The Role of School Management Teams in School Improvement

by

Loliwe Fezeka Sister

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Supervisor: Dr J. McFarlane
Abstract

This study is aimed at investigating the role of the School Management Team (SMT) in school improvement. The investigation was carried out using the qualitative approach and the study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm.

The declining performance of some schools academically as reflected by the end of year results, as well as the confusion that engulfed me on assuming duty on my appointment as a head of department of Science and, therefore, becoming part of the SMT in my school, encouraged me to investigate the role of the SMT in school improvement.

The study covers, among others, the following areas:

- Functions performed by the SMT members.
- Challenges faced by the SMT members in their management practice.
- Ways of addressing these challenges.

Methods of data collection used in this study were interviews, questionnaires, own observations as well as the analysis of documents.

The main recommendations emanating from the study are that SMT members should be better equipped for their roles through workshops and in-service training and that the respective roles of SMT and School Governing Body (SGB) members should be better demarcated by the Department of Education.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THE STATING OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

Education is a key variable in the development of societies. The South African system of education has undergone three critical stages. The first stage featured the introduction of education in South Africa for the first time by missionaries (Kallaway, 1988:141). The second crucial stage was characterised by the beliefs of the Nationalists who were ruling the country. Lastly, is the transformation period, which is identified as the period from 1994 to the present era. This study focuses on the transformation period as experienced in the Eastern Cape Province. The South African Constitution adopted in 1996 requires that school education be transformed. The Eastern Cape Province incorporates former South African, Ciskei and Transkei territories. This study reflects on the scenario in schools in the King William’s Town district, which falls within the former Ciskei territory.

Schools are organisations whose function is to attain a specific goal. The goal to be attained is effective teaching and learning. Renshaw, as cited by Bush (1986:16), asserts that, “most schools remain static, hierarchical and paternalistic in character. As hierarchical organisations, it is assumed that heads of departments and principals take the leading role in determining the goals of their institutions” (Bush, 1986:23). The principal, the deputy principal and heads of departments (HODs) constitute the School Management Teams (SMTs) in schools in South Africa (Department of Education, 2000:02). The SMT is assigned functional tasks as well as managerial activities.

1.2 Rationale

The increasing complexity of schools as organisations has subjected the SMTs to changing demands, especially in respect of its management tasks (South African Democratic Teachers’ Union, 2001:04). Educational transformation has not been without some problems in the Eastern Cape. According to my own observation, the management of institutions in the King William’s Town area has been characterised by confusion. Most managers are people who were appointed as managers in the old
system of education, prior to 1994. Very few educational leaders of today have undergone training to enable them to cope with their managerial duties (The Teacher, May 2000:7). These managers are presently struggling to acquaint themselves with the transformation management strategies.

Marx, as cited in Henderson and Kesson (1999:65) describes management as a process through which people in charge of human activities must see that human and other resources are used as effectively as possible in order to meet the requirements of the people they serve. School Management Team members therefore have to ensure that educators and learners are effectively served.

My own observations have alerted me to the fact that what is currently happening in some of the schools in the King William’s Town area is not in line with what is desired so as to bring about improvement in schools. Learners roam the streets during school hours. This is further confirmed by statement in a SADTU publication, (2001:12), that “many schools in the Eastern Cape are characterised by unprofessional methods of management and administration”. Effective teaching and learning seem not to be materialising in some institutions around King William’s Town. When I approached some SMT members and asked them about their role in education transformation, responses were varied. Some of these responses were “How can I know my role in education when educators challenge whatever I request them to do?” or “I no longer have a role to play because transformation made educators feel that any form of supervision is equivalent to oppression, so I do not want to be seen as an oppressor.”

The above responses are indicative of the fact that the SMT members are either threatened by the educators’ responses or unaware and unclear of what they are supposed to do in order to bring about successful teaching and learning in the various institutions.
1.3 The purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is to promote school improvement through identifying ways promoting effective functioning of School Management Teams.

1.4 The statement of the research problem/question

The question this study attempts to answer is:
How can School Management Teams promote school improvement?
Answers to the following sub-questions assisted in answering the main question:
- Which functions are performed by School Management Teams?
- What are the challenges facing School Management Teams in their efforts to bring about school improvement?
- How can these problems experienced by the School Management Teams be addressed?

1.5 Demarcation of the study

Research for this study has been conducted in the King William’s Town area. Schools investigated were representative of the following:
- Schools from each of the following areas: rural, township and town (former Model C schools).
- Only Senior Secondary schools were involved.
The demarcation of this study was influenced by the fact that the researcher wanted to investigate how schools from different backgrounds in the King William’s Town district are managed.

1.6 Definition of terms

1.6.1 School Management Teams (SMTs)
Schools are managed by teams made up of the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments (HODs). In schools where the senior position is that of the principal
only, an agreement is reached that certain members of staff should be co-opted to the SMT.

According to McNally, as cited in Lindelow and Bentley (1989:135), a management team involves a cross-section of experienced administrative professionals in a structured decision making process, endorsed by the school board and the superintendent. People occupy senior positions in schools due to the experience they have in educational matters and this includes positions and experience in administration and management.

Wallace and Hall (1994:02) claim that “teams of senior staff are known as senior or school management teams”. For purposes of this study the hierarchical nature of the education system is to be taken into consideration as one needs to not only be a senior staff member, but must be either a HOD, deputy principal or principal so as to be considered eligible to be an SMT member.

1.6.2 School improvement
This is a wide topic. For purposes of this study I will focus on management and administration of schools by the SMT members. School improvement refers to proper management and administration of schools that leads to the effectiveness of schools.

1.7 An outline of the envisaged chapters

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1 the background to the study is given and the research problem is stated. The chapter introduces the reader to terms like School Management Teams (SMTs) and school improvement.

Chapter 2

This chapter comprises a literature study based on the role of School Management Teams in school improvement.
Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 I describe the research method used in this study, which is based on the qualitative approach.

Chapter 4

This chapter reflects on the findings of this study and provides some recommendations on ways of dealing with the challenges encountered.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the literature study various authors’ views have been studied to bring about a better understanding of the potential role of School Management Teams (SMT) in school improvement.

“Schools are organisations whose function is to attain the goal of effective teaching and learning. Effective teaching and learning is achieved by restructuring schools. This restructuring involves a shift from notions of management that are status related and role specific to ideas of leadership which are interactive, team-focused, collaborative and future oriented” (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992:75). Beare et al.’s statement is in line with the fact that principals used to be the only figures of authority in institutions. As accounting officers they took it upon themselves to dictate what needs to be done in an institution. Beare et al claim that management needs to be team-work, irrespective of a person’s position in the school organogram.

As schools are hierarchical organisations, it is assumed that heads of departments and principals take the leading role in determining the goals of their institutions (Bush, 1986:23). Principals and heads of department constitute what is referred to as the school management team.

Most often, school improvement will be started by administrative and teacher leadership in the school (Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins, 1999:51). The SMT members are charged with the duty of ascertaining that administration as well as leadership approaches implemented in a school bring about positive change in the school.

For purposes of this study I will sometimes refer to head teachers when I talk of the SMT members, the term “head teachers” is used for the management team in some of the sources I used.
In this chapter I will consider and reflect on what various authors say about the roles of SMT members, which are in line with my research question under the following headings:

- Functions performed by SMT members.
- Challenges with regards to school improvement.
- Ways in which these challenges can be overcome.

2.2 Functions performed by the SMT

2.2.1 Introduction

Everyone in a school has some responsibility in its successful running. The main responsibility rests on those in the position of school management (Walters, 1993:08). Systemic leadership signifies that all individuals hold certain levels of power and that different types of power are vested in different roles (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000:94). According to Walters (1993:14), the SMT is responsible for effective management of the school and this consists of planning, leading and control. These three are aspects through which effective management and administration are reflected in a school as they are often used as norms for evaluating the success of a school.

2.2.2 Planning

Planning is the identification of a course of action in order to achieve desired results (Bell, 1992:37). Bell continues to state that these results will be expressed in terms of objectives and will be derived from the school development plan and the priorities that it identifies. The Department of Education (DoE) (2000:05) has a similar view on planning as they regard planning as a way of maintaining activities in a school and of setting new ways for development and growth. Planning in schools is usually done at management level and presented to lower levels for scrutiny.

Senge, Ross, Kleiner and Smith (1994:47), on the other hand, view planning as a process whereby management teams change their shared mental models of their company, their markets and their competitors. SADTU (2001:7) identifies planning as the work the SMT does to master the future. This includes setting out information in an orderly fashion, and the decision making process of selecting the best methods to achieve the objectives. According to the Department of Education’s Task Team on
Education Management Development (1996:46), planning ensures that people with the right skills and abilities are in the right place at the right time.

### 2.2.3 Leading

The SMT members are expected to play the role of leaders in their schools. According to Walters (1993:01), “leaders, through their position in a school, are obliged to be effective”. He continues to claim that, “the effectiveness depends largely on the sensitivity, approachability and management styles of the leaders”. The SMT members as leaders in a school must know how to accomplish the mission and vision of their schools, through the way in which they provide guidance to other members of the school community.

### 2.2.4 Control

Control used to be a tool which was used by the principal to check progress in as far as covering of the syllabus by the educators in each subject was concerned. Control within school management is the process by which the SMT members ensure that actual activities conform to planned activities and that objectives are accomplished (Walters, 1993:20). The views of Walters reflect a change in the way of perceiving control. One of the key current roles of SMT members is that of control. The criteria to be used when work is controlled, are decided upon by the concerned parties long before the actual control takes place. Bell (1992:37) reiterates this view by stating that controlling is the monitoring of performance to ensure that objectives are being achieved and tasks completed.

According to the DoE (2000:28), monitoring and evaluating how plans are working are important because:

- They make people more responsible for the activities they have planned.
- They create an opportunity for assessing whether the plans can be implemented or not.
- They are the norm that can be used to check whether a school is developing or not.

The SMT is responsible for the practical operation of the school and evokes newness and change, encourages and inspires (Lemmer and Badenhorst, 1997:343). The SMT
supervises and monitors activities, not to exercise hierarchical control, but to stress feedback and reinforcement and to make suggestions (Dunlap and Goldman, 1991:14).

A mechanism of controlling educators’ work is the checking and moderation of tests and examinations to ensure that good standards are maintained and that teachers are planning examination papers which encourage their pupils to use thinking skills (Walters, 1993:10). The SMT members need to engage staff members in debates where criteria are set and agreed upon by all concerned, which are to be carefully followed in preparing the examination papers so as to own the decisions taken.

