DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN A RURAL NAMIBIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate the understanding and implementation of democratic leadership and management in schools by school managers and other members of the school community in leadership and management roles as advocated by the policy of *Education for all.* The study also aimed at identifying any gaps in the understanding and practice of the participants in order to enhance democratic leadership and management in schools.

Qualitative research using the interpretive approach was the methodology employed in order to fulfill the intention of the study, namely to investigate the participants` experiences and understanding of democratic education leadership and management. The case study method was appropriate to understand the meanings the participants attached to their practice in their natural setting. Data were collected by using semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation. The sample for the study consisted of ten participants: the principal, the head of department, two School Board members, two senior teachers, two Learner Representative Council members and two class captains.

The findings suggest that the participants understood and practised democratic ELM in terms of broader participation, open communication, delegation for empowerment, learning organisation, shared decision-making, shared leadership and teamwork. However, the data suggest areas of concern in the participants` understanding and implementation of the policy which could be strengthened to entrench the policy.

The study recommends that education policy makers, education managers, school managers, teachers, parents and learners all work towards improving democratic ELM in schools. In order to achieve this objective, policy makers are urged to avoid ambiguity to enable all implementers to fully understand policies. Education managers could ensure school-wide training on the policy while school managers and other stakeholders should engage in self-reflection and introspection and be more proactive towards improving their own understanding and practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Robert Nalisa Mabuku, hereby declare that this study is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree or examination at any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

December 2009

ACRONYMS USED IN THE RESEARCH

DoE: Department of Education

ELM: Education leadership and management

ETSIP: Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme

HOD: Head of Department

JSC: Junior Secondary Certificate

LRC: Learner Representative Council

MEC: Ministry of Education and Culture

MEd: Master of Education

MC: Management Committee

MoE: Ministry of Education

NANTU: Namibia National Teachers` Union

PAAI: Plan of Action for Academic Improvement

REF: Regional Education Forum

SB: School Board

SDF: School Development Fund

SDM: Shared decision-making

SDP: School Development Plan

SSE: School Self-Evaluation

SWOT: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

TSE: Teacher Self-Evaluation

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study. It begins by contextualising the research, before setting out the research goals and methodology. Finally, I provide an outline of the thesis.

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Education is a vehicle for enhancing social transformation. Before independence in 1990, the Namibian education system was based on the colonial South African Bantu Education Act of 1953, a manifestation of the oppressive ideology of apartheid. According to both Amukugo (1995, ,p. 56) and Salia-Bao (1991, p. 20), the underlying philosophy was that the best education was appropriate for the elite minority (white) population and a handful of blacks, while the majority (black) people needed only rudimentary education to suit their servitude roles. Similar to South Africa before 1994, in Namibia there were "strong bureaucratic controls over the system" (South Africa. Department of Education (DoE), 1996, p. 11). Such a bureaucratic and authoritarian education system had major implications for the administration, governance and management of schools. The system was deliberately designed to leave school managers, teachers, learners and communities with little or no say in school affairs as the national administrator totally controlled all educational matters in the country. Salia-Bao (1991) supports this argument:

> Bantu Education (was) designed to provide Africans with only that measure of self-management which (would) alleviate feelings of acute deprivation and provide for sufficient individual achievement to minimize the possibility of African revolt, while at the same time not endangering White economic and political interests. (p. 19)

A manifestation of the strong bureaucratic control of the education system by the colonial administration was the nature of school committees, although parents were represented on school committees, according to Cohen (1994), they had no voting rights, were not consulted and had very limited power. The situation of school committees, Cohen (1994) noted, was such that:

> The numbers were limited and in some instances were not even drawn from the parents of the school-going children … parental participation was often lacking, especially among rural communities where many were uneducated and lacked motivation and an awareness of their responsibilities. (p 106)

The representation of parents and communities on school structures was merely symbolic rather than meaningful, hence the lack of participation and the subsequent insufficient contribution to the development of their schools. This was a deliberate move to promote the interests of the colonial administration through Bantu education, that is, Salia-Bao (1991) claimed, "total control of African education by the (colonial) state" (p. 19). The Minister for Bantu Affairs directed school administrative and managerial functions such as maintenance and school funds. Amukugo (1995) explained that, among other functions, the Minister was responsible for:

> Prescribing the conditions governing the establishment, control and maintenance of the schools … controlling the funds collected for the schools and determining school fees. (p. 58)

In a democratic education system, functions like the determination and control of school funds as well as the maintenance of schools may be satisfactorily performed by the schools themselves, through appropriate organs such as the School Board, School Management Committee and School Maintenance Committee.

With independence in 1990, Namibia adopted an education system that fostered the new government's vision of a democratic society. The major goals of this education system are "access, equity, quality and democracy" (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), 1993, p. 32). In a move away from authoritarian school leadership and management, the Education Act 16 of 2001 made provision for a "democratic national education service" (Namibia, 2001, p. 2), through decentralisation and learner and parent involvement. This would be achieved by establishing administrative and management structures like regional education offices, circuit offices and cluster centres; regional education forums (REF), school management committees (MC), school boards (SB) and learner representative councils (LRC). The practice of democratic leadership and

management may be helpful in Namibia's educational institutions in order to do away with old practices such as unilateral decision-making by authoritarian leaders. It is therefore a policy of the Ministry of Education to employ democratic leadership and management in its educational institutions. According to Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC), 2001:

> A democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision-making … [and its strategic plan] calls for education managers – in a school, at Head Office or in a Regional Office – to base their leadership and management style on democratic principles, and to ensure their educational programmes are managed in a similarly participatory and democratic style. (p. 13)

Furthermore, a democratic education system goes beyond mere broad participation in decision-making because such participation should be meaningful. This may be achieved by teaching the stakeholders how to participate actively, empowering them to take responsibility and become accountable and by proper consultation. To this end, Namibia. MEC (1993) described democratic education as one that entails:

> The clear accountability of those who are our leaders… in schools that are responsive to their communities, parents and neighbours are not regarded as generally unwelcome outsiders *[sic]*. Instead, the schools are organised to enable them to be active participants in school governance, active contributors to discussions of school management and administration, and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning. Similarly, adult learners are expert consultants … teachers must be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its masters or caretakers. (pp. 41-42)

In this regard, Shields` (2004) description of democratic education acknowledged meaningful participation in decision-making, empowerment and responsibility of stakeholders in education:

> Education that is democratic offers all legitimate stakeholders opportunities to participate (in decision-making) … it often requires teaching people how to participate, making them feel comfortable and empowering them to feel competent and capable. (p. 124)

Using these definitions of democratic education, it may be deduced that democratic leadership and management may be associated with practices that include participation,

involvement, shared decision-making, accountability, responsibility, autonomy, delegation, empowerment, consultation, teamwork and a learning organisation (Co-active, 2008, Harber, 1993, Shields, 2004, Schmuck & Runkel, 1994 and South Africa. DoE, 1996).

To highlight the need for democratic ELM in schools I cite a Namibian-based study, The Values Manifesto Project, conducted by Euvrard (2006). This project is worth mentioning here because it uncovered significant values and beliefs on democratic education by learners, who are major stakeholders in the education system. The study found that the top values chosen by primary and secondary school learners across the country, included democracy/equality, cooperation and active involvement (pp. 3, 4). On the value of democracy/equality, the participants argued that "to be valuable citizens and leaders in a democratic Namibia, 'we should practise at school and live out democracy by getting involved in discussions and decision-making'" (Euvrard, 2006, p. 3). With regard to cooperation, Euvrard (2006) found that the learners felt that "students and teachers should help one another by sharing resources and ideas, working as a team, compromising, and being forgiving and loyal" (pp.3, 4). The Values Manifesto Project advocated the democratic leadership and management of schools in order to satisfy the needs and expectations of the students. The findings of the project demonstrated that learners in Namibian schools seem to value democratic leadership and management in schools very highly. Schools, therefore, are expected to uphold and transmit such values. In this regard, Namibia. MEC (1993) stated that:

> To teach about democracy, our teachers and our education system as a whole must practise democracy … just as education is a foundation for development, so is it a foundation for democracy. Building those foundations must be a conscious process in which all learners are engaged. (pp. 41-42)

This paradigm shift from the pre-independence non-democratic system to the post-independence era of democracy requires that "school principals (as the gatekeepers of education) constantly think of new ways of managing, leading and administering schools" Philander (2008). This implies that school managers should, in the view of

Namibia's Minister of Education, cited in Philander (2008), "be transformative leaders and catalysts of change" who need to be aware of the role of education in the changing wider political, social and economic context in which they find themselves. This requires school managers to lead their institutions in their efforts to realise democratic ELM. As leaders, school managers should thus inspire other stakeholders to embrace transformation in order to minimise resistance to change.

Organisation Development research on group dynamics has indicated, "Involvement and participation energize greater performance, produce better solutions to problems and greatly enhance acceptance of decisions" (French & Bell, 1999, p. 88). Schools would become more effective and resistance to change reduced. In turn, people feel empowered and committed to the aims and objectives of the institution. Russell (2000) agrees that empowerment "involves entrusting workers with authority and responsibility" (p. 80). In short, if people are allowed to participate meaningfully, are consulted and involved in decision-making, they may feel empowered and consequently become committed and accountable to the institution.

Teamwork is a way to achieve such participation and delegation. According to Smith (2003), the value of teams is that they are the "building blocks of effective and satisfying organisation life" (p. 13). Schmuck and Runkel (1994) argued for the "creation of management and leadership teams" because "broader involvement in decision making" led to an increased interaction at all levels (p. 275). In addition, as Davidoff, Kaplan and Lazarus (1994) say, "to enable people to operate at maximum potential, schools have to work consciously at the creation of and maintenance of teams" (p. 13). Teamwork is critical to democratic ELM because it embraces most of the other values of democracy. As Bell (1992, cited in Jones, 2005) suggested, a team is "a group of people working together on the basis of shared perceptions, a common purpose, agreed procedures, commitment, cooperation and resolving disagreements openly by discussion" (p. 23). Jones (2005) maintained that when members of teams are delegated certain tasks and continuously learn from one another, are involved and consulted in decision-making,

cooperation, open communication, commitment, responsibility and accountability are enhanced and the effectiveness of reaching decisions is improved (p. 128).

In my experience as an education manager, I have observed that the democratic leadership and management of schools in Namibia may not be fully realised, especially in some rural schools that are far from the hub of political, social and economic development, the urban centres. Democratic ELM may be slow to achieve in rural schools because of poor resources, contrary to urban schools that are better resourced. According to Namibia. Ministry of Education [MoE], (2007), "schools in the northern regions of Caprivi, Kavango, Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati and Oshikoto have lower physical, human and financial resources" (p. 18). The majority of parents in rural schools are not literate enough and this may pose a challenge as to how well they understand policies and participate effectively in school matters. Although some people accuse school managers of authoritarian tendencies in decision-making, not much empirical data has been documented about the extent or lack of such practices in many Namibian schools, particularly in the rural areas of the Caprivi region. These questions and my studies for my Masters degree triggered my interest in the topic. I hope that this research will enhance better understanding of democratic school leadership and management in the Caprivi region and Namibia at large and identify gaps in practice that need strengthening. The findings may serve as a challenge for further investigation as the study seeks to broaden the current perceptions of democratic leadership and management in Namibian schools within the context of the policy document *Education for all*.

1.2 RESEARCH GOALS

This research sought to determine to what extent democratic leadership and management practices were implemented in a rural Namibian secondary school, in the context of the policy of *Education for all*. This included:
* To investigate participants` understanding of what constitutes democratic leadership and management as provided for in the policy, and

* To identify areas of concern and need associated with the implementation of democratic leadership and management practices in the school.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The study was an interpretive case study located in qualitative research design because the ultimate purpose of the project was to determine the participants` perceptions and understanding of democratic leadership and management and how this was practised in their school. According to Connole (1998), the interpretive design aims at "discovering the meanings and beliefs underlying the actions of others" (p. 17). The site was a rural secondary school to which I had easy access; hence, it was a convenient case.

The case study method uses what Gillham (2000) called "the multi-method approach" (p. 13) to investigate an individual, group, institution or community. I found it appropriate to use three (multi) sources of data – interviews, document analysis and observation that enabled me to triangulate different types of evidence, "what people say, what I see them doing … what documents and records show" (Gillham, 2000, p. 20). The individual/one-on-one interviews were semi-structured, audiotaped for verbatim transcription and guided by three open-ended questions.

I studied the minutes of Staff, Management Committee and School Board meetings in order to discern the presence or absence of democratic leadership and management beliefs and practices. Finally, I visited the school from time to time over a period of five months to look for evidence of democratic leadership and management practices. The data were systematically organised into categories and interpreted. I discuss my research methodology more fully in chapter three.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

In chapter 2, I review the literature that gives both an international and local perspective on democratic leadership and management in schools. Chapter 3 presents the

methodology used in the study. In chapter 4, I present the data collected from the school. Chapter 5 carries the interpretation of the data. I summarise the findings of the study, make recommendations for practice and for further research in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review the literature that shaped and informed this study and that provided a conceptual framework for the research. To enhance the understanding of democratic leadership and management there is a need to explore the general character of current writing on leadership and management. As Tarplett (2004, n. p.) argued, "Unless we understand how current ideas have developed, we lack an important tool in evaluating them". First, I explore the concepts of education leadership and management (ELM) to show that they share the common ground of democratic leadership and management practices. For the purposes of this research, I treat leadership and management such that there is an overlap at times. I base the rationale for my research on the premise that democratic ELM practice is related to school effectiveness, which includes a contented staff. Mungunda (2003) acknowledged that the terms leadership and management "are used by many writers as either interchangeable or synonymous … (they are) two different, yet complementary activities, existing side by side in a mutual, logical relationship" (p. 6). The chapter further explores some important democratic leadership and management theories and discusses a selection of key concepts and constructs associated with democratic ELM. The benefits and limitations of democratic ELM form the last section of the chapter.

2.2 DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP THEORY

Leadership means the ability to inspire, provide direction for the vision and mission of an organisation, to give guidance, set an example and maintain good working relationships with other members of the organisation. Schmuck (1986) maintained, "Leadership is influencing followers to act toward goals that represent the values, aspirations and expectations of both the leader and the followers" (p. 18). The philosophy underlying democratic leadership and management can be traced back to the ideas of Lewin, Lippit and White (1938), Flanagan (1951), Fleishman (1945), Katz, Maccoby and Morse (1950),

Merton (1957), Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) and Mintzberg (1973; 1975). Lewin, Lippit and White (1938, as cited in Boje, 2000, p. 4) conducted an experiment to investigate the effects of three classic leadership styles on organisational effectiveness, namely autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. It is helpful to note that theorists like Clark (1997) also referred to these leadership styles as authoritarian, participative and delegative (free reign) respectively (pp. 1-2).

For the sake of comparison, the characteristics of each style are worth a brief highlight. The characteristics of autocratic leadership include the tendencies to "centralize authority, dictate work methods, make unilateral decisions [and] limit employee participation" (Boje, 2000, p. 4). Laissez-faire leadership, Lewin, Lippit and White (1938, as cited in Boje, 2000) argued, "gives employees complete freedom to ask *[sic]* (question) decisions and complete their work as they see fit" (p. 5), thus giving no direction at all, and the result can be frustration, disorganisation and low quality of leadership and management. However, this is a narrow view because there is a positive view too, that it is an ideal style in some professional environments as it allows freedom and autonomy to members of the organisation without the leader's participation. "Laissez-faire leadership works for teams in which the individuals are very experienced and skilled self-starters" according to Mind Tools (2008, p. 3). Democratic leadership also referred to as "participative leadership" (Mind Tools, 2008), may be defined as a style of leadership in which "the leader forges consensus through participation" and always asks the question: "What do you think?" (Fullan, 2001, p. 35).

Goleman (2000, as cited in Fullan, 2001) posited six leadership styles: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching. These were described as:

> Coercive – the leader demands compliance ("Do what I tell you"). Authoritative – the leader mobilizes people toward a vision ("Come with me"). Affiliative – the leader creates harmony and builds emotional bonds ("People come first"). Democratic – the leader forges consensus through participation ("What do you think?"). Pacesetting – the leader sets high standards for performance ("Do as I do, now"). Coaching – the leader develops people for the future ("Try this"). (p. 35)

Coercive and pacesetting styles are perceived to affect the work environment, and consequently performance, negatively due to people's resistance, resentment, being overwhelmed and burnt out. In contrast, authoritative, affiliative, democratic and coaching styles were believed to have a positive effect on climate and performance, according to Fullan (2001, p. 35). Monyatsi`s (2005) study concluded that introducing democratic structures, values and principles also contributed to improved management and, by extension, leadership standards in schools (p. 365). Democratic ELM being a manifestation of the democratic education system, should strive towards creating schools that are characterised by shared decision-making, shared leadership, participatory management, empowerment and life-long learning.

There is support for the assumption that organisations such as schools that are led democratically may be more likely to be effective than those that are subjected to autocratic and laissez-faire leadership and management. Studies by Lewin, Lippit and White (1938, as cited in Boje, 2000) that compared Boys Clubs led by democratic leaders with those led by autocratic leaders yielded the results that the amount of work done was equal in both groups; but the quality of work and group satisfaction were higher in democratic groups (p. 5). Furthermore, according to Reid (1981, as cited in Smith, 2001), "there was more originality, group-mindedness and friendliness in democratic groups, in contrast, there was more aggression, hostility, scapegoating and discontent in laissez-faire and autocratic groups" (p. 4). Subsequent studies (Bass, 1981; Miller & Monge; Wagner & Gooding, 1987; Yukl, 1989, as cited in Boje, 2000), have yielded mixed results because "studies using surveys found positive effects of democratic participation with effectiveness, whereas lab/field experiments and studies using independent raters had weak results" (p. 5). However, there is a growing trend towards democratising organisations, including schools around the globe confirmed by Bryson and Anderson (2000).

ELM under democratic education would be compatible with contemporary leadership and management styles such as transformational, servant, situational and distributed, which either fall under or are related to collegial models of ELM because, as Bush (2003)

asserted, collegial models of leadership assume the sharing of power and decision-making among members of an organisation through discussion and hence consensus (p. 64). A brief discussion of these ELM leadership styles follows.

2.2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership was espoused by Bass (1985), cited in Transformational leadership (2008, unpaged) among others, who expanded on the ideas of Burns (1978) and has its roots in collegial models of leadership and management that assume shared values and common interests among leaders and staff, according to Bush (2003, p. 78). The major assumption in collegial models, as Bush (2003) posited, is that "organizations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Power is shared among some or all members of the organization" (p. 64). According to this view, policy and decision-making in organisations is a result of discussion, hence consensus and there is power sharing among stakeholders. This presupposition further implies the democratic values of consultation, participation, inclusion, shared leadership, cooperation, teamwork and empowerment.

Mind Tools (2008) defined transformational leaders as:

> True leaders who inspire their teams with a shared vision of the future. Transformational leaders are highly visible and spend a lot of time communicating. They don't necessarily lead from the front, as they tend to delegate responsibility amongst their teams … they may need to be supported by detail people. (p. 4)

This definition shows that a transformational leader is someone able to inspire his or her team, have a shared vision, be a good communicator, practise delegation and recognise the expertise of other members. Such a view is in tandem with that of Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, as cited in Bush, 2003), who described transformational leadership as "a form of leadership (that) assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organisational members" (p. 76).

This type of leadership may lead to greater productivity in the organisation because the leadership is committed not only to the goals but also to the development and efficiency of all members, which translates into the development of the entire organisation. Leithwood (1994, as cited in Bush, 2003) conceptualised transformational leadership in terms of eight dimensions:

> Building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modelling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. (p. 77)

These qualities of transformational leaders are applicable and relevant to the promotion of democratic ELM because such constructs represent shared democratic values and beliefs of the organisation and need to be nurtured by all the members of the organisation. The ideas of transformation, people's desired results, learning together, collective aspiration and setting free such aspirations; are practices that can be fostered by democratic or participatory leadership and management.

2.2.2 Servant leadership

The concept of servant leadership was inspired by Greenleaf (1977) and is a form of democratic leadership and management, which posits that "leadership must first and foremost meet the needs of others" and consist of attributes like "vision, credibility, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others and empowerment" (Russell 2000, pp. 78, 79). A servant leader, like the transformational leader, is concerned about his or her followers, shares their vision, delegates to empower and trusts others, but goes a step further to show greater commitment to the needs of the followers. In democratic situations, such a leader may be perceived as a 'man-of-the-people' because for him or her, the main objective is to serve others rather than to be served. According to Covey (1990) and Ford (1991), cited in Russell (2000), "servant leaders assert the important place of values, beliefs and principles in leadership" (p. 79). This implies that the servant

leader recognises and respects the value and belief system of their followers thereby paying allegiance and commitment to the ensuing organisation culture.

A key assumption in servant leadership is that the personal values of a leader have a bearing on the leadership and management of an institution. Clawson (1999, as cited in Russell, 2000) maintained that "honesty and integrity form the moral foundation of effective leadership through the four key values of truth telling, promise keeping, fairness and respect for the individual" (p. 77). Likewise, Snyder et al. (1994, as cited in Russell, 2000) identified "service to others, humility, integrity, honesty and hard work" (p. 77), as essential personal values of effective leadership. Servant leadership is compatible with democratic ELM because the theory espouses constructs such as serving, appreciating, respecting and empowering others, including honesty and humility, which are regarded as manifestations of democracy. However, servant leadership offers no guarantee that it will work if there is lack of trust and accountability on the part of the leaders and the followers respectively.

2.2.3 Distributed leadership

Woods (2004, as quoted in Hatcher, 2005) recently added a distinct dimension to the notion of democratic leadership and management, "democracy adds to the emergent character of distributed leadership the notion that everyone, by virtue of their human status, should play a part in democratic agency" (p. 7). The recognition of the capabilities of other members of the organisation to participate implies that the leader trusts his or her followers and would consequently be comfortable to share power, responsibilities and accountability with the rest of them, as is the case with transformational and servant leaders. A climate of democratic ELM is cultivated as there are efforts for delegation, empowerment, consultation, consensus, shared decision-making, broader participation and involvement of all stakeholders. These practices involve participation, which Bush (2003) argued, "will increase school effectiveness" (p. 78). In that regard, MacBeath (2005) viewed distributed leadership as:

An ability to relinquish one's role as ultimate decision maker, trusting others to make the right decisions. A belief in the potential and authority of others, listening with the intent to understand, negotiation and persuasion are the levers that allow trust to gain a foothold and leadership to be assumed and shared. (p. 355)

However, distributed leadership has its shortcomings. Premised on trust, this leadership style could be characterised by what MacBeath (2005) called "dilemmas of trust and accountability, of `holding on` and `letting go` and balancing of command, consultation and consensus" (p. 353). If what Leeuw (2001) and Elmore (2004), as cited in MacBeath, 2005) termed the "me-too-you-too principle" or reciprocity of mutual respect that is vital to distributed leadership is not observed due to differences in expectations, "trust may push and pull in opposing directions" (p. 354).

2.2.4 Situational leadership

"There is no one right way to lead or manage that suits all situations" is an argument put forward by researchers (Mind Tools, p. 4). This skepticism about the effectiveness of leadership and management styles partly led to the emergence of situational leadership. According to Mind Tools (2008), situational leadership means, "switching instinctively between styles according to the people and work they (the leaders) are dealing with" (p. 5). The choice of an effective leadership and management approach in a specific situation depends on the skills and experience level of members, the work, and organisational environment. The main idea is for the leader not to be rigid but instead to go with the flow by adopting an attitude of addressing each situation on its own merits. Situational leadership theory is premised on the contingent model of leadership, which Bush (2003) argued, "provides an alternative approach, recognizing the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation, rather than adopting a one size fits all stance" (p. 150).

Hersey and Blanchard (1972) cited in Chimaera Consulting (1999, p. 1) characterised situational leadership style "in terms of the amount of direction and of support that the leader gives to his followers" They consequently developed a model of situational

leadership based on four styles, namely directing/telling, coaching/selling, supporting/participating and delegating/observing. According to Chimaera Consulting (1999), the directing style is characterised by one-way communication in which the leader decides on the followers` roles and tasks and supervises closely. In the coaching style, the leader defines roles and tasks, takes decisions unilaterally but seeks input from followers so there is two-way communication. The supporting style is characterised by a leader who delegates tasks empowers followers, facilitates and becomes part of the team. In the delegating style, the leader participates in decision-making and problem solving but followers have more autonomy in deciding the extent and timing of the leader's involvement (p. 1).

Hersey and Blanchard (1972, as cited in Chimaera Consulting, 1999, p. 2) further hypothesize that situational leadership depends on the competence (skills) and commitment (motivation) of the follower on four levels: D4 – high competence and high commitment; D3 – high competence and variable commitment; D2 – some competence and low commitment; and D1 – low competence and low commitment. In short, the Hersey Blanchard situational leadership theory posits that a leader's leadership style (S1 – S4) must correspond with the follower's development (maturity) level (D1 – D4). As Barth (2007) succinctly put it "different situations require different types of leadership" (p. 17).

In examining these four contemporary leadership theories there is a clear inclination towards democratic principles such as consultation, shared decision-making, shared leadership, empowering others by delegating and allowing them autonomy. Next, I explore the nature of democratic management theory.

2.3 DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT THEORY

Management encompasses planning, leading, organising and controlling. Schmuck (1986) maintains, "Management entails planning, setting goals, designing procedures, implementing, evaluating, institutionalizing and the like" (p. 19). However, this is a

bureaucratic management theory view, following on from scientific management, which reflects a particular way of looking at management. Current perspectives such as the collegial and human relations models as well as the systems and the contingency approaches may provide a different understanding of management. Collegial models, for example, are a form of democratic management that embraces transformational and participative leadership and management theories. As Bush (2003) contended, in educational settings, "collegial approaches are often manifested through systems of committees" (p. 74). Such committees are characterised by egalitarian decision-making, with such decision-making being reached either by consensus or compromise rather than unilaterally (p. 74). According to McNamara (2008), the Human Relations Movement spanning from the 30`s to the present gave prominence to individuals and their unique competencies in the organisation with the belief that "the organization would prosper if its workers prospered as well" (p. 1).

Such views would find support in the systems theory. The systems approach assumes that "managers must ensure that all the interdependent units are working together so that the organization's goals can be achieved" (Weaver, 2005, p. 2). The approach could help school managers realise that decisions and actions taken in one area of an institution will affect other areas and vice-versa. A related