuality.

The critical approach in deconstructing and reconstructing the leadership mystique, therefore enables researchers to enhance our understanding of the role of educational leadership in the socio-economic and political

transformation of our young democratic society. Schools and those who work in them have an agency. Our aim is to unpack the discursive leadership practices, performances, meanings, ideologies, and power relations in various schooling contexts. In that process, we should be able to explicate and understand the essence of educational leadership in the ineluctable process of educational reform. This is why it is essential that those who engage in the business of school leadership begin to appreciate that "knowledge must always be understood in its historical and discursive specificity". As we engage with leadership issues, it is essential that we begin to understand this concept as "a set of epistemological distinctions to orient the observer toward the empirical world, but whose actual concepts and descriptions involve a continual interplay between the theory and events of the world, as argued by Popkewitz (1998) in *Struggling for the Soul: The Politics of Schooling and the Construction of the Teacher*. Our aim is to allow space for understanding and appreciating that hegemony and influence are contested in our school systems at every level and how this impacts on the notion of sustainable, effective, efficient and transformative leadership. We firmly believe that the articles that are part of this edition variously go a long way in helping address these issues.

The first of these articles is titled *Educational leadership and management – some thoughts from the field.* At the core of this article is reflection on whether South African higher education is succeeding in helping students develop a better understanding of this very complex and elusive concept. Arguments that the author, Van der Mescht, raises in this article draw from Bourdieu's notion of field forces and his own extended background in the educational leadership 'professional' field, academia, national curriculum development and review processes. Against this background, the author then focuses on the Masters in Education Leadership and Management (ELM) to develop a framework that attempts to 'capture the complexity of the field and to militate against its debilitating eclecticism' and related 'weak force of academic pursuit'.

Focus in the second article, *Leading change in the academy: a biographical narrative of developing a dynamic strategic planning model for student affairs in HWI'* is also on 'academia' and change. The authors, Moloi, Dzvimbo and Ngcobo, present a dynamic strategic planning model for leading change in the post apartheid era. Their discussion is mainly informed by the experiences of one of the authors in leading strategic change in a Historically White Institution's (HWI) Division of Student Affairs. It also draws from critical theory, post modernism and works by Mintzberg's (1994) and Kaplan and Norton (2001 and 2004) on strategic planning and use of strategy maps. In the

end the authors make use of a social epistemology to point towards the development of a strategic process that is socially constructed by staff and students.

The third and fourth of the articles draw attention to what may be viewed as hardly unexplored, but very important, locally related educational leadership issues. The first of these two is entitled *An unexplored partnership: the influence of traditional leaders on schooling*. In this article the authors, Mbokazi and Bhengu, reflect on their observations in five research projects conducted between 2002 and 2004 of influence exerted by traditional leaders on schooling. The authors' reflections in this regard draw from the sociology of cultural transmission, collaborative theories and systems approaches to change management. In the fourth of these articles the author, Msila, focuses on *Ubuntu and school leadership.* The discussion in this regard begins with a demystification of the 'ubuntu' concept and proceeds with a presentation of the ethnographic case study in which the author explored the role of 'ubuntu' in leading teacher change and school improvement.

Authors of the last 'group' of the articles help emphasize the importance of working together for leadership effectiveness. Grant 'begins' discussion in this respect in an article she entitled, *'We did not put our pieces together': exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens.* The discussion in this article is informed by a study in which the author explored the professional development initiative of educators in four KwaZulu-Natal schools. The article is premised on the view that leadership is vital for organizational 'movement and change' and that for the leadership to be effective in this respect it needs to be distributed amongst various members of an organization. The author's findings in the related study serve to confirm this view and lead to a conclusion by the author that such collaboration is only possible through a critical reconceptualization of, and debates about, leadership. On a similar note, in the last of the articles Edwards and Smit present a proposal of *Collaborative leadership as a necessary condition for successful curriculum implementation.* The proposal is located in post structuralism and is informed by a study in which collaborative curriculum leadership that enabled the successful curriculum implementation in the absence of the school principal was explored. Conclusions drawn by the authors from findings in this research were that such leadership is a 'precondition for the creation of a collaborative culture' that they found to enable the success even in the absence of the school's principal.

References

Bernal, D.D. 1999. Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research. In Segarra, J, Dobbles, R. and Greene, M. (Eds). *Learning as a political act*. Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review.

Bradley, H. 1999. *Gender and power in the workplace: analysing the impact of economic change.* London: Macmillan Press.

Chisholm, L. 2001. Gender and leadership in South African educational administration. *Gender and Education*, 13(4): pp.387–399.

Popkewitz, T.S. 1998. *Struggling for the soul. The politics of schooling and the construction of the teacher*. Amsterdam: Teachers College Press.

Ritzer, G. 2008. *Sociological theory*. Boston. McGraw-Hill.

Thandi Ngcobo
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal

ngcobot9@ukzn.ac.za

Kholeka Moloi
Faculty of Education
University of Johannesburg

kholekam@uj.ac.za

Educational leadership and management - some thoughts from the field

Hennie van der Mescht

Abstract

Educational Leadership Management (ELM) is a relatively new field in South Africa, but it exhibits characteristics similar to those found in countries where the field is more established, notably the United Kingdom and United States of America. Chief of these characteristics is the academic-professional tension. Against the background of two decades in the 'professional' field, and 16 years in academia, the author draws on Bourdieu's notion of field forces to characterise the field in South Africa. Three forces are identified, and of these, the market and the state are identified as unduly dominant. The relatively weak force of academic pursuit has worked against the development of a vibrant community of scholarship. Drawing on his experience in national curriculum development and review processes, the author focuses on the Masters in ELM and develops a framework that attempts both to capture the complexity of the field and to militate against its debilitating eclecticism.

Introduction

The recent Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) national review of MEd programmes in Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) raised a number of key issues for higher education practitioners in the field of ELM. Indeed, the phrase 'in the field' highlights one of these, since it became apparent that some involved in the review process doubted that ELM was a 'field' at all. As a senior official put it: "But does it (ELM) really have the required gravitas…?" Another senior official asked: "When someone has a Masters degree in ELM what does it mean? What can one assume this person *knows*, or *can do*? How is this different from what an MBA graduate *knows* or *can do?*" A remark by a fellow academic (from another field) asks a similar question slightly differently: "But all you (ELM academics) seem to be doing is citing and teaching theories derived from other fields. . . like Maslow's hierarchy and Herzberg's motivation. . ." So there are two questions here: Does the field of ELM have sufficient academic, intellectual weight? And is ELM a distinct field or merely a conglomerate of theories drawn from other more established fields? And, since the context of these questions was the MEd in ELM, there is the related question of how Master's graduates in the field demonstrate their membership through what they know, do and value.

It is not surprising that questions like these are being asked. Indeed, I have been asking the same and many other related questions since I entered the field sixteen years ago. ELM is, after all, a young field, particularly in South Africa; all the more reason why fundamental questions about its *being* need to be debated and this paper is an attempt to do just that. For me these questions raise two issues which I address in two parts.

First, there is the question of 'the field of ELM'. Is it fair to suggest that the field is really about 'doing' and that it lacks a sense of being philosophically grounded and informed? Is the field dominated by pragmatic and utilitarian ends? In this part of the paper – *The nature of the field* – I explore the forces shaping the field to arrive at suggestions of what characterises ELM in South Africa. Second, there is the question of the distinctiveness of the field in terms of its theoretical framing. Is it true that ELM has no distinct body of theory, but that it draws from other fields in order to make sense of what ELM academics and practitioners do? Put differently, what is *educational* about educational leadership and management? And the related question: How does a Master's graduate demonstrate membership of this field? In this part of the paper I focus on the Masters degree, arguably the most ubiquitous manifestation of ELM, and work towards an understanding of what it may look like in South Africa.

Although the questions cited above also raise the issue of whether or nor ELM is a field at all I do *not* intend to address this question here. Viewed internationally there can be no question that ELM has long been a distinct area of interest and activity that has provided a 'space' for scholarly as well as professional activity over a sustained period of time. In both the United States of America (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) the 'history' of ELM (or 'educational administration' as it is called in the USA) has been well documented (see, for example, Murphy and Louis, 1999 and Bush, 1999). It is a history dating back well over a century, characterised by vigorous debate and scholarship. While South Africa has a less impressive history there are signs of growth. HEI courses in 'educational administration' have featured since the 1960s. Courses more seriously organised around key issues such as 'management', 'leadership, 'policy', 'education law' and 'organisation development' have proliferated over the past two decades. Research database searches throw up impressive numbers of Masters and PhD studies set in the field. Scholars have produced texts, sometimes in collaboration with 'big names' from overseas, but not always. It is a field in the making. So there is

not much to be gained from wondering whether or not the field exists, and it may be more fruitful to ask questions about the *nature* of the field.

The nature of the field

Gunter's (2004) interpretation of Bourdieu's notion of 'field' is helpful. Bourdieu provides a more nuanced reading of field which helps to lift some of the hidden dimensions out for our consideration. Bourdieu (in Gunter, 2004, p.34) sees a field as "a competitive arena where agents struggle for position and to position others". Gunter (2004, p.23) argues that this notion of field – which she calls "an arena of struggle" – is a useful "metaphor to describe and understand intellectual work". Since fields are characterized by the pursuit of specific goals, the metaphor "generates useful images of terrain, with boundaries, where activity is structured and entry is controlled" (Gunter, 2004, p.23). What such a 'terrain' may constitute and what its 'boundaries' may be is the subject of the second part of the paper. For now I want to pick up on the notions of controlled 'entry' and the forces which vie for dominance.

For many academics – and I am one of these – ELM is a 'borrowed' field superimposed onto a career launched on the back of initial education and training in a particular discipline (such as sociology in education) and, in South Africa, often in professional teacher training. This situation is not unique to South Africa. According to Gunter (2004, p.23) in the UK, "there is a strong commitment to understanding and improving practice, and the work of the practitioner. It is usual that field members in higher education tend to begin their careers in schools or local administration". In South Africa it is common for academics in the field to have been redirected in response to institutional re-orientation, in turn driven by market forces. I am a case in point. Trained as an English teacher I applied for a position in English education at a university, but was appointed on the strength of having been a school principal which dovetailed with the institution's need to develop ELM in response to the growing demand. In this way professional experience in the field (such as having been a principal) can play a significant role in allowing aspiring academics to gain entry to HEIs keen to capitalize on market trends. Since this feature of membership plays a significant role in shaping the terrain and possibly the boundaries of the field as well as impacting on field forces I need to explore it briefly here.

Internationally ELM as a field seems always[1] to have been characterised by the dual interests of the pursuit of academic ('theory') advancement, typically through research, and professional ('practice') development through training in generic management skills (Bush, 1999; Willower and Forsyth, 1999; Gunter and Ribbins, 2003). Given the essentially practical nature of management and leadership – consider, for example, that one can 'lead' and 'manage' in a way that one cannot 'psychologise' or 'sociologise' – it is hardly surprising that courses in the field usually incorporate professional (work-based) learning. Indeed, it would be surprising if such courses did *not* refer to and build on experience, and expect reflection on practice. In its attempts to develop South African post-graduate qualifications the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for ELM undertook a comparative international study of Masters qualifications. This is standard procedure when creating qualifications since international comparability is regarded as an indicator of quality. What the search revealed was that post-graduate courses routinely include a strong focus on practice or praxis. Phrases such as 'the improvement of research based management skills' and 'practical implications for the work of educational management' abound. Some programmes are specifically targeted at 'preparing professionals for entry-level administrative positions in schools, school districts, and educational agencies". Students are expected to 'master a core of professional and theoretical knowledge and demonstrate skills in applied research and the practice of leadership'. In other words, experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) is widely recognised as a strategy for post-graduate study in the field of ELM and this necessarily implies a focus on practice. As mentioned earlier, the theory's usefulness becomes apparent when one looks at the ACE in School Leadership which appropriately privileges practice-based learning over academic interests. The approach resonates with Schön's (1983) notions of reflexive practice, and has been shown to be useful in a range of contexts and levels (De Jong, 2007). It represents a resolution of the tension between theory and practice Lewin sought to resolve through his development of action research and the learning organisation (Weisbord 1987).

Against this background I move on to explore the forces at work in ELM in South Africa.

---

[1]   Except for a brief period (1950–1960s) in the USA when 'professors' decided the field needed academic respectability and searched in vain for a 'grand theory' of educational administration.

Field forces in ELM

The market

There are, I argue, three forces shaping ELM in South Africa. The first I have already mentioned: the market. My experience has been that the demand for ELM has remained consistently high over the past decade. As a result ELM courses have proliferated – no doubt one of the reasons why the HEQC selected the MEd in ELM as its first 'target' in education – because HEIs need to remain economically viable. Hence increased numbers of students in the field is a common phenomenon. Importantly, Masters students' reasons for wanting a Masters in ELM are nearly always linked to improved professional practice and career advancement, often *out of* the school environment and *into* the 'system'; hardly ever the need *to learn* or *contribute* to our limited pool of knowledge and research. The unfortunate consequence of this imperative is that the post-graduate ELM degree may come to be regarded as a kind of 'service' degree, not actually *expected* to promote academic development either in its learners or the field.

My concern here is thus with the effect of market forces on the nature of the field, and on the quality of programmes developed for the field. Some of the programmes reviewed recently showed evidence of tendencies I would regard as problematic, such as being too accessible (intellectually) to many (if not 'all') comers, over-simplification of complex issues, and ease of duplication and delivery by remote control in distance modes. The measure of quality I have in mind here is less comprehensive than the daunting HEQC outcomes and criteria: in fact, there is only one criterion I use: the extent to which the programme is a 'level 8' qualification. Here I draw on SAQA's *Draft level descriptor document for levels 5–8* (Department of Education [DoE], 2000). These descriptors are not perfect but they go some way towards answering the question posed earlier (*What can a Masters graduate be expected to know, or do?*) and although they are generic and not specific to the field of ELM they are useful in indicating a *level* of intellectual as well as professional engagement.

The level descriptors are organised into three columns, and read as follows:

Level 8 (Masters)	Foundational competence	Practical competence	Reflexive competence
	Display mastery of a complex and specialized area of knowledge and skills. Ability to generate, evaluate and synthesize information and concepts at highly abstract levels. Demonstrate expertise in highly specialized and advanced technical, professional and/or research. (*sic)*	Operate in complex, advanced and highly specialized contexts. Select from complex and advanced procedures across a major discipline. Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity. Design and apply research methods and communicate research to peers.	Complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and group output.

What catches the eye are words like 'complex', 'synthesise', 'concepts' and 'abstract'. These indicate a level of intellectual engagement it was sometimes difficult to find in programmes that seemed to be loosely arranged around 'topics' – rather like 'syllabuses' – and where the expectation seemed to be that students should 'learn' appropriate 'content' seemingly ungrounded in any sense of philosophical underpinning. In these circumstances theory becomes something to be memorized rather than a tool which provides the conceptual language that enables us to talk about the field and critical engagement is unlikely to be fostered. These programmes seemed pre-occupied with an impoverished version of 'substance' and it was hard to see how the kind of engagement suggested in the Level 8 Descriptors could be attained when the complex practice of leadership and management, situated within the profoundly complex historical/political context that is South Africa, buckling under apparently contradictory forces of performativity and social justice is reduced to recipe-like 'theories' or the kinds of simplistic 'popular' rhetoric that abounds in 'airport' literature. One wonders how academic advancement is to be achieved through programmes that fail in this most crucial of criteria.

Equally important, the treatment of *any* kind of 'content' – usually the canonically celebrated stream of text from 'overseas' – as some kind of 'ideal'

ignores the crucial dimension of the cultural, historical, political and social *situatedness* of educational leadership and management practice and research. In South Africa that situatedness is of course unique, and it is characterised by crippling legacies of a divided past, legacies which play out throughout the education system. I would argue that the effects are nowhere more telling than in the practice and study of educational leadership and management. In summary, the lack of a language enabling critical thought and engagement, and the unproblematised embrace of apparently value-free text cannot lead to the kind of learning that may result in social justice and the kind of personal, organisational and societal transformation that ELM field members should be bringing about.

Intellectual/academic interest
Hence I argue that the second force I want to address – the need to advance knowledge, to contribute to healthy debate and *grow* the field into an intellectually vibrant one – is relatively weak in South Africa. There are few platforms for engagement. Apart from EMASA conferences and an EASA interest group, there have been few opportunities to forge a community of scholarship. In fact, South African academics in the field have not really 'talked' to each other (except through examination processes) and the fact that it has taken a government initiative (the HEQC review) to enable collegial engagement may be a significant pointer to what is 'wrong' in the field. Until recently there has been no South African journal dedicated to ELM (and the Education Management Association of South Africa's [EMASA] efforts are applauded here). The fact that two prominent journals (the *South African Journal of Education* and the *Journal of Education*) have both run special editions focusing on ELM will hopefully encourage the founding of more specialist journals.

Thus it may be fair to claim that in South Africa the field of ELM lacks the maturity to have grown into an *intellectual* space it clearly has become in the UK and elsewhere, notably the USA (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002). Perhaps it is this immaturity – a kind of 'academic' immaturity – that has allowed a third force, namely government-led initiatives in the field, to play so prominent a role.

The state
I refer here to two kinds of state agency: One, policy and quasi-policy guideline documents produced over the past decade or more with the express aim of providing coherence and direction to management development; and

two, policies which direct and shape practice, chiefly the practice of school principals and satellite officials such as EDOs.

It would be churlish of an academic in a field which is lacking in intellectual vibrancy to protest against innovation and advancement driven by other needs, in this case the instrumental needs of a state department which wants more qualified 'leaders' and 'managers' in the schooling system. I do not protest so much as simply point to a danger, the danger that if the strongest force in this field is the need of the state to develop professional capacity (as opposed to the need of academia to develop a robust and critical discourse) post-graduate qualifications may indeed come to be seen as 'service' degrees, the instrumental means to utilitarian ends. I would not wish to portray the two forces – academic interest and governmental needs – as being in conflict. The evolution of ELM as a field in South Africa has been characterised by a sense of cooperation and consultation between these two forces. But there is a tension because ultimately the state's needs are different from those of academics. In a field populated by academics rooted in practice these more instrumental needs could seem sensible and even seductive. But in a country still emerging from a paradigm of compliance and struggling to forge a transformative future these forces are unlikely to foster the kind of critical engagement that leads to growth.

That aside, the DoE 'arm' responsible for planning and bringing about management development has a particular view of educational leadership and management. It is a view which stresses participative, 'democratic' management, collegiality, collaboration, schools as open systems and learning organisations, and, importantly, site-based management. In short a view Willower and Forsyth (1999, p.2) have described as one of only "three unifying elements" in a vast and complex terrain (the other two being systematic research and professional/academic networking). The influential and oft-cited *Task Team Report on Education Management Development* (DoE, 1996) is driven by this philosophy, the theory that consultation and participation leads to increased ownership and thence to increased effort and productivity. Significantly, the more recent *Draft Policy Framework. Education Management and leadership development* (DoE, undated) picks up the *Report's* arguments and endorses its philosophy. It also, of course, maps out a strategy to bring about appropriate 'development' of school leaders and managers, a nettle this arm of the state has been keen to grasp. So, for example, the new Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in School Leadership has come into being as a manifestation of this body's intent. This

programme is similarly infused with the philosophy outlined above and also, significantly, driven by experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), as discussed earlier.

But the DoE 'arm' responsible for assuring 'quality' through prescriptive policies like *IQMS* and *Whole-School Evaluation* (DoE, 2001) clearly has a different view of the business of school management. Here the emphasis has shifted to performance management and it is difficult to see how the 'line function' of ensuring that performance rubrics are properly completed can sit comfortably with participative and collegial management approaches. There is an obvious mismatch of interests here, to be expected perhaps considering their very different agendas, but nevertheless raising important questions about what counts as appropriate leadership and management, where the balance of 'power' lies and what counts as 'knowledge' in and of the field. This tension has been extensively noted and explored in other countries. Gunter (2004, p.29), for example, laments how in the UK educational leadership has been replaced with "performance leadership" where "knowing is increasingly about complying with central requirements to implement reform". Glatter (1999, p.254) traces the "growing power and influence of the central state" in a climate of "policy hysteria" in the UK, and cites Fullan pointing to similar tensions in the USA. Similarly Bush (1999, p.243) reports on the same concerns in Australia, citing Smyth's view that "the supposed decentralisation of power is illusory and the reality is an intensification of central control". We should not draw comfort from the fact that this may be a universal tension: rather we should be wondering why South Africa has not learned anything from the many international consultations we have heard so much about. The answer may be that when bureaucrats talk to bureaucrats they are likely to be pleased with what they are told.

The upshot of this clash of interests is that the good intentions of management development initiatives – in all likelihood enjoying the support of academia – are likely to be frustrated by an emphasis on performativity and compliance, where the simple act of filling in forms correctly can appear to be evidence of quality. At the same time, though, it has to be said that there is a sense of unease surrounding the expectation that HEIs will 'deliver' the ACE qualification referred to above, no doubt because it comes as a complete package but also because academics are loathe to think of themselves as 'trainers'. It is the classic professional/academic tension.

To conclude this section: in the arena of struggle that is ELM in South Africa I see three forces. Market forces and government needs for management development and regulating practice appear to be the dominant forces. The need to develop a community of scholarship is comparatively weak.

The terrain and boundaries

Characterising the field of ELM is a risky business since there are probably at least as many characterizations as there are field members. Hence I need to preface this next section with several disclaimers. First, I need to explain what I am *not* doing. I am *not* trying to develop a course or curriculum for a Masters in ELM, or any other qualification. I am also *not* suggesting that what is presented here is *the* answer. What I *am* trying to do is present a framework, a heuristic device to enable and perhaps encourage debate that I believe to be crucial to the field. In the process I incorporate a figure I have found useful in my own attempts at coming to grips with a field that is so complex and 'all-inclusive' in its interests, eclectic in its conceptual underpinnings, and wide-ranging in its contexts of application. The framework has helped to guide my work with post-graduate students, and there is evidence that it has helped my students 'find their feet' in often marshy territory. The framework appears as an Appendix.

ELM is concerned with leadership and management, but also with governance (which in South Africa has come to refer the role of the School Governing Bodies), and, some would argue, administration. In some countries these terms are difficult to distinguish. According to Gunter (2004) 'leadership' has gained ground in the UK, while in the USA 'administration' has long held sway. In South Africa 'administration' usually refers to support systems and structures that enable management and leadership to function, while the distinction between 'management' (as a process focused on maintenance and control) and leadership' (as a change-oriented, relational phenomenon) remains current. In the framework I use here (see Appendix) I retain these distinctions.

What follows is a brief explication of what is intended in the attached framework (see Appendix).

Environment

The framework presents the field as three areas of interest. The outer circle – *Environment* – characterises the context in which the field operates as a field of scholarship and practice. Here the focus is on society, community, culture, history, politics, national and provincial policy. There is an interest in trends in the history of Southern African education, and the implication of that history for education leadership, management and governance. Governance is viewed as a matter of implementing policy as well as managing the system and in South Africa the move towards *democratic* governance – the drive towards involving parents, learners and other representatives of the school environment in school governance – is an important one.

As argued earlier (page 7) the field cannot ignore its situatedness in a particular context and history. It would be impossible for workers in the field, whether they are professional knowledge workers or professional practitioners, to work to a transformative agenda in the absence of clear and present consciousness of the social structures that gave (and give) rise to current challenges. Moreover, if schools are to be regarded as 'open systems' it is in their very openness that social forces shape the cultures and structures of their organisational being. There is constant interplay between the environment and the school. Some of the 'labels' used here refer to specific forces – such as policy – while some refer to less tangible but equally significant influences, such as values and culture. And so the field, too, needs to be 'open' in this way. I agree with Ribbins and Gunter (2002, p.372) that

> the purpose of educational leadership is not just about particular tasks and behaviours, but is a social and socialising relationship. The scope of educational leadership is therefore wider than those who are formally designated leaders and so includes children and teachers, and reaches beyond the organisation to include parents and the wider community.

The outer circle thus serves as a reminder of the forces that lie beyond organisations' internal workings but are significant in shaping their practice; and also a reminder of how those forces shape and are shaped by research and scholarship.

Organisation

At the next level the focus is the organisation. The interest here is in understanding how organisations function, both in terms of factors identified in the environment as well as those which shape their internal functioning. An important tool here is theory. Few would quibble with the need for management and organisation theory in a post-graduate course in ELM. Theory represents social scientists' attempts to make sense of or account for behaviour and structural phenomena. In providing a theoretical language scientists make it possible to talk *about* the phenomena. While this may seem obvious and uncontentious, *how much* theory, or even *which theory*[2] are far more tricky questions. Some prefer getting to grips with 'current' issues; others prefer a historical approach, arguing that we need to know where current notions of these phenomena come from. Either way, it is possible and entirely necessary for a post-graduate course in ELM to point to trends in thinking and research in especially management, leadership and organisation theory.

Equally important, to my mind, is the need to recognise and engage with theory in terms of *what it is.* By this I mean taking cognisance of texts' production values: *Who produced the text? Based on what kind of research? For what purpose? In what country? What is valued in the text?* These questions help to focus attention on the text's cultural and political values, an important step because no text is value-free and uncritical alliance with what may simply be trendy militates against developing the competence suggested in Level 8 Descriptors.

Organisation Development (OD) is included in this area to point to the need for field members to develop organisational literacy. The ability to 'read' an organisation – in light of theory as well as more remote forces – goes some way towards countering the tendency of regarding theory as somehow universally applicable. ODs problem-solving approach looks at practice through the lens of theory, thus synthesising these 'uneasy bedfellows' in a way that the Level Descriptors referred to earlier (page 6) fail to do. Or, to be fair, it may be what was intended in the first entry under 'Practical competence': 'Operate in complex, highly advanced and highly specialised contexts.'

---

2   *Which theory* is definitely not a question I want to answer here!

Person

The fact that leadership occupies the centre of the framework is perhaps the most telling symbolic indication of where I stand in the field, and will no doubt be contested. Recent trends in leadership theory de-emphasise the power of the person, though usually not to the benefit of the 'task'. Leadership as presented as relational (using words like 'distributed', 'shared', 'participative', and 'servant'). Leadership is increasingly viewed as a function of the group rather than the individual. However, if we are to retain our distinction between 'management' and 'leadership' – and there are good reasons for doing this – I believe the inner circle has a place, and not merely a symbolic one. I should add that I do not suggest here that there is anything positional about leadership; it can happen anywhere inside or outside the organisation. But I resist attempts to erode the notion that it is through acts of creativity and initiative that newness comes into being. Unfortunately this is precisely what I think is happening in the field. I come back to this point later.

At this level leadership theory is a key ingredient, for the same reasons presented above for management and organisation theory. The challenge here is perhaps greater though, for it is a fact that leadership is a far bigger 'industry' than management as a quick glance at any display of popular texts in book stores will show[3]. My experience is that quantity in this case is no indicator of quality, and the degree of unevenness in terms of quality of leadership texts can be bewildering. The truth is that leadership occupies at least two domains: it is a field of serious study where claims are based on sound research and are therefore reliable and of value; but it is also a field of popular, inspirational 'pop-lit'. Thus selecting suitable texts can be difficult. Here too – as with management – there are different approaches. Some believe that students need to have a sense of the broad trends in leadership thinking – perhaps over the past century – while other prefer to focus only on current trends in the field.

Some caveats and pointers

This framework suffers from the same problems that dog any attempt at classifying, patterning, ordering, or in any way distinguishing among facets of

---

[3]   *The Seven Habits of . . . The Eighth Habit . . . Leadership Secrets of (Atilla, Hitler . . .)* and so on.

a multi-faceted phenomenon, namely the suggestion that these elements somehow exist independently of each other. This is not the case. Policy, for example, exerting pressure from the outer ring, permeates both the organisation and the individual levels. Leadership – though at the centre – exerts influence outwards through the levels of organisation and environment. The layers are permeable, and relationships among forces both dynamic and reciprocal.

Despite these and other caveats I have found it useful to contemplate the complexity of the field by working 'through' separate layers towards a holistic view. While the framework makes no explicit reference to research (excepting the practice-based OD component) it is understood that the MEd is a research degree, and, regardless of the size and shape of the research component, it is understood that this is where the degree is headed: the production of a research product. One important benefit has been the framework's ability to locate research interests. Each layer is a rich source of research questions, and indeed the 'layering' helps to bring these into clear focus, enabling researchers to grasp the context of their research while at the same time recognising the multiple forces at play.

Conclusion

Finally, I can suggest an answer to one of the key questions posed earlier: 'When someone has a Masters degree in ELM what does it mean? What can one assume this person knows, or can do? How is this different from what an MBA graduate knows or can do?'

An ELM Masters graduate is able to 'read' an organisation in the context of both external and internal forces which have shaped and continue to shape its being. The external forces are complex, since they are community and societal forces and the school is 'owned' by its communities. Internal forces are complex because people teach for different reasons, and the ultimate aim of the education project is notoriously difficult to articulate, let alone define. This ability to 'read' an organisation and its context grows from the combined influence of relevant practice and scholarship. Hence the graduate can identify problems and challenges that require research, either basic or applied. The graduate has the conceptual language to make sense of as well as to think and talk *about* what s/he observes. The graduate is aware of how addressing localized, site-based challenges through research feeds into the field as a

whole, and adds to what we know. The graduate is driven by values that commit her/him to practice – and the nurturing of practice in others – that is socially and morally just as well as transformative.

But what is it that needs transforming? As discussed earlier, it is not difficult in South Africa still to see evidence of past inequality. Internationally, too, increased awareness of social/economic imbalance has recently emerged as a strong theme for leadership in the new millennium.[4] The difficulty for me is that the lofty goal of transforming society, or even a community, can seem hard to attain. Cloaked in the discourse of society and even 'the country' it is difficult to see how a school principal's leadership can be transformative. In terms of the framework, the further one moves towards the outside circle the easier it becomes to relegate leadership to system maintenance and monitoring, as in 'performance' leadership. From this vantage point it is easy to lose touch with what it is that makes leadership important: the personal, human, 'being with' of leaders and those they lead. In this sense leading is not unlike teaching. In both phenomena there are groups of people. In both groups at least one member has the expressed goal of facilitating development in other group members. In both cases there is a range of technological and material support structures, as well as taken for granted social structures, such as the tacit 'willingness' to be led, or taught. And in both cases these structures are of little use if the leader/teacher does not acknowledge that everyone needs help, and that the most valuable help s/he is able to provide is to remind group members of what it is to be human; what it means to be fully present at this time in this place. To rephrase a question posed earlier – 'How is a Masters graduate in education different from, say an MBA student?' – an answer can emerge from posing the question a little differently: What is **educational** about educational leadership? Gunter (2004) has suggested that one of effects of the emphasis on performance and quality assurance is that educational leadership may simply mean leadership *in educational organisations*, rather than *educational* leadership. In her view, "Educational leadership focuses on the education system, is about education, is integral to learning processes and outcomes, and is of itself educative" (Gunter, 2004, p.32). ELM is clearly more than the application of theory and 'best practice' recipes drawn from a general management context. The key to how it is 'different' and 'more' is the central business of enabling the development of intellectual, moral and aesthetic discernment, and a sense of social justice.

---

[4]   An entire edition of *Educational Administration Quarterly,* 2004, 40(1) was recently devoted to leadership for social justice.

This can only happen when people work with people, and this is the stuff of leadership.

ELM in South Africa is indeed a space; its size and shape will depend on who and what tries to occupy the space, with what kinds of interventions and to what ends. I have argued that the struggle for dominance of this space seems unequal at this point. Paying attention to arguably the most influential manifestation of this space – the Masters degree in ELM – can help to counter-balance the powerful forces of the market and the state. Policy tyranny can paralyse agency. Paying attention to the people-centredness and teacher-centredness of leadership can help leaders to see the state as a discourse, one of many, and to learn to mediate rather than merely comply.

Appendix: Framework for ELM approaches
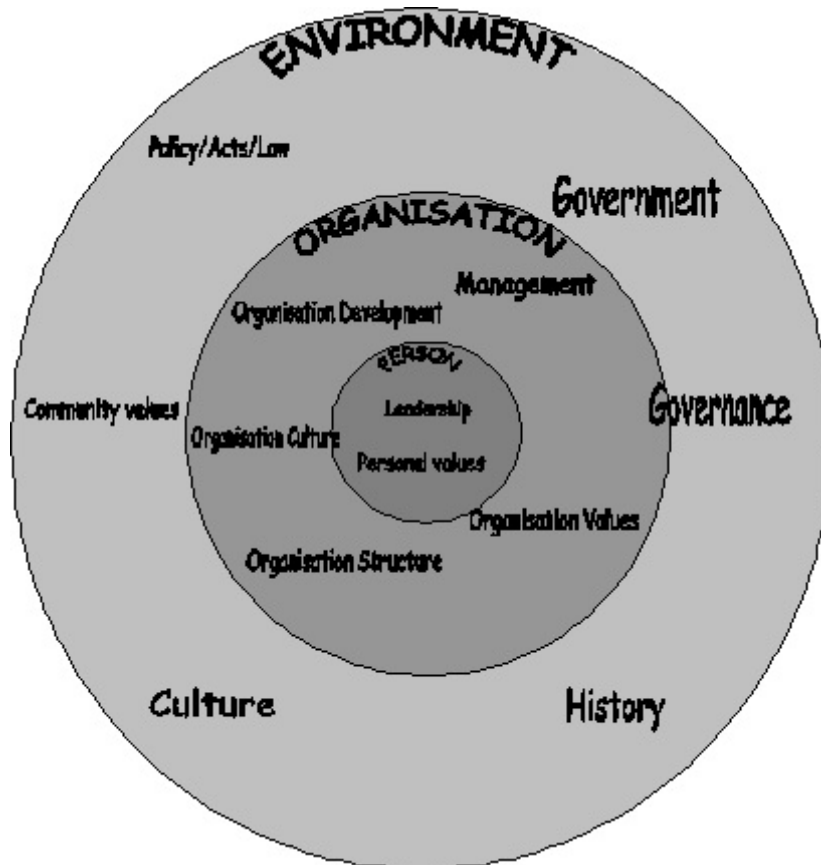
References

Bush, T. 1999. Crisis or crossroads? The discipline of educational management in the late 1990s. *Educational Management and Administration,* 27(3): pp.239–252.

De Jong, W. 2007. From 'doing' to 'knowing what you are doing': Kolb's learning theory in teaching documentary practice. *Journal of Media Practice*, 7(2): 151–158.

Department of Education. 1996. *Report of the Task Team on Educational Management Development.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. 2000. *Draft Level Descriptors Document for Levels 5–8.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. (2001) *National Policy on Whole School Evaluation.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Glatter, R. 1999. From struggling to juggling. Towards a redefinition of the field of educational leadership and management. *Educational Management and Administration,* 27(3): pp.253–266.

Gunter, H. and Ribbins, P. 2003. The field of educational leadership: studying maps and mapping studies. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 51(3): pp. 254–281.

Gunter, H. 2004. Labels and labelling in the field of educational leadership. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 25(1): pp.21–41.

Kolb, D.A. 1984. *Experiential learning: experience as a source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Murphy, J. and Louis, K.S. (Eds). 1999. *Handbook of research on educational administration: a project of the American Educational Research Association.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ribbins, P. and Gunter, H. 2002. Mapping leadership studies in education. *Educational Management & Administration,* 30(4): pp.359–385.

Schön, D. 1983. *The reflective practitioner,* New York: Basic Books.

Weisbord, M. 1987. *Productive workplaces: organizing and managing for dignity, meaning and community.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Willower, D.J. and Forsyth, P.B. 1999. A brief history of scholarship on educational administration. In Murphy, J. and Louis, K.S. Louis (Eds). *Handbook of research on educational administration: a project of the American Educational Research Association.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp.1–23.

Hennie van der Mescht
Education Department
Rhodes University

h.vandermescht@ru.ac.za

Leading change in the academy: a biographical narrative of how a dynamic strategic planning model for transforming Student Affairs in a historically white institution was developed

Kholeka Moloi, Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo and Thandi Ngcobo

Abstract

In this article, the authors present a proposal for a dynamic strategic planning model for leading change within academia in the post apartheid era. This model is mainly informed by experiences of one of the authors in leading strategic change in a Historically White Institution's (HWI) Division of Student Affairs. It also draws from works by Mintzberg (1994) and Kaplan and Norton (2001 and 2004) on strategic planning and the use of strategy maps in leading change in a HWI in the South African context. The main question we attempted to answer is: how do managers lead strategic change in Student Affairs? This question is answered through a critical biographical narrative of one of the researchers and her colleagues. Methodologically, we make use of a case study approach which enabled us to grasp the subjective meanings of social action by major actors as they conceptualized the leading of change through a strategic planning process. Such an interpretive approach provided the authors with an opportunity to investigate understand and explicate the challenges of strategic leadership attempts of transforming Student Affairs. Theoretically, the discussion and exegesis of leading change through strategic planning is interrogated through a post-structural and a post-modern perspective in an attempt to re-write the possibilities for new meta-narratives and identities in Student Affairs. The objective is to point towards an analytical discourse practice that engenders the development of cultural spaces that are inclusive, transformative and emancipatory" (Giroux, 2006, p.234). This is achieved by the development of a social epistemology of strategic planning in Student Affairs which accentuates questions about: what sort of knowledge should be produced on leadership and strategic planning; by whom and for whom?

Introduction

How do managers lead strategic change in a Historically White Institution (HWI)? The discussion in this article answers this question through a critical biographical narrative of a Black female academic that was in a leadership position in the Division of Student Affairs (DoSA) in one such university.

This involved an arduous process of leading strategic change in this unit. In answering the question above, we therefore examine how strategic planning as a leadership tool was conceptualized and utilized in an effort to bring about sustainable and continuous change in that Division. Furthermore, we critically reflect on the process of conceptualizing and initiating strategic change in the Division from a leadership and process perspective by adopting a biographical approach which focuses on one aspect of University management in the academy: Student Affairs. Student affairs are an arena that is fraught with racial, ideological, educational, intellectual, political and ethnic contestations. From a methodological perspective, we relied on the 'case study' approach to enable us to grasp the subjective meanings of social action by major actors in student affairs at this institution as they experienced and conceptualized the strategic planning process. Such an interpretive approach to the study of leadership, the conceptualizing of strategic planning for transformation in the Division has its roots in Weber's notion of Verstehen and the hermeneutic – phenomenological tradition and symbolic interactionism as articulated by Weber (1947) and Heidegger (1986).

Since our case study is a Division of a HWI, the issues of politics, race and ethnicity, knowledge and power also needed to be probed so that we could posit ways in which racial inequality in student affairs could be dealt with by a University society that is still racially divided? In a HWI the issues of race and ethnicity are highly emotive and contested terrains. As we discuss the leadership change role in the DoSA, our concern also embraces the process of racial and ethnic (in this case Afrikaans and African) "group formation and boundary maintenance" (O'Sullivan and Wilson, 1988, p.223) in the unit.

We begin our discussion by offering reasons why we opted for a biographical narrative and case study methodology. We then delve into the biographical narrative by one of the 'key actors' and that of her colleague whose experiences form the basis of this article. Thirdly, we utilize a variety of theoretical perspectives to discuss the processes of leadership and strategic planning in the stated Student Affairs Division. Here, we rely on the actual planning and leadership processes that the researchers were involved in regarding the development of a strategic plan, its implementation and monitoring process in the student affairs division at the university. The discussion of leadership, strategy and continuous change in the academy is premised on the works of Mintzberg (1994), Kaplan and Norton (2001 and 2004) on the strategy focused organization and strategy maps, respectively. We then offer a conceptual perspective that is based on a meta-theoretical

approach to the discussion of strategic planning in the stated Division of Student Affairs. The conceptual schema borrows from critical theory especially the work of Habermas (1971) and Giroux (2006) and post structuralism/modernism as articulated by Foucault (1972, 1980) and Baumann (2002). Finally, we make use of the works of Friedmann (1987); Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel (1998); Beer and Nohria (2000); Takeuchi and Nonaka (2002); Senge (2002) and Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2005) to weave through a critical discussion of a model of strategic planning we view as being relevantly dynamic for leading change in Student Affairs in a post apartheid era. Such a discussion foregrounds the strategy process as: an analytical process; a visionary process; a mental process; an emergent process; a process of negotiation; a collective process; a reactive process; and a process of reflective transformation (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998). We conclude the discussion of leading change through strategic planning by briefly utilizing a post-structural and a post-modern perspective to attempt to re-write the possibilities for new meta-narratives and identities in Student Affairs. In the process we hope to point towards an analytical discourse that engenders the development of cultural spaces that are inclusive, transformative and emancipatory" (Giroux, 2006, p.234). In so doing, we develop a social epistemology of strategic planning in Student Affairs by privileging questions about: what sort of knowledge should be produced on leadership and strategic planning; by whom and for whom? (Badat, 2006; Fuller, 2006 and Weiler, 2006). Such a critical approach "facilitates a constructive engagement with the social world that starts from the presumption that existing arrangements – including currently affirmed identities and differences – do not exhaust the range of possibilities" (Calhoun, 1995) for action, change and transformation.

Rationale for the biographical and case study methodology

The biography or life story methodology regarding the study of leading strategic planning in the academy enabled us to document the inner experience of the participants and how they interpret, understand and define the world around them (Bryman, 2004). Furthermore, as Rosenthal (2004) argues, a biographical approach enables researchers to interpret the meaning of phenomena such as leading change in strategic planning in the overall context of a biography. Epistemologically, we found hermeneutics to be appropriate for assisting us to adopt a theory and method that enabled us to interpret human activity and meanings by staff in the Division of Student Affairs

(DoSA) as they engaged in the development of the transformative strategic plan. Following the work of the major proponents of phenomenology we took the position that it was essential to focus on:

> . . . how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher (researcher) should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world.

> (Bryman, 2004, p.16)

From an ontological perspective it became essential to adopt a constructivist approach since our concern was with the manner in which staff and in particular the Acting Executive Director in the DoSA as social actors were continually constructing social phenomena and their meanings. Therefore, social categories of leadership in the academy, strategic planning and their meaning were continually being constructed by the Acting Executive Director, staff and students in the DoSA. Consequently, we took an approach to knowledge production about leadership and strategic planning which is germane to constructivism that it (knowledge) is indeterminate.

As noted by Rosenthal (2004), the biographical life story of researchers, regardless of the specific research questions, is based on fundamental theoretical assumptions which, in our case, took the following views into account:

1.   In order to understand and explain the leading of strategic planning, it is essential to construct the genesis of the action: creation, reproduction and transformation of the DoSA;

2.   In order to understand and explain the actions of staff and leaders on the DoSA it is important to explicate the actions of the major actors: the Executive Director, her staff and students. This promises to provide the development of a better understanding of the players' subjective perspectives and courses of action during the process of strategic planning and leading change by the Acting Executive Director. Our major concern in such an biographical study is to understand the meanings the participants attached to their actions. From a hermeneutic perspective, our concern therefore is with the theory and method of interpretation of human action in leading change through strategic planning.

3.   In our quest of an understanding of the processes of leading change and strategic planning, it was essential for us to interpret the experiences of the major actors in the DoSA, as part of their overall context of their current professional life and future perspectives as they were trying to transform a HWI in their own portion of the entire university.

The overall goals of all these activities is an attempt to reconstruct and analyze social phenomena about leading change through strategic planning in Student Affairs by a female Black academic and her Black male colleague. The focus is on both processes and structures that were essential in changing cultures about leadership, strategic planning and change management.

Since our methodological concern was with one particular 'case' at the university, a biographical narrative was complemented by a case study research design. As such, we resorted to a detailed analysis of the case under study; the DoSA, regarding how the Black female academic and her Black male colleague were engaged in leading change through the process of strategic planning which involved the reconstruction of social phenomena and meaning in this HWI's unit. These colleagues were therefore participant observers in this process. We did not delude ourselves into thinking that our findings at this university can be generalized to all other Historically White Institutions (HWIs). Our view was that this discussion can shed light on the process of leading change through the tools of strategic planning in similar divisions in other HWIs.

A unique case study was also essential because the researchers were interested in providing a suitable context for their research question, which is: how do managers lead strategic change in Student Affairs in a HWI? This was done through the participant observation and, as already indicated, analysis of a social process of strategic planning in the Division. The participant observations were structured and unstructured as both the Acting Executive Director and her colleague met formally and informally with staff and students in the DoSA. The participant observation method enabled the researchers to discern the 'ongoing behaviour of the key participants', the students and staff, as it occurred. In the process they were then capable of noting and recording salient features of the processes of leading change through strategic planning. As Cohen and Manion (1994, pp.106–107) contend, the purpose of a case study is: "to probe deeply and to analyze intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establish generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs". In this

case, the wider population that the DoSA represents is staff and students at the university.

The biographical narrative

The female researcher joined the university in November 1997 after having been identified by her lecturer and supervisor, her current colleague now a full professor in the university, as a potential lecturer. Her experiences before joining the university also include being a school principal. From the period of her appointment to the university to February 2007 she has worked in the Faculty of Education in the department of Education Management in different levels ranging from 'contract lecturer', junior lecturer, senior lecturer to her current position as an associate professor. The latter position she has held since 2002. In March 2007, she was seconded to head the Division of Student Affairs as Acting Executive Director. Before March 2007, she had never heard of nor had been anywhere near this Division. Therefore, her secondment was her very first knowledge, encounter and experience of the Division and senior management within the University in general.

Coming from an education management professional and academic background, she was confronted with having to first understand the new and somewhat 'strange' environment of the Division. The work processes, and procedures were carried out completely differently from the 'normal', teaching, research and community involvement activities she had been accustomed to in the Faculty of Education. In her own words: "I must confess at the beginning, I felt lost, more and more confused because everything was strange. Some of the difficulties I encountered were:

- a completely different work ethic;

- every staff member worked from a budget which they controlled;

- there was no sense of 'urgency' in the service delivery;

- the staff members were involved in solving students' problems from the morning to late evenings; and

- there were students at the doors of staff for different kinds of problems and complaints at every moment and every day of the week".

For her, these experiences that she was beginning to construct were new and they began to take a toll on her. On studying what was going on and finally getting a grasp of the setting and how work was performed, she eventually knew what was needed to improve 'how we all thought about our work'. In her conceptual and epistemological schema, what was needed was a fundamental mental and paradigmatic shift. She could not believe that one unit could be so different from others while operating in the same HWI. These different constructions of social and contested realities 'affairs' became very challenging mentally, emotionally and physically.

The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the Rector, who sets very high standards for performance and achievement, was also being driven by imperatives from the University Council and key stakeholders of HWI to achieve quick results and transform student affairs. As a manager who believes in 'pathfinders' and in people who play in the first league, he was not willing to compromise on the deliverables he was setting for the new and inexperienced Acting Executive Director. This was all done within the context of a HWI that is being driven by a management ideology of managerialism and performance management; and commercialization of instructional materials in light of declining subventions from the State for public institutions. The new Acting Executive Director was now operating in a strange environment in which "market and market-like practices" (Slaughter and Rhoades (2004, p.10) are being pursued vigorously by the University management and being literally forced on the entire university through 'Executive' Deans and 'Executive' Directors.

Following her appointment as an Acting Executive director, this researcher had to look for a leadership framework, model and paradigm that would enable her to effectively and systematically lead and monitor a multiracial staff and student body. She needed direction that would enable her to carry on with her work whilst simultaneously making improvements on certain aspects which, from consultation with the two directors and other staff members in her new unit, were necessary. What she realized was that the staff members were very busy on a daily basis with day to day operations and the solving of unending student problems. These problems were mainly related to students requesting assistance for funds, for example, to attend one meeting or some conference; meals; car hires to attend one meeting or the other. Furthermore, the SRC was almost always confrontational on issues of racism and dissatisfactions with how Black students were being treated by some staff members and students at the residences at the main campus in particular.

As a result of the nature of their work, staff members in this Division were always so exhausted that they did not have time to even think about the need for a strategy or a plan that was essential for making sense of the present, let alone the future in Student Affairs. In addition, the Division was operating on a poorly conceptualized and developed strategic plan that was 'housed' in a redundant document to which no one ever referred to. The development of a comprehensive and living strategy became a starting point for the new Acting Executive Director, together with her two new Directors and the rest of the team to resuscitate what had existed and had been neglected and to improve that strategy where pertinent. For her, the greatest challenge was on leadership and planning for change. The questions that continually confronted her were:

- How can the team and unit plan to help all students deal with issues that they found dissatisfying regarding the Division's service?

- How can the team plan for having a day in which it could focus its attention on research aimed at improving their services and contribute to the research output of the University?

- How can it professionalize student affairs so that they could not only deal with the day to day problem solving and operational activities, but have its activities felt in the nine University faculties and the Management Executive Committee (MEC)?

Other critical issues that the new Acting Executive Director had to interrogate were, *inter alia,* that:

- Since its inception the Student Affairs Division had never organized a national and international student affairs conference;

- There was an absence of an intellectual and research focus in the thinking of the staff; and

- There was no student resource centre that provides students with information on student affairs nationally and internationally.

As a result of these challenges, the new Acting Executive Director needed to plan very seriously on how to 'turnaround' Student Affairs as it had existed for over 30 years to a new unit that would be aligned with the direction that the University was taking. The new Acting Executive Director was also

concerned by the perception of the MEC about student affairs that the DoSA was not adding any value to the University. That perception was, for her, correct and critical because the DoSA:

1. Did not engage in research activities.

2. Was not visible in the university and was not even mentioned in the University reports in terms of 'impact' and effectiveness.

3. Did not convey collective professionalism regarding how tasks were performed because, for example, each staff member controlled and did with his/her budget as they saw fit.

4. Thinking among staff members was completely different from what she had expected because they regarded themselves as administrative workers and did not see their connection with the different faculties in terms of providing support upon which the academic achievement of all students depends.

5. Did not have future oriented leadership.

Therefore, it was essential for the new Acting Executive Director to try, without appearing to be imposing herself, and influence staff to change a culture that they had been accustomed to for over ten, and in some cases sixteen, years. This was a serious challenge. However, she understood that change takes place at three levels, namely, the surface level, the intermediate level and at the deep level. Her understanding of the challenges before her therefore was that for any fundamental change to take root, it was at the deep level that she, the change agent, needed to strike. Unfortunately, this takes time and requires a deep personal commitment, deliberate patience and continuous conversation and persuasion. This is taking into consideration that she was dealing with people's mental models and deeply ingrained mental assumptions, beliefs and attitudes. What she was confronted with is what Youniss (2008) regards as subject-subject social construction of knowledge and interpersonal relationships. She was also confronted with the university's dissatisfying history and culture in mediating development so that political-moral identity becomes the key source of collective meaning for individual lives in the University.

She was also confronted with a situation in which she found it difficult to introduce people who had never been directly involved with academic work to start speaking about their professional role in servicing students. In this area, she was dealing with deeply held assumptions of how each one of the staff members perceived their work. In their own words, the staff continually pointed out to her that: "we are administrative staff and we have thus nothing to do with academia". One of the senior staff members would actually say to her that when she was employed in her position she was told to do operational work and solve students' problems. She was afraid that if she even 'stayed a day away from work' in a week doing research, she would be violating her contract. Some of the staff members were just not interested in research. The need for a leadership academy for training student leaders became eminent. Furthermore, the Rector had also expressed the view that he wanted such an academy to be established. The Acting Executive Director then had to impress upon a male Black colleague that there was a need for them to begin to work with the nine faculties in the University from the perspective of the DoSA. This would be beneficial to the students themselves in providing them with much needed support to the faculties in terms of collaboration and enlightenment regarding the students' personal problems such as those relating to finances and health issues. These aspects would eventually give light to the students' level of academic performance, the high drop-out rate because the DoSA would be collaborating with academic faculties in research and publications. What she discovered was that, there is a plethora of avenues for research in Student Affairs and that the lack of research in the unit could be attributed to its isolation from the rest of the University.

According to the Acting Executive Director, the leadership prevalent in the Division had been of people working in silos without mutual consultation. Almost all the decisions that had been taken had not been shared. In her account, some of the people in leadership positions expressed the view that working in teams was inconceivable. In some quarters of student affairs, people expressed that they had been used to a consultative style of leadership. Thus, to make the strategic plan work, the team needed to learn how to fuse different leadership styles to be able to work with individuals effectively (fusing both the autocratic and democratic leadership styles). In the main, this required epitomizing the concept of shared leadership in order to make the 'critical connections' that are required for 'successes' in complex systems such as student affairs. A fundamental shift in the consciousness of each one of the staff members became eminent, if the team was to bring about the necessary change and implement strategic change. The transformation of the

consciousness of the staff in student affairs would be a major leadership training institute on its own. It required moving beyond the day-to-day operations to 'persuading' staff to get things done in a way that would help make the team's activities felt by the students, the University Executive Leadership (UEL) and the rest of the academy. Paulo Freire's (1970) work on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, becomes useful as it helps in the context of this discussion because it helps us to analyze the relationship between knowing the world (the experiences of staff in student affairs) and changing it (goal attainment). The emphasis here is the relationship between critical awareness (transformation of consciousness) and social action (engagement) and the process that each one of the staff members in the DoSA would go through to attain strategic change (political and moral consciousness of individual staff members).

Given that the University is engaged in the transformation process, Student Affairs had to follow suit. Both the issues highlighted above and the University transformation agenda prompted the need for a well articulated strategic plan to guide the everyday activities and, more importantly, to give the DoSA a direction of the future and how its leadership could be aligned to the entire university. To be able to achieve this, the Acting Executive Director needed a partner to work with from the Faculty of Education to help her 'think and map out' and articulate a strategy. This is how the second researcher, a Black male academic with vast experiences in strategic planning across the African continent was brought into the process of leading strategic change in the DoSA. His role was to work with the Acting Executive Director and her executive team and assist in mapping out the strategy and its final development. The second researcher sat with the executive team in the DoSA on a weekly basis, assisting them in thinking through and being engaged in conversations and guiding them where they had no skills or knowledge in thinking strategically. It became imperative that the team needed to develop a strategy map for leading the transformation process in the DoSA. The key questions were:

1. Does strategic planning work as a tool of professionalizing student affairs in the academy; and

2. How does one lead and manage change in one unit of a HWI where students, especially the Black student, are of the opinion that they are entitled to funds and other services because they were historically disadvantaged?

She had to construct and develop a new paradigm of managing and leading in which the focus in the DoSA would be on continuous learning and knowledge production, integration of skills, development of multi-skilled staff, developing dynamic coalitions across the University, and focusing on collaborative advantage in the unit (Chattell, 1995). A strategic plan was needed that had to focus on: leadership (executive behaviour), context (vision, mission and strategy) and culture (beliefs, behaviours and assumptions). In the preparation of the entire team the Acting Executive Director had to adopt a framework for working with her team adapted from the work of Hackman (2002) depicted below:
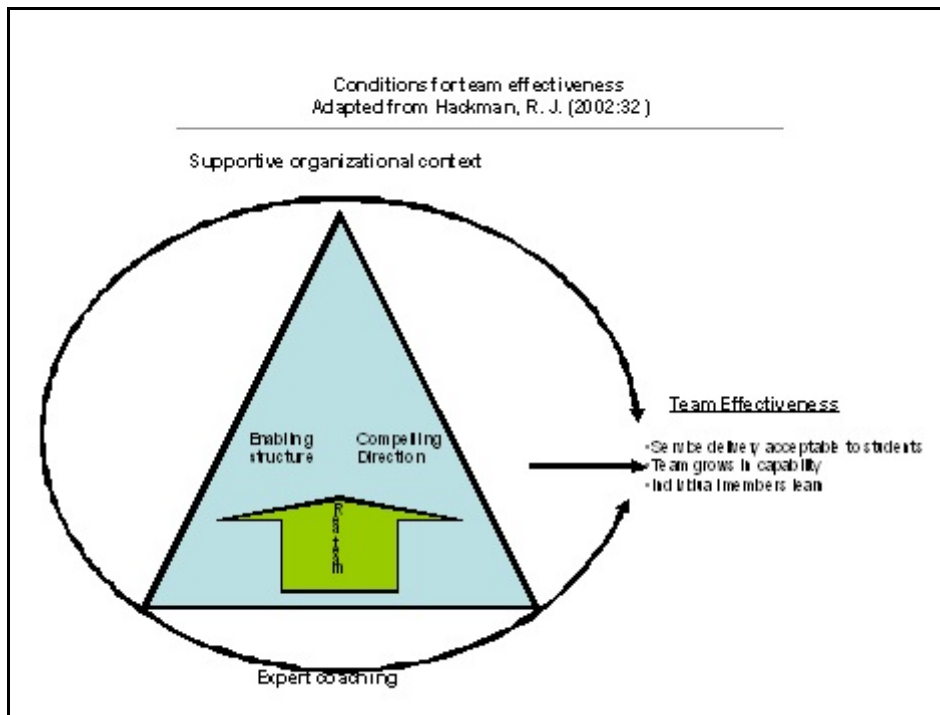
Emphasis had to be on developing a cohesive team that was effective. In the process, she had to develop her leadership skills and competencies so that she could develop a "capacity to influence others by unleashing their power and potential to impact the greater good" (Blanchard, 2007, p.xix) in the DoSA.

Her coaching, mentoring, guiding and leading styles and frameworks had to be enhanced considerably. Prompted by a sense of urgency and a clear and compelling vision, the Acting Executive Director developed a model of working with her team by adapting Hackman's (2002) framework, as depicted above. The main ingredients of this model are: an enabling structure that she had to develop; a compelling direction with a shared vision and mission among her staff and students; and an ability for expert coaching as a leader so

that she could focus on changing the culture of the DoSA by utilizing a number of learning models. In this regard, she drew heavily from the works of Takaeuchi and Nonaka (2002) on organizational knowledge creation; and Wenger (1998) on individuals learning as a community of practice. She also drew pointers from the work of Gallimore and Tharp (1990) on Vigotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in working with the team to a point where their performance moved from a stage where they are assisted by capable colleagues to a phase where the individual can now 'automize' the learning process in strategic planning and leading change. In the process the Acting Executive Director and her team adopted a meta-theoretical approach to the process of leading change in strategic planning in Student Affairs which will be discussed below.

Conceptualizing leadership and strategic planning in Student Affairs

Students are the core 'businesses' of higher education and training. A thorough knowledge of the composition and characteristics of the broad diversity of the student population, including expectations and dis/satisfactions, psychological/physical development, behaviour and motivation, is crucial for ensuring the development and administration of the programmes that promote student success (UNESCO, 2002). The leadership requirement in this case therefore related to 'expert' knowledge and understanding of students and their development. Through a careful analysis of existing data, the staff in the DoSA was required to develop a comprehensive and accurate socio-cultural picture of the student population and identify inadequate or missing information elements. The aim was to enable the team to effectively initiate appropriate action and inform campus administrators, faculty, student leaders, on the governance and nature of the student body (UNESCO, 2002). Data relating to these issues was gathered by means of surveys, focus group interviews and panel discussions. As indicated in our ethodology section this was a way of making sure that staff in the DoSA were actually involved in the collection of data and the development of better understanding of meanings that are generated through student and staff interactions.

The DoSA is one of the key components of the University whose main responsibility is adding value to the overall short, medium and long term strategic goals and plans of transforming a HWI. The main subdivisions of the DoSA at the University are Organized Student Life and Governance and

Student Accommodation. These two subdivisions were born out of the lengthy and ineluctable process of strategic task team preparation; student affairs alignment; and the integration and renewal that started in May 2004 and was concluded exactly three years later (May 2006).

The vision of the Student Affairs Division is to provide opportunities for an optimal University experience to all students. This vision and mission was developed in alignment with the University's strategic goal of 'a preferred student experience which is defined as 'to promote the holistic development of the student in preparation for the world of work and responsible citizenship'. In accordance with guidelines provided by the MEC and as a result of the Integration and Renewal Process, the DoSA was structured to add value to the goal of a preferred student experience in the following key areas that impact on the student and his or her life in the University:

- Organized Student Life and governance. (SRC, societies and student media);

- Student Community Service;

- Student Discipline; and

- Student Accommodation (physical facilities and residence life).

The Division consisted of four operational areas in which the team had to conceptualize a plan that would enable the creation of a sustainable market and stakeholder satisfaction within and outside the academy. The team's strategic architecture of efficiency and effectiveness in these four areas was the basis for internal process performance systems, divisional learning and growth to achieve overall institutional value, transformation and student satisfaction.

As the team developed its strategy, it was also important for it to remember that the university is committed to a process of global transformation in key areas of scholarship; competitive research, creativity and innovation in teaching and learning; and the whole process of curriculum reform and renewal. As a Division, the team had to make sure that their work enhanced this transformation agenda. Since the DoSA dealt with the largest university stakeholder group, it also had to make sure that its plan contributed to the development of an institutional ethos and a new culture within the academy so that key areas of employment equity; a multi racial and multi ethnic University can be anchored in an environment where all will feel a sense of belonging. As the team had to make sure that its focus was to be the needs of the student body and how the unit could work with this body so that the unit could learn,

develop and adopt requisite leadership skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes that will enhance its trajectory towards a transformed leadership culture and repertoires.

If the University is to achieve the transformational objectives of the South African Government, as articulated in the Education White Paper 3, then the DoSA has a pivotal role in bringing about enduring change in the University in terms of its strategies, leadership, structures, processes, culture, performance and outcomes. Since the DoSA is only responsible for the student life outside the classroom, it had to ensure that the student is prepared to take part in the academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical life of the University. The intention is to eventually contribute to the development of human resources skills, knowledge and research that relates to such as the development of a non-racial, non-sexist society and the embracing of the democratic values that are enshrined in the South African constitution.

The role of the DoSA vision and mission

The Division's vision was used to guide the strategies, structures, processes and culture of the Division in achieving the broad goal of transformation in the University. The mission statement in the strategic planning process, on the other hand, was to:

- Exploit existing capabilities and develop new ones;

- Diversify sources of (energy) skills, competencies, tacit knowledge and experiences;

- Learn from previous mistakes and successes; and

- Plan and implement change carefully, holistically and in a participatory manner (Stadler, 2007).

In the process, the team was able to align strategies, processes, culture and performance, information architecture, organizational architecture, and its human resources management systems that it believes would enable the achievement of the desired transformation within the University.

Strategic profiling: SWOT in Student Affairs

The following is a brief presentation of the SWOT analysis that the unit then conducted:

Strengths

1. Access to faculties and resources within the University.
2. Qualified, competent, experienced staff with institutional memory.
3. Ability to engage the SRC in national, regional and international students' movements.
4. The existence of a variety of activities (intellectual, political, professional, physical, moral, social and spiritual) that students can be involved in on all campuses.
5. A greater percentage of a student body that is in general well-disciplined, tolerant of diversity and accepting of change.
6. High performance in some areas of student leadership.

Weaknesses

1. Imbalanced racial student representivity in residences (e.g. one residence is 77% white and 23% black).
2. Inadequate relevant professional qualifications and effective performance output amongst staff in the Student Affairs unit.
3. Dispersion of campuses and new areas of operation (movement from one-dimensional to a matrix organization).
4. Lack of research activities and therefore there is neither a publication nor a culture of sharing knowledge and skills in Student Affairs.
5. Poor discipline in the areas of alcohol and substance abuse, academic integrity, and access control.
6. Lack of standardized documents and procedures for engaging with student discipline across campuses.
7. Insecure environments for students in all campuses.

Opportunities

1. Location of the University in a big, financially prosperous and metropolitan city.
2. Support from the MEC for Student Affairs.
3. Willingness of external funders to support Student Affairs and the ability to source funding for worthy endeavours.
4. Institutionalization of student leadership development programs.
5. Ability to involve students in meaningful community engagement projects.

Threats

1. Inadequate funds for students' and unit's activities.
2. Inability to align with the University's strategic thinking.

3. Politicization of student governance and poor student leadership.
4. Diverse student body (race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, political orientation, culture, personal attributes, learning styles, abilities, motivation, academic and personal preparedness for higher education) may result in tension, especially in residences.

The end result of the SWOT analysis was to develop a flexible strategic direction that enhanced the Division's ability to co-adapt to current changes and evolution over time, resilience in the face of setbacks, and ability to locate the constantly changing sources of advantages in Student Affairs and the University as a whole. In the process the team was able to be engaged in a continuous renewal process of reinventing itself as its circumstances changed. Hence, the Division was guided by the broad concept of institutional and student transformation in the strategic planning and implementation process especially a nexus of strategy, goals and tactics that engender unique roles of students as organic intellectuals as well as responsible and productive members of our current and future societies.

What emerged from the SWOT analysis was that there was a lack of professionalization, transformational leadership and a change strategy in Student Affairs which was a serious short coming that is affecting the team's other activities adversely.

Main strategic goal of the Division of Student Affairs

The main strategic goal we identified as being appropriate and promising success in guiding us realize the vision and mission of the university in both the short and long term is: to promote the holistic development of the student in preparing for the world of work and responsible citizenship. To achieve this strategic goal in both the short, medium and long term, the DoSA adopted a set of generic and unit specific strategic goals and strategies; key performance indicators (KPIs), and action plans for each unit to achieve their four main areas of strategic thrust. The three main strategic objectives that the team derived from this main goal after their strategic analyses are: (a) to provide optimal opportunities for student development and success; (b) to professionalize the DoSA; and (c) to develop and implement standardized policies and procedures. The strategic framework for achieving the institutional, divisional and unit goals was based on the 'strategy map template' developed by Norton and Kaplan (2004). It is an essential and flexible tool in managing and measuring the unit's goals and strategic objectives to achieve market value in the main areas of its strategic thrust. As a framework for creating stakeholder value, the strategy map focuses on the following key elements of the institution and the DoSA:

- Funding or the financial perspective (improved cost structure);
- Student and stakeholder perspective (customer value proposition);
- Internal perspective (operations, management, innovation); and
- Learning and growth perspective (culture, leadership, alignment).

These perspectives were then translated into an Action Plan with operational activities and time frames, responsibilities, costs, risks and mitigation strategies for each unit within the Division. It is through the action plans developed by all units in Student Affairs that the unit was able to translate the University's and Division's goals and strategies into 'action' by incorporating the following four elements (Pierce and Robinson, 1997, p.16):

● These action plans helped the team to identify specific functional tactics and actions to be undertaken on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis;

● The action plans had clear time frames for completion and made it easy for the team to monitor themselves and check if they are achieving the global and strategic goals of the University as well as those of the DoSA;

● These action plans were able to assist the team in enhancing their degree of accountability by identifying the persons responsible for each action in the strategic plan; and

● Each action plan had one or more specific and immediate objectives that could be identified as outcomes that action generated.

For the team to be continuously capturing cross boundary synergies, it had to be involved in a systematic benchmarking process (especially of their performance) in order to create new standards and raise the bar in Student Affairs, (Ten Have, Ten Have, Stevens, Van der Elst and Pol-Coyne, 2003, p.22). That benchmarking process involved the following elements:

● Internal benchmarking with the university faculties and departments;

● Competitive benchmarking with the main competitors;

● Functional benchmarking with similar units in the higher education sector in general; and

● Generic benchmarking with commerce, industry and the public not for profit sector.

This is a continuous process that the team was involved in as they strived to achieve the mission and vision of the University. As a professional group of staff in Student Affairs, the team has to possess a conceptual and theoretical grasp of the ways in which difference is constructed in the university through various representations and practices that name, legitimize, marginalize and exclude the cultural capital and voices of subordinate groups among our student body (Giroux, 2006). The question is: does strategic planning, as

described in this paper, enhance or hinder the development of different voices and identities in the academy? In other words, is there room for a none instrumentalist rationality in the planning process of a university that is committed to transformation? Put differently, how does strategic planning as a rational and a supposedly neutral, apolitical and ahistorical process enhance the production of knowledge and power in the academy? As critical and postmodern theories would question: how are networks of power relations intertwined with knowledge, subjectivity and ideology through a rational planning process? These questions point to the need for a transformative and empowering approach to strategic planning and a social epistemology of learning.

Critical perspective on leadership, strategy and continuous change

The process of strategic planning is in essence a way of initiating, implementing and managing change in the academy. Our particular concern is with change that benefits the majority and in particular those that were historically marginalized during the apartheid era within student affairs. Foucault (1972 and 1980) would speak of 'rehabilitation of subjugated knowledges even in the process of strategic planning and leadership in the academy. Our focus therefore is with the manner in which power in the academy works through discursive practices and performances of strategic planning. In, as Badat (2006, p.90) argues, using a critical and post modern perspective to interrogate strategic planning in Student Affairs, our concern then was:

> with the mutual interaction between historical social structure and conjuncture conditioning human agency and how limits and constraints are set on social action and outcomes, while also providing possibilities and opportunities for the same.

Habermas (1971) emphasizes the same notion but then his analysis focuses on knowledge constitutive interests that are embedded in a process such as rational strategic planning in Student Affairs. However, for our purposes, we chose to move away from knowledge constitutive interests that are focused on power, control and technical rationality to a more transformative planning process that lies within the purview of a hermeneutic discourse in which knowledge is always mediated through pre-understanding. Furthermore, we needed to borrow from a post modern discourse so that the focus of the planning process was to be on "agency more correctly on the habitat in which agency operates and which it produces in the course of operation" (Bauman,

2002, p.431). Thus the process of strategic planning needs to be problematized so that we unpack the epistemologies and fundamental instabilities and interpretations that undergird that process. In such a post-structural analysis we de-center the subject so as to give historical specificity to the process of strategic planning and change management in Student Affairs and the University.

Planning then is stripped of its technical assumptions such as: predetermination, the objective and detached planner and formalization (Mintzberg, 1994). In this conceptual schema, Mintzberg, *et al.* (1998), argues that planning for successful change flows from learning, growth and development. If strategic planning is to be transformative and empowering, then we should see strategy as: a visionary process; a mental process; an emergent process; a process of negotiation; a collective process; a reactive process; and a process of reflective transformation (Mintzberg, *et al.*, 1998). Here we also see the need for a 'constructionist' approach to the process of strategic planning especially in reference to the role of managers in Student Affairs. Team members had to continually ask themselves questions that challenge their basic assumptions on which they act and strive to improve their own capacity for self-reflection. As such, strategic planning becomes a process in which managers and their subordinates are also concerned with the creation of multiple realities, testing and experimenting. This is why it is essential to borrow ideas from the field of organizational learning and the learning organization in this process.

Conclusion

The South African Institutions of Higher Education are, in line with related governmental calls, variously engaged in activities aimed at helping bring about a societal transformation that will find all the country's individuals enjoying equal rights and dignity. The starting point in this article is that the success of these activities is most likely to occur if their implementers do not rely on strategic planning exercises which are simplistically informed by neat technical and rationalistic underpinnings. What this means is that, for these activities to succeed, leadership needs to acknowledge the complexity of change and 'implementer' and 'beneficiary' meanings when planning for transformation strategies.

In this article we presented a dynamic and socially constructed strategic planning model whose development was informed by the above. At the core of this article was a critical biographical narrative regarding experiences by one

of the authors, and those of her colleague, as an Acting Chief Director of a university's Division of Student Affairs. The development of this unit's strategic plan for transformation was enabled by the inclusive and 'emancipatory' nature of leadership by this author. The success with which this dynamic strategic planning model is being implemented serves to illustrate the importance of this type of leadership, the adoption of the learning organization concept and stakeholder 'meanings' when planning for transformation strategies. This model's 'institutionalization' or continued success will thus depend on how leadership will be enabling in this regard and therefore calls for continued research in that respect.

References

Badat, S. 2006. 'From innocence to critical reflexivity: critical researchers, research and writing, and higher education policy making'. In Neave, G. (Ed.). *Knowledge, power and dissent: critical perspectives on higher education and research in knowledge society*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, pp. 89–116.

Baumann, Z. 2002. 'Sociological theory of post-modernity'. In Calhoun, C., Gerteis, J., Moddy, J., Pfaff, S. and Virk, I. *Contemporary sociological theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp.429–440.

Beer, M. and Nohria, N. (Eds). 2000. *Breaking the code of change*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Bennis, W., Spriitzer, G.M. and Cummings, T.G. (Eds). 2001. *The future of leadership: today's top leadership thinkers speak top tomorrow's leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Blanchard, K. 2007. *Leading at a higher level*. Upper Saddle Rive, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Bryman, A. 2004. *Social research methods*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Calhoun, C. 1995. *Critical social theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Chattell, A. 1995. *Managing the future*. London: Macmillan Business.

Cohen, L. and Manion, L. 1994. 4th Edition. *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.

Davenport, T. and Harris, J.G. 2007. *Competing on analytics: the new science of winning*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Fuller, S. 2006. 'Universities and the future of knowledge governance from the standpoint of social epistemology'. In Neave, G. (Ed.). *Knowledge, power and dissent: critical perspectives on higher education and research in knowledge society*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, pp.345–370.

Foucault, M. 1972. *The archeology of knowledge*. New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. In Gordon, C. (Ed. and Trans.). New York: Pantheon.

Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder & Herder.

Friedmann, J. 1987. *Planning in public domain: from knowledge to action*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Gallimore, R. and Tharp, R. 1990. 'Teaching mind in society: teaching, schooling, and literate discourse'. In Moll, L.C. (Ed.). *Vigotsky and education: instructional implications of a socio-historical psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.175–205.

Giroux, H.A. 2006. The Giroux reader. [Robbins, C. (Ed.)]. Boulder Colorado: Paradigm Publishers.

Habermas, J. 1971. *Knowledge and human interests* [Trans. J. Shapiro]. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hackman, R.J. 2002. *Leading teams: setting the stage for great performances*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Ten Have, S.T., Ten Have, W., Stevens, F. and Van der Elst, M. with Pol-Coyne, F. 2003. *Key management models: the management tools and practices that will improve your business*. London: Prentice Hall.

Heidegger, M. 1986. 'Phenomenology and fundamental ontology: the disclosure of meaning'. In Mueller-Volmer, K. (Ed.). *The hermeneutics reader*. London: Blackwell Publishers, pp.214–240.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. 2001. The strategy focused organization: how balanced score card companies thrive in the new business environment. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. 2004. Strategy maps: converting intangible assets into tangible outcomes. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Kouzes, J.M. and Posner, B.Z. 2005. 'Bringing leadership lessons from the past into the future. In Bennis, W., Spriitzer, G.M. and Cummings, T.G. (Eds). *The future of leadership: today's top leadership thinkers speak top tomorrow's leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, pp.81–90.

Mintzberg, H., Ahlstrand, B. and Lampel, J. 1998. *Strategy safari: the complete guide through the winds of strategic management*. London: FT Prentice Hall.

O'Sullivan See, K. and Wilson, W.J. 1988. 'Race and Ethnicity'. In Smelser, N.J. (Ed.). *Handbook of sociology*. Newbury Park, California: Sage, pp.223–242.

Pearce II, J.A. and Robinson, R.B. 1997. Strategic management: formulation, implementation and control. 6th Edition. Chicago: Irwin.

Rosenthal, G. 2004. 'Biographical research'. In Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J.F. and Silverman, D. (Eds). *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage Publications, pp.48–64.

Senge, P. 2002. 'The leader's new work: building learning organizations'. In Morey, D., Maybury, M. and Thuraisingham, B. *Knowledge management: classic and contemporary works*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, pp.19–51.

Senge, P., Scharmer, O.C., Jaworski, J. and Flowers, B.S. 2005. Presence: exploring profound change in people, organizations and society. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Slaughter, S. and Rhoades, G. 2004. *Academic capitalism, and the new economy: markets, state and higher education*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Stadler, C. 2007. 'The four principles of enduring success'. Harvard Business Review, July–August, pp.62–72.

Takeuchi, H. and Nonaka, I. 2002. 'Reflection on knowledge management from Japan'. In Morey, D., Maybury, M. and Thuraisingham, B. *Knowledge management: classic and contemporary works*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, pp.183–186.

UNESCO 2002. 'The role of student affairs and services in higher education. A practical manual for developing, implementing and assessing student affairs programmes and services'. Follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education. UNESCO, Paris: 5–9 0ctober 1998.

Weber, M. 1947. *The theory of social and economic organization*. [Handerson, A.M. and Parsons, T. (Trans)]. New York: Free Press.

Weiler, H. 2006. 'Challenging the orthodoxies of knowledge: epistemological, structural and political implications for higher education'. In Neave, G. (Ed.) *Knowledge, power and dissent: critical perspectives on higher education and research in knowledge society*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, pp.61–87.

Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Youniss, J. 2006. 'Situating ourselves and our inquiry: a first-person account'. In Conrad, F.C. and Serlin, R.C. (Eds.). *The Sage handbook for qualitative research in education: engaging ideas and enriching inquiry*. Thousand Oakes, California: Sage Publications.

Kholeka Moloi
Kuzvinetsa Peter Dzvimbo
Faculty of Education
University of Johannesburg

kholekam@uj.ac.za
peterd@uj.ac.za

Thandi Ngcobo
Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape

ngcobot9@ukzn.ac.za

An unexplored partnership: the influence of traditional leaders on schooling

Sandile Mbokazi and Thamsanqa Bhengu

Abstract

The international arena has demonstrated that educational collaborations are necessary as tools that strengthen the effectiveness of reform initiatives in improving the educational attainment of students. Accordingly, schools have collaborated with colleges, universities, parents, and community leaders, to democratise education, equalise educational opportunity, support teachers, break down institutional barriers, and share resources for maximum benefit. The South Africa Government has started to consider partnership as one way to improve schooling in the country, and traditional leadership has been identified as one of the possible partners. This paper reflects on the experience of the authors in five research projects, conducted between 2002 and 2004, where the influence of traditional leaders was observed. To understand collaboration, one needs to trace the existing influences that the parties have on each other. Therefore, the role of traditional leadership is discussed in relation to school management, leadership, governance, school-community relations, infrastructural development and curriculum delivery.

Introduction and background

In the first decade of democracy in South Africa, education policies were developed to provide schools with better opportunities to function efficiently, justly, and democratically (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996; KwaZulu-Natal Schools Act of 1996; Norms and Standards for School funding, 2000). Despite these progressive policy directives, the quality of schooling in the country, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, continued to be a concern to the government and the public. Most schools are not safe centres of community life, because community ownership of schools as contemplated in the Tirisano document has either been partially or not achieved at all. For example, violence in South African schools has reached alarming levels. Bullying, rape, assault, vandalism, gang fights, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence plague many South African schools (Sing, 2003; Maluleke, 2003; Mabokwane and Mampa, 2002; Momberg, 2001; Somniso, 2001). This has caught the attention of the government, and various provincial education departments have begun to implement innovative and practical ways to respond to violence. To mention a few, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Safety and Security has joined forces with the MEC for Education to address violence in schools. In some schools in the

Pietermaritzburg area, a suggestion box has been put in place for learners to put in their concerns, such as bullying, sexual harassment, and abuse (Oellerman, 2005; Harrilall, 2005). The Western Cape Department of Education has set up a Safety Schools Programme and Call Centre for the same purpose.

At the close of the first decade of democracy in South Africa the then national Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, identified partnership as one way of addressing concerns in schools. The notion of partnership was reiterated by Ms Ina Cronje, the MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, at the beginning of the second decade of democracy. In her speech to the academic community and researchers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the 22 June 2004 and at the Education Stakeholders' Forum on the 15 July 2004, the MEC enumerated many ways in which schools and employees fall short in their response to the progressive policies. She saw this as linked to the huge backlogs in schools and the poor commitment of some educators to their profession. One of the partners that they have identified to address the situation are the traditional leaders whom they regarded as having an important role to play in the provision of quality education in the country. Prof Asmal in his speech to the traditional leaders said: "The role of Traditional Leaders in the promotion of quality learning and education should not be under-emphasised". These words are an indication that the roles that can be played by traditional leadership in schooling are viewed by the department's political leadership as significant.

For the purposes of this paper, the composition of the Traditional Leadership as an institution needs to be presented. This institution is hierarchal in nature with the *Isilo*[1] at the top layer and *Amakhosi*[2] and the Traditional Council taking second and third layers respectively. *Izinduna,*[3] *izibonda* and *amaphoyisa enkosi* occupy the bottom two layers.

---

[1]
  Isilo means the Monarch for the Province of KwaZulu-Natal as recognised in Section 17 of the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005), or 'king' as defined in Section 1 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003 (Act No. 41 of 2003).

[2]
  Inkosi means a senior traditional leader as defined in Section 1 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003 (Act No. 41 of 2003) and recognised as such in terms of Section 19 of KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005) and *Amakhosi* is the plural form of the term.

[3]
  Induna is a traditional leader who is under the authority of, or exercises authority within the area of jurisdiction of, an *inkosi* in accordance with customary law, and who is recognised as such in terms of Section 27 of the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005) and *izinduna* is the plural form of the term.

Figure 1:   Traditional leadership structure

Isilo is the monarch, *amakhosi* are senior traditional leaders, both of whom get to these positions predominantly through inheritance. However, during colonial times in South Africa some senior traditional leaders were imposed by colonial masters (Mashele, 2003; Minnaar, 1991). The Traditional Council is the only layer in the traditional leadership institution that is democratically elected, and it must include women (KZNLGTA, 2005; RSA, 2003). The last two layers of the institution – *izinduna, izibonda* and *amaphoyisa enkosi* – are often appointed by the senior traditional leaders. The Legislation recognises the first four layers. Our experience of working in rural communities indicates that the fifth layer that includes *izibonda* and *amaphoyisa enkosi* takes different shapes in different communities within the province. *Izibonda* are elderly members of the community who have been in the community longest and have profound knowledge of community history. *Amaphoyisa enkosi* keep the peace in community gatherings. In some communities one person can perform both duties.

Conceptual and theoretical framework

This section provides a discussion of key concepts and theoretical perspectives that are used in this paper. According to Gonzalez, Lauder, and Melles (2000), we are living in an interconnected society where forming synergistic partnerships can create stronger economies and offer residents a high quality of life. *Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus* (1995, p.696) defines partnership as "a relationship in which two or more people or organisations work together in a business venture". Synonyms for partnership include alliance, association, combine, participation, and sharing (Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1995). Strategic partnership, alliances, and mergers are concepts that permeate the world of business today (Jensen and Unt, 2002), and the related discourses have impacted on other sectors including education. Educational collaborations have emerged from the broad spectrum of reform initiatives largely as a means to improving educational attainment for students (Gomez, 1998). Such collaboration has brought together schools, colleges, universities, parents, and community leaders (Gomez, 1998). Collaborative projects have attempted to renew the democratic value of education, equalise educational opportunity, support educators, break down institutional barriers, and share resources for maximum benefit (Gomez, 1998).

According to Gomez (1998), partnership involves both engagement and exchange, with collaborative activities aimed at mutually derived and independent benefits for all participants. Partners must have a highly flexible, empowering, and innovative partnership culture; a team-based strategy; and a process of relationship management (Lendrum, 2004). Partnerships and alliances involve strong, inspirational and visionary leaders with levels of personal drive, competence and integrity (Lendrum, 2004). The basic principles of partnership include agreement on common problems. These guidelines were intended to break down barriers and rebuild the quality of schooling (Gomez, 1998).

A successful partnership must function symbiotically, and maintaining this kind of relationship requires an understanding of multiple realities, because conflicting perceptions of the same event can lead to a breakdown in communication (Gomez, 1998). Gomez (1998) further argues that partnerships should be the result of a mutual desire on the part of two or more institutions to effect change. Practitioners and researchers agree that the key to sustaining the energy of interinstitutional collaboration is strong leadership and effective governance. Among those characteristics deemed essential are common goals;

mutual trust and respect; shared decision making; long-term commitment; and information sharing (Gomez, 1998).

The term partnership implies equity among institutions and individuals within a system circumscribed by entrenched inequities and hierarchies (Gomez, 1998). Some writers have argued that in partnership attitudes, feelings, and habits must be merged (Jensen and Unt, 2002). Perhaps one way to achieve this is to create a positive 'entrapment' among the partners. Entrapment is a term adopted from psychology, which means a process whereby partners increase their commitment to a course of action in order to justify their investment of time, money or effort to it (Wade and Tavris, 1998). Gomez (1998) raises a concern about the absence of a theoretical basis for educational collaboration and an almost exclusive focus on practice. He then proposes that a more rigorous philosophical scrutiny of the relationship among partnership, education, and democracy, profound systemic change must be done.

We use the systems approach to frame our thinking about the forms of partnership that may or may not exist between traditional leadership and schools. This approach maintains that all individuals and organisations exist within a network of relationships (Pettigrew, 1999). Sociologists call this a 'social network' that can be characterised by either strong or weak ties (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega and Weitz, 2002). In this perspective, schools are seen as part of a society which has a profound effect on how the school operates). When used in connection with social and human systems, it is referred to as 'ecosystemic' theory, where all parts are related to, and affect, each other (Pettigrew, 1999).

Ecosystemic theory is based on the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment (Pettigrew, 1999). This is appropriate to use in analysing the interdependence between schools and the land that is under the authority of traditional leadership. Within ecosystemic theory there are four levels. These are Microsystem (e.g. individual; family); Mesosystem (school; church); Exosystem (community services; school governing body; Provincial DoE); and Macrosystem (customs of culture; broad ideologies; government; laws) (Pettigrew, 1999). For the purposes of this paper we are using mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem, because we are examining partnerships at an institutional level, i.e. school and traditional leadership.

Pettigrew (1999) cautions that all these levels must exist in harmony; otherwise a 'dissonance' will occur. The idea of 'ecological dissonance' occurs when the equilibrium of the whole system is disrupted (Pettigrew,

1999). The harmonious equilibrium can be disorganised by power relations among role players. Power has been defined elsewhere as the ability to direct others' behaviour even against their will (Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn, 1988; Brinkerhoff *et al.*, 2002). Sociologists have identified two kinds of power, i.e. coercion and authority. While coercion is the exercise of power through force or the threat of force, authority is power supported by norms and values that legitimate its use (Brinkerhoff *et al.*, 2002).

A number of studies conducted by the Education Policy Consortium[4] of South Africa between 2002 and 2005, some of which were conducted in collaboration with researchers from other organisations across the country, suggest that traditional leaders have great power and influence over decisions for schools falling within their jurisdiction. Such power and influence is either negative or positive. This is happening in rural schools, because most schools in such contexts are built on tribal trust lands, and by default the traditional authority often has a final say on land-related decisions.

In this paper we maintain that schooling is characterised by cultural transmission through what many sociologists call a 'hidden curriculum' (Wilcox in Spindler, 1982; Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). We can thus see the role of traditional leadership in relation to either the formal teaching process or the informal cultural transmission processes of schools, or to both. This frame enables us to examine the role of traditional leadership in school governance, management, curriculum delivery and infrastructural development, as well as in mediation between schools and communities they serve.

Methodology

This article draws from our experience and reflections as researchers in four ethnographic studies conducted by the EPC. The common goal of these studies was to "formulate patterns of analysis that makes reasonable sense out of human actions within the given contexts of a specific time and place" (Fife, 2005, p.1). Our experiences in these studies were not captured in any formal order, because the studies were not examining traditional leadership. Rather these experiences existed as our reflective notes on how we grappled with one or another form of

---

4   The Education Policy Consortium of South Africa is a research structure formed in 2000 by the education policy units in the Universities of Fort Hare, Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal, as well as the Centres for Higher Education and the Centre for Education Policy Development. The Consortium is funded by the SIDA and the Dutch government.

traditional leadership influence in these studies. The studies that are selected are the Governance and Equity in South Africa; the Emerging Voices; Investigating the Effects of the ECAG's Classroom Building on Schooling; and Investigating the Impact of Unpaid Domestic Child Labour on School Attendance.

The Governance and Equity project was a longitudinal study that had three components to it, i.e. statistical analysis of education finance, discourse analysis, and six case studies – two of which were rural schools –were selected from Gauteng, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The Emerging Voices study was conducted in collaboration with the Human Sciences Research Council and was funded by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. This study examined people's experiences of education in the context of poverty in nine rural primary schools from the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces. The study to investigate The Effects of ECAG's Classroom Building on Schooling was conducted in fourteen rural schools in Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal. The study to examine The Impact of Unpaid Domestic Child Labour on School Attendance was conducted in twelve rural schools, six from each of the KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces.

In these studies we were struck by the significance of the role of traditional leaders that seemed to have implications for the success or otherwise of many decisions and processes that impacted on schooling. For the purposes of writing this article, we saw it necessary to make follow-up telephonic interviews with some selected school managers, and traditional leaders from the schools and communities that had participated. The selected schools' names are presented here in pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. These schools are GMY Primary, NYC Secondary, MTW Secondary, KBZ Secondary, and ENB Primary. GMY and ENB Primary Schools are situated under the same *inkosi*. MTW and NYC Secondary Schools are also under the same *inkosi*. The aim of the contact was to refresh our memory and to obtain current information about the influence of traditional leadership in these schools. An additional one-on-one interview was conducted with one Inkosi who has made a contribution to improve infrastructure in the schools that are situated in the area of his jurisdiction.

A careful triangulation of information from the authors' experience and the follow-up interviews with selected informants from the schools that participated in the above mentioned studies resulted in the discussion below. The discussion traces the evidence of traditional leadership influence in school management, governance, mediation between school and community, and in infrastructural development. The conclusion which attempts to elicit implications for policy and practice is made based on the emerging picture in the discussion, comes at the end of the article.

Traditional leadership in school management and leadership

Within the school context management and leadership are closely related with different foci. Management focuses on operations within an organisation while leadership entails looking at the direction that the organisation is taking (Clarke, 2007; Department of Education, 1996; Davies and Ellison, 1997; Sapre, 2002). Both these terms take into account the social context and relationships that can assist the organisation to achieve its vision and mission. In the Emerging Voices study, it was found that when principals indicated the degree of influence of various community leaders on the running of the school, they ranked the *izinduna* the highest (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

During the follow-up interviews, the informants expressed contrasting opinions about the linkages between traditional leadership and school management teams. The principal for GMY Primary said that school management and leadership are professional and highly specialised roles that traditional leaders would not be expected to take on. Other informants saw the linkage as a definite possibility and indicated how such a linkage has been, and could be, achieved in various school contexts. There are visible signs of partnership between the institution of traditional leadership and the school management team regarding what is currently happening, and what could potentially happen, in schools. The emerging picture is that traditional leadership can assist school managers in terms of information sharing, conflict management, and maintaining discipline.

According to the principal of the KBZ Secondary, the traditional leader who was an ex-principal and an *induna,* and was running a local taxi industry, used his multi-faceted experience to share specific management-related information with the current principal of the school. The principal further asserted that most traditional leaders know learners' home conditions and are better placed to inform the school about these conditions so as to help enable the school management team to understand learners better. In that way the school can make informed choices about the deployment of resources. This supportive role was linked to his ex-principal status and cannot be played by any traditional leader who did not possess this status.

In another school, i.e. MTW Secondary, the traditional leader was considered by all the informants as an expert in conflict resolution and discipline maintenance. As such, he occasionally conducted capacity building workshops on conflict management with the school management team. Further, the

school's discipline policy provided for specific disciplinary measures to be outsourced to the traditional leadership. For example, the discipline policy refers all cases involving learners carrying weapons into the school premises to the *Inkosi*. This is done as a protective mechanism for the in-school population, because such learners pose a threat to both the staff and other learners. The rationale of outsourcing these cases is that they compromise discipline in the school and therefore a neutral institution, for instance, the traditional leadership, is deemed appropriate to address this. There is consensus from informants that the relationship with the *Inkosi* has benefited the MTW Secondary School greatly.

The informants recommended ways in which the partnership between traditional leadership can further be developed and strengthened. One traditional leader stressed that they should not be ignored or undermined by the school authorities, but must have significant input on the general running of the school. Unlike in MTW Secondary, the principal in NYC Secondary reported that traditional leadership can assist in helping management solve a number of problems such as curbing violence in schools. This shows that this school has not been as proactive as the MTW Secondary in terms of taking advantage of the expertise of conflict resolution that the Inkosi possessed. The principal of ENB Primary School said that her management team was neither able to deal with extreme cases of unruly behaviour of learners as manifest in cases of bullying, nor able to cater for learners with special needs, especially those who were mentally challenged. She felt that traditional leaders can assist the school in building a strong case for intervention by social workers.

Traditional leadership in school governance

Governance entails defining an organisation's mission and to establish its policies and control mechanisms to allocate power, determine decision-making processes, establish organisational culture, and set up procedures for performing specific tasks (Kouri, 1999). Traditional leaders have a historical influence on school governance. During the era of Bantu Education, traditional leaders were given responsibility to nominate five members, four of which would serve in the School Committees (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). The Emerging Voices study pointed out that 83% of surveyed schools were situated or built on tribal trust lands/communally-held land, which gives the traditional leaders authority and control over schools, particularly in the school governance (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Such authority and control entail monitoring and supervising SGB activities, as well as

disciplining the children (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Our analysis of traditional leadership influence on school governance has revealed that these leaders participate as either full members or representatives in the general functioning of SGBs, as well as promoting safety and security in schools.

The roles that traditional leadership plays in school governance include monitoring, supervision of the School Governing Body (SGB) activities and participating in the Safety and Security Committees. There are three types of membership that traditional leadership have on SGBs. The one is that of full membership of the SGB. As full members of the SGB traditional leaders perform normal functions like any member of this body. The Chairperson of the SGB in NYC School is also a member of the Traditional Council that deliberates on community matters with Inkosi. The other form of membership is through having a representative on the SGB who reports to the traditional leadership, enabling it to monitor and supervise the activities of the SGB. In MTW Secondary, the Inkosi has the representative on the SGB, who reports to him on a regular basis. Co-option to the SGB occurs when the SGB identifies a member of the traditional leadership structure as having specific expertise. In the study to examine Governance and Equity in South African Schools, one school in the Eastern Cape had co-opted a Headman[5] into the SGB and his contribution was seen by the principal and the teaching staff as positive. The latter form of membership indicates the trust that exists between the two structures.

The principal of the KBZ said that most schools elected traditional leaders into their SGBs, mainly because they are influential and are trusted in the community. The inclusion of traditional leadership in the Safety and Security Committees has been crucial in the promotion of safety and security in schools. The KBZ principal said that the school is located in close proximity to the *Induna*'s household and he looks after the school, because he also serves in the Safety and Security Committee.

During the interviews informants also made recommendations about roles that can be played by the traditional leadership. The principal for GMY Primary said that the traditional leaders can play an important role in assisting the SGB identify parents that need to be exempted from paying school fees. They further pointed out that traditional leaders help authenticate cases of those who apply for exemption. The principal at ENB Primary said that her school was gripped by vandalism of school property and she asserted that traditional

---

5   Headman is equivalent to '*induna*'.

leaders can assist in this regard by supporting the school's efforts to address this challenge. The experience of MTW School has demonstrated the possibility and the success of this.

Traditional leadership in schools - community relations

The discourse on school community relations have been underpinned by the acceptance of the fact that a school is not isolated or independent, but it operates in a social context such as the local community (Bryson, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1990; Gorton, 1991; Robertson, 1995). There has been a growing realisation and a need for school leaders to get to know community leaders better, involve parents in school processes, and to establish key communicators from members of the public (Fiore, 2002). Traditional leadership is part of community leadership in rural contexts and attempts to establish linkages between this structure and schools had both positive and negative factors. Some of the positive ones include an enhanced community ownership of schools and parental involvement in school affairs as well as playing a gate-keeping role in terms of access to schools by outsiders. Negative factors include the non-responsive attitude of some traditional leaders when they are invited to participate in school affairs, and it has been reported that some are in fact trouble-makers.

The informants interviewed revealed that most school managers have found involving traditional leaders in ensuring maximum participation of parents in school affairs a rewarding exercise. The current roles played by traditional leadership include the promotion of community ownership of schools which helps curb crime and vandalism. Other roles include mediation and strengthening of relationships between schools and community; creating a platform where both the school and community discuss issues affecting them. Such a platform has been created in GMY Primary School, where the traditional leaders call community meetings and use the school as a venue. This is characterised by symbiotic relationship between the two structures. For instance, the traditional leadership utilise school as venues for community meetings and the school would have a slot in the programme to address the community on school matters. Despite ENB Primary being in close proximity to the GMY Primary, there is no evidence that indicate that such a symbiotic relationship has been established. Sometimes the schools request traditional leadership to call community meetings on their behalf. In MTW Secondary School, the *Inkosi* is requested to invite parents on behalf of the school, and in this way attendance to meetings has improved.

In The Effects of Unpaid Domestic Labour on Schooling study, an *Inkosi* played a gate-keeping role regarding access to schools built on tribal trust lands for research and development projects. Informants also indicated that there is a potential role that can be played by the traditional leadership to create a platform through which schools can form partnership with different spheres of government. The principal of KBZ said that traditional leadership can also liaise with Local Government and Welfare Departments on behalf of the schools in order to secure linkages that would benefit learners. However, this gate-keeping role could be both productive and counterproductive. While this is important to protect the schools from invasions that may violate the rights of the members of school community and creating innovative partnerships for schools, it may also block development in these schools. The researchers were almost chased away in a research site and a development project for improving access roads was suspended in KwaZulu-Natal, because the traditional leadership felt that the protocols had not been properly observed.

Notwithstanding the positive factors characterising the relationship between traditional leadership and schools in rural contexts, some traditional leaders were not supporting the schools in their jurisdiction. The principal at ENB Primary said that some traditional leaders were less motivated to understand that the schools needed them. She said that all they did was to use the school for the distribution of letters to community members inviting them to meetings. The principal in NYC Secondary asserted that community members and leaders should assist with regards to safety and security. He despaired that this was not possible because these people often expected payment for such services. Though there was a Safety and Security Committee in the area, of which traditional leadership was part, it was non-functional, because members hardly attended Committee meetings. The Safety and Security Committee of ENB Primary has *izinduna* as part of the structure. They were also part of the Community Policing Forums, but it was reported that other members of such forums were the very trouble makers, because they were allegedly involved in petty criminal activities.

School-community relationship building and sustenance is a two way process where both parties must take initiatives. While most informants were content with calling for the involvement of traditional leadership on school affairs, the KBZ principal proposed the inverse trend. He said that in order to maintain a smooth relationship between schools and communities, school managers need to associate with the community by attending functions or parties even if uninvited. This is taking the school to the community and promoting the schools' involvement in the community affairs. This would afford the

community an opportunity to accept and regard these schools as part and parcel of themselves and would enable them to make suggestions for school improvement.

Traditional leadership in infrastructural development

The need for infrastructural development is echoed by John Samuel in the Emerging Voices study when he says: "The relative scarcity of resources and in some cases the desolation and poverty of rural communities seriously limits the developmental possibilities that might be achieved through education" (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005, p. viii). The evidence in the four selected studies indicated that partnership between schools and traditional leadership in terms of infrastructural development took various forms. These include traditional leadership taking initiative in enhancing schools' built environment, endorsing application for the construction of new classrooms, and the schools approaching traditional leadership to assist in fund raising for the provision of physical resources, such as toilets.

The building of MTW Secondary School was an initiative of the *Inkosi* in 1982 and the *Inkosi* has remained a guardian for the school to ensure proper maintenance of the built environment. Together with parents, an *Inkosi* assisted in raising funds for the deposit in the building of eight classrooms at another school, i.e. NYC Secondary School. Another *Inkosi* made a tractor available to level the ground where classrooms were built at GMY Primary School. In the study to investigate the effect of ECAG's classroom building on schooling, it was reported that during the process of applying for classroom provision, an *induna*, played an important endorsing role in the signing of application letter for ENB Primary School. After a teacher had left the school because he could not cope with the lack of toilets, the *Inkosi* where KBZ School is situated has responded positively to the school's request to help build toilets. The KBZ principal further said that whenever the school buys equipment, traditional leaders are informed for buy-in purposes, because community ownership helps improve safety and security. An *induna* argued that traditional leaders should have an ultimate say on infrastructural development, since the land belonged to the *Inkosi*. All these incidents indicate current and potential partnership between traditional leadership and schools in improving the built environment.

However, the proposal made by the traditional leader's lobbying for an ultimate say in infrastructural development indicates different perceptions of power relations than the one indicated by the principal of KBZ Secondary.

The principal is of the opinion that the power of traditional leaders can be used to benefit the school in terms of protecting physical resources. On the other hand, the traditional leadership desire to have a direct influencing on the final decisions about infrastructural development.

Traditional leadership in curriculum delivery

The current and potential roles that traditional leadership play in curriculum delivery point to a thin line between the formal and the 'hidden' curriculum. It was reported in one of the participating schools that the current role of traditional leadership in curriculum delivery entails reinforcing the traditional values of respecting oneself and others. The principal of KBZ pointed out that the traditional leadership often comes to address the children at school on issues of tradition and cultural values of respect. This happened either during school assembly or in Life Orientation classes.

A proposed role includes that traditional leadership contribute towards promoting HIV/AIDS awareness. The KBZ principal said that traditional leaders can complement educator's efforts to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. He said that some learners were orphans, but would often hide their situation. Traditional leaders know learners' situation and are in the position to share information with schools managers in order for them to handle related learner cases effectively.

Conclusions: implications for policy and practice

The nature of partnership between traditional leadership and schools has been characterised by the search for expert knowledge, gate-keeping, and support towards general school improvement. In addition, there are recommendations to take these forms of partnership to the next level where these can be formalised through legislation. First and foremost an exosystemic partnership between education departments and traditional leaders must be explored within the South Africa context and must be properly legislated for maximum support of the rural schools. This requires effective policies on how the schools can draw from resources in their feeder area and how the communities can strengthen schools efforts to be centres of community life. This paper has indicated an evident willingness of traditional leaders to support the affairs of schools in their areas and has suggested how a platform to involve them in the transformation agenda of schools can be established and sustained. It is everybody's responsibility to promote and encourage this relationship. It is a

two way process where school-based stakeholders must involve traditional leaders in their affairs and traditional leaders must do the same. The data from the participated schools in this article indicated that the relationship between schools and communities was shaped by the nature of participation of traditional leaders in the affairs of the schools.

The legislation should also seek to regulate and encourage the effective communication between traditional leadership and schools. A communication between principals and traditional leaders must be smooth and characterised by proactive endeavours of parties involved. The NYC and MTW High Schools have different strengths of relationship with traditional leadership regardless of their proximity to the same traditional leadership headquarters. This was also true in the ENB and GMY Primaries. The difference was in the proactive nature of the parties in MTW Secondary and GMY Primary, and their passivity of the parties in NYC Secondary and ENB Primary in relation to building the relationship. As a result, collaboration between school and traditional leadership was weak for the NYC, while it was very strong at the MTW. Our assumptions about proximity of the two schools and thus having similar relations with traditional leadership were thus dispelled.

References

Brinkerhoff, D.B., White, L.K., Ortega, S.T. and Weitz, R. 2002. *Essentials of sociology*. 5th Edition. London and Belmont: Wadsworth.

Bryson, J. 1988. *Strategic planning for public and non-profit organisations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clarke, A. 2007. *The handbook of school management*. Cape Town: Kate McCallum.

Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus 1995. New Edition. HarperCollins: England.

Davies, B. and Ellison, L. 1997. *School leadership for the 21st century: a competency and knowledge approach*, Harlow: Longman.

Department of Education. 1996a. South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. 1996b. *Changing management to manage change in education: report of the task team on education management development.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Education. 2000. *Norms and standards for school funding.* Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs 2005. KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act (Act No 5 of 2005), Pietermaritzburg

Fife, W. 2005. *Doing fieldwork: ethnographic methods for research in developing studies and beyond*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Fiore, D.J. 2002. *School-community relations*. New York: Eye On Education.

Gomez, M.N. 1998. *On the path to democracy: the role of partnership in American education*. Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute.

Gonzalez, J.L., Lauder, K. and Melles, B. 2000. *Opting for partnership: governance innovations in south-east Asia*. Ottawa: Institute of Governance.

Gorton, R.A. 1991. *School-based leadership: challenges and opportunities*. 3rd Edition. W. C. Brown Publishers.

Harrilall, K. 2005. 'Special box to help city's school kids'. *The Witness*, March 8.

Jensen, K. and Unt, I. 2002. *Negotiating partnerships: increase profits and reduce risks*. London and New York: Financial Times, Prentice Hall.

Kouri, D. 1999. *Strengthening school governance*. Saskatoon: Saskatchewan School Trustees Association Research Centre, University of Saskatchewan.

KwaZulu-Natal Local Government and Traditional Affairs. (2005). KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, No. 5 of 2005. In KwaZulu-Natal Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (Ed.): KZN Provincial Government.

Lendrum, T. 2004. *The strategic partnering pocketbook: building strategic partnerships and alliances*. Sydney and New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

Mabokwane, M. and Mampa, L. 2002. 'Teachers who are law unto themselves'. *City Press,* 1 September 2002, p.20.

Maluleke, E. 2003. Pupil shot after playing prank on girl he liked. *City Press*, 25 May 2003, p.10.

Mashele, P. 2003. Traditional leadership in historical context. *Municipality Talk: A Newsletter of IDASA's Local Government Centre,* 1(1).

Meighan, R. and Siraj-Blatchford, I. 2003. *Sociology of educating*. 4th Edition. London and New York: Continuum.

Minnaar, A. de V. 1991. *Conflict and violence in Natal/KwaZulu: historical perspectives*. Pretoria: HSRC.

Momberg, E. 2001. Dagga raid on Pretoria school. *The Citizen,* 7 November, 2001, p.1.

Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005. *Emerging voices: a report on education in South African rural communities.* Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Oellerman, I. 2005. 'Suggestion boxes for schools'. *The Mercury*, March 8.

Pettigrew, L. 1999. More about systems approach, *The School as a Learning Organisation: Reader Module 4*. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal, pp. 31–42.

Republic of South Africa. 2003. *Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act*, (Act No. 41 of 2003). Pretoria: Government Printers.

Robertson, P.J. 1995. Improving school quality through SMB: a theoretical model of the process of change. *Advances in Research and Theories of School Management and Education Policy,* 3(3): pp.223–271.

Sapre, P. 2002. Realising the potential of educational management in India. *Educational Management and Administration*, 30(1): pp.101–108.

Sergiovanni, T.J. 1990. *Value-added leadership: how to get extraordinary performance in schools*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Singh, A. 2003. 'Boy kills principal and himself'. *Daily News,* 25 April 2003, p.1.

Schermerhorn, J.R., Hunt, J.G. and Osborn, R.N. 1988. *Managing organisational behaviour*. New York: Wiley.

Somniso, V. 2001. 'Pupils tried to kill schoolmate'. *Sowetan*. 7 November, 2001, p.3.

Wade, C. and Tavris, C. 1998. *Psychology*. 5th Edition. New York: Longman.

Wilcox, K. 1982. Ethnography as a methodology and its application to the study of schooling: a review. In Spindler, G. (Ed.). *Doing the ethnography of schooling: educational anthropology in action*. New York: CBS College Publishers, pp.456–478.

Sandile Mbokazi
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal

931321343@ukzn.ac.za
mbokazis@telkomsa.net

Thamsanqa Bhengu
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal

bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za

Ubuntu and school leadership

Vuyisile Msila

Abstract

Among the many calls in educational transformation in South Africa has been the need to transform the management styles in schools. Many critics agree that the Constitution of the Republic lays a good foundation for a democratic system of education. Arguably, if 'failing schools' can utilise the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution, schools would be more prosperous. The deteriorating quality of education and management in dysfunctional historically black schools for example, is frequently attributed to defective management strategies (Steyn and Van Wyk, 1999; Masitsa, 2005). Shared leadership, participative leadership, the creation of effective change agents in a team are some of the myriad solutions cited by research as answers to deteriorating leadership quality in dysfunctional schools (Singh, 2002).

In this article focus is on the role of *ubuntu* as one of the Constitutional values that can enhance school management. This study looked at whether or not *ubuntu* philosophy can assist schools rid of managerial obstacles. A case study was conducted in a school where the principal in it used *ubuntu* as a form of a leadership model. Based on tested and mellowed values of African democracy, it was found out that the philosophy contains the ideal model on which democratic leaders would like their fellow employees to follow. This philosophy also responds to the local African context, hence it might be ideal for African schools in particular. However, we found out that *ubuntu* is not a plain sailing form of leadership. As any other models, teachers need to be prepared to be receptive to it. *Ubuntu* as a philosophy can also not be seen as a 'size fits all' solution in the challenges that the African society faces today.

Introduction

This article explores the potential of *ubuntu* leadership which can be loosely interpreted as an African-centred form of leadership. The term will be explored in more detail in the next sub-section. With the advent of a democratic education and more openness to issues of diversity, many school leaders that I have come across are trying to experiment with novel ways of management. A number of courses in South Africa have also been developed for school leaders so that they could be able to face the current emerging democratic society. Institutions such as the Mathew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance in the University of Johannesburg strive to update school leaders with new models. There are other similar projects around the country. In Port Elizabeth for example, the General Motors (GM) Foundation

has also been supporting school leaders who are upgrading their qualifications. This project was done in conjunction with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The Department of Education (DoE) has just introduced a course referred to as Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) specialising in School Leadership. All these are programmes that would enable leaders to explore various models that are congruent to a democratic society and efficiency in schools.

Teachers involved in various programmes have tried to transform the old top-down structure that used to be purported by the previous departments of education. The top-down structure was hierarchical and teachers were usually told what to do and not what not to do. It is this top-down culture of the past that is usually blamed for the teachers' resistance to change initiatives. Reeves and Ralphs (1994) pointed out that many experienced teachers and principals were mostly schooled in apartheid ideology. They were used to being administrators within their schools and when it comes to democratising the schools they tend not to accept this. Mahomed (1999) averred that four to five decades of a top-down teacher culture and passive acceptance of instructions might be enhancing interpretative difficulties being experienced by educators. Management utilising *ubuntu* as a basis of management ensures that a new culture of inclusiveness is promoted in the workplace. Recently there have been a number of writers and researchers who have suggested new forms of leadership in many dysfunctional schools (Steyn and Van Wyk, 1999; Masitsa, 2005). Research also shows that many township schools in South Africa continue to be underperforming and management structures are usually said to be helpless in the face of educational changes (Msila, 2005).

In a recent study by Msila (2005), he discovered that black parents continue to move their children away from township schools because of the belief that township schools or the historically black schools are failing their children. Among other factors cited by parents was that management in various historically black schools continued to deteriorate in the face of teacher apathy and incompetence. Many conscientious principals have long started to look around for alternative models that would improve their schools. A number of these schools leaders have tried and given up because they maintain that their teachers are not up to the challenge. Some are trying participative leadership, team management and various other employee involvement strategies. Although others have become despondent in the process there are a number who still believe that teachers need more time to learn to be committed.

In this article the focus is on the value of *ubuntu* and the possible role it can play in the enhancement of school leadership. The Manifesto on Education

highlights *ubuntu* as one of the important aspects and the need for it to be linked to the values cherished in the Constitution (DoE, 2001). *Ubuntu* is said to emerge out of the political tumult prior the 1990s and peacemakers wanted to ensure that in the process of creating a new framework, they would formulate a sentiment that would become part of the defining vision of the democracy (DoE, 2001). Furthermore, this publication states that there was a need in South Africa "for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimisation" (DoE, 2001, p.15).

Much Western literature sheds light on values that are cornerstone to *ubuntu*. Prinsloo (1998) argues that the concepts used within *ubuntu* context are not unfamiliar to Western thinking. Sharing, brotherhood, dignity and trust can be found in Western contexts (Prinsloo, 1998). Western literature also uses concepts such as participative leadership and the latter is similar to this article's view of *ubuntu* leadership. Furthermore, Prinsloo explains that *ubuntu* is religious, expansive, transcendental and centrifugal (1998).

In this study, I look at the potential of *ubuntu* leadership model in a school. The main question explored was: Can participative-based strategies embedded in *ubuntu* help school leaders in enhancing the teachers' positive attitude towards change?

Sub-question addressed was the following:

●   Are teachers readily receptable to participative strategies of leadership as associated with *ubuntu* principles?

Ubuntu demystified

Among others, the current system of education in South Africa aspires to bring forth a system that would be comparable to education systems around the world. Mbigi (1997) contended that if a competitive, developed nation is to be built, collective solidarity in African life should find its expression in the modern forms of business entrepreneurship, business organisations and management. This collective solidarity contains a number of values that can influence how people make choices in life. Broodryk (2006) states that *ubuntu* worldview contains the basic values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion. Furthermore, Broodryk points out that these core values are associated with other positive values such as warmth, empathy, giving, commitment and love. Mbigi (2000, p.6) also explains *ubuntu* as literally

meaning "I am because you are – I can only be a person through others". The latter is very close to Chikanda's definition of the concept. Prinsloo (1998) cites Chikanda who stated that *ubuntu* is *African Humanism* that involves alms-giving, sympathy, care, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness.

The concept of *ubuntu* is very crucial for a number of institutions in the society and this includes schools. As South African school leaders are assuming leadership roles they need the best leadership models, philosophies and strategies to help them in this regard. Arguably, *ubuntu* is one philosophy that can help in developing practices of doing things together in organisations (Mbigi, 1997). *Ubuntu* has become prominent under the democratic dispensation in South Africa. Mbigi (1997) posits that the concept is both uniquely African and universal for it is implicitly expressed elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, Mbigi argues that South African organisations are faced with ruthless global competition hence the need to negotiate a shared common agenda in organisations. Common among the discussions above is the idea of interconnectedness among people which is espoused by *ubuntu*. A number of African languages reflect this humanness, this inter-dependence among people. *Ubuntu* is based on these principles.

In support of the above the DoE publication (2001, p.16) states that out of the values of *ubuntu* follows the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect which are at the centre of making schools places of effective culture of learning and teaching. The publication further points out:

> Equality might require us to put up with people who are different, non-sexism and non-racism might require us to rectify the inequities of the past, but *ubuntu* goes much further: it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference. . . Ultimately; *ubuntu* requires you to respect others if you are to respect yourself.

This article focuses on how this concept can be applied to leadership in schools. Adair (2006) differentiates between leadership and management. On the one hand, he explains that leadership is of the spirit compounded of personality and vision while on the other he describes management as a phenomenon of the mind more of accurate calculation, of methods and routine. Furthermore, Adair explains that leadership is the understanding and sharing of a common purpose without which there can be no effective leadership. For Adair, while managers manage change, leaders manage growth. In this article *ubuntu* leadership refers to the management and nurturing of growth within an organisation. *Ubuntu* style of leading an organisation involves a departure from hierarchically structured management

relations and rather introduces a cooperative and supportive form of leadership in which collective solidarity of the group is employed and respected (Prinsloo 1998). Furthermore, Prinsloo cites Mbigi who points out that *ubuntu* is a social survival strategy that developed from adverse social and geographic circumstances in which people had to cooperate to survive. Mbigi (2004) points out that it is the role of leadership to bring meaning and hope in any situation and into the confusing world characterised by rapid and chaotic change. Furthermore, Mbigi states that in indigenous African traditions the leader is the one who is the medium of hope and channel for meaning. In schools, the principals as leaders need to take a lead role as they assist their teachers to make meaning of the leadership challenges that thwart certain schools.

Mbigi and Maree (2005) argue that the African village is based on mutual trust, respect and care and they maintain that these are elements that modern South African organisations should strengthen and convert into a competitive edge. This is supported by Khoza (1994) who opines that *ubuntu* has practical implications for the work place. Among these are values such as creative cooperation, empathetic communication and team work (Khoza, 1994). These values can be very crucial for leadership in schools especially, schools that are dysfunctional. Schools striving for success can use *ubuntu* philosophy to enhance effective leadership and meaningful followership that might translate to a collective solidarity among colleagues. It appears that a number of writers have agreed that the principle of *ubuntu* has to be transmitted into the management practice (Teffo, 1999:).

The study

This investigation was conducted as a case study in one historically black school where a new principal was experimenting on the values of *ubuntu* in her leadership role. I had gone to investigate the cause of certain managerial problems in township schools and I discovered that as a new principal, she was in the process of transforming the school leadership policies. According to the principal and five of her staff members, she had inherited a school "that was fraught with mismanagement, low morale of teachers, disobedient learners and aloof parents". When she assumed the position, the school, (which is situated in an urban Eastern Cape township), was experiencing all sorts of challenges. Many teachers were despondent stating that they were also frustrated by the changes in education while their school was languishing in the doldrums of educational set up. The school has twenty-nine teachers excluding the school principal. Research was conducted through observations

and interviews over a period of ten months. Not all teachers were willing to be interviewed or be observed though. Five teachers neither allowed the research team to observe them nor interview them.

Educational ethnographic methods were employed in the study. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) described the purpose of educational ethnography as providing rich, descriptive data about the contents, activities and beliefs of participants in educational settings. Like all other field studies, ethnography takes place in natural settings. Bailey (1987) pointed out that in ethnographic research; the observers attempt to become part of the culture or subculture that they are studying. Furthermore, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) stated that in an ethnographic study the researchers try to render a 'true to life' picture of what people say and how they act and hear the people's words and actions are left to speak for themselves. For ten months we (myself and two co-researchers) studied the particular culture of that school visiting the school at least twice a week. In most visits we were complete observers as we adopted a passive role thus minimising contaminating the setting. The aim was to be as objective as possible. This was a crucial aspect for such an ethnographic study for as ethnographers it was crucial to understand the culture of the participants fully well. The data gathered became so rich as a result of these frequent visits to the school.

In the school (which we shall name Liso High School) we visited teachers in their classrooms, in staff meetings and also attended four teacher-parents meetings. In two separate occasions we also became part of meetings between the school management and the Learners Representative Council. The methods used in the study ensured that we study the participants in natural settings. Weiss (1998, p.257) pointed out that among the many advantages of qualitative research and the natural setting are:

* Greater awareness of the perspective of programme participants
* Capability of understanding dynamic developments in the programme as it evolves
* Awareness of time and history
* Special sensitivity to the influence of context
* Alertness to unanticipated and unplanned events

Methods used

The principal and twenty-four other teachers were interviewed during the course of the study. Of these twenty-four teachers thirteen are male and eleven

are female. Questions asked during interviews were open ended and teachers were given a chance to comment on teaching in general and management specifically. The teachers who are in management positions, the heads of department (HODs) and the deputy principal were interviewed more than the ordinary post level 1 teachers. Many post level 1 teachers (there were eighteen in the sample) were interviewed on average four times each during the course of the study. Once before the study commenced, twice while we were actively conducting the study on site and once when we were about to conclude the findings. However, the school management team was interviewed several times. On average six interviews were conducted with management members. Questions raised were on management and teaching. We also shadowed the principal for three weeks, one full week at the beginning and one full week in the middle of the study and one full week before the conclusion of the study.

Observations were crucial in the process of information gathering. We observed a number of factors in classrooms and meetings. Most of the time as researchers we wanted to see whether there was any change of leadership in Liso High School. We also wanted to see how the school functions when participative leadership strategies are introduced. In the classroom we looked at how teachers managed their classrooms investigating whether the leadership style of the principal had any impact upon the classroom practice of her teachers. We were able to visit sixteen teachers in their classrooms over the period of four months. Among other aspects we were interested in was how teachers were reflecting department's policy in teaching aspects of *ubuntu* in the classroom. In meetings we observed how these were handled observing aspects such as participation, facilitation of the meetings. We were also interested as to how crucial decisions were reached in these meetings.

The findings

The study unravelled much about issues around culture, tradition and teacher change. The principal is working with a staff who have not been used to effective management strategies. The previous principal was a person who exercised a *laissez-faire* approach to the management in her school. There was never proper management of classrooms and the teachers' performance was never evaluated. The school was even condemned by the community around it as 'a failure and a useless school'. As a result of this form of management teachers were usually not sure what to expect from management. When Ms. Molo, the new principal arrived at the school, teachers seemed to have been taken aback in being delegated to do several duties. Many teachers were not used to perform other duties in the school. They appeared not to see their role

in school management. As the principal stated:

> When we prepared for the parents' evening, I could see that a number of my colleagues were surprised when I gave them various roles to perform during the parents' meeting. Many of them expected me to do everything including welcoming, financial reports, learners' progress and so on. They did not expect to take part in the programme.

Molo also reported huge apathy when she came to the school. She said she suspected that it was a matter of her colleagues "being wary of a person coming from outside and was gradually changing their culture". Molo also stated that it appeared as if few teachers understood her idea of democracy and even those who did could not practise it. They hardly wanted to get involved in school matters at all. The teachers expected her to be a treasurer, a manager, a choir conductor, a sports mistress and various other roles. None of the teachers took any role in extra-mural activities when Molo arrived at the school. The previous organisational culture in the school reflected less staff participation in activities. The apparent failure for Molo to set goals shows the challenges of introducing a new culture and tradition within an organisation. According to Prinsloo (1998) introduction of new traditions might require further training and development and workers need to understand the competitive survival issues facing them. The latter did not appear to be true for this school. The teachers did not seem to understand their school as well as their roles. Prinsloo states that workers must understand the organisation so as to be able to contribute to and participate in planning procedures and organising teams.

In trying to institute a new organisational culture which involved teachers, Molo moved for a more inclusive approach to management. The idea of the collective is very basic to the *ubuntu* philosophy which she was consciously trying to implement. She was changing the leadership paradigm in the school. The principal rotated a number of roles in the school. The teacher's school committee's portfolios were changed in each of the four quarters of the year. What she wanted was for all teachers "to have a feel of what it felt to be a school's treasurer, sports teacher or secretary". At some point the teachers were very concerned when she apparently gave a position of treasurer to an alleged alcoholic. The teacher gave up after two weeks because he said he "could not balance the books". Talking about her staff members, Molo said she achieved a level of success with the teacher. She averred:

> You see most of them never carried any responsibility positions in the school. Therefore it was quite a shock for all of them to find that they were assuming positions of high importance in the school. I could see their apathy persisting. However, many got embarrassed when they had to report what they had done. This taught many to be very responsible at the end.

Molo stressed the show of respect for all her teachers. All the teachers were treated as equals as the principal tried out team approaches to leadership which are based on mutual respect. However, many were sceptical especially at first. One teacher emphasized:

> We do not understand this. We are not used to be involved in issues such as coordinating meetings, fund raising initiatives and school governance. We have always not concerned ourselves with things outside our classrooms. We think this lady wants us to run this school for her.

Molo encountered much resistance from teachers who seemed not ready for the challenge of taking responsibility for many school duties. The staff members appeared to expect to be told what to do at all time. The kind of shared leadership envisaged by the principal did not seem to work. The teachers were consciously or unconsciously refusing to take up the gauntlet of changing their schools for the better. This was a form of leadership where the principal was trying to infuse elements of *ubuntu*. These included some of the aspects mentioned above such as collective solidarity, respect, sharing and compassion. Molo arrived at a school where teachers did not reflect any of these qualities and the previous management style in the school was always cited as a reason by some participants. *Ubuntu* philosophy was struggling because of either the teachers' dependence upon leader's judgement or their apathy towards school management. Few ever shared their professional experiences. With the advent of the new National Curriculum Statement (NCS) teachers in a number of schools are unsure about their classroom practice hence they opt for teacher isolation rather than risk exposing their inadequacies pertaining to the new curriculum.

The paradox of educational change in South Africa though is that the NCS envisages a new kind of teacher who has different attributes from the teachers under apartheid education. The NCS regards teachers as key contributors to educational transformation in South Africa (DoE, 2002). Furthermore, this publication highlights different roles that teachers are expected to assume and these include being leaders, administrators and managers. The Schools Act of South Africa (SASA) which has influenced the governance of schools is based on the Constitution of the Republic. The School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are supposed to work in partnership in school governance. Effective partnership in schools has the following qualities:

> Mutual trust and respect
> Shared decision making
> Common vision
> Open communication
> Good teamwork

> Promotion of the interests of the partnership rather than those of the individual
> Respect for the roles of different partners

> (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch, 1997, p.8)

Liso needed the above qualities among the teachers in particular. The above qualities clearly show the need for solidarity and oneness in the workplace. Mbigi and Maree (2005) talk of the solidarity principle of *ubuntu* and one finds it very close to the above.

Teacher isolation in Liso meant that there was no interdependence among colleagues. The principal tried to initiate 'subject teams' headed by the heads of departments. The latter structures hardly worked in the first four months because the teachers were not used to working together in issues pertaining to professional development. They lacked the necessary diligence and for some time the teachers in the study were highly opposed to management changes. At the beginning a number of them thought that the management strategy that the principal wanted to introduce was more linked to NCS. As one lady participant put it:

> The principal is not likely to succeed in implementing this new curriculum. We have tried
> this before and it has not worked. One person cannot do it, we've been to several workshops
> and few of us could really come to grips with the new system.

Teachers only began to grasp the basics of the 'new leadership' months after their principal arrived. Molo regarded herself a leader of change who was constantly trying to introduce leadership based on solidarity, respect and democracy and all these happen to be aspects that are part of *ubuntu* philosophy. She was also labelling what she was introducing as *ubuntu* leadership as it was based on some values of *ubuntu*. It was interesting to note how the teachers changed their belief systems towards the end of the study. By the eight month a majority of teachers stated that they could 'see' the direction the principal was taking. One teacher union site committee member stated that:

> You have to remember that teachers come from a past where their input was not valued. We
> were very suspicious of authority. But the irony here is that here is a leader who wants to
> give us voice and a will to participate fully in school governance but again we are suspicious.
> That is what history has done to us.

Similarly one of the heads of department reflected on how teachers tend to mistrust colleagues. This is what she said at the beginning of the study:

> Sometimes you call a teacher and you show them what they do wrong maybe or something
> similar to that. Like one teacher in my department who never does lesson plans. These are

crucial for me to control the work. But he went to other colleagues saying that I was victimising him. It is difficult and challenging to be in school management when teachers do not trust one another.

Concerning classroom practice, a number of teachers tried hard to use methods congruent with the NCS. Yet it was clear that many were still struggling in really moving away from the exclusively teacher-centred approaches even when their learners were sitting in groups. Through classroom visits with me though the principal tried in a collegial fashion to point out the weaknesses to teachers as she tried to build their classroom practice, trying to manage change as a leader.

Discussion

The study has shown that some of the idealized values in our society cannot be easily assimilated by people. With the transformation in the South African education there have been many debates on what we need to do in order to change our education system for the better. Values such as *ubuntu* have all been highlighted in bringing forward educational change. The study above however, has illustrated two aspects in particular:

1.   That teachers who have not been prepared to be change agents will not be able to embrace values such as *ubuntu*

2.   That the so called *ubuntu* models are not necessarily providing simple cut and dried solutions. There will still be many who will see these as oppressive or opposed to their own value systems.

The discussion of the findings will be completed under three themes namely:

●   *Ubuntu*, communalism and leadership
●   Common vision and *ubuntu*
●   Re-education: confronting teacher fears in a time of change

Ubuntu, communalism and leadership

The literature cited above reflects communalism as one of the important cornerstones of *ubuntu*. Khoza (1994) refers to communalism as collectivism. Prinsloo (1998) cites Khoza who points out that communalism is any of the several types of social organisation in which the individual is seen as being subordinate to a social collectivity such as state, a nation, a race, a social class.

According to Khoza *ubuntu* broadens the respect for the individual and the respect of each person in the social unit (Prinsloo, 1998). In a school mired in a series of mismanagement incidents and negative competition, the strategies introduced by the principal of Liso developed a sense of communalism. The majority of teachers stated that they have learnt to be communal in their approach to school leadership. The participants in the study pointed out that before the principal's implementation of leadership strategies, teachers were more apathetic and tended to 'compete negatively'. One HOD cited an example of how teachers tended to demean those who were experiencing problems in the implementation of the NCS. The HOD stated that although "at the end of 10 months the school is not perfect, but there is a culture of communalism and democracy creeping in". In fact, this was evident in the various aspects of the school. Teachers began to believe in working together after much resistance. Communalism meant that there developed respect for one another and the goals of the organisations became more important for the group.

Looking at communalism, it was clear that it had much impact on enhancement of leadership. The teachers at the school unanimously agreed that they used to work 'separately and selfishly'. The concept of *ubuntu* and communalism that the principal introduced enhanced team participation, sharing of skills as well as ideas. Mbigi and Maree (2005) point out that *ubuntu* is a collective, shared experience and solidarity and all these are crucial for the development of people and organisations. The participants in the study expressed how the concept of working as a unit helped in minimising problems. Workshops on team building, team teaching, as well as coaching are some of the aspects that the principal introduced to enhance the idea of solidarity and the teachers gradually internalised these values. Teachers grasped the 'new culture differently; some were more amenable to change. However, what was interesting was that the 'new culture' had clear effects upon the teachers who were not part of the sample. They were not interviewed or observed but we could see how they worked well in a team as their apathy waned. *Ubuntu* clearly led to some kind of shared vision.

Common vision and *ubuntu*

Mbigi (2000) refers to common vision within the *ubuntu* context as collective visioning. He also states that it is crucial in creating a new collective mindset. The theory of shared leadership is one of the frequently discussed theories in literature particularly that from the 'west'. Mrs Molo initially stated that her staff did not have a common vision. By inculcating communalism and democratic leadership, she was also consciously trying to build a teaching

corps that shared a certain vision. The principal arrived at a school where teachers cherished and probably unconsciously clung to top-down strategies of management. She found 'a management structure that was autocratic'. She maintained that she needed to rebuild the staff to confirm to certain values of equality. She saw the sharing of 'collective vision and values crucial for the development of the school'. Mbigi and Maree (2005) refer to *ubuntu* as a spirit of collective development and reconstruction in organisations.

Sharing a common vision within the *ubuntu* context means creating a right balance between the individual and the group. The right balance between individualism and collectivism is made possible by accommodating people's need for dignity, self-respect and regard for others seriously (Prinsloo, 1998). Molo says she arrived at a school divided by many elements; age, union affiliation, party politics and post level were some of the factors that made teachers not to share common values and vision. Yet Nel (1994) averred that shared vision is the deepest binding principle that enables employees to be united within an organisation. Common vision, as evident in this study, ensures that employees are able to fight their doubts and fears.

Re-education: confronting fears

Among other challenges of leadership is the task of leading change. This is a time when leaders need to allay the fears of the employees. Molo experienced many challenges when she had to prepare her staff for changes and two of these were re-educating the staff and secondly addressing the teachers' fears. The principal was introducing a new culture, a different kind of leadership. The *ubuntu* principles she was inculcating were an endeavour to create harmony among the individuals and their community around them. It appeared to be the fear of new responsibility and new culture that made the teachers to have certain fears and feel inadequate as professionals.

Ubuntu philosophy and change management was an experience of teacher empowerment. The teachers were not part of the 'school community', the collective. They were also isolated in their classrooms fearing to share experiences, good or bad. One of the initial exercises that the principal did was to provide the teachers with an instrument (a questionnaire) one morning which asked the teachers to write about their experiences as professionals. Many questions needed the teachers to reflect on their practice and express their beliefs when it came to change and change management. Each questionnaire had ten questions. A sample from the questionnaire is below:

1.   What kind of a leader are you?
2.   Why is collective/participative leadership important?
3.   Should democracy be the cornerstone of leadership? Why?
4.   Is the current change in education necessary?
5.   Do we need *ubuntu* as a form of leadership in our school? Explain briefly.
6.   Is it crucial for the principal to be the sole leader in change management?

When this questionnaire was administered by the principal at the beginning many teachers could not answer some of the questions with confidence. Many stated that for the first time they began to think about teacher roles and obligations. Seventy per cent of the teachers for example could not really articulate the role of teachers in change management. Sixty-five per cent thought that the principal should lead change in a school alone. Fifty per cent did not really understand how *ubuntu* can apply in a school. They thought this only 'had to do with customs and traditions of black people'. It is however, amazing how the same questions although asked differently on the ninth month of the research enabled teachers to come with more well thought of responses that displayed their growth.

From the study, many participants were for a couple of months still believing in 'old-style' of management. The following appeared new to them:

(a)   Teachers were not used to shared leadership – many teachers still needed boss-driven approaches. There was no motivation to innovate and bring strategies in sharing management duties. The professional maturity of the majority of teachers is very low to such an extent that they could not share duties well. Towards the end of the year there were a few teachers who appeared to have a full understanding of what was expected of them under the new leadership style of the principal.

(b)   Magnifying parental and community role – For a number of years the school had been operating without any efforts to involve parents in school matters. The community around the school was so alienated that they were not sure if there was any role they could play in the school. However, Molo tried hard to involve community in some school governance matters. The school is situated in an informal settlement area, many parents belong to low socio economic status and have low level of education. Few of them made efforts to become part of the School Governing Body, yet those who involved themselves who were about fifty, out of a possible three hundred found them being part of a team that was making crucial decisions for the school.

For the majority of the participants, *ubuntu* as a philosophy worked in the

school only after the participants started to understand themselves as well as their practice as professionals. Teffo (1999) pointed out that all that companies need is a mentor to teach or preach *ubuntu*. Teffo also states that this will go a long way into answering the question of: "How do we incorporate *ubuntu* in our management style?" (p.164). The idea of introducing a mentor is very crucial especially when one looks at the crucial aspect of preparing the workers as the climate is made conducive to be receptive to *ubuntu* models. While the principal at the school appeared to be a mentor to all her teachers, she also invited a few speakers, on average two a month to speak on various aspects of leadership. These speakers also incorporated the *ubuntu* concepts in their speeches.

What lacked most in Liso high school was the necessary cooperation. Regarding this Teffo (1999, p.164) points out:

> *Ubuntu* empowers people to love and respect each other. In the search for a new management style, the writing of memos may have to be supplemented by communication (follow-up oral presentation and/or discussions). It would yield better results if the director or manager were to go to the people and discuss issues with them.

It was through the principal's efforts that enabled the concept of *ubuntu* to be fairly accepted in the school. The principal brought in some form of re-education and encouraged teachers to reflect continuously upon their practice. The study also showed that when *ubuntu* is made to function well, it can enhance the school performance. Yet as pointed out above, there needs to be some form of voluntary re-education among the teachers. They need to be predisposed to change management.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study showed that *ubuntu* worldview can have a positive impact when its principles are used effectively in leading a school. Yet *ubuntu* demands a paradigm shift, a change in what many employees have been used to. As witnessed above, much research has shown the potential of participative-based strategies. However, aspects such as caring, sharing, respect and compassion might be challenging to internalise for many workers. *Ubuntu* poses this challenge of fostering a culture of interconnectedness and interdependence among workers. The principal in this study ensured that the staff followed and believed in a common vision that would lead to some form of communalism. Furthermore, this study also leads one to concur with Mbigi that *ubuntu* is a philosophy that can assist in developing practices of doing tasks together in an organisation (Mbigi, 1997). When people work together in a team, sharing a vision, they will tend to shirk apathy due to the positive

aspects of the collective and communal way of thinking. *Ubuntu* style of leadership does lay foundation for these qualities. Currently, *ubuntu* is about transforming belief systems as people look forward into the future. Leaders and followers all need to be prepared for it. It is apt to close with Mbigi's argument when he points out:

> Effective leadership requires us to have convivial experiences by digging deep into our emotional and spiritual resources. It is difficult to create a new society with unchanged people and unchanged leaders. We cannot give the world what we don't have. For us to pass on the flu, we need to have the flu.

<div align="right">(Mbigi, 1997. p.15)</div>

References

Adair, J. 2006. Not *bosses but leaders: How to lead the way to success*. London: Kogan Page.

Bailey, K. 1987. *Methods of social research*. New York: The Free Press.

Broodryk, J. 2006. *Ubuntu: life coping skills from Africa*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing.

Department of Education (DoE). 2001. *Manifesto on values, education and democracy*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Education (DoE). 2002. *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9*. Schools Policy. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Goetz, J.P. and LeCompte, M.D. 1984. *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. Orlando: Academic Press.

Khoza, R. 1994. The need for an Afrocentric approach to management. In Christie, P., Lessem, R. and Mbigi, L. (Eds). *African management: philosophies, concepts and applications*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources, p.117–124.

Mahomed, H. 1999. The implementation of OBET in South Africa: pathway to success or recipe for failure? In Jansen, J. and Christie, P. (Eds). *Changing curriculum: studies on outcomes based education in South Africa*. Kenwyn: Juta, pp.157–170

Masitsa, M.G. 2005. The principal's role in restoring a learning culture in township secondary schools. *Africa Education Review* 2(2): pp.205–220.

Mbigi, L. 1997. *Ubuntu: the African dream in management*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.

Mbigi, L. 2000. *In search of the African business renaissance: an African cultural perspective*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.

Mbigi, L. 2004. *The spirit of African leadership*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.

Mbigi, L. and Maree, J. 2005. *Ubuntu: the spirit of African transformation management*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources.

Msila, V. 2005. The education exodus: the flight from township schools. *Africa Education Review*, 2(2): pp.173–188.

Nel, C. 1994. Value-centred leadership – the journey to becoming a world-class. In Christie, P., Lessem, R. and Mbigi, L.. (Eds). *African management: philosophies, concepts and applications.* Randburg: Knowledge Resources, p.125–142.

Potgieter, J.J., Visser, P.J., Van der bank, A.J., Mothata, M.S. and Squelch, J.M. 1997. *Understanding the SA Schools Act*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Prinsloo, E.D. 1998. *Ubuntu* culture and participatory management. In Coetzee, P.H. and Roux, A.P.J. (Eds).*The African philosophy reader*. London: Routledge, pp.41–51.

Reeves, C. and Ralphs, M. 1994. *The struggle to teach*. Johannesburg: Maskew Miller.

Singh, P. 2002. Collegiality in education: a case study. *South African Journal of Education*, 22(1): pp.56–64.

Steyn, G.M. and Van Wyk, J.N. 1999. Job satisfaction: perception of principals and teachers in urban black schools in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education,* 19(1): pp.37–43.

Taylor, S.J. and Bogdan, R. 1984. *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. New York: John Wiley.

Teffo, L. 1999. Moral renewal and African experience(s). In Makgoba, M.W. (Ed.). *African renaissance*. Mafube: Cape Town, pp.149–169.

Weiss, C.H. 1998. *Evaluation: methods for studying programs and policies*. New Jersey: Upper Saddle River.

Vuyisile Msila
Faculty of Education
Nelson Mandel Metropolitan University

vuyisile.msila@nmmu.ac.za

'We did not put our pieces together': exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens

Callie Grant

Abstract

Research in education leadership has been dominated by a traditional view of leadership which separates school leaders from teachers. More recent research calls for distributed forms of leadership where all teachers are viewed as having the capacity to lead and where power is redistributed across the organisation. This article argues for the critical importance of linking professional development initiatives to issues of leading. It explores specifically, teacher leadership in relation to a professional development initiative attended by educators from four schools in KwaZulu-Natal. It reports on qualitative data gathered from school management team (SMT) members, teachers and project leaders collected eight months after the initiative, using questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Findings reveal that teacher leadership in terms of the implementation of the new pedagogic learning was restricted to individual classrooms with little take-up as a whole school initiative. This suggests that conditions in the schools were not always conducive to authentic collaboration, redistribution of power and teacher leadership. It further suggests the need for professional development initiatives to consciously address leadership issues and post-initiative support processes when they are conceptualised. The paper calls for a radical reconceptualisation of leadership where leadership is understood as a shared activity involving a range of social relationships with educators operating as agents for change as they work towards the goal of improved teaching and learning.

Introduction

This paper uses the concept of teacher leadership within a framework of distributed leadership theory to report on a school-based model of professional development which was explicitly designed to offer teachers opportunities to practise new pedagogic learning in an authentic teaching context before returning to their schools in order to assist with 'take-up' (after Adler, 2002) of the new learning in their classrooms and schools. In this paper I work from the premise that the central focus of education leadership is to set direction and guide the school in achieving its core function of effective teaching and learning. In order to achieve this core function, leadership must be understood as a shared process which involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and

develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school. In other words, I am suggesting that teaching and learning is central to educational leadership. And, if this is the case, then it follows that the continuing professional development of educators is a crucial element of education leadership. So I argue that any teacher professional development initiative must be linked to issues of leading. For without addressing issues of leadership, the take-up of the new learning from any initiative is likely to remain at a personal level and become restricted to individual classrooms. It is within the framework of critical education leadership, I believe, that the take-up of new learning as a whole school initiative is more likely to occur. And this requires a culture of communication, collaboration and questioning in a distributed leadership context where teachers, whether operating as formal or informal leaders, create an environment in which to grapple with the new learning, share ideas, take calculated risks in implementing the new ideas and reflect critically on the process with a view to ongoing improvement. It is within these professional learning communities (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) that power in the school is redistributed and where teachers can operate as leaders as they strive towards a more equitable society.

Leading through distribution

This paper works from the premise that 'leadership' is a process which works towards movement and change in an organisation while 'management' is the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Although distinct processes, both leadership and management are needed for an organisation to prosper (Kotter, 1990). However leadership and management processes have traditionally been located within a single individual and most often been equated with headship (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Grant, 2006). In contrast to this singular view of leadership, I believe that leaders can exist at all levels of an organisation and, in the context of this paper, a school. I particularly like Gunter's (2005) definition of education leadership because it links leadership to teaching and learning, it views leadership inclusively and it includes the capacity building of educators. Theorising from a critical perspective, she is of the opinion that

> education leadership is concerned with productive social and socialising relationships where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agent is connected with others in their own and others' learning. Hence it is inclusive of all, and integrated with teaching and learning.
>
> (Gunter, 2005, p.6)

This inclusive approach to leadership as well as its capacity building aspect is

at the heart of the distributive leadership model. As Harris and Muijs explain, "Distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise where it exists in the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role (2005, p. 28). They go on to say that distributed leadership offers the school "multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture" (2005, p.31). For Gronn, distributed leadership is a group activity where influence is distributed throughout the organisation and where "leadership is seen as fluid and emergent rather than as a fixed phenomenon" (2000, p.324). Similarly, as Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods (2003, p.3) remind us, "distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual 'to others', rather it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise".

A useful characterisation of distributed leadership is offered by Gunter (2005). She suggests that distributed leadership is currently, in research, being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic. Firstly, *authorised* distributed leadership is where tasks are distributed from the principal to others in a hierarchical system of relations where the principal has positional authority. This type of leadership can also be termed 'delegated leadership' and is evident where there are "teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation" (Woods, 2004, p.6). Secondly, *dispersed* distributed leadership refers to a process where much of the workings of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more autonomous, emergent process "through networks in which the private interests of the individual are promoted through group and/or collective actions, and through the community where the public good secures the defence of the individual" (Gunter, 2005, p.52). This type of leadership opens up the space for what Gronn terms "co- or partner principalships" (2003, p.151) and which centres on "spontaneity" and "intuitive working relations" (*ibid.*, pp.42–43). Dispersed distributed leadership, through sharing the leadership tasks more widely and redefining roles, shifts the power relations in the school in the achievement of the predefined organisational goals and values. Thirdly, *democratic* distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004) and raises questions that encompass "how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change" (Gunter, 2005, p.57).

Thus the concept of distributed leadership, as characterised above, is powerful in that it opens up a variety of possibilities for teachers to lead in different areas, at different times and with different purposes in their professional lives.

Teacher leadership

Implicit within the model of distributed leadership are the leadership practices of teachers. Teacher leadership, as it is known in the research literature, provides an important starting point in exploring how distributed leadership works in schools as it provides "operational images of joint agency in action and illustrates how distributed forms of leadership can be developed and enhanced to contribute to school development and improvement" (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p.440). Teacher leadership is understood and defined differently by many different writers internationally. But, as Harris and Lambert emphasise, the definitions tend to have one point in common which is that "teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed" (2003, p.44). They further explain that teacher leadership has as its core "a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth" (2003, p.43). In the South African context, the concept of teacher leadership is new and is slowly emerging as a new area of research interest (see Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Singh, 2007; Rajagopaul, 2007). Developing on the definition of teacher leadership by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), I have argued that, for the South African context, teacher leadership can be understood as:

> a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal and formal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust.
>
> (Grant, forthcoming)

From the above brief discussion of teacher leadership it becomes apparent that, in order for teacher leadership to emerge in a school, certain structural and cultural conditions are necessary. These include, firstly, a culture of distributed leadership within the school (Grant, 2006) where teacher leaders are supported by school management and other teachers (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001); secondly, collaboration and shared decision-making within a culture of mutual trust, support and enquiry (Harris and Lambert, 2003); and, finally, support by the school's management team for teachers' professional development by providing time and resources for continuing professional

development activities and by validating the concept of teacher leadership (Muijs and Harris, 2003).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) call for schools to become professional learning communities where democratic and participatory decision-making exists and where teachers can thrive and make a difference through the actions they take in such school contexts. The concept of 'communities of practice' (after Wenger, 1998) is useful here to develop our understanding of this culture of collaboration and participation. People, and therefore teachers too, belong to many different communities of practice at different times in their lives, some of which are "sometimes so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons are also quite familiar (1998, p.7). These communities are characterised by learning as social participation through mutual engagement and the negotiation of meaning where participation is a process of "being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998, p.4). Learning takes place, according to Lave and Wenger (1999), with the increased participation in communities of practice and it is within these professional communities, I argue, that one can find teacher leaders. However, as Ash and Persall (2000) emphasise, professional development initiatives should not be imposed by a central office but should rather be site-based and collaborative and should take cognizance of the goals of the school and the needs of individuals. To a large extent this was the case with the professional development initiative reported on in this paper. A further important point to make is that authentic teacher leadership too cannot be imposed but will emerge as teachers embrace new initiatives and innovate in a climate of trust and mutual learning (Grant, 2006). Explained slightly differently, teacher leadership is more a "form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impact directly on the quality of teaching and learning" (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43). It can involve teachers working for change in a school by changing classroom practice itself, by working together with other teachers on curriculum issues, by working at a whole school level to bring about change or by networking across schools (Grant, 2006). It must be emphasised at this point that pursuing teacher leadership within different communities of practice in a school does not suggest that the role of the principal becomes redundant. On the contrary, the role of those people in formal management positions is critical in enabling teacher leadership and creating opportunities for teachers to lead through the creation of a culture of collaboration and by using the strengths and talents of the individual teachers. The task of the SMT becomes one of holding "the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.28).

The professional development initiative

The project which frames this paper was a result of a partnership established between the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa and Bridgewater State College (BSC), Massachusetts, USA. The goal of the project was to develop and research a replicable and effective school-based model of professional development for teachers in KwaZulu-Natal (Farrar, 2006). This model was specifically designed to overcome some of the limitations of the 'cascade model' of professional development, a model which has dominated teacher professional development in South Africa during the last decade. Said differently, the aim of the school-based model was to introduce news ways of teaching and learning to teachers in a way which, after the initiative, would have a sustained impact on the schools.

Drawing on Thomson and Staknevich, (2007), Phase One of the initiative comprised five simultaneous Professional Development courses offered in one township school (School A) in Sobantu just outside Pietermaritzburg, during the July school holiday in 2006. The initiative consisted of five simultaneous week-long teacher development courses, identified by the teachers in the initial needs analysis and defined as crisis areas by the National Department of Education. The courses offered were Emergent Literacy, Reading and Writing across the Curriculum, Mathematical Literacy, Enquiry-based Learning and Reading Assessment and Instruction. This project involved a team of 29 staff and post-graduate students from UKZN and BSC and 33 educators from a cluster of four neighbouring primary schools in the Sobantu Township. The schools were selected because of their context of previous disadvantage, because of their proximity to each other and to UKZN and because relationships between the schools already existed. All four principals enthusiastically supported the initiative and played a vital role in the project and it was they who encouraged their entire staff to attend. Of the 33 educators who attended, 12 were SMT members (including three of the four principals) and 21 were post level one teachers. Learners from all four schools, divided into grade groups, were present for the entire week at School A. The school-based model used during the initiative simulated a real life teaching – learning situation and was specifically designed to increase potential for implementation of new strategies or take-up. Formal teaching was followed by exercises for practical application of the teaching with a group of real learners. During the five-day period teachers from each school were asked to sit with their colleagues at lunch time to share what was happening in the different courses and also to discuss take-up in the school afterwards.

This paper is concerned with Phase Two of the project which explores the take-up of the pedagogical learning in the four schools eight months after the curriculum courses were delivered. It does this through the lens of distributed leadership and teacher leadership.

Research design

Research questions

During this second phase of the project, the following broad research question guided the thinking of the researchers: "What leadership roles do teachers play in the take-up of the new pedagogic learning in their classrooms and schools? A secondary question was: what are the particular leadership challenges the educators face in implementing this new pedagogic learning?

Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature and took the form of a case study of the four schools involved in the professional development initiative. The participants were the educators (SMT members and teachers) from each of the four schools who had attended the initial courses as well as the project leaders (two UKZN academics). I would like to clarify at this point that I was not involved in Phase One of the project at all. I was invited to join the project at the beginning of Phase Two because the project leaders required an 'outsider' to be a part of the research process. It was hoped that this 'outsider' status would make it easier for participants to respond more honestly to my research questions, especially in cases where their reflections were critical of the initiative.

The research design involved collecting data using a multi-method approach in an attempt to obtain rich data so as, firstly, to describe the take-up of the new learning in each of the four schools and, secondly, to reflect critically on the professional development initiative. The *first* set of data was gathered from SMT members and teachers using semi-structured questionnaires which required open-ended qualitative responses. A total of 22 out of 35 questionnaires were completed and returned, a 63% return rate. School C had a low questionnaire return rate, due mainly to internal conflict in the school resulting from a dispute between the principal and deputy principal. A *second* set of data consisted of four semi-structured, focus group interviews with the SMT members, one at each school. A *third* data set consisted of three semi-structured, focus group interviews with the teachers. We did not interview

teachers at School B because of their non-involvement in the initiative. A *fourth* set of data was gathered from a semi-structured individual interview with each of the two UKZN project leaders while the *final* data set constituted the analysis of project documentation and reports. In a further attempt to make the findings more trustworthy, I and a researcher from the original team analysed the data together.
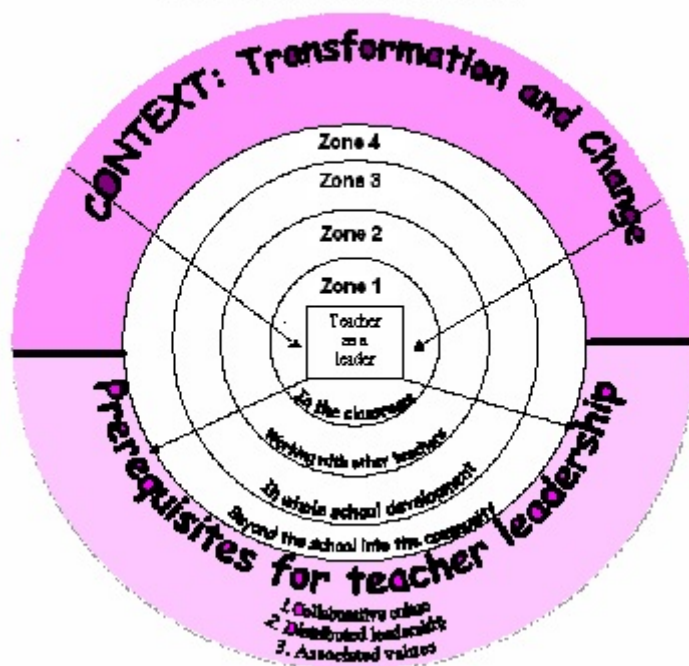
Data analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the data in this study. Working inductively and deductively, I developed my own tool for analysis. I used the notion of 'zones' developed in my earlier research into teacher leadership in the South African context where I suggested that teachers lead in four semi-distinct areas or 'zones' (Grant, 2006). In that paper, I argued that teacher leadership exists within the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Secondly, it exists between teachers when they discuss curriculum issues and work together in order to improve their teaching and learning. Thirdly, it extends beyond separate learning area foci into whole school planning, development and decision-making. Finally it exists beyond the school boundaries into the community and between neighbouring schools. These four 'zones' of teacher leadership are broad and provide the first level of analysis in this study. Within these four zones, I then used the six roles of teacher leadership identified by Devaney (1987, in Gehrke, 1991) as the second level of analysis. The six roles (re-ordered by me to articulate more coherently with the four zones) are:

1.   Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching
2.   Providing curriculum development knowledge
3.   Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
4.   Participating in performance evaluation of teachers
5.   Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice
6.   Participating in school level decision-making.

The diagram that follows illustrates how the levels of *zones* and *roles* work together in the analysis of the data from the four schools.

Figure 1: Towards a model of understanding of teacher leadership in South Africa

Teacher Leadership	
First level of analysis: Four Zones	Second level of analysis: Six Roles
One In the classroom	**One**: Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching
Two Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities	**Two**: Providing curriculum development knowledge
	Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
	Four: Participating in performance evaluation of teachers
Three Outside the classroom in whole school development	**Five**: Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice **Six**: Participating in school level decision-making
Four Between neighbouring schools in the community	**Two**: Providing curriculum development knowledge **Three**: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers

Analysis: zones of implementation

In the following sections data drawn from the study reveal that, in each of the four schools, implementation of the new pedagogic learning was most strongly identified in the zone of the classroom (Zone One). Teachers also operated as leaders outside their classrooms while working informally with other teachers (Zone Two) as they grappled with the new knowledge and methods learnt. Some also operated as leaders as they networked with teachers from other schools (Zone Four). However, the take-up of the new pedagogic learning did not move into a whole school framework (Zone Three) in any of the four schools. This primarily suggests a lack of articulation between the design of the professional development initiative and issues of leadership and take-up of the new learning. It also suggests that some of the schools in the study did not have a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making with the necessary structures in place to support teachers in a process of critical reflection and inquiry in relation to the new learning. It is to the data that I now turn. This section is presented according to the *zones* where teachers lead (Grant, 2006).

Zone one: Teacher leadership in the classroom

Within the zone of the classroom (Zone One), we have examples of teachers from all four schools taking up leadership in their classrooms and experimenting with some of the new pedagogic learning from the courses in order to improve their own teaching (Role One). For example one educator was of the view that "In the learning area that you attended (at the workshop), you feel at ease to implement what you have learnt without planning because you use the previous experience from the workshop" (Educator, School C). For another her "attitude to teaching changed. I was now exposed to different approaches and teaching skills. I worked with the learners at their level and got better results" (Educator, School A). In the context of the *Enquiry-based Learning* course, the following SMT member spoke of the value of the new learning for her: "I used to teach and rush to complete the lesson I am teaching. But I noticed that now when you teach, you must go steady. You teach, you observe the learners, the things they are doing, like the structures. It was an ongoing process; step-by-step-by-step" (SMT member, School B). For another educator, the new learning was in the area of classroom management as a result of increased confidence: "I understand it (the technology content) now and love to teach. The learners like to be at school because I don't bully or scold them." (Educator, School C). In the context of the *reading courses*, one participant reflected: "I found that absolutely fascinating, and we saw how the children themselves ordered and re-ordered and they actually learnt. . . "

(SMT member, School D). Tangible learner outcomes were reported by another participant: "My learners gained much from the language experience which also enhanced their vocabulary. Because of this my learners (Grade One) were able to compose a book in their own handwriting and illustrations by September which was exhibited at our Art and Culture exhibition" (Educator, School D). In the context of the *Mathematics courses*, an educator made a connection between method appropriateness and the age of the learner: "discovery of themes and concepts (in Mathematics) is far more interesting for the little child than learning or being told by the teacher or just informed" (Educator, School D). For another participant, the new pedagogic learning had resulted in an increased professional identity and confidence in teaching: "I really moved my mindset about Maths. It wasn't a science anymore. Now I know I can play games with Maths and talk about Maths!" (SMT member, School D).

From the data we get a picture of curriculum change in the classrooms as a result of the initiative. This suggests that the structure of the professional development initiative, organised around practical sessions with children, made it possible for teachers, on their return to schools, to take on leadership roles by experimenting in their classrooms with the strategies taught during the initiative. Of course, educators were conscious of and vocal about the barriers to implementing the new learning. The two most common barriers that emerged from the data were, not surprisingly, the difficulty of large class size and the issue of second language as the language of instruction for the majority of learners. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore these barriers.

Zone two: Teacher leadership through working with other teachers

There was varying take-up of teacher leadership in Zone Two in the four schools which, in most instances, was affected by a combination of school structure and teacher agency. In two of the four schools there is sufficient evidence to indicate the existence of teacher leadership in Zone Two where teachers, either in formal or informal positions of leadership, worked together with other teachers to grapple with the new pedagogic learning in order to improve their classroom practice. Within this zone of teacher leadership, I caught glimpses of the following three roles working together (Devaney, 1987 in Gehrke, 1991): providing curriculum development knowledge (Role Two), leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (Role Three) and participating in performance evaluation of teachers (Role Four).

In School A there was much evidence of teachers working together, discussing the new content and methods and attempting to implement this in their classrooms (Roles Two and Three) as the following quotation depicts: "After the winter holidays we held numerous informal group discussions, one-on-one talks and even talks to some that were unable to attend the workshop" (Educator, School A). An SMT member concurs: "Especially when they (the teachers) have a problem with a certain thing, they share ideas from that workshop. Try this and that" (SMT member, School A). At this school, the involvement of the SMT, and particularly the principal, in the courses seemed to have benefited the teachers implementing the new learning in their classrooms. This principal immersed herself in the courses and "really had a sense of how important the good teaching function is" (Project Leader 1). All the questionnaires spoke of a supportive SMT which: "encouraged us to implement what we have learnt during the workshop and they tried to organise a time for us to share ideas" (Educator, School A). Another educator adds: "Although we didn't meet formally but educators shared them during breaks and in the mornings" (Educator, School A). From the above quotations we get a feel of the encouragement and recognition that Harris (2003) argues is important for teacher leadership. The data offer us a picture of teachers providing curriculum knowledge to their colleagues through informal in-service education such as through discussion, reflection and mentoring. We get a sense of the teachers operating as leaders as they communicate with each other about their teaching in their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Regarding the role of performance evaluation of teachers (Role Four), one SMT member reflects with honesty on her failure to observe her peers, citing time as a barrier: "As an HOD, I am a full-time teacher, There is very little chance that I get to go out and observe, and to see how its being implemented" (SMT member, School A). However, another SMT member refers to a teacher who invited one of the university academics to observe her "because I felt I have really gained" (SMT, School A).

It seems from the data that at School D there were different levels of take-up of the new learning depending largely on the learning area concerned. For example, in Foundation Phase Mathematics the following happened: "In my phase meeting there were discussions on the different methods. Arrangements and discussions were made on how to implement the ideas. . . .The Grade 2 teacher drew up work based on the workshop. She shared her ideas with other teachers in her grade" (Educator, School D). However, in the Intermediate Phase language learning area the SMT member explained that she "did not get a chance to give any feedback to the staff or to any members of the SMT" (Educator, School D). This differentiation in terms of pedagogic take-up does suggest that some teachers were offering informal in-service education by

sharing the new methods and operating as leaders in developing work plans for the grades (Roles Two and Three). In this instance we have an example of a community of practice in action, characterised by learning as a social participation through mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998).

It is not really possible to discuss how teachers at School B worked together with other teachers as no teachers from that school attended the courses and therefore could not be expected to lead this process. In terms of School C, I do not feel sufficiently confident to claim how the new pedagogic learning was introduced due to the poor return rate of questionnaires from this school. The interview data from this school is, at times, contradictory in relation to this *zone* and so I make no claims about Zone Two at School C. In summary, the data thus far point to teacher leadership roles being taken up in Zone One in all four schools and in Zone Two at two schools. We now turn to Zone Three where a very different picture emerges.

Zone three: Teacher leadership and whole school development

Leading, sharing and planning for the new pedagogic learning as a whole school initiative did not happen formally at any of the four schools. In describing the process of implementation at School A, a participant says: "We didn't actually have a formal meeting where we cascaded them on the information we received but we did meet informally in our groups and we discussed the methods used" (SMT, School A). At School C a similar picture emerged, described in a slightly different way: "We did not put our pieces together. I don't know what they did; they don't know what I did. But at that point we were busy with policy. There was so much else" (Teacher, School C). Similarly, at School D the teachers reflected that: "We never really had a chance to talk about the different courses. . . I would have liked us all to come together and share – the whole staff. Especially for those of us working in the same phase" (Teacher, School D). For School B, the situation was different. The data spoke of the attempts of the SMT to introduce *Enquiry-based Learning* as a school based initiative, for example, a teacher comments: "To be frank enough, I did not attend the workshop but we had feedback from our Head on what transpired from the workshop. More emphasis was on Technology. As a school we have just started to look at the importance of Technology and seen the need to teach it in a proper way" (Educator, School B). The feedback to staff was SMT-led through informal meetings and one-on-one discussions with teachers.

It can be seen from the above discussion that the take-up of the new pedagogic learning by teachers as a whole school initiative did not happen in any of the four schools. There were no formal school meetings dedicated to the professional development initiative where staff members were given a chance to discuss and give feedback on their experiences in the courses. Neither were staff development meetings set up for teachers to reflect critically on the new learning in terms of its potential and relevance for implementation in the context of the school (Role Five). Teachers were not engaged in school level decision-making about the initiative and the associated new learning (Role Six).

Zone four: Teacher leadership between neighbouring schools

While the professional development courses were particularly valuable for the curriculum knowledge and methods learnt, an additional benefit was that they gave educators a chance to work closely with educators from nearby schools, some with different racial and cultural backgrounds. As one participant shared: "We gained a lot of experience in different methods and we also got a chance to network with other schools and mix with people from overseas" (Educator, School A). Another participant concurred: "Now I know and like to network with other educators, even those outside our school" (Educator, School C). However, the benefits of cross-school interaction, the sharing and the learning, ended for some at the end of the professional development initiative. As one participant admitted: "We haven't been able yet to network with other schools who actually participated because of time frames. So all the excitement that went with the course, a lot of it gets lost along the way. And that's just a fact. Not because we do not want to do it, but because people are all busy with their own programmes – the reality of it" (SMT member, School D). And yet for some teachers the collaboration continues: "We met teachers from different schools and shared many ideas. We are still networking with those teachers" (Educator, School C). It is clear from the data that the take-up of teacher leadership across school boundaries in an attempt to continue professional relationships was uneven across the schools in the study. The take-up, where it occurred, demonstrates the agency of individual teacher leaders.

So far in the paper I have described, using the zone and role rubric for analysis, the take-up of teacher leadership in the context of the professional development initiative. The evidence of teacher leadership is convincing in Zone One in all four schools; convincing in Zone Two in two of the four schools and, while there is commitment in theory to teacher leadership in Zone

Four, there was very little evidence of this in practice. The lack of teacher leadership in Zone Three is sobering and demands our attention. What were the barriers that impeded the take-up, or otherwise, of the new learning at a school level and how did this relate to issues of leadership? It is to this question that I now turn.

Discussion

Barriers to teacher leadership in the context of the four schools in this study

In this study there was a varying take-up of teacher leadership in the four schools in relation to the professional development initiative in terms of zones and roles. The context of each school, together with its unique structure and culture, impacted on how the take-up of teacher leadership occurred. The data point to different barriers to whole school take-up of the new learning in each school. I now move on to each school and give a brief description of the type of leadership and identify what I consider the major barrier to the take-up of the new learning.

In *School A* the principal and the majority of staff worked together and were involved in discussions regarding curriculum development in the school. As researchers we got the sense of leadership as "fluid and emergent" (Gronn, 2000) with real collaboration where teachers were working effectively, supporting each other and working collegially (Hargreaves, 1992). Dispersed distributive leadership was evidenced through the flatter organisational structure, the level of teacher agency and co-leadership. Teachers did not resort to blaming the SMT for non-implementation of the initiative at a school level but owned the 'failure' for themselves, with *time* being the major barrier: "Teachers are just, as I say, trying to manage their time. And time is just of a major issue in our lives. Teachers from the schools that were here are willing, they want to, but they just don't find the time because many of the teachers that were on the workshop are studying as well" (SMT member, School A). This level of teacher leadership evidenced at School A is an example of the shift "away from traditional top-down management and getting teachers to take responsibility and to accept some accountability" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.42).

A *lack of teamwork, collaboration* and *shared vision* seemed to be a major cultural barrier to professional development in *School B*. The absence of teachers from the courses frustrated the Principal and HOD, and this non-

attendance was attributed to the fact that there were *no financial benefits* for participation (SMT member, School B). The non-participation of teaching staff in the courses resulted in an SMT-led rather than teacher-led curriculum development initiative with the SMT having authority because of their participation and knowledge and where they were attempting to motivate teachers within a 'culture of encouragement' (Harris, 2003).

While a good number of SMT members and teachers in *School C* were involved in the professional development initiative, the major barrier to the take-up of new learning at a school level was due to a later disruption of the formal leadership in the school as a result of a dispute; in other words, due to what Hargreaves (1992) terms the 'micropolitics' of the school. The absence of the Principal for a large part of a term followed by the departure of the Deputy Principal to another school left teachers feeling isolated and "without opportunities to collaboratively solve problems, share information, learn together, and plan for improving student achievement" (Ash and Persall, 2000, p.15). During our visits to the school we got the sense of a culture of cautiousness and reserve, rather than 'a culture of mutual trust and respect' (Grant, 2006). The *internal school conflict* resulted in a level of 'bruising' which operated as a barrier to distributive leadership. However, the agency of individual teachers comes to the fore in the following quotation and demonstrates a form of teacher leadership as "ownership of a particular change or development" (Harris, 2003, p.79): "The responsibility was on us. I kept saying to Y (another teacher), because she did Maths, we must sit. We must sit. It's commitment and time. The other way we could have done is to go to someone and say I have got this and just ask" (Teacher, School C).

The literature points to successful teacher leadership where formal school leaders become involved in pedagogic learning and spend lots of time "with teachers, in and out of classrooms, engaged in conversations about teaching and learning" (Ash and Persall, 2000, p.18). In School D, the Principal and Deputy Principal did not attend the professional development initiative and their absence was felt by the majority of the educators: "Maybe the *whole SMT* (my emphasis) should have been present, helping us to integrate the whole thing, putting it together and bringing it down to the staff level" (Teacher, School D). The major barrier to teacher leadership at this school was *'top-down' leadership and hierarchical school structure* with power and decision-making firmly in the hands of the Principal. One teacher explains that "it was hard for us as teachers to organise a workshop. If somebody *higher up* (my emphasis) had organised it, it would have been easier" (Teacher, School D). An SMT member explains that: "We have freedom with consultation or with his approval. He's *strong at the top* (my emphasis) and his management

is. . . I don't know, we are all a good team. . . There is nobody who is going to challenge him, I don't think" (SMT member, School D). Here we have a form of authorised distributed leadership with controlled delegation and no real devolution of decision-making. Even the two HODs appear powerless to initiate curriculum change in the face of their senior colleagues: "Us, you know, having this information and then coming and saying this is what we've learnt. Let's implement this. They (the principal and deputy principal) won't say no but then they need to create time and they need to create the structure in the school so that we can implement" (SMT member, School D). This lack of agency centralises the power and decision-making at a school level firmly in the hands of the principal and deputy principal at the top of the pyramid.

Any discussion about teacher leadership and the challenges to take-up of the new learning in schools in the context of the professional development initiative would be incomplete without a critical look at the professional development initiative itself and it is to this that I now turn.

Reflections on the professional development initiative: what can we learn?

Working from the premise that leadership is fundamentally linked to issues of teaching and learning, this study suggests that any professional development initiative should, in some way, be explicitly linked to leadership and, in particular, teacher leadership. For, without this link, I argue that the learning from any development initiative is likely to remain at the level of the individual teacher and be restricted to the zone of the classroom. And, in some instances, this may be sufficient. However some professional development initiatives, like the one discussed in this paper, have broader organisational goals that target not only the individual teacher but the school as well. During the planning phase of this initiative, meetings were set up with each of the four the principals to discuss and negotiate the goals of the initiative in the light of individual school needs and their Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) processes. The initiative also aimed to motivate teachers to form a community of practice *within* their schools, grounded in the belief that these communities of practice would promote sustainability, increase the take-up of the new learning and "would most likely increase the ongoing impact and enable teachers to implement practices they examined in their courses" (Farrar, 2006, p.29). In addition it was anticipated that "teachers might even form a community of practice *across schools*, as the schools are all situated near each other and are in a natural relationship with one another" (*ibid.*, pp.29 –30). These goals, laudable as they were, met with limited and uneven success

and the data point to the design of the initiative as one possible reason for this. In the planning phase of the initiative, the programme focused on the content of the five curriculum areas and the only time allocated to discussions on take-up in schools was at the end of the teaching day. In practice the educators negotiated to have this discussion time moved earlier and it therefore occurred informally during lunch breaks and only amongst educators from schools A and C (Verbeek, 2006). A project leader reflected that "unless you really work very closely on trying to convince one of the individuals to take that responsibility (of leading the initiative back at school), it doesn't happen. So I think we failed on that score" (Project Leader 1). A weakness of the design of this initiative was that there was no planned post-initiative school support and this view was communicated by the teachers in School A who felt there should have been more contact between the course facilitators and the educators after the initiative at a grade level and a school level (Teacher, School A). A project leader endorsed this point: "I've personally not followed up in the schools and that's a huge gap. I think that's a huge gap in the project" (Project Leader 2). In some instances, course facilitators compiled resources to help teachers to hold the experiences (Project Leader 2), but this was as far as the support went. The project leaders were in agreement that subsequent school-based professional development initiatives "should involve major changes to the design" (Farrar, 2006, p.32) and more time should also be given to the planning process (Project Leader 1).

So what does this mean when we design professional development initiatives? Working from the premise that "professional learning communities hold the key to transformation – the kind that has real effects on people's lives" (Wenger, 1998, p.85), I argue, firstly, that we need to build into our professional development initiatives discussions on the possible barriers that teachers may face in the take-up of the new learning in schools and ways in which these may be overcome. We need discussions about the value and role of teachers in developing professional learning communities and offer educators strategies for developing ways to build learning communities in schools because, as Harris and Lambert (2003) explain, these do not occur naturally. We need to discuss the important role of teachers as leaders in this process of building learning communities and offer teachers some strategies for taking the new learning back into schools. Secondly, and equally importantly, the design and aims of the professional development initiative should be discussed and negotiated with the SMT of the school to ensure that the SMT owns the initiative and participates in the training, as their teaching responsibilities should be central to their leadership work – they are first and foremost teachers. They should therefore experience professional development together with the teachers in their school. Finally, once the initiative has

ended, course facilitators should build on the professional relationships they developed with teachers and principals by "developing sustained, resourceful relationships that support professional growth and the emergence of local school leadership" (Farrar, 2006, p.32). However, it must be argued that reflection and critique on and take-up of the new learning in schools are not solely the responsibility of the project leaders and course facilitators. Schools themselves, and the leadership therein, have a critical role to play as agents of change.

Conclusion

While teacher leadership was supported as a concept across the four schools in this study, the extent to which it operated in practice was limited. The take-up of new curriculum knowledge and methods by teachers was restricted to individual classrooms and informal teacher discussions but did not move formally into the whole school arena. The reasons for this restricted take-up resided in the school culture and differed across the four schools. Teacher leadership within a collaborative culture was most prevalent in School A with a lack of time within the constraints of an already full teaching programme being the main barrier which impeded staff from taking initiative. In schools B, C and D teacher leadership was not as widespread as in School A due to a range of cultural and structural barriers that did not support teacher leadership. These included the non-involvement of all staff in the original initiative (School B), the fraught 'micropolitics' within School C and a forceful principal within a hierarchically organised School D. A further barrier to teacher leadership in school D was the non-involvement of key SMT members in the professional development initiative. This case study has highlighted that a commitment to the rhetoric of teacher leadership will not, in itself, make it happen in practice. Instead it needs to be "facilitated and embraced as a cultural norm within the school" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.120). Given the limitations of case study research, I make no further claims from this study but raise a number of questions which a larger study might well be able to answer. How does one develop in educators a critical notion of agency for the take-up of democratic distributed leadership and teacher leadership? How can we get educators to look critically at the notion of schools as hierarchies and to expand their understanding of leadership beyond formal role or position? How do we get principals to work within a distributed leadership framework without feeling threatened?

So what can be learnt from the experiences of this professional development initiative to improve school-based professional development models? This

paper has argued that professional development initiatives for educators must be linked to issues of leading if the goal is to have sustained impact on the whole school context. It has also suggested that when designing these initiatives, time must be allocated for discussions around teacher leadership as well for the development of strategies for teachers to initiate professional learning communities on their return to schools. The following questions might be of use when designing professional development initiatives: Have we included workable leadership strategies into the courses to support educators in taking the new learning back into their schools? Have we grappled with the composition of educators attending the workshop and asked questions such as 'who will lead the process once educators return to schools'? How do we get teacher leaders to deal with structural barriers and resistant principals? These questions, I believe, are critical to the successful implementation of new learning in schools as a result of professional development initiatives and, if disregarded, will restrict the take-up of new learning to individual teachers in individual classrooms.

In conclusion, I argue in the context of South African schools for the radical reconceptualising of leadership (Gunter, 2001) and for debates about critical education leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. I believe there is a need in our country for more research into teacher leadership primarily because, in the words of Farrar, "Education reform rests on effective professional development that is sustained by teacher leaders" (2006, p.33). And, as Muijs and Harris contend, teacher leadership "reclaims school leadership from the individual to the collective, from the singular to the plural and offers the real possibility of distributed leadership in action" (2003, p.445).

References

Adler, J. 2002. 'Global and local challenges of teacher development'. In Adler, J. and Reed, Y. (Eds). *Challenges of teacher development: an investigation into take-up in South Africa.* Pretoria: Van Schaik, pp.1–16.

Ash, R.C. and Persall, J.M. 2000. *The principal as chief learning officer: developing teacher leaders.* NASSP Bulletin May 2000: pp.15–22.

Astin, A.W. and Astin, H.S. 2000. *Leadership reconsidered: engaging higher education in social change* [On line]. Available at http://www.wkkf.org/pubs/CCT/leadership

Bennett, N., Harvey, J.A., Wise, C. and Woods, P.A. 2003. *Distributed leadership: a desk study*. Available at www.ncsl.org.uk / literature reviews

Farrar, R. 2006. *A report to CART: examining a school-based professional development model in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. Unpublished report.

Gehrke, N. 1991. *Developing teachers' leadership skills.* ERIC Digest ED330691.

Grant, C. 2005 'Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations'. *Agenda,* 65, pp.44–57.

Grant, C. 2006 'Teacher leadership: some South African voices'. *Education Management, Administration and Leadership,* 34(4): pp.511–532.

Grant, C. (forthcoming) 'Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively' in Muthukrishna, A. (Ed.) *"Educating for social justice and inclusion: pathways and transitions"*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Gronn, P. 2000. Distributed properties: a new architecture for leadership. *Educational Management and Administration* 28(3): pp.317–81.

Gronn, P. 2003. *The new work of educational leaders: changing leadership practice in the era of school reform.* London: Paul Chapman.

Gunter, H.M. 2001. *Leaders and leadership in education*. London: Paul Chapman.

Gunter, H.M. 2005. *Leading teachers*. London: Continuum.

Hargreaves, A. 1992. 'Contrived collegiality: the micropolitics of teacher collaboration'. In Bennett, N., Crawford, M. and Riches, C. (Eds). *Managing change in education: individual and organizational perspectives*. London: Paul Chapman, pp.80–94.

Harris, A. 2003. 'Teacher leadership and school improvement'. In Harris, A., Day, C., Hopkins, D., Hadfield, M., Hargreaves, A. and Chapman, C. *Effective leadership for school improvement*. London: Routledge Falmer, pp.72–83.

Harris, A. and Lambert, L. 2003. *Building leadership capacity for school improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Harris, A. and Muijs, D. 2005. *Improving schools through teacher leadership*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Katzenmeyer, M. and Moller. G. 2001. *Awakening the sleeping giant. Helping teachers develop as leaders.* 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Kotter, J.P. 1990. *A force for change: how leadership differs from management*. New York: Free Press.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. 1999. 'Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice'. In McCormick, R. and Paechter, C. *Learning and knowledge*. London: Paul Chapman.

Muijs, D. and Harris, A. 2003. 'Teacher leadership – improvement through empowerment? An overview of the literature'. *Educational Management and Administration,* 31(4): pp.437–448.

Rajagopaul, S.M. 2007. *An investigation into the factors that help or hinder teacher leadership: case studies of three urban primary schools in the Pietermaritzburg region*. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Singh, H.D. 2007. *To what extent does the School Management Team promote or hinder the development of teacher leadership? Case studies of two public primary schools in the northern suburbs of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.* Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Thomson, C. and Staknevich, J. 2007. *We prohibit the use of isiZulu because their English is so bad*. Paper delivered at the International Society for Language Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, April 2007.

Verbeek, C. 2006. *Report to Board of School of Education and Development: a pilot programme for school-based short-course continuing professional development for teachers. Sobantu, Pietermaritzburg, June 2006.* [Project report]. Unpublished correspondence.

Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Woods, P.A. 2004. 'Democratic leadership: drawing distinctions with distributed leadership'. In *International Journal of Leadership in Education,* 7(1): pp.3 –26.

Callie Grant
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal

grantc@ukzn.ac.za

Collaborative leadership as a necessary condition for successful curriculum implementation

Graeme Edwards and Brigitte Smit

Abstract

Schools are essentially concerned with people and the development of knowledge and skills. Schools are also tasked with being relevant in contemporary society, for the present and for the future. Like any other societal institution, schools require sound leadership that is apposite for the 'business' of teaching and learning. Even as school leadership structures are historically hierarchical in nature, more modern trends suggest a move away from rigid command leadership approaches to leadership styles that are more participative and collaborative in nature. Woven within the fabric organisation structure and relevance, is the premise that leadership exists in a form that requires further consideration and examination. Against this backdrop of the changing contexts of leadership, the authors examine the processes, structures and human interventions that lead to the successful curriculum implementation in the absence of the school principal. We argue that, while there are certain desirable conditions required, it is indeed possible for curricula to be implemented successfully in situations where the school principal is absent. We present rich texts from qualitative interview data and discuss three findings from this inquiry.

Introduction

Is successful curriculum implementation at all possible in the absence of the school principal; and if so, what does this say about the conceptualisation of leadership as it is commonly known? In this article we illuminate successful curriculum implementation in spite of the absence of a school principal and argue that curriculum can indeed be successfully implemented in a collaborate culture. We understand that curriculum implementation is influenced by two significant factors. The first relates to curriculum implementation as change and the second indicates that collaborative leadership is often argued as an essential aspect of dealing with this change and the implementation of the curriculum.

Effective collaborative leadership is frequently presented as a fundamental feature for successful and sustained functioning of an organisation as well as an important requirement for dealing with change. This holds true for

commercial organisations, organs of the state and most certainly for schools. One such an example, the 'National College for School Leadership in England', illustrates that British education authorities recognised the need for leadership as part of their school improvement programme. Such leadership makes a difference and it can play a significant role in the success of a school. Conversely, poor leadership or the lack of leadership skills can adversely affect the entire process of teaching and learning as well as the development of a positive school culture. Fullan (2004, p.16) appropriately cautions, "only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment, can implement the reform that leads to sustainable improvement in student achievement".

Even though we fully appreciate and accept the vital role that leadership plays, for the purpose of this article we examine and report on the structures, processes and human interventions that lead to the successful implementation of the curriculum, in the absence of the leader, here the school principal. In the next section we contextualise the changing nature of school leadership drawing on national and international thinking.

Conceptual framework for school leadership in the absence of the principal
In recent years, a shift has occurred in the understanding of best leadership practice in schools. For the purpose of this inquiry we focused on five broad themes of this changing perspective. The first theme suggests that a school is similar to any other business or commercial endeavour and therefore similar models, approaches and leadership styles can be imported. Here practitioners and school leaders alike place confidence on the premise that this practice would produce successful schools and high levels of learning and achievement. Southworth (2005) challenges this line of thinking and argues that school leadership is quite different from leadership in other organisations. The distinguishing factor is that school leaders have the responsibility to create and lead an environment that enhances and supports learning. He argues also that, "it is precisely this focus on students' development, which makes school leadership distinctive and different from other forms of leadership" (*ibid.*, p.75). Furthermore, effective school leadership is synonymous with leadership that effectively manages change. Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hargreaves and Chapman (2005, p.11) note that "the current focus on leadership stems from the need to cope with discontinuous and accelerating change". This is particularly relevant within the current South African educational milieu, which could be regarded as a society in which the virtues of democracy, transparency**,** openness, participation and consultation are placed in high regard. Principals who are able to manage change in their schools effectively can be characterised as being transformative rather than transactional,

invitational rather than autocratic and empowering rather than controlling (Harris, *et al.,* 2005).

The second theme that addresses best leadership practice in schools relates to the role of principal as curriculum leader. Lambert (2002, p.37) explains that "the days of the principal as lone educational leader are over". She elaborates that the "old model of formal, one person leadership leaves substantial talents of teachers largely untapped" (*ibid.*, p.37). As such therefore, curriculum leadership should not lie solely with the principal, but teachers should be directly involved and responsible for driving educational processes, including curriculum development, and for providing leadership at various levels within the school structure. Also, teachers have to lead the process of curriculum implementation as well as curriculum development. The responsibilities of the principal in this regard lie in providing a suitable and supportive pedagogic environment where curricula can be effectively and efficiently implemented. A desirable characteristic that emerges from such a situation, in which the principal considers himself as the curriculum leader, is when the role of curriculum leadership is distributed amongst teachers at different levels in the school. We support Manthey's (2004, p.13) assertion that "leadership that matters is leadership that is sustained, which requires that it is distributed to others". This proposes that leadership is in fact most powerful when it is shared with others (*ibid.*). Day, Hall, Gammage and Coles (1993) fittingly refer to 'enabling leadership' in discussing curriculum leadership. They comment that all teachers within a school community should be involved in curriculum development and implementation and not just those who have been assigned with such tasks. Appropriately, the prime task of the curriculum leader is viewed as one of stimulating staff initiatives and encouraging creative thinking around curriculum matters. This proposes that curriculum leaders enable teachers to actively participate in the process of curriculum implementation and development (Day, *et al.,* 1993).

The third theme speaks to sustainable leadership, which implies a shift from the single charismatic leader, who although exerting immediate influence, is evanescent (Hargreaves, 2005). Sustainable leadership lasts in that it "secures success over time". It is also patient in that "it defers gratification instead of seeking instant results" (*ibid.*, pp.185–186). A credible measure of sustainable leadership practice can only be assessed once the leader has left the organisation. Appropriately, Manthey (2004) explains that the success of leaders with regard to student learning cannot be measured by their impact on student learning at the end of their tenure, but rather by the number of quality leaders that remain at the school when they leave. In the act of developing sustainable leadership, the principal is required to play a carefully balanced

and thoughtfully executive role. The principal's role includes assuming the role of instructional leader as well as empowering teachers to be and become collaborative leaders themselves. By adopting a collaborative leadership style, the principal is still regarded as the instructional leader, with an added dimension. Instructional leadership is distributed and disseminated to teachers who are empowered to be instructional leaders in their own right. The task of the instructional leadership and curriculum implementation is therefore a shared one, and one that can develop sustainability in instructional leadership.

The fourth theme speaks to the absence of the school principal in a variety of scenarios. The first scenario is where there is no principal at all, which was the focus of this inquiry. In a report compiled by O'Brien, Murphy and Draper (2003, p.46) it was explained that in approximately one third of cases studied, the situation of permanent absent leadership arose from "retirement, resignation and, a much smaller third cause, promotion**.** The second scenario presents as a situation where there is physically a principal in the position, but his/her leadership style is so far removed from the daily processes of the school that in all practical terms, s/he may be regarded as absent. The third scenario is similar to the second; the principal is so far removed in interest and leadership in matters of teaching and learning, that they may be regarded as absent with regard curriculum implementation. Absent leadership, therefore, may suggest that there is no leadership at all. It may also suggest that, in spite of a leader being present, there is still no real evidence of leadership. Also, the absence of a leader does not necessarily imply that there is no leadership at all in the school. Leadership activities may be present at different levels of the organisation, the school.

The fifth and last theme addresses leadership style and collaborative leadership. We draw a distinction between leadership style and leadership approach. While commonalities certainly exist, we suggest that a leadership approach differs from a leadership style in that it seeks to create an environment in which teaching and learning can occur most effectively. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive; the leadership style gives rise to the creation of an environment, which is conducive to successful curriculum implementation, whereas the leadership approach is that which creates a climate, ideally a collaborative culture that facilitates successful curriculum implementation and school improvement. Bearing in mind that curriculum implementation is essentially associated with educational change, the value of the creation of a school climate and school culture that is conducive for successful implementation of curriculum and the ability to deal with change, cannot be over emphasised. Collaborative cultures are characterised by their ability to deal with change and their ability to overcome the failures and

pitfalls associated with the process of change. In the context of an absent school principal, the approach towards change and the ability to cope with change is often attributed to the attitude and personality of the individual person. These attitudes are often shaped by the approach to leadership and the creation of a school culture that facilitates and supports the process of change.

To this end, we argue that collaborate leadership is a precondition for the creation of a collaborative culture. A central role that the collaborative leader plays is to create an environment where there is a shared vision. This involves joint strategies and goes beyond the purview of any individual or group of individuals. Shared vision is a "process that leads to the establishing of common ground" (Chrislip, 2002, p.109). This directs a group of people working together through the creation of a shared vision (Chrislip, 2002). Vandal (2006, p.55) adds that school leaders must not regard teachers as "troops to be deployed but rather as colleagues in service of children". He maintains that, "the strongest vision for action is one that is shared". Importantly, is that this 'shared vision' extends further than a mere consideration for the work that must be completed. Shared vision must also include the type of working environment that is strived for. This can be referred to as the work 'culture'.

There are essentially four viewpoints of characteristics of collaborative leadership. The first, views collaborative leadership as a "function performed and not a position held by one" (Marshall, 1995, p.68). The outcome of such a point of view is that everybody in the organisation is a leader and leadership is regarded as situational. Leadership therefore depends on circumstances and not on position or authority. The second view deals with the role of power and, paradoxically, powerlessness. Pascarella, (1984) argues for greater participation and power sharing, as opposed to accumulation of power. Realising the importance of power and its link to self esteem, he adds that "participative management is really about people and that it begins with nurturing their self esteem" (Pascrella, 1984, p.139). The response to true leadership is based then on the manner in which educational leaders deal with the issue of power. Power in the educational sphere is explicated by Blasé and Blasé (1996, p.2): "principals who embrace teacher professionalism, do more than share power, they multiply it".

The third and fourth views on collaborative leadership are closely linked in that they deal with the mutual benefit of working together and the notion that successful collaborative leadership depends on the quality of the relationships. The mutual benefit of working together, as argued by Chrislip (2002) is more than the sharing of knowledge and information. In fact the relationship allows

each party to achieve its own goals. Mature, professional and high quality interpersonal relationships are imperative if the shared vision is to be made real. In a context where collaborative leadership is practiced, a collaborative culture can emerge and flourish. Notably, relationships that are reciprocal in nature, give rise to the creation of a collaborative culture. Furthermore, Chrislip (2002) contends that joint decision making in reciprocal relationships leads to coherence, which in turn leads to action. Collaborative cultures are thus characterised by inclusiveness. Emanating from inclusiveness is the value of relationships, the role which Rubin (2002) regards as being central to collaborative cultures. He refers to them as "relationships that bind" (*ibid.*, p.17). The concept of collaborative leadership and the creating of a collaborative culture are presented as a leadership approach that will most likely support and facilitate the effective implementation of curricula. Collaborative leadership creates a climate that serves as a platform for successful curriculum implementation. According to Sergiovanni (2004, p.49) this approach leads to the formation of a "collaborative culture", where each person must view their specific role as part of a "reciprocal relationship that spells out mutual obligations" (*ibid.*, p.49). In such a relationship a balance between individual autonomy and collaborative work are achieved.

Research design and methodology

The design type or the design genre (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004) of this inquiry is a qualitative case study of a private secondary school. This design is governed by fitness for purpose, which means relating the research questions to data and selecting appropriate tools and procedures for answering of the research question. This inquiry embraced an "interpretative, naturalistic approach" to its subject matter and this translated to studying and interpreting phenomena in natural settings by examining the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, pp.22–25).

Six participants were purposively selected, the acting principal, the deputy principal, a housemaster, and three experienced teachers. These participants were members of staff at the research site (the school) during the time when the phenomenon of 'absent principal' was evident. The research site was a school in a well established urban area. It has a long and proud history of excellence on the sports field as well as in the classroom. In this school, not only was the new curriculum successfully implemented, but this was achieved in the absence of the principal.

The process of data collection took place at a school, which Patton (1990, p.169) would regard as an "information rich site". The site was well suited for the research as it had experienced the phenomenon of an absent principal for approximately nine months. It was during this time that the new curriculum (Revised National Curriculum Statement Grade 8 and 9, 2002) was implemented and developed. Also, the preparation for the implementation of the Further Education and Training Curriculum was undertaken (National Curriculum Statement Grade 10–12, 2003).

We used individual semi-structured interviews with convergent and divergent questions. Interview questions related to management issues, teaching and learning aspects, learner and parent matters, and follow-up questions as they occurred in the various conversations. Together with these face-to-face interviews, we also conducted dyad interviews, a technique in which the responses of two participants are stimulated through the questions posed. The interviewer (one of the researchers) encouraged the participants not only to respond directly to the questions posed, but also to discuss and debate aspects of the phenomenon between themselves. It was through this interaction with each other (the two interviewees) that understanding and meaning of the phenomenon of the absent principal and curriculum implementation was gleaned.

Data were analysed for content, using colour coding. To this end, interview data were audio taped, with the necessary consent, confidentiality and anonymity, including ethical clearance from the University. These data were transcribed and inductively analysed, fittingly for semi-structured and dyad interview data, without any pre-coding. Furthermore, we used the Grounded Theory approach to qualitative data analysis according to Charmaz (2006), open, axial and selective coding, building categories, which we constructed into content themes or categories of the empirical data. The identification of data themes was as a result of placing similar units of meaning into categories and sub-categories. During the analysis we also used a number of memos, personal, methodological as well as theoretical memos (Charmaz, 2006). Methodological norms such as trustworthiness of the inquiry in terms of the credibility of the findings were ensured through prolonged engagement in the research setting, together with member checking of the interview data. Interpreted findings of this inquiry, which are collaborative leadership, power and authority, and school culture could possibly be transferred to similar school contexts.

Collaborative leadership

As with any organisation or situation where a group of people are led, the leader, by virtue of the authorised position, competence or style injects into the 'space' certain energy. This creates the atmosphere in which people work and take on their professional duties and responsibilities. In our particular inquiry where there was an absent school principal, teachers at different levels of the organisation were required to assume certain roles. Duties and responsibilities were delegated to a number of teachers who assumed roles of leadership in order to ensure the efficient daily functioning of the school and the successful implementation of the curriculum. These roles were often new and different to their usual tasks and responsibilities. What was required of teachers was a high level of understanding and appreciation of the overall goal, vision and purpose to ensure successful implementation of the new curriculum; in sum, a shared and common understanding of what was at stake in the wake of absent leadership. It is for this reason that Lambert (2002, p.37) comments that a principal is no longer a "lone educational leader". In fact the act of leadership is not the sole domain or responsibility of the principal. Here Murphy and Seashore Louis (1994) explore the evolution in educational leadership, explaining a paradigmatic cognitive shift from a traditional view of a principal as the expert, to a more modern understanding of the principal as supporter and facilitator of educational processes. Many effective principals delegate power and authority to staff members at different levels of the organisation, which implies that in situations where there is an absent principal, there may be an absent school principal, but not necessarily absence of leadership. Noteworthy for this inquiry therefore, is that collaborative leadership in general and instructional leadership in particular, is an activity that can be undertaken by teachers at different levels in the organisation. Despite the absence of the principal, who is regarded as the leader of the school, we learnt in this inquiry, rather paradoxically, that collaborative leadership was the precise reason for the efficient daily functioning of the school and the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Power and authority

The presence or absence of power and authority are important factors for successful and effective leadership. This inquiry revealed that where the school principal was absent, the existence and location of power and authority was not clearly defined. Often, the absence of the leadership does, however, suggest that if an individual assumes a leadership role, often s/he possibly lacks the necessary skills, competences, power and authority to successfully

fulfil the requirements of the said role. While competencies and skills may be learned and acquired, the same may not always be true for power and authority. When a school principal is absent, some confusion may exist with regard to the amount and the extent of the delegated authority of the acting principal. Some staff are indeed able to cultivate power and authority. By employing leadership techniques that are participative, people centred and sincere, sufficient authority can be cultivated to enable the successful daily functioning and even the flourishing implementation of new policies and curricula. In this particular case study, the deputy principal adopted certain strategies, which effectively enabled him to cultivate the necessary power and authority to successfully carry the school through the period of an absent school principal through participative leadership, a "process of involving subordinates in the decision making process" (Anthony, 1978, p.3). This not only united the staff but created a forum for discussion and joint problem solving.

School culture

The data sourced from the empirical work provided evidence that a collaborative school culture existed at the time when the principal was absent. In addition, the responses of the participants support the main characteristics of this culture, which includes careful management of interpersonal relationships. When questioned about the factors that facilitated the running of the school and the implementation of curriculum, participant H told us that . . . *this was made possible by the quality of relationships, co-operation and communication. It all boils down to relationships and we're all working at it.* Aptly, Raffoni (2005, p.136) explains that a communication strategy such as, 'Managing One to One' builds interpersonal relationships. Together with the existence of clearly defined policies and procedures, it was the school culture, which created the necessary climate for the school to function on a daily operational level as well as successfully implement the new curriculum. Leading on from the above, we propose that collaboration has the power to connect people. Participant 'O', in the dyad interview, commented about her direct line superior during the time when the school principal was absent: *it is encouraging to know that he was supporting you and that he was there.* Then again, one cannot assume that merely establishing a collaborative school culture is sufficient in dealing with the challenges and reforms that schools face. Issues such as resources, teacher training and competency, socio-economic factors and the prevailing political climate are just some additional facets that influence successful implementation of new policies and curricula. Furthermore, Hargreaves (1994) in this context argues that although he recognises the unifying power of collaboration, he alerts to a type of

collaboration that brings about a divide amongst teachers. This occurs when teachers are separated into "insulated and often competing sub-groups within a school" (*ibid.*, p.213). This form of teacher culture is termed "balkanisation", which occurs when teachers work neither in isolation, nor with the majority of their colleagues but rather in smaller sub-groups that exist within the larger school community (*ibid.*).

We fully recognise and accept these deliberations in identifying a positive school culture. We also acknowledge, evident from this inquiry, that the creation of a collaborative culture serves to enhance and facilitate the successful implementation of curriculum during the absence of the school principal. Moreover, collaborative cultures may enhance the potential for success in situations where leadership is frail, by facilitating the process of dealing with change and stimulating people to a common purpose and shared vision. This is particularly true when management structures of internal policies and procedures are well established, accepted and collectively understood.

Implications for policy and practice

The findings give rise to four possible implications and suggestions for educational policy and practice. The first implication concerns sustainable school leadership, which ought to become an important consideration at the micro as well as the macro levels. In schools, principals are required to consider succession planning both in matters of school leadership and in matters of curriculum implementation. Also, continuity and smooth transition are important components of successful curriculum implementation. In effect, they serve to reduce the debilitating effects of anxiety and uncertainty that is often associated with change. Therefore, it is essential that policy makers introduce purposeful programmes that seek to train and develop future school leaders. Not only will this serve as training for future leaders in education, but it will assist to retain suitable teachers in the profession.

The second implication considers the link between policy as text and policy as practice or implemented policy. Regarding the implementation of curriculum (text to practice), the disjuncture between policy and practice is possibly the most significant hindrance to success. In order to bridge the gap between the two, we propose that policy writers and policy makers pay closer attention to the levels of proficiency and curriculum literacy of principals and teachers, which are required to implement the policy. Also, the amount of support that is required for the development of teacher guides and learner material ought to be thought about. This implies that practicing teachers and school principals

must be made part of the process of implementation if success is to be achieved.

The third implication speaks to power and authority issues. In democratically governed countries such as South Africa, highly rigid and autocratic governance structures will find it difficult to remain relevant. Relevance will be achieved when school structures mirror those virtues that are regarded as most important for an economically productive and integrated society where differences are tolerated and celebrated. Policies on school governance should therefore consider and promote leadership styles that embrace the principles of participative leadership and the development of collaborative cultures in schools. At the same time, however, education departments must delegate sufficient power and authority to school principals so that they are able to manage their schools efficiently and successfully to implement change. In conjunction with delegated power and authority, principals have a responsibility to cultivate their own power and authority through the leadership practices and approaches they employ. This is particularly true for matters of curriculum implementation and development.

The fourth and final implication involves school cultures. In this particular case study the collaborative school cultures demonstrated conducive for the development of individual talents, the management of change and the implementation of curriculum. Furthermore, this collaborative school culture transcends social cultures and serves to unify the school community and encourages the community to set differences aside and strive for a common good. In practice, this may enhance relationships, which are essential for the successful functioning of schools. It may therefore be helpful that principals and educational leaders give due consideration to the development of collaborative school cultures in their institutions.

Some concluding thoughts

The investigation exposed how human actions and interventions took place in successful implementation of the curriculum in a context of an absent principal. It revealed appropriate findings and practical considerations for school leadership and curriculum implementation. From these findings, we are able to deduce that although there are tensions in the absence of the school principal, successful implementation of the curriculum is still possible in a context where there is clear intention to pursue a collaborative school environment, where leadership is distributed to different levels of the organisation and where power and authority are not the sole privilege of the principal. Schools are essentially concerned with people and the relationships

that exist between them. The value of sound interpersonal relationships and a guiding purpose cannot be overstated. Productive, mature and interdependent relations are the bonds that will sustain a school in a time of change and curriculum implementation.

References

Anthony. W. P. 1978. *Participative management*. Philippines: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Blasé, J. and Blasé, J. 1996. *The fire is back! Principals sharing school governance.* California: Corwin Press, Inc.

Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing grounded theory. A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

Chrislip, D.D. 2002. *The collaborative leadership field book*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Day, C., Hall, C., Gammage, P. and Coles, M. 1993. *Leadership and curriculum in the primary school. The roles of senior and middle management.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Day, C. 2005. In Harris, A., Day, C., Hopkins, D., Hadfield, M., Hargreaves, A. and Chapman, C. 2005. *Effective leadership for school improvement.* New York: RoutledgeFalmer, pp.26–52.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds). 2005. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* Third Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Department of Education 2002. *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (RNCS). Pretoria.

Department of Education 2003. *National Curriculum Statement*. Grade 10–12. Pretoria: Seriti Printing.

Fullan, M. 2004. *Leading in a culture of change. Personal action guide and work book.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hargreaves, A. 1994. *Changing teachers, changing times. Teachers' work and culture in a post-modern age.* London: Cassell Villiers House.

Hargreaves, A. 2005. Learning-centred leadership. In Davies, B. (Ed.). *The essentials of school leadership.*Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp.159–190.

Harris, A. 2005. In Harris, A., Day, C., Hopkins, D., Hadfield, M., Hargreaves, A. and Chapman, C. 2005. *Effective leadership for school improvement*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, pp. 9–25.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W., Smit, B. 2004. *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Lambert, I. 2002. A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8): pp.37–40.

Manthey, G. 2004. Most powerful act of leadership is giving it away. *Leadership*, 34(1): p.13.

Marshall, E.M. 1995. *Transforming the way we work. The power of the collaborative workplace.* Boston: American Management Association.

Murphy, J. and Seashore Louis, K. 1994. *Reshaping the principalship. Insights from transformational reform efforts.* California: Corwin Press, Inc.

National College of School Leadership. Available from www.ncsl.org.uk . (Accessed on 28 September 2006).

O'Brien, J., Murphy, D. and Draper, J. 2003. *Policy and practice in education.* Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.

Pascarella, P. 1984. *The new achievers – creating a modern work ethic.* New York: The Free Press.

Patton, M.Q. 1990. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* London: Sage Publications.

Raffoni, M. 2005. *Framing for leadership. In getting people on board.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Rubin, H. 2002. *Collaborative leadership*. California: Corwin Press.

Southworth, G. 2005. Learning-centred leadership. In Davies, B. (Ed.). *The essentials of school leadership*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, pp.75–92.

Vandal, G. 2006. Learning leadership under fire. *School Administrator,* 63(2): p.54.

Graeme Edwards
Department of Education Studies
University of Johannesburg

beataburna@worldonline.co.za

Brigitte Smit
Department of Education Studies
University of Johannesburg

bsmit@uj.ac.za

Journal of Education

The ***Journal of Education*** is an interdisciplinary publication of original research and writing on education. The Journal aims to provide a forum for the scholarly understanding of the field of education. A general focus of the journal is on curriculum. Curriculum is understood in a wide and interdisciplinary sense, encompassing curriculum theory, history, policy and development at all levels of the education system (e.g. schooling, adult education and training, higher education). Contributions that span the divide between theory and practice are particularly welcome. Although principally concerned with the social sciences, the journal encourages contributions from a wider field.

While it is intended that the journal will remain academic in nature, the readers are considered to be educational generalists and articles which are of interest to such readers will receive preference. Potential contributors are asked to ensure that submissions conform to the guidelines outlined at the back of the journal.

The Journal of Education is intended to serve as a resource for scholars of education, and such readers are free to make a limited number of copies of articles for non-profit research and teaching purposes. In cases where multiple copies are required for teaching purposes, we trust that South African institutions affiliated to the Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation (Pty) Limited (DALRO) will follow normal procedures with respect to the reproduction of publications.

The journal is freely available in Adobe Acrobat format on the World Wide Web at http://www.ukzn.ac.za/joe. Members of the Kenton Education Association receive copies of the journal as part of their membership benefits. Institutional subscribers should contact the editors.

Editorial Committee

Notes for Contributors

Journal of Education will appear at least twice per year.

Submissions

Unsolicited papers are welcome for consideration and should be addressed to the Editor of the *Journal of Education*. Submitting authors should note that a per page fee of R100 will be levied on published submissions. Institutional Research Offices of higher education institutions usually pay this type of fee. Authors whose affiliated organisation may not have instituted this practice are asked to contact the Editor, as the levy is a means of sustaining the journal, and is not intended as a deterrent to aspiring authors!

Articles and review essays are reviewed by anonymous external referees. Appropriate papers will be refereed for significance and soundness. Papers are accepted on the understanding that they have not been published or accepted for publication elsewhere.

Articles and essay reviews (maximum 6 000 words); debate, discussion and research notes (2 500 words); book reviews (2 000 words); and book notes (200 words) will be considered.

Contributors should submit three clear, page numbered copies of the manuscript, and bearing the title of the paper. Manuscripts will not be returned. The name(s) and full address(es) of the author should appear on a separate sheet. Each paper should be accompanied by a 100 – 150 word abstract. Hard copies should either be accompanied by a 3½ inch diskette bearing the article, or followed by the file sent as an email attachment to the Editor at JoE@ukzn.ac.za. Articles sent by e-mail only are not accepted except in cases where this might be the only reasonable means of communication.

The electronic version of the article should not be formatted, and should preferably not use a variety of fonts and font sizes or use paragraph styles. Where necessary, however authors may wish to indicate levels of subheadings (i.e. first level, second level). Footnotes should be kept to a minimum, and authors are asked to keep tables and diagrams to the most feasible level of size and simplicity. Tables and diagrams should also be sent in separate files.

Each author will receive a copy of the journal in which the paper appears.

Copyright resides with the publishers of the journal.

Readers are free to make a limited number of copies of articles for non-profit research and educational purposes. In cases where multiple copies are required for teaching purposes, we trust that South African institutions affiliated to the Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation (Pty) Limited (DALRO) will follow normal procedures with respect to the reproduction of publications. Educators or publishers outside South Africa wishing to reproduce articles in publications or compilations of readings should contact the Editor.

Referencing style

Journal of Education style of referencing is a requirement. References in the text should appear as follows:

> No country in the world can afford the schooling its people want (Reimer, 1971) and it has been argued that "of all 'false utilities', school is the most insidious" (Illich, 1971, p.60).

The references should be listed in full at the end of the paper in an acceptable standard format, preferably the following:

Books

> Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. *Title: additional title information*. Edition (if other than the first). Place of publication: Publisher.

Chapters in edited or compiled books

> Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of chapter or article. In Surname(s), Initial(s) of editor(s) or compiler(s). (Eds). or (Comps). *Title of book*. Edition (if other than first). Place of publication: Publisher. Inclusive page numbers of the chapter.

Journal articles

> Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of article. *Name of journal* volume number (part number (if there is not continuous pagination)): inclusive page numbers.

Articles and reports in magazines and newspapers

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of article. *Name of magazine or newspaper* day and month: inclusive (and additional) page numbers.

Book reviews

Surname of reviewer, Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of review (if there is one). [Review of] *Title of book reviewed* by Name of author in its most familiar form. *Name of periodical* volume number (part number) or date (if applicable): inclusive page numbers.

Theses and dissertations

Surname, Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Description of work. Location of university: name of university.

Seminar papers

Surname, Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Unpublished seminar paper. Location of university: name of university, name of department, programme or unit.

Conference papers (unpublished)

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Description of occasion (including the nature and subject of the conference or meeting, name of the society or group, the place at which it was held and the date(s) on which it was held).

Duplicated materials

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Description of material. Location of issuing body: name of issuing body.

Interviews

Surname of person interviewed, Initial(s). Year. Interviewed by initial(s) and surname of interviewer. Place where interview occurred, further details of date (day and month). Details of location of transcript, if available.

Personal communications

Surname of person with whom communicated, Initial(s). Year. Description of communication, further details of date (day, month).

Microforms, audio-visual material, CD-ROMs etc.

As for works above but with the addition of the format in square brackets at the end of the reference, e.g. [Microfilm] or [Videotape] or [CD-ROM], etc.

Online sources of information (published or unpublished)

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. *Title.* Version (if any). Place of publication: Publisher.
<Address of web page between> Day, month (and year if different to publication year) of visit to site.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

The Editor
Journal of Education
School of Education and Development
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01
Scottsville 3209

Telephone: +27 033 - 260 6091/6206
Fax: +27 033 - 260 5080
E-mail: JoE@ukzn.ac.za

Frequently asked questions

Is the Journal of Education SAPSE accredited?
Yes

How many issues per year?
In terms of a recent policy decision, we aim to produce at least two 'normal' editions of the journal each year in addition to at least two special issues (one of which will be the Kenton Special Edition).

Most journals now have a per page fee which contributors are required to meet should their articles be accepted. Does the Journal of Education levy such charges?
Yes. This step was necessary to cover the costs of the increased number of issues each year. A levy of R75 per page will be applied to successful articles submitted to our office. The central research offices in most institutions of higher education routinely arrange for such payments to be made. We encourage individual authors who do not have such cover to contact us.

Are articles peer reviewed?
Yes. Our goal is for articles to be refereed by three experts in the field.

What is the waiting period after submission?
Referees provide their crucially important service for no reward, and are sometimes unable to oblige on time but we endeavour to respond within three months.

Can I send my submission by e-mail?
Only if you live in a place where submission of three hard copies is inordinately difficult or expensive, please. The norm is three hard copies sent to our office. The electronic version of the article may be sent as an email attachment, or on a disk included with the hard copies.

To what extent should an article being submitted be presented in 'the style' of the journal?
Citation and referencing should be in the style of the journal (see the previous section 'Notes for Contributors'). Authors are not expected to reproduce the particular fonts and font sizes used in the journal, but the levels of headings and subheading should be clear on the hard copies submitted. With regard to the electronic version of the article, we prefer as little formatting as possible.

Does the journal have a policy to encourage and support budding novice researchers?
Unfortunately not – this is simply beyond our capacity. While we welcome extended comment that referees may be able to offer, we cannot impose on their good services beyond the expectation of an overall judgement on the article, together with brief justification of that judgement.

What is the rate of acceptance/ rejection?
The following statistics for 2002 and 2003 provide an indication of the pattern of acceptance/ non acceptance:

Year	Accepted with no or minor revisions	Accepted after revisions	Not accepted
2002	9	7	41
2003	15	9	47

Even an increase in the number of issues each year will not keep pace with the ever-increasing number of submissions. We can do little to mitigate the competition engendered by state funding policy and the kinds of incentive schemes that have become a feature of the higher education landscape.

Is there an appeal mechanism should my article not be accepted?
Beyond summarizing reasons for rejection – where applicable - we regret that we are unable to enter into detailed discussion on decisions reached by the Editorial Committee on the basis of referee reports.

The journal describes itself as providing "a forum for scholarly understanding of the field of education". What does this really mean?
We understand this as implying that articles should represent a rigorous enquiry (conducted through argumentation or empirically) into the understanding of educational issues. Such inquiry originates in a problem rather than a solution, and it is rare for such enquiry to have no reference to, or engagement with, a broader literature and theory. Advocacy in the form of prescriptions or 'how to do it' recipe knowledge for practitioners seldom finds favour with referees. The question of audience is key. The assumed audience is the collective body of researchers rather than those more narrowly concerned with the effective implementation of specific policies.

Recent non-acceptances include a high proportion of undeveloped research reports, summaries of dissertations, and even sound but small-scale case studies that are purely context specific and unconnected with broader issues, literature or theory. Similarly, even a successful conference paper is usually in need of further development before it merits publication.