The SMT members, as figures of authority, can control people simply by the force of their personality (Walters, 1993:01). This indicates that the SMT members are better placed in a school to influence decisions taken by the members of the entire staff than just staff members at lower levels of the management hierarchy. In order to be effective, control needs to be applied in such a way that it allows all other staff members the opportunity to voice their views.

2.2.5 Management and Administration

2.2.5.1 Introduction
In a school, the SMT as constituted by the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments, is responsible for the management and administration of the institution (DoE, 2000:06).

2.2.5.2 Definitions

(a) Management
According to Mabizela (year unknown:02), school based management refers to all approaches to the management of public schools or systemic private schools wherein there is significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources. Resources are among the determinants of success or failure of management practise. The availability of resources is more often cited as a requirement for effective teaching and learning in
schools. This requires the SMT to be well acquainted with the management duties they have to carry out in order to improve schools.

(b) Administration

Knezevich, as cited in Mabizela (year unknown:02), defines administration as a social process concerned with identifying, maintaining, stimulating, controlling and unifying formally and informally organised human and material energies. This takes place within an integrated system designed to accomplish predetermined objectives. In certain instances controlling creates problems as it is done without the SMT members sitting down with other staff members so as to set criteria to be followed in the control of work. Administration, with particular reference to the control of work, is done by SMT members.

Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:33) arguing on the same topic of administration claim that, “In the majority of schools, principals have to fulfil numerous administrative functions, often to the detriment of their managerial role”. This indicates that principals are forced to do the administrative work which consumes a lot of the time meant for the key role of principals, which is management.

2.2.5.3 Decisions about the curriculum

The three main areas in which the SMT should gain authority in a school based management are curriculum, personnel and budget (Lindelow and Heynderickx, 1989:128). Prash, as cited in Lindelow and Heynderickx (1989:129), suggests the following curriculum policy statement: “To assist the school staff and to provide some degree of coordination among schools.” Curriculum is unfortunately dependent on the stipulations of the Department of Education as well as the choice of internal stakeholders and the SGB in any school. This creates problems as it sometimes disadvantages learners. The choice of subjects to be included in the curriculum is sometimes influenced by factors about which the particular school has no control. To cite an example, schools without laboratories sometimes choose physical science as one of the subjects and then most learners fail at the end of the year.

The SMT is also charged with the duty of planning and managing school finances, which requires them to do budgeting. The DoE (2000:26) claims that, “SMT members
need to understand the financial position of the school, and need to be able to participate in managing the school’s finances, including helping with fundraising”. This can be accomplished through ensuring that accurate financial records are being kept so as to enable SMT members to give account of the use of funds.

2.2.6 Decision Making

2.2.6.1 Definition
Decision making means choosing from at least two possible courses of action (Bell, 1992:37). He adds that decision making is one of the central skills of management because so much time is spent on making choices. The SMT is charged with the choice of making decisions that will enable the school to improve. If the SMT makes a decision without looking fully at the merits and demerits of the case that is under consideration, chaos can erupt that will lead to deteriorating standards in the school.

2.2.6.2 Shared decision making
Lindelow, Coursen, Mazzarella, Heynderickx and Smith (1989:152), refer to the participative decision making system as voluntarily shared with those in traditionally subordinate positions. This statement alludes to the fact that whenever a decision that needs consensus is to be made, all parties concerned need to be consulted so as to participate in the decision making.

2.2.6.3 Advantages of staff participation in decision making
Increased community and staff participation in school decision making has been an important component of school based management (Lindelow and Heynderickx, 1989:131). Beers, as cited in Lindelow and Heynderickx (1989:131), states that sharing decision making authority at the school sites creates ownership and, therefore, leads to a more positive attitude towards the organisation.

Lindelow and Bently (1989:142), in re-emphasizing the decision making issue, state that “participation in decision making increases job satisfaction for most (but not necessarily all) employees and gives them a sense of “ownership” in the organisation”. This attitude assists the SMT members, as all participants then own the decisions taken.
Participative decision making offers educational administrators the opportunity to voluntarily share their power with subordinates and the clients of the school system, allowing the best of both worlds: professional control of the schools and access to the huge potential for improved education that participative management provides (Bell, 1992:153). SMT members, through engaging in participative decision making, create an opportunity for openness so that staff members are on board for all the activities of the school that affect them in one way or the other.

2.2.6.4 The role of the SMT members in decision making
Drucker, as cited in Bell (1992:15), maintains that in every decision and action the manager is to harmonise the requirements of the immediate and long-range future. This can be achieved through ensuring that the manager does not impose decisions on other staff members. In this study SMT members are alerted to the fact that they need to pay heed to the input of other stakeholders that are involved in the school so as to be effective in their management and administration.

2.3. Challenges with regard to school improvement

2.3.1 Introduction
The SMT is charged with the responsibility of running a school and in order to do so it needs to have the authority to make certain decisions (Lemmer and Badenhorst, 1997:338).

In improving the quality of teaching and learning, education management must be more supportive than directive of the change process (Department of Education, 1996:28). In trying to be supportive, SMT members are faced with the following challenges:

2.3.2 Low qualifications of educators
The curriculum is presently in the process of changing. Own observation shows that the majority of educators attained their teaching qualification prior to the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). This resembles an obstacle in the effective teaching by educators as they are expected to implement OBE methods in their
teaching. The DoE at district level exposed educators to training in OBE for a week or so, and expects educators to implement OBE in their classrooms.

It is difficult for the SMT members to give educators the expected support, as they too need training in OBE. “Low qualifications create despondency and apathy in many school communities” (Department of Education, 1996:18). Many teachers are untrained or poorly trained (Dadey and Harber, 1991:06). Teachers were trained for a maximum of one week in OBE. This makes it difficult for them to switch from using information acquired during the training they received for three years when they were prepared for the profession, to a week’s information sharing.

2.3.3 Lack of support for teaching and learning

Support for teaching and learning in schools is limited to short in-service courses run by the DoE, which focus on content and methodology (Department of Education, 1996:18). Justice is not done by these courses as they are conducted over a short period of time. The SMT finds it difficult to assist educators in their areas of difficulty, due to lack of training themselves as managers.

2.3.4 Low morale among learners

“Lack of hope on being employed on finishing studies by learners contributes to a feeling of despondency and de-motivation among learners, who often express their frustration through absenteeism as well as lack of commitment to their own education, or other forms of negative behaviour” (The Voice, July 2002). Some families do not have funds to support the learners through tertiary level, while in some cases learners have lost interest in their studies. Absenteeism impacts badly on the learner performance at the end of the year. This can be attributed to missing out on certain lessons during the absence of the learner who then never bothers to seek information on what was done during his/her absence.

2.3.5 Low morale among educators

For people in leadership positions within schools, low morale among educators presents an enormous challenge. The challenge is to develop leadership as an art, which will encourage all members of the school community to take responsibility for making a difference within the school (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:04). “Teachers are
overworked and underpaid, sometimes not paid at all for months on end” (Dadey and Harber, 1991:20). The non-payment of teachers’ salaries by the DoE is viewed by teachers as a lack of appreciation by the state, for the role they play in the lives of learners. This, in some instances, results in educators spending many days visiting the department offices to make enquiries about payments. Learners are disadvantaged by this action as they remain without an educator for the relevant subject for a number of days.

According to Sterling and Davidoff (2000:03), there is pressure from all sides, which is felt most at the point of delivery - the school. Often teachers experience mixed feelings within this context. Teachers are either frustrated or de-motivated and without hope. The DoE expects the SMT to implement its policies, while on the other hand there is resistance from the side of educators who feel that sometimes SMT members are oppressing them. The allegation of being oppressors is flung at the SMT members more often than not when they request educators to submit work for monitoring purposes.

2.3.6 Increase in numbers of learners

“The increase in numbers of learners led to the disintegration of learning environments and the death of the culture of learning” (Department of Education, 1996:18). In many schools educators have to teach in crowded classrooms. This situation affects the impact of teaching as it is difficult to control the learners. The lack of effective teaching and learning affects the performance of the whole school. Individual attention is not possible in crowded classrooms and this has a negative impact on the results of the schools.

Schools have to survive in conditions where resources for education are increasingly scarce and where their operation may be hampered by mismanagement and there is also increasing pressure on schools to take more and more pupils (Dadey and Harber, 1991:19). This statement in a way verifies the reasons cited for failure to effect improvement in schools by some SMT members.

2.3.7 Lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities

The introduction of the School Governing Body (SGB) structure, as stipulated by the South African Schools’ Act no. 84 of 1996 (SASA), created confusion in many
It is difficult for some people to differentiate between the role of the SGB members and the role of SMT members. This, in many instances, is due to the lack of capacity of the SGB members. The Act clearly states that the SMT members’ role is management while the SGB members’ role is governance. In many occasions there are clashes in running the schools because the SGB members want total control.

2.3.8 Staff discipline

“Teacher misbehaviour, among others, is defined as lateness, absenteeism, alcoholism and sexual harassment of female pupils” (Dadey and Harber, 1991:06). Lateness as well as absenteeism, have a bad impact on school performance. The SMT is entrusted the task of assisting both learners and educators to overcome the lateness and absenteeism syndromes so as to have a “winning” team.

2.3.9 Financial Management

According to Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:131), accessing and managing the financial resources needed to reach one’s goals are essential prerequisites for successful achievement. This becomes true for the SMT members, as they have to ensure that funds collected through school funds as well as the subsidy given by the DoE are properly utilised and well accounted for by those responsible for school finances.

2.4 Ways in which these challenges can be addressed

2.4.1 Motivation

The leadership challenge is to bring a sense of hope and possibility back into the terrain of the school (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:03). This will boost the low morale of educators as well as learners so that they all exert effort in the activities they engage in.

2.4.2 Empowerment of SMT members

Robertson et al, as cited in Morrison (1998:129), argue that effective performance is the product of ability, training and motivation. Morrison (1998:131) goes on to say “one of the keys, then, to motivation appears to be empowerment.”
Empowerment means more than simply “allowing” teachers access to decision making (Blasé and Blasé, 1994:132). Blasé and Blasé furthermore state that empowerment involves among other things:

- Developing teachers’ skills to gather data, make decisions and solve problems.
- Freely engaging in critical discourse in which educators discuss, debate and dialogue.
- Involving parents and other citizens in providing a legislative framework for schooling that supports democratic processes.

Tate, as cited in Blasé and Blasé (1994:137), defines empowerment as “the broadening of teachers’ expert and professional authority over schooling. According to Mitchell and Sackney (2000:58), empowerment equips the SMT amongst others with the following capacities:

- Capacity for openness which enables the implementation of collegial transformation.
- Intellectual stimulation which helps develop structures to foster participation in school decisions.
- Interpersonal capacity which is fundamental to empowerment and self-change. They add that, “In environments with enhanced interpersonal capacity and with empowered individuals who engage in deep self-change, learning communities can be expected to emerge and profound improvement in teaching and learning can be expected to flourish”

### 2.4.3 Changing leadership approach

The challenge is to develop leadership as an art that will encourage all members of the school community to take responsibility for making a difference within the school (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:04). The leader’s role is to encourage transformation within the school by inspiring and motivating staff and students to realise their potential (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:08).

Leadership means making an inspirational difference in your own life, the lives of others and the life of your school (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:02). This statement
is in support of the fact that a leader has to discover ways of working with others, which help them to feel that they are of high value to the life of the school.

Effective schools require effective managers, and effective management is one of the key requirements for school improvement. This can take place in schools where governance is shared. The effectiveness of leaders depends largely on their sensitivity, approachability and management style (Walters, 1993:01). Management styles that can be applied by SMT members so as to achieve improvement in schools are the following:

2.4.3.1 Transformational Leadership
Transformational leadership involves an exchange among people seeking common aims, uniting them to go beyond their separate interests in the pursuit of higher goals (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1988:198). According to the Department of Education (1996:42), one of the key facets of education management is to develop leadership and technical management skills so as to ensure effective and efficient delivery within education institutions.

A transformed leader needs to cultivate in his school a professional culture of collegial feedback by encouraging staff to share ideas which breed success (Evans, 1999:93).

“Principals as part of the SMT should employ political and symbolic frames in the interpretation of their problems” (Leithwood et al, 1999:22). This will draw the leaders’ attention to multiple dimensions of the school organisation.

“Transformational leadership exposes one to restructuring through changing their governance structures, open themselves to greater community influence, become more accountable, clarify their standards for content and performance and introduce related changes in their approaches to teaching and learning” (Leithwood et al, 1999:23). The SMT members worked with school committees who were responsible for governance, but that changed in 1994 when Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSA) were introduced. Education is dynamic, hence at present governance is handled by SGBs in schools.
The SMT members need to consult stakeholders for effective running of their schools. This is done by being involved in Education forums that are constituted by the various stakeholders like political organisations, churches and teachers’ and learners’ organisations. It is this involvement of stakeholders that promotes transparency in the activities of the school, and through the participation of the stakeholders the school can be changed for the better.

Transformational leadership entails not only a change in the purposes and resources of those involved in the leader-follower relationship, but an elevation of both (Leithwood et al, 1999:28). In South Africa 17 departments of education merged to one in 1994. One of the key aims of this merger was to share resources so as to improve the quality of education even in the formerly disadvantaged schools. The merger also brought about a change in the manner in which the SMT members go about carrying out their management duties. Staff members have a say in activities of the school, something which never featured in the old era.

According to Beare et al (1992:107), the principal who is a transforming leader may secure substantial commitments of time and energy from teachers in a drive to change attitudes of students and parents to school community.

2.4.3.2 Constructivist Leadership

According to Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner & Slack (1995:29), constructivist leadership refers to the “reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meaning that lead towards a common purpose about schooling”. Lambert furthermore clarifies these reciprocal processes as those that:

- “Evoke potential in a trusting environment”: This means the SMT members should assist educators such that even the hidden talent is brought out. This can be achieved by building a sense of trust. Once trust is built every individual prides in engaging in developmental activities.
- “Reconstruct, or “break set” with old assumptions and myths”: Reconstruction is possible in an environment where every individual’s opinion is respected. Concepts and motives for activities that take place need to be clearly defined.
so as to enable everybody exposure to information that pertains to school activities.

• “Frame actions that embody new behaviours and purposeful intentions”: Actions taken by SMT members need to be for the purpose of changing for the better. When reprimanding either a learner or an educator, the SMT members need to aim at instilling a spirit of good will because work is smoothly done in an environment where there is harmony.

2.4.4 Building a shared vision
When there is a shared vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar “vision statement”), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to (Senge, 1999:35). Senge continues to say the practice of shared vision involves the skill of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment rather than compliance.

2.4.5 Team learning and team work
School improvement is brought about by team learning and support. When teams are truly learning, not only are they producing extraordinary results, but the individual members are growing more rapidly than could have occurred otherwise (Senge, 1999:37). Team learning and team work assist by enabling team members to help one another in making every endeavour a success.

2.4.6 Creation and support of conditions conducive to teaching and learning

2.4.6.1 Support to boost morale
The extent to which effective learning is achieved becomes the criterion against which the quality of management is to be judged (Department of Education, 1996:27). This indicates that the SMT needs to provide support to educators if it wants the school to improve. Provision of support to educators can also boost the morale of educators who will be able to gain confidence in their work as support will equip them with more skills. Developing people improves the effectiveness of each individual, and of the institution (Department of Education, 1996:47).
2.4.6.2 Building capacity
The task of the SMT is to build the capacity of staff and learners to respond effectively and creatively to problems and to find appropriate strategies to realise potentials (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:12). If staff members are capacitated, such behaviour is reflected through the skills they portray in carrying out their duties. The skills are essential for the improvement of schools.

The idea of capacity building is further discussed by Fuller, as cited in Senge et al (1994:28), where he says “If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don’t bother teaching them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking”. Capacity building is but one tool which can be applied in order to achieve school improvement.

2.4.6.3 Individualised support
Individualised support may be motivational in assuring teachers that the problems they are likely to encounter while changing their practices will be taken seriously by those in leadership roles, and efforts will be made to help them through those problems (Leithwood, Jantzi, Steinbach, 1999:72). The SMT is well positioned in the educational hierarchy to support the normative activities that promote professional and student learning (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000:103). Support is essential so as to boost the morale of educators by preparing them in such a way that they are able to deal with problems that they are exposed to, in their teaching experience.

2.4.6.4 Promotion of professional reflection
Podsakoff as quoted in Leithwood et al (1999:75), states that “leadership practice that challenges followers to re-examine some of their work and to rethink how it can be performed is the meaning of intellectual stimulation in the transformational leadership literature”. This is indicative of the fact that educators need to be encouraged to do self-assessment, with the aim of coming up with mechanisms or approaches that can make them successful in their work. The SMT members should encourage all other staff members to practice introspection, so as to be able to learn from mistakes made, and to be able to correct these, in order to bring about effectiveness in schools through team work.
2.4.6.5 Promoting a collaborative culture

Educators need to be developed in order to have self-renewing schools. “Self-renewing schools are collaborative places in which adults care about one another, share common goals and values, and have the skills and knowledge to plan together, problem-solve together and fight passionately for ideas to improve instruction” (Costa and Liebmann, 1997:117). This statement is in support of the fact that the SMT members need to consult with SGB members, staff members and learners so as to be able to achieve a collaborative culture.

2.5 Conclusion

SMT members need help from other staff members, from the learners, as well as from the SGB in order to be successful in improving schools. School improvement is shown among other things through management and administration strategies that are developmental to both the SMT and learners. The SMT determines the failure or success of a school through their mode of operation. The SMT members are granted authority over other staff members by virtue of the position they occupy in the school hierarchy that is why they have to be creative and supportive of all developmental programmes.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of an outline of the research methodology used, sources of data as well as methods used for data collection. Baxter, Hughes and Tight (1999:35), identify method as “relating principally to tools of data collection”, and methodology as “having a more general and philosophical meaning”. This statement implies that a method is used when data is collected, for example, questionnaires and interviews, while methodology refers to the paradigm or research tradition within which the study has been conducted. This outline is influenced among other views by Erwee and Mullins (1995:20), who view research design as, “a framework that specifies the type of information to be collected, the sources of data and data collection procedures”.

The research design implemented in this study encompasses amongst other things the following:

- Research paradigm
- Research methods
- Data gathering methods
- Data analysis
- Data interpretation

3.2 Research Paradigm

3.2.1 Introduction

Guba, as cited in McFarlane (2000:15), states that, “a paradigm is a basic set of beliefs that guides action, specifically in terms of disciplined inquiry, but also in a wider sense”. In this chapter the beliefs referred to are my personal beliefs as a researcher, in so far as the best possible way of conducting research in education is concerned. These beliefs are in line with the interpretive paradigm.
3.2.2 Interpretive Paradigm

This study is based upon the interpretive paradigm and is aimed at explaining the role played by the SMT members in improving schools. According to Burrel and Morgan (1979:28), the interpretive paradigm “seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action”. The individual consciousness referred to is that of SMT members as this study is centred around the SMT members’ roles.

McFarlane (2000:27) alludes to the fact that in the interpretive paradigm the researcher seeks to understand social situations by becoming part of the situation or becoming close to people involved with them to in order listen to them, and to share their perceptions and experiences. It is the daily experiences of the SMT members in their management practice that shaped this study.

Merriam (2001:128) states that “in interpretive research, education is considered to be a process and school is lived experience”. Activities that can bring about improvement in schools need to be applied within a period of time and it needs some effort on both the part of the SMT members as well as the stakeholders within schools.

Cohen and Manion (1994:38) argue that, “the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjectivity world of human experience”. This statement alludes to the centrality of human behaviour in interpretive paradigm. The behaviour to be studied in this case is the behaviour of the SMT members.

3.3 Research Method

3.3.1 Introduction

The research method applied in this study is qualitative research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:372), qualitative research is “concerned with understanding participants’ feelings, beliefs, ideals, thoughts and actions”. This study seeks to understand the role played by the SMT members in their endeavours to work towards improving schools.
Wiersma (1995:212), on the other hand, views qualitative research as a situation where “the researcher operates in a natural setting and to the extent possible should maintain an openness about what will be observed or collected in order to avoid missing something important”. The natural setting creates an opportunity for the researcher to build trust so that the participants can express themselves freely.

3.3.2 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research appealed for the purpose of this study especially when one bases one’s argument on the four characteristics of qualitative research as identified by Merriam (2001:06), namely that:

- Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there: Each school is unique in that conditions usually pertain to circumstances prevailing in the place where the school is located. This requires SMT members to treat the school with the uniqueness it deserves so it can be possible to attain improvement.

- The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection: Qualitative research does not focus on already available data, hence it is essential for the researcher to collect data.

- Qualitative research usually involves fieldwork: The field in this study is the school as the researcher had to go to various schools in order to observe the behaviour of the participants in their natural settings.

- Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy.

Struwig and Stead (2001:12), also commenting on the topic of qualitative research, claim that, “qualitative research focuses on the participants’ and researcher’s perspectives and requires that the behaviour of individuals needs to be explained with reference to the individuals’ environment or context”. Qualitative research requires flexibility and the use of theories, which means that the study can be adjusted to different emerging situations and that theories about research can be used as a point of reference.

Denzin and Lincoln, as cited in Struwig and Stead (2001:11), claim that, “qualitative research can be viewed as interdisciplinary, multi-paradigmic and multi-method”.

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They feel that qualitative research is a broad term encompassing many and varied elements and approaches to research.

Finch (1986:06) agrees with Merriam in saying that “the logical procedures adopted in qualitative research are inductive in that data from case studies are used to develop, not just to test, generalisations”. This alerts the researcher to the fact that information obtained from interacting with the SMT members should be utilised to draw some conclusions.

3.4 Data Gathering Methods

3.4.1 Introduction
All research involves collection of data through various methods. Triangulation was applied in this study. According to Cohen and Manion (1994:269) triangulation may be identified as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”. In this study methods of data collection used were:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Own observation
- Document analysis

3.4.2 Design Classification
This is an empirical study. According to Mouton’s (2001:146) classification framework of design types, this study can be defined according to the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Classification</th>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Hybrid data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Medium Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above reflects the fact that this study is textual, which means that the data is gathered in the form of words. It also highlights the fact that the researcher has medium control over the process, which means that questions are open-ended. Data is identified to be hybrid due to the fact that both primary and secondary data are
utilised. What makes this study empirical is the fact that the researcher relies on observation and experiment and not on theory for the reaching of certain conclusions.

3.4.3 Sampling

3.4.3.1 Introduction

The researcher’s endeavours to collect information from smaller groups or subsets of the population in such a way that knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study is referred to as sampling (Cohen and Manion, 1994:101). In this study sampling was done among secondary schools in the King William’s Town District.

3.4.3.2 Sampling Methods

Purposeful sampling was used in this study. Creswell (2002:194) defines purposeful sampling as “intentionally selecting individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon”. He adds that criteria are used to purposefully sample sites or individuals. Purposeful sampling is, also identified by Cohen and Manion (1994:103) as a strategy where “the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of the researcher’s judgement of their typicality”. The criteria used for selecting schools for this study, guided by Erwee and Mullins’ (1995:40) steps in selecting a sample, were as follows:

- Definition of the population: Schools included in this study are schools within the King William’s Town district in the Eastern Cape.
- Specify the sample frame: Schools selected are representative of all schools in the King William’s Town district which include remote rural and urban (township and ex-Model C) schools.
- Specify sampling unit: Only Senior Secondary schools were included in this study. The identified schools are Kei Road Combined School – a township school; Funiwe Senior Secondary School – a rural school with a modern structure of classrooms; Langaliphumile Senior Secondary School - a remote rural school and Kaffrarian Girls High School - an ex-Model C school. These schools were selected because at the time their performance in the matriculation examinations was on various levels. This, therefore, represents a fairly representative sample for the King William’s Town area.
• Specify sampling method: This study employed non-probability sampling, as the selection of a population element to be part of a sample was based on the judgement of the researcher. As indicated before, individuals were purposefully selected because of the knowledge and experience of the individuals with respect to the roles and functions of the SMT members.

• Determine the sample size: In each of the participating schools, the sample comprised of two SMT members (principal and head of department), two SGB members (chairperson and secretary) and two educators. Three circuit managers who are Education Development Officers (EDOs) were also part of the sample due to the fact that they worked with the schools participating in the chosen sample.

3.4.4 Interviews

3.4.4.1 Introduction
An interview was one of the data collection methods implemented in this study based on Cohen and Manion’s (1994:307) description. The research interview used in this study was a two-person interview conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information, and with focus by the interviewer on content specified by the research objectives. All questions posed to interviewees were aimed at establishing the role played by the SMT members in trying to improve their schools.

3.4.4.2 Type of interview used
The unstructured type of interview was used. Interviewees were asked questions but the interviewer did not have a fixed pattern in asking the questions. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:252), “unstructured interviews allow the interviewer great latitude in asking broad questions in whatever order seems appropriate”. This means the prevailing circumstances in an interview are to guide the researcher in the manner in which questions are to be posed. Cohen and Manion (1994:309) support this idea by McMillan and Schumacher, as they claim that an unstructured interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom than a structured interview. The advantage of an unstructured interview is the fact that the interviewer is able to rephrase questions when the interviewees experience
problems with responding to questions. Creswell (2002:205) also alludes to the fact that unstructured interviews allow the researcher to ask open-ended questions that permit the participant to create various response possibilities.

Erwee and Mullins (1995:56) identify the unstructured interview as being personal, using extensive probing in order to obtain a single respondent to talk freely and to express detailed beliefs and feelings on a topic.

### 3.4.4.3 Interview process

Interviewees were contacted some time before the interviews were to take place. This was done so as to arrange time for the interviews. Wiersma (1995:199) warns that “interviews should have flexible schedules”, hence the researcher arranged interview time so as to let the interviewees set aside time in their programs for the interviews.

Individuals were interviewed separately. This was done in line with the views of Mitchell and Jolley (1992:458), who claim that, “interviewing more than one person at a time would prevent the researcher from getting independent responses as participants might go along with the group rather than give their true opinions”. As a researcher, I also wanted to create an opportunity where each interviewee would be able to express herself/himself freely and at the same time be certain of the confidentiality with which the information would be treated.

Creswell (2002:405) is also in favour of the one-on-one interview as he claims that it is useful for asking sensitive questions and also for enabling the interviewees to ask questions or provide comments that go beyond the initial questions. The interviewer had to sometimes probe for answers when interviewees seemed to respond in an unsatisfactory manner.

The duration of each interview was thirty minutes. The aim of spending the thirty minutes with each interviewee was to enable the researcher to explore various aspects of the problem in an unrestricted manner.
3.4.4.4 Problems encountered

When interviewees were approached for this study, some were reluctant to co-operate citing the following:

- The interviewees feared that their responses might be handed over to the DoE and they would be charged for not doing their work, and that the researcher was a private investigator for the Department. This showed a lot of suspicion and mistrust.
- They felt that the interviews would consume a lot of their time and that this would be a waste as they were not going to get any remuneration for participating in the interviews.
- Responses of SGB members only refer to schools in rural areas as well as from the townships, as the researcher could not interview SGB members from former Model C schools. SGB members who were approached at these schools could not accommodate the researcher due to their busy schedules.

The above concerns were addressed personally with the participants and finally the interviews took place. This is how the concerns were addressed:

- The researcher assured the interviewees that the interviews were conducted as part of data collection only so as to get correct information on what actually was taking place in schools. A letter stating that the researcher was a student was also produced to back up this statement.
- The researcher assured the interviewees of the strict confidentiality to be awarded every piece of information shared during the interviews.
- The researcher also pointed out that participating in the interviews would assist the SMT members as talking could sometimes bring about solutions to problems encountered by the SMT members in their practice.

Arrangements were made with each interviewee about the venue of the interviews, where the interviewee would be able to talk freely without any interruptions. During the interview process the researcher had to briefly explain the purpose of the interview so as to put the interviewees at ease. As the interviewees responded, the researcher took notes. In some instances, especially when interviewing the SMT
members, a tape recorder was used. With the consent of the interviewees, using a tape recorder was relevant due to the fact that the researcher did not want to miss a thing in the responses of the SMT because the study’s focus was on the role of the SMT members. The recorded responses granted the researcher an opportunity of playing the tape again so as to be able to ensure that the responses were correctly translated to paper, and that no misinterpretation or incorrect hearing had taken place.

The only responses that can be claimed to be reliable as well as valid are the ones obtained from the school-based respondents. In most instances the SGB members were not actually aware of what is taking place in the schools. In some schools when the SGB members were requested to reflect on the role of the SMT in the school, the response was “The SMT runs the school under the headship of the principal when the chairperson of the school SGB is not there”. In certain instances the response was “The SMT cannot perform their duties because they are not obeyed by the unruly educators in that school”.

3.4.5 Questionnaires

3.4.5.1 Introduction
A questionnaire is a formalised schedule for collecting data from respondents (Erwee and Mullins, 1995:28). Various forms of questioning are implemented when drawing up a questionnaire.

3.4.5.2 Response formats used in this study
The questionnaire for this study was compiled using Cohen and Manion (1994:109) stipulations on drawing up questionnaires as a guide. Some of these response formats were as follows:

(a) Likert scale
This is a scale with a number of points that provide ordinal scale measurement. An example of one of the questions posed in this category is: “Low morale among educators is one of the challenges facing the SMT members”.

Agree □ □ Strongly agree □ □ Disagree □ □ Strongly disagree □ □
(b) Closed–ended questions

Closed -ended questions are questions where the researcher poses a question with pre-set response options for the participants. This can be shown as follows.

“Since you joined the SMT, the performance of the SMT in your school has”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Dropped</th>
<th>Not changed</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

See Annexure A for this questionnaire

These questionnaires were delivered to the participating schools for later collection after completion. Clarity was offered to the respondents on how to go about responding to the questionnaire and they were urged to respond accurately to the questionnaire. Questions asked in the questionnaire were aimed at laying the foundation in preparation for the interviews that were to be a second phase of the survey.

3.4.5.3 Responses to questionnaires

The responses to the questionnaires left a lot to be desired. However, the picture drawn by the responses of the respondents was that of successful schools. Some respondents failed to return the questionnaires within the stipulated time, but with pestering by the researcher they finally submitted them.

Questionnaires were not answered individually as per the request of the researcher. Responses reflect that educators as well as SGB members in participating schools had come together to discuss responses and that made them give similar responses. It is because of this that in my view, the questionnaires did not serve the intended purpose of this study.
3.4.6 Own Observation

3.4.6.1 Introduction
One method of collecting data is through observation. According to Mitchell and Jolley (1992:424), observation involves simply watching behaviour. Creswell (2002:198) reiterates this statement as he claims that observation is the process of gathering first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site. As this study focused on members of the SMT, their behaviour in particular was observed at each of the identified schools.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:256) regard observation as relying on a researcher’s seeing and hearing ability and recording the resultant observations rather than relying on subjects’ self-report responses to questions or statements. This is what alerted the researcher in this study to the fact that the authenticity of responses by interviewees needs to be verified where possible. Verification in this study was done by checking the interview responses, and comparing them with what took place when the researcher visited the schools.

3.4.6.2 The observation process
After some debates between staff members of the schools constituting the sample for this research, about whether or not I should be allowed to observe the staff meetings, I was finally given permission to do so. I was further granted the status of a participant observer in two of the schools. According to Creswell (2002:200), a participant observer is an observational role adopted by researchers when they also take part in activities in the setting they observe.

Only one school granted the researcher permission to be part of their SMT members’ meetings. Reasons given for declining to allow the researcher to attend these meetings ranged from stating that doing so would be giving the researcher access to information that had not been given to other staff members, as well as saying these meetings were strictly for SMT members and no outsider was to be allowed. This was said to be the policy of the schools.
Observations were made during three staff meetings so that the researcher could be given the opportunity to understand the school activities better. Creswell (2002:201) defines this continued observation as “multiple observation”, which is aimed at locating insightful behaviour of activities. This view is further endorsed by Wiersma (1995:28) as he claims that observation is a continuing process, and is not limited to one or two sessions.

Struwig and Stead (2001:100) support the view that observation occurs in naturalistic contexts as the observer looks for larger trends or patterns of behaviour pertinent to the study. These patterns are only identified when the observation is done over a longer period. A longer period allows the researcher to compare findings and be able to detect a pattern.

The views shared in the meetings I observed, can be summarized as follows:

- Principals, more often than not, wanted their views to be the popular ones.
- In some schools educators were not as vocal in the meetings as they were during the interviews. When asked about this change in behaviour they said they had given up hope of ever being listened to by the SMT, as they had tried several times to give advice but no one heeded their proposals.
- SMT members were not treated with any respect. Instead they were threatened that they would be reported to teacher union offices for the ill-treatment they incur on educators (No incidents of ill-treatment were evidenced by the researcher).
- The SMT members had no operation plan. (Rural schools).
- Schools in town were not experiencing any of the problems mentioned above, instead they boasted of their SMT members’ achievements in ensuring that there was improvement in the schools.

In some rural schools, the only senior post was the principal’s post, so educators had to be co-opted to the SMT. This had its problems as it was met with resistance in some schools. Educators wanted remuneration for services rendered. Morrison (1998:132), when addressing the resistance due to lack of remuneration, claims that, “people will involve themselves in change only when they are promised to get payment”.
3.4.7 Questions’ validity

3.4.7.1 Introduction
Mishler, as cited in Struwig and Stead (2001:143) defines validity as trustworthiness or credibility. Validity of any study is important and various mechanisms are employed to confirm validity.

Creswell (2002:183), in defining the same concept claims that, “validity means that researchers can draw meaningful and justifiable inferences from scores about a sample or population”.

3.4.7.2 Ways of validating data
Struwig and Stead (2001:144) identify the following as ways of validating data:

- Descriptive validity refers to whether information provided is factually accurate and comprehensive or whether it has been partly omitted or distorted. In some instances, interviewees respond in a manner in which they think the researcher wants them to respond. Validity ensures that such behaviour does not take place.

- Interpretative validity is an indication of whether participants’ meanings or perspectives are accurately report or not.

- Triangulation means the extent to which independent measures confirm or contradict findings. According to Cohen and Manion (1994:270), the use of triangulation will help to overcome the problem of method-boundedness. Method-boundedness makes it impossible for data to be valid, as the applicable instruments tend to be biased towards the particular theory without looking elsewhere.

Validity has to do with whether your methods, approaches and techniques actually relate to, or measure, the issue you have been exploring (Baxter, Hughes and Tight, 1999:200). Validity in this study was confirmed by using various sources of data.
3.4.8 Reliability of data
According to Creswell (2002:180), reliability means that individual scores from an instrument should be nearly the same or stable on repeated administrations of the instrument, they should be free from sources of measurement error, and they should be consistent. In order for reliability to be achieved, questions posed should be unambiguous and clear. Wiersma (1995:309) agrees with this view as he claims that, “reliability is the degree to which an instrument will give similar results for the same individuals at different times”. This means one can depend on the received results, as they are relatively consistent. In this study the questions asked by the respondents during the interview gave a guide to the results. The interviews were conducted in different venues and at different times but there was consistency in the content asked. The result was that a pattern was detected in attitudes of the various categories of respondents, SMT members’ tone differed from the SGB members’ tone and were also confirmed through the researcher’s observations of the SMT activities in the schools.

3.4.9 Document analysis
Documents used in this study consist of public and private records that provide valuable information in helping the researcher understand central phenomena in qualitative studies.

In this study the documents used were minutes of staff and SGB meetings, official memos and records kept by the schools.

The filing system in rural areas is very poor compared to that of town schools. This can possibly be explained by referring to the fact that the schools in town have a clerk who deals with filing and that their principals have a maximum of 12 periods per cycle, whereas other SMT members have a maximum of 24 periods. In rural schools, principals have a minimum of 24 periods per cycle and other SMT members are as overloaded as any educator, some having 44 periods per cycle out of 56 periods and, in addition, there are no clerks. In rural areas information that was shared during the interviews turned out to be invalid when the researcher requested supporting evidence, as there was none.
3.5 Data Analysis

Erwee and Mullins (1995:72), define analysis as involving the ordering and structuring of data to produce knowledge. It embraces a whole range of activities.

Both verbal and non-verbal data were used in this study. According to Struwig and Stead (1995:40), verbal data can be obtained through conducting interviews while non-verbal data can be obtained through using questionnaires.

This study focused on the themes identified by Baxter et al (1999:174), for data analysis which are:

- The shape of data: Data collected in this study is textual data as written words are used as opposed to verbal words. The researcher has medium control over the data as open-ended questions were asked during the verbal interview process.
- The nature of data: Data used was primary in most cases as the researcher obtained information through conducting interviews, so information was original.
- Managing data: The researcher managed data by arranging the notes taken from the responses of the interviewees so that a pattern could be detected.

Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1995:121) claim that analysis of data should result in a deeper understanding of the situation, and a “new” practical theory that can extend existing understanding.

Mouton (2001:108), claims that analysis involves “breaking up” the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships and is aimed at understanding the various constitutive elements of one’s data.
3.6 Data Interpretation

3.6.1 Introduction
Data obtained in this study was chaotic at first, as responses from the interviewees were not well structured. Responses from interviewees in this study reflect that a lot needs to be done in preparing SMT members for their role so as to bring about effectiveness in their schools.

3.6.2 Functions performed by the SMT members
Responses obtained in this study show that SMT members view their role in school improvement as being the following:

3.6.2.1 Planning
Responses from some of the interviewed SMT members revealed that in some schools no planning was done for the day-to-day operations of the school. The statements by the SMT members that were reiterated by educators, made me believe that in many schools, especially those in rural areas, little or no planning takes place. Planning by the SMT members is event driven. They only think of planning when trying to solve a specific problem or are instructed to do so by the DoE.

3.6.2.2 Leading
SMT members mentioned that leading in their institutions is what brings about effectiveness. One respondent claimed that it was through leading by the SMT members that the mission and vision of his school were completed.

My own observations showed that the mission and vision statements of schools are only there for window-dressing. I discovered that it was only SMT members who were aware of what the mission statement and vision of their schools entail. In-depth enquiries showed that not all stakeholders were consulted when drawing up the two statements.
3.6.2.3 Control
According to the views of SMT members, control refers to asking educators to submit their work, so that it can be evaluated by the SMT members, looking at the amount of work done over a prescribed period of time. Control is often referred to as monitoring. Controlling is the monitoring of performance to ensure that objectives are being achieved and tasks completed. Failure to control work leads to poor performance by certain schools. This gives schools a negative image in society. In most instances the SMT members fail to do control work due to fear of threats from the educators. They fear being labelled by educators as oppressors, hence control is not implemented.

3.6.2.4 Areas of management
One grey area in management by the SMT is budgeting. Budgeting in some schools is merely done because the department wants schools to submit their annual budgets. Various reasons are given by the SMT for the late budgeting by schools. These reasons range from late payment of school fees by learners to engaging in programmes that were never planned. The SMT cite this as a reason for them to operate on a paper budget for the greater part of the year. Paper budget refers to instances whereby schools draw up their budget on funds that are not readily available. Budgeting is one area that needs attention, as it is an activity central to the effectiveness of a school. Some SMT members do not even understand how a budget is drawn up. They view budgeting as drawing up the income and expenditure report.

Personnel is but one of the areas managed by the SMT members. Feedback obtained during the interviews indicates that some schools have excessive numbers of personnel who are sometimes difficult to manage as they play truant at times knowing that their absence may go unnoticed. Some schools complain that they have difficulty in performing their duties as they are understaffed. They struggle to deal with the load of work they are expected to carry.
3.6.2.5 Decision making
Decision making in schools is still regarded as being the role of the SMT members only. Staff members are often excluded when crucial decisions are to be taken in schools. They are not asked to voice their views when changes like an increase in school fees payable by learners are to be effected. Educators in some schools were not even invited to participate in the drawing up of the school policy.

3.6.3 Challenges faced by SMT members

3.6.3.1 Lack of skills among educators
School Management Teams are sometimes challenged by teachers in their implementation of management practises. The most cited challenge is the lack of skills among educators. SMT members claim that OBE requires creativity, something which is not easy to find in many teachers. This results in poor academic performance by the learners.

3.6.3.2 Insufficient number of classrooms
SMT members also have to deal with the problem of an insufficient number of classrooms. The DoE is accused of dragging its feet in unveiling programmes for the building of additional classrooms. In schools where the enrolment is high, the different subject grouping makes the lack of classrooms a challenge as different subject groupings consume a lot of space. One of the SMT members interviewed pointed out that “in their school each grade has 2 groups, and the school starts from grade 8 to grade 12 and they have only 7 classrooms. Some classes are conducted in a dilapidated prefabricated structure which was erected in 1983”. This scenario poses a threat to the improvement of the school as it impacts negatively on the performance and commitment to work of both educators and learners.

3.6.3.3 Lack of human resources
Schools complained of lack of human resources. The redeployment process which was effected in 1999, is identified as the cause of insufficient educators. SMT members allege that some schools accommodating grades 8 to 12 were left with only
6 educators after others had to leave as a result of the redeployment process. This hit badly as the remaining educators were left with a burden that was too difficult to carry. There are also certain educators who are scarce to find, especially those offering mathematics and science. Some schools remain without a teacher for these subjects for almost a year and that has a negative influence on the school’s performance.

3.6.3.4 Autocratic leadership
Responses from interviewees in this study reflect that a lot needs to be done in preparing School Management Teams for their role so as to bring about effectiveness in their schools. Findings from the interviews show that in most cases principals remain the sole managers in schools. Theoretically, all stakeholders within a school encourage team work, but they fail to effectively implement this principle.

3.6.3.5 Tensions between principals and the members of the SMT members
School Management Teams are characterised by individuals within a team. During the interviews one HOD said, “our voices fall on deaf ears, our principal is running this school as if it is his farm”. When talking about the management style of the principal, another HOD said “The tensions between myself and my principal are so serious that I would not be amazed if he runs me over in his car when we meet in the dark. I think my qualifications which are better than his, as well as my challenging some of his management traits pose a threat to him”. Statements like this make one wonder as to whether the SMT really has a vision for improving the school or whether it is not merely a matter of personal gain.

Principals on the other hand, accuse the other SMT members of being uncooperative. One principal even said, “I am always accused of not allowing the other SMT to participate in school management. When I assign them duties, they complain that I am delegating my responsibilities. What do they want me to do?”

3.6.3.6 Application of principles of democratic management
Although school principals claimed to be supporters of democratic models of management, their actions reflect otherwise. Democratic models, according to Bush (1986:48), assume a common set of values that guide the managerial activities of the
organisation and, in particular, are considered to lead to shared institutional objectives. Institutional objectives are only shared when team work is emphasised in a school. One of the principals claimed that, “what I have discovered is that my deputy wants my post. He is discrediting me in the SGB by telling them lies about me which is why I just do not involve her in what I do at school”.

3.6.3.7 Challenges with respect to the functioning of the SMT members
SMT members from the rural areas and township spent a greater part in the interview lamenting about what they do not have while the SMT in town boasted of what they have achieved utilising the few resources they have. Some of the responses from SMT members in rural areas and the township were “It is difficult for us to improve our schools because we do not get any support either from the parents or the Department of Education; even our learners show no interest in their studies”. The SMT members from town had a positive attitude as some said “We are so fortunate because we have a strong and committed team comprising of educators, learners and supportive parents.”

In all the schools there were signs that SMT members are eager to bring about change for the better in their schools though some were not even aware how to do that. An SMT member from the township had this to say “The strong urge to the delivery of quality production forces SMT members to build teams that are efficient, effective, organised, well groomed, well delegated and supervised, where everybody is on board for all the daily activities of the school”.

Reflections by the interviewees revealed that there is sometimes conflict in schools caused by the interference of the SGB in administrative matters. An example of such a case is when the SGB wants to dismiss an educator or a learner. The SGB is not aware that they can only go as far as recommendation, but cannot actually dismiss or employ educators themselves. These conflicts affect the management of the SMT members because in most cases the problems are such that tuition does not take place. Sometimes the SGB interferes while the SMT are still applying administrative procedures to the problem.
3.6.3.8 School improvement

Theory on how to make an effective change in schools is a recipe some SMT members have, but one which they fail to implement. Some SMT members lament that the present era in education does not accommodate the old educators, as it is too democratic. They go on to claim that they have no control over educators, as if their role is the control function only.

3.6.3.9 Lack of clarity by SMT members about their roles.

It was through the interview process that the researcher could establish that some SMT members are not even aware of what is expected of them. They merely responded to requests by the educators when they are presented to them.

SGB\(^{1}\) members who were interviewed were also unaware of many of the activities or functions that are to be performed by SMT members. The chairperson of the SGB of one school even said, “we were told by the Education Development Officer (EDO) that as an SGB we were granted all the powers to govern the school. Powers to govern to us mean we can appoint and dismiss an educator as we please here”. This is a misconception because the SGB members merely recommend appointment or dismissal of an educator.

Interviewees stated that crucial decisions are taken at management level in schools. When a staff meeting is held, the SMT ensures that decisions taken are not going to disadvantage the school through guiding the debates towards the direction they want it to go. Staff members are given an opportunity to voice their views on which decisions are to be based, but the SMT makes sure that the decisions are not going to put them at loggerheads with the department. Some of the staff meetings’ decisions are identified as uninformed and radical and in such instances the SMT just does not implement them. This implies that the SMT members are involved in power games that undermine the principles of democratic leadership.

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\(^{1}\) Student Governing Body
3.6.3.10 Pressures exerted by parents with respect to the curriculum

School management, among other things, focuses on curriculum, personnel and budget as already alluded to in Chapter Two. The SMT members are exposed to situations where they sometimes find themselves in a tight corner. They have limited influence on deciding on the relevant curriculum to be followed. Parents, especially in rural areas, depending on the radio for updates on educational activities, exert pressure on schools to offer subjects that are identified as economically viable and in demand in the country. This is done irrespective of whether conditions are conducive for that or not. Most schools in rural areas, for example, offer physical science though they do not have laboratories. Parents want it to be offered so that their children can get suitable jobs on leaving school. The inclusion of physical science in the curriculum in some areas does not serve its purpose as learners perform poorly.

3.6.4 Ways of addressing these challenges

The possible solutions according to the SMT members are:

3.6.4.1 Motivation

One of the respondents argued that if SMT members could acknowledge the efforts of educators in bringing about improvement in schools, educators would be motivated. I also learnt from the respondents that motivation could be in the form of organising functions in which educators and learners who make a difference in schools will be honoured. Each good deed warrants appreciation even if it is just verbal encouragement from the SMT members.

3.6.4.2 Re-skilling of educators

Education is dynamic. Presently educators have to teach OBE\(^1\) inclined material. This is not easy for educators to do who were only trained for a maximum of one week in OBE methods. In order to address this deficit, educators should be retrained so that they can be OBE compliant. The training to be offered should be such that educators are able to do it part-time so that learners are not left without educators.

\(^1\) Outcome Based Education
3.6.4.3 Building of classrooms
The DoE\(^1\) has a responsibility to address the imbalances of the past. This can be achieved through ensuring that basic requirements of schools, like classrooms are provided. Most infrastructures in schools in this district are in a bad condition. Some schools are forced to conduct lessons in open spaces due to shortage of classrooms. The district office has to assist in securing financial sponsors for this, especially for rural schools who are the most highly affected by the shortage of classes.

3.6.4.4 Employment of human resources
Schools are faced with the problem of having to deal with heavy workloads for SMT members. SMT members in some schools teach a number of periods equivalent to the number of periods combined for all the other staff members. This is inevitable due to the curricular needs of the school versus the number of educators for which the school qualifies in the staff establishment. It is high time that the DoE takes into consideration the curriculum of schools as a determining factor for the number of educators to be employed in the particular school.

All schools in rural areas in the King William’s Town district are operating without clerical staff. An educator is usually also assigned to do clerical duties. This increases the workload of the educator. The DoE could transfer some of the clerical staff, who are in excess at the DoE offices, to schools in rural areas like they do in the case of educators.

3.6.4.5 Management style
“The difference between a good school and a bad one is in the management of the two”. These were the words of one of the SMT members interviewed. This statement implies that an effective school must have a management team that is able to carry the transformation of schools forward. The SMT has to lead by example, by being able to be transformation agents. Team work should be inculcated as a central feature in the mode of operation for the school. An open – door policy will enable staff members to

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\(^1\) Department of Education
freely share their problems with the SMT members in order to improve their performance.

3.6.4.6 Establishing the roles of each member
In order for schools to function effectively, the roles to be played by each member of the SMT should be clearly defined. In certain instances schools are ineffective due to undefined roles. Some SMT members do not know who is responsible for what among themselves. In certain instances, the willingness by individuals within the SMT to work hard is interpreted negatively, especially by the principals. They accuse such a team member of being someone who wants the relevant post of the principal. A change of the mindset is needed in order to effect a positive change in schools.

3.6.4.7 Good financial management
SMT members play a central role in the management of school finances. In order to succeed in financial control SMT members should be trained in financial management so that they can assist the SGB in financial control. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:131) allude to the fact that managing money that has been allocated by the DoE to the school is vital to the development of school and project budgets. Budgetary processes when well handled improve the effectiveness of the school.

3.6.4.8 Disciplinary measures
Revisiting of ethics so as to ensure good discipline among staff members and learners is essential. One of the respondents even said “schools have been dragged to the gutters by the democracy practised in our schools. SMT members are no longer feared by both educators and learners.” When the meaning of this statement was probed the respondent explained that schools were characterised by lack of discipline by both educators and learners, which makes schools to be not easily managed. A corrective measure for this behaviour was identified as setting in place policies that address this behaviour. These policies should be drawn up using the views of those who will also be affected by them so as to promote ownership of these policies. Ownership of policies by everybody would ensure that all adhere to the policies.
3.6.4.9 Creation and support of conditions conducive to teaching and learning

(a) Introduction
Responses from SMT members showed that they were aware that building the capacity of staff members was their responsibility. Nonetheless, no programmes were identified as being implemented in schools towards capacity building. Some staff members complained that they were not afforded individualised support by the SMT members.

A closer look by the researcher at the role to be played by SMT members in the creation of support of conditions conducive to teaching and learning reflected that creation and support of these conditions was not an easy function. It is ridiculous to expect someone who was never given any opportunity to capacitate himself, to be able to capacitate somebody else. The SMT members also do not have time at their disposal to create space for capacity building. In addition, some of the SMT members are not creative enough to come up with ideas to promote professional reflection.

(b) Promoting a collaborative culture
Most SMT members interviewed claimed that they were charged with the task of promoting team work. One deputy principal even said, “the strong urge to a service delivery of quality production forces SMT’s to build teams that are efficient and effective”. They also pointed out that this was difficult to achieve due to lack of support from staff members.

Educators based their responses to initiatives of SMT members for more team work on the blame frame triangle by Sterling and Davidoff (2000:09), which talks of a victim, a rescuer and a perpetrator. They identified themselves as victims of the SMT members. One educator, when asked about the development program of her department, responded by saying “our HOD is only concerned about asking us to submit learners’ books so that he can assess progress made. I have never seen any developmental programme nor heard from my colleagues of such a programme”.

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This response reflects that team work is not practised in that particular school and also that openness about activities does not feature.

(c) Improving communication between the SMT and staff members
In most of the rural schools, communication proved to be one of the areas that needs improvement. Educators complained of a lack of transparency in the operation of the SMT members. They claimed that the SMT\textsuperscript{2} members impose on them to do certain things without first discussing it with them. This caused problems in many instances as educators resisted carrying out the SMT instructions.

(d) Implementation of the departmental policies
SMT members are departmental representatives at school level. They are responsible for ensuring that departmental policies are adhered by all in the schools. This is done through bringing in circulars on what needs to be done, from the district offices of the DoE, to the schools.

The \textsuperscript{1}EDOs voiced their plans of operation aimed at assisting SMT members. One EDO even claimed, “In my circuit I have conducted about four capacity building workshops for the SMT members, in two of which I organised facilitators from the NGO. I will be disappointed if, in my circuit, there is an SMT member who does not know what to do”. There were records backing up her statement in the form of documents and some principals also endorsed that.

It also emanated that some principals fail to fetch documents from the office for their schools. These are documents like signed resolutions, departmental circulars and memos. The EDOs attribute this to a negative attitude of some principals. One EDO said, “Some principals’ attitude changed the day they discovered that we were given subsidy cars. They pointed out clearly that as EDOs, they have to see to it that every document issued reaches their schools because the state has given us cars”. What these principals were missing, according to this EDO, was the fact that an EDO cannot manage to reach his allocated 25 schools daily and also that there are also other administrative errands to run.

\textsuperscript{1} Education Development Officers
\textsuperscript{2} Strategic Management Team
3.6.4.10 Provision of incentives

Hard working SMT members need to be encouraged by the DoE through being given various incentives. The form of incentive to be given should differ according to the various posts held by SMT members. SMT members identified these incentives as car subsidies for principals so that they could be able to reach the district office when necessary and money (referred to as an allowance) for deputy principals and HODs\(^3\).

3.7 Conclusion

The SMT members in rural areas have no clue as to what they are expected to do. They regard themselves merely as a link between the department of education and the educators. They think they are there to bring departmental circulars and ensure implementation of departmental policies only.

The situation in the town school was most appealing. It was easy to access information due to their filing system which is of a high standard. Even the attitudes of the SMT members were different. The town (ex-Model C) SMT members had a positive attitude whereas the rural SMT members were bitter.

\(^3\) Head of Departments
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This study was triggered when it was noticed that learners of some schools in the King William’s Town district were roaming around the streets during school hours. Furthermore, the researcher noticed that there was a decline in discipline of both learners and educators and especially in the year end results of grade twelve learners.

This chapter portrays the findings and recommendations emanating from the literature as well as empirical studies. The layout is as follows:

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Introduction

One of the tools utilized to determine effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a school is its management structure. Management in schools is the responsibility of the School Management Team (SMT). The present period in education requires that transformation takes place in all educational spheres, but for purposes of this study I, as the researcher, concentrated on the role of the SMT in school improvement. Findings from my literature study as well as the empirical study supplied the necessary information for this study. The main pillars of this chapter are:

- Functions performed by the SMT members.
- Challenges faced by the SMT members.
- Ways of addressing these challenges.
- Recommendations

4.2.2 Functions performed by the SMT members

The SMT members interviewed stated that their responsibilities as leaders included doing the following tasks:
4.2.2.1 Planning
Planning according to what is stated in Chapter 2 of this study refers to identification of a course of action in order to achieve desired results. The School Management Team members are expected to initiate processes towards planning so that it is implemented according to outlined and agreed upon guidelines.

Evidence from the empirical study shows that little or no planning takes place especially in the rural schools. If SMT members are, therefore, to contribute to school improvement, they need to ensure that they operate according to a clearly outlined programme drawn up during the last quarter of the previous year. This plan should be a product of structural meetings within the schools so as to accommodate all the stakeholders in a school. SADTU (2001:7) adds to this by emphasising the importance of making all information available to ensure that planning is done in an effective way.

4.2.2.2 Leading
School Management Teams should provide guidance to other members of the school community. The guidance may be given through being sensitive to the plight of others and by being approachable to them. The leading should not only be in the form of window dressing activities such as the drawing up of vision and mission statements.

Leading by SMT members could accomplish good results in as far as school improvement is concerned. In most instances the success in the functioning of a school is measured by the leadership provided by the SMT members. Leadership is sometimes reflected in the manner in which policies are being implemented by the SMT members.

4.2.2.3 Control
As already stated in 2.2.4 of this study, control within school management is the process by which the SMT members ensure that actual activities conform to planned activities and that their objectives are accomplished.
In my view, the control function of the SMT members should focus on the monitoring of educators’ work. However, it became clear to me that SMT members shun controlling the work of educators because of the resistance of the educators. SMT members could hold meetings with subject educators in which a framework for monitoring of work should be developed. Once the framework is adopted in a meeting every educator will be expected to adhere to the stipulations of the framework and thereby minimise clashes between SMT members and educators.

The study shows that SMT’s have the responsibility to exercise control over the work being done in schools, so that people become more responsible for the activities they have planned. This should be the case even though it may be an unpopular approach among staff members. An important consideration is that control needs to be exercised in such a way that it allows staff members’ opportunities to voice their own concerns.

4.2.2.4 Ways of supporting teaching and learning

Practical ways in which teaching and learning could be supported among others include decision making. Decision making should entail choosing from at least two possible courses of action. SMT members should involve relevant stakeholders in every decision that needs to be taken. When all affected people participate in decision making, the outcome, as identified by Lindelow and Bently (2.2.6.3), is an increase in job satisfaction for most employees. Job satisfaction boosts the morale of educators as stated in 2.4.6.1 of this study.

4.2.3 Challenges faced by the SMT members

Although the SMT members are faced with the task of ensuring that schools become effective centres of learning, they come across various challenges. In improving the quality of teaching and learning, education management must be more supportive than directive of the change process (Department of Education, 1996:28). These challenges, according to what emanated in my literature and empirical studies, are as follows:
4.2.3.1 Low qualifications of educators

Qualifications of some educators do not respond to the needs of the curriculum presently implemented by the DoE\(^4\). The in-service training that is provided by the DoE does not address this shortfall as it is provided for a week at the most.

SMT members should encourage educators to register with institutions so as to upgrade their qualifications. Guidance needs to be provided as to what needs to be studied so that, on obtaining the qualification, one is able to provide effective service that corresponds to the curriculum needs.

4.2.3.2 Low morale among learners

Learners who know that they won’t have funds to proceed to tertiary institutions are more often than not, discouraged by knowing that they won’t be easily employed on passing matric. Their morale is low and that results in poor performance in their studies. The SMT members need to come up with motivational programmes that will assist in boosting the morale of learners.

The SMT members should be the key factor in ensuring that the school curriculum is responsive to the economic market. Learners should be given clear guidance on school subjects to choose and they need to be informed as to how the chosen subjects can assist in getting a job once a qualification is attained.

4.2.3.3 Low morale among educators

The morale of educators is affected when they consider the benefits they get as professional people. This is captured in the quote in 2.3.5 of this study, which states that, “teachers are overworked and underpaid, sometimes not paid at all for months on end”. The low morale can also be linked to a lack of support by communities which the educators serve.

\(^4\) Department of Education
In order to boost the morale of educators, SMT members should come up with motivational programmes within their schools. Functions like an “Open day”, where parents will be invited to school to meet educators who teach their children may be one way of ensuring that communities visit schools. SMT members should also assist in exerting pressure in the DoE so that educators get their salaries without delay after being appointed.

4.2.3.4 Lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities
Lack of clarity with regards to roles and responsibilities is often influenced by the management style of the SMT members. In order to overcome this, democratic principles need to be implemented in schools. SMT members should respect the views of educators and the educators should do the same with respect to the views of SMT members.

In order for SGB members not to interfere with the management of the school, workshops need to be organised for them so as to outline the role they have to play, emphasising the fact that they should only be dealing with governance of the school.

4.2.3.5 Decisions about the curriculum
The SMT needs to set up participatory structures that will help to work towards the school’s goals. According to the DoE (2000:27), “the new policy framework calls for structures which allow all stakeholders to play a role in education”. Among stakeholders referred to are the personnel in schools. It is through the set structures that the SMT can be enabled to manage the personnel, as it will submit reports on all planned and performed activities, by the participatory structures to the SMT. Parents should be involved in discussions about the curriculum so that they do not put the SMT members under pressure when decisions have been taken.

4.2.3.6 Staff discipline
The empirical study showed that the negative attitude of educators was impacting negatively towards school improvement. The teachers made it difficult for the SMT members to go about doing their work as they declined to comply; they failed to honour relevant submission dates for the SMT to be able to monitor their work. Other
issues referred to in the literature study include lateness, absenteeism, alcoholism and sexual harassment of female pupils.

SMT members should ensure that school policies as well as relevant pieces of legislation are correctly implemented. The Policy Handbook issued to each school is clear on how to deal with cases of misconduct and SMT members should, in consultation with the SGB, implement them in order to improve staff discipline.

4.2.4 Ways of addressing these challenges

4.2.4.1 Introduction
The present era in education requires transformation of the education system. The Oxford dictionary defines transformation as “a change for better”. In order for education to change for the better the following recommendations need to be effected in schools:

4.2.4.2 Motivation
Both the literature and the empirical studies emphasised the importance of motivation, especially with regard to providing positive feedback to staff members for any achievements they have attained, bringing a “sense of hope and possibility back into the terrain of the school” (Sterling and Davidoff, 2000:03). This to my mind, is one of the key areas in which the SMT can play a meaningful role in changing the climate of schools, as a first step towards school improvement

4.2.4.3 Empowerment of SMT members
In-service centres need to be set up for SMT members. The focus of these centres should be on preparing the SMT members so that they are able to face up to their challenges and be able to be effective in their management and administration duties. The target group for this training should be all SMT members irrespective of experience. This approach will assist by ensuring that all SMT members are competent in so far as the prescriptions of the ever-changing education system are concerned.

For Blasé and Blasé, (1994:132), this involves among other things:
• Developing teachers’ skills to gather data, make decisions and solve problems.
• Freely engaging in critical discourse in which educators discuss, debate and dialogue.
• Involving parents and other citizens in providing a legislative framework for schooling that supports democratic processes.

The skills levy creates an opportunity for educators to be skilled. SMT members should identify their areas of weakness and enrol for courses that will improve their capacity as managers.

4.2.4.4 Changing the leadership approach

A change in the mindsets of the SMT members is essential. It is stated in 2.4.3 of this study that “leadership means making an inspirational difference in your own life, the lives of others and the life of your school”. I found in schools that SMT members did not really know how to approach educators when they wanted them to submit work. The SMT members do not allow educators an opportunity to discuss the manner in which monitoring of work is to be done. They use the “old” supervision methods. Morrison (1998:24), in referring to this behaviour states, “The change requires a recognition that existing practices are no longer effective…” The change can be manifested through practicing openness.

The SMT needs to attach value to every educator’s opinion so as to make changes for the better. Evans (1999:104), claims that, “the challenge for school leaders is to value individuality by trying to accommodate the varied as far as it is possible, without compromising the needs of the school as a whole”. This means individualism when correctly applied can lead to improvement of schools.

In changing their leadership approach, SMT members would be wise to make a study of alternative leadership approaches such as transformational leadership (raising followers’ aspirations to a goal higher than themselves) and constructivist leadership (in which the leadership potential in the followers is unlocked) so as to bring about a new way of thinking about leadership roles in the school, and create opportunities for leaders to emerge in the every day running of the school.
4.2.4.5 Creation and support of conditions conducive to teaching and learning

As already stated in 2.4.6.3, the SMT members are well positioned in the educational hierarchy to promote professional and student learning. SMT members should make the DoE aware that insufficient staffing increases the load of work for them resulting in the SMT failing to perform certain duties. The SMT is expected to perform both management and administrative work.

While the empirical study identified many obstacles for the SMT members to engage in efforts to improve teaching and learning, the following practical ways should be tried out:

Boosting the morale of educators, supporting staff members individually, encouraging professional reflection and the promotion of a collaborative culture in the school. In 2.4.6.3 of this study, Podsakoff cited by Leithwood (1999:75) refers to “leadership practice that challenges followers to re-examine some of their work and to rethink how it can be performed”. This is indicative of what may be done towards creation and support of conditions conducive to teaching and learning.

While this is a key aspect of the task of SMT’s, the empirical study showed that none of the schools participating in this study had any programmes aimed at increased capacity building of staff.

4.2.4.6 Financial management

The empirical study revealed that SMT members often do not even understand how a budget is drawn up. They view budgeting as tabulating the income and expenditure report.

Financial management is at the heart of school improvement. This clearly represents a key area of the SMT’s task, and should be taken seriously. Even though this has not been said by any of the respondents, it seems obvious that SMT members should be trained in financial management so as to enhance their skills in this area.
4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 Effective utilization of both human and material resources
This can be achieved through engaging in the following activities:

- Planning: Planning of the annual activities of the school needs to be done during the last quarter of a year for the following year. SMT members can prepare a draft document which will be presented in a broader meeting for adoption and endorsement.

- Control: Work done by all the educators need to be controlled by the SMT members. This is done for quality assurance purposes and the tools to be used for control need to be clearly understood by all parties concerned.

- Resources: Most schools are under-resourced. SMT members should derive ways of securing sponsors so as to mobilise resources for their school.

- Leading: SMT members need to lead by example. They have to be central in monitoring the implementation of the DoE and SGB policies.

4.3.2 Creation of an environment conducive for learning and teaching
The core business of the SMT is to ensure that they explore a conducive learning environment that has been created by the SGB through policies to produce a quality product as well as improving service delivery. An environment conducive to learning and teaching is one where every individual is clear about the role to play in order to obtain a better public image.

4.3.3 Provision of Professional Support to educators
Professional support in line with programmes like Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) needs to be provided to educators. It is through IQMS that an educator will be able to identify both strong as well as weak areas in his development as an educator with the aim of giving assistance where necessary.

4.3.4 Decision making
According to Lindelow and Heynderickx (1989:131,142), shared decision making promotes a sense of ownership and increases job satisfaction. Ducker, as cited in Bell (1992:15) encourages managers to take note of the inputs from the stakeholders.
The empirical study showed that staff members often feel excluded from decision making processes in schools.

In order to improve schools through increasing ownership and job satisfaction of staff members, SMT members should find ways to design decision making structures so as to increase staff participation in decision making.

4.3.5 Low morale among learners
The majority of learners go to school with the aim of getting either highly paid jobs or at least working so as to get a living wage even if one only studies up to matriculation. Presently most learners are without jobs due to their qualifications not being market related or not having a decent qualification at all. This is clearly outlined in The Voice (July 2002) where it is stated that, “lack of hope on being employed on finishing studies by learners contributes to a feeling of despondency and de-motivation among learners”.

In order to boost the morale of learners, the SMT members should ensure that the curriculum offered in their schools corresponds to the needs of the market so as to be able to effectively produce for the market.

When learners know that they stand a good chance of getting jobs on completing their studies, their level of commitment to their work and the standard of their school work increases. This will bring about an improvement in both performance and reputation of the school.

4.3.6 Low morale among educators
The remuneration of each individual plays a key role in boosting the morale of the receiver thereof. When referring to this matter, Dadey and Harber (1991:20) claim that, “teachers are overworked and underpaid, sometimes not paid at all for months on end.” This type of treatment kills the morale of the educators.

In order for the SMT members to succeed in improving the schools, I concur with what is contained in 3.6.4.2 that educators need to be re-skilled. The curriculum offered in schools is not similar to the training that educators received when they were
prepared for the profession. Presently schools are expected to offer the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS). This makes some educators reluctant or unsure of what they have to do in class. This is not their fault as they only received a week’s training in the new curriculum.

Schools can improve if educators could be trained for a minimum of six months in the new curriculum. This will commit a lot of funds because substitute educators will need to be employed while the teachers are undergoing training. Though this might appear extravagant, ultimately it will make educators regain the confidence they once had in their profession, as they will then be well versed with what the RNCS entails.

4.3.7 Staff discipline
According to Dadey and Harber (1991:6), “teacher misbehaviour among others is defined as lateness, absenteeism, alcoholism and sexual harassment of female pupils.” In order to improve on these misbehaviour actions the following can be put in place:

- Educators who have a habit of coming late can be assigned duties that will require them to report early e.g. supervising hoisting of the school flag five minutes before the beginning of each day.
- Educators who absent themselves from school should be given leave without pay if this behaviour of theirs is consistent.
- Sometimes alcoholism is as a result of a problem that needs professional help. An educator may be referred to a professional person for an Employee Assistance Programme. If this does not breed good results then the stipulations of the Educators’ Employment Act (EEA) may be implemented.
- The EEA is clear on this offence that it warrants dismissal but the offender must be given a chance to present his case.

4.3.8 Empowerment of SMT members
Blasé and Blasé (1994:132), argue that, “empowerment involves among other things developing teachers’ skills to gather data, make decisions and solve problems. Schools can only improve when educators are central in decision making of their schools. It takes a well-empowered person to be able to take well-informed decisions and it is well-informed decisions that improve the school.
It is the way in which a school is structured and the way its SMT members relate to other members of the school community that will determine a school’s improvement.

4.3.9 Changing forms of leadership

One of the key challenges for SMT members in a school according to Sterling and Davidoff (200:04), is “to develop leadership as an act that will encourage all members of the school community to take responsibility for making a difference within the school”. This includes aiming at transformational leadership which tries to inspire people to transcend their individual interests and aim at higher goals which in the schools would refer to improving schools to make them institutions where the focus is improved teaching and learning.

Changing the leadership approach should include considering a constructivist leadership approach (2.4.3.2) which focuses on reciprocal processes in which the hidden talents of individuals are brought out.

Such approaches to leadership stand in stern contrast to the experiences of participants of this study which refer to autocratic leadership styles in schools, in which either the principal or the SMT members exclude educators from leadership and decision making processes. It is tragic that SMT members can still say, “our voices fall on deaf ears…” If schools are to be improved, both principals and SMT members should understand and apply leadership approaches that allow the full utilization of the contributions of all members of the school community.

4.3.10 Financial Management

Schools are managed and administered using finances. This involves budgetary processes (see 3.6.4.7). In order for SMT members to succeed in improving the school, clear financial management has to be put in place. This can be achieved through setting up a finance committee which will be responsible for all the financial activities of the school. The finance committee should consist of all stakeholders within the particular school community.

Finance is but one of the areas that creates conflicts in schools among the stakeholder. It is advised that those assigned the responsibility of dealing with school finances
should be well trained so that they become fully aware of what is expected of them. Schools will improve when there are no clashes with regard to accountability for the finances.

4.4 Conclusion

The SMT needs to set goals that are attainable. In support of this statement, Harber and Davies (1997:169) claim, “If governments or heads want to improve schools, they not only have to establish achievable goals, they have to surface those schools’ scripts and discourses”. Scripts in this study refer to the norms and values of the schools. If heads of departments can effect the necessary changes in their departments, within reasonable time the changes will spread over to the whole school.

SMT members still have a lot to learn. This can only be achieved with dedication and commitment from both SMT members and all the other stakeholders in schools so as to be able to improve schools.

The district does have a vision, but what is lacking are implementation strategies. In order to succeed in the implementation process, planning by the district needs to be influenced by the needs at school level.
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ANNEXURE A

Kindly respond to this questionnaire. Your responses are to be given the confidentiality they deserve. The questionnaire responses are to be used for my study purposes as I am doing a treatise for my Med through UPE. My topic is: The role of School Management Teams (SMT) in school improvement.

Make a circle around the chosen option.

1. Gender:

   Male                                            Female

2. What is your present position in the school hierarchy?

   Educator                        HOD            Deputy Principal          Principal

3. How long have you been part of the SMT?

   0-4years      5-9years    10-14 years   15-19years      20 or more years

4. The SMT is the only decision-making structure in a school.

   Agree         Disagree              Strongly Agree             Strongly disagree

5. Team work is the best approach to be used by the SMT.

   Agree         Disagree              Strongly Agree             Strongly Disagree

6. In your school, discipline is regarded as:

   Very Important   Important    Somewhat Important   Not Important
7. Relations between the SMT members and the educators are:

   Excellent       Good       All Right     Poor       Bad

8. Parent involvement in your school is:

   Very Important   Important   Somewhat Important Not Important

9. Low morale among educators is one of the challenges facing the SMT.

   Agree        Strongly Agree   Disagree    Strongly Disagree

10. Since you joined the SMT, the performance of the SMT in your school has:

    Improved   Dropped       Not Changed   Not Sure
ANNEXURE B

Questions asked during the interview.

1. What is your position in your school?
2. Define your role as an SMT member.
3. How is your school managed?
4. How different is the role of SMT members to the role of the SGB?
5. What mechanisms are in place in your school to ensure that there is improvement?
6. Whose responsibility is it to take decisions in your school?
7. What is your view of good school management?
8. What do you think should be done to assist SMT members improve their management role?
9. Clearly define the role of the SMT members in school improvement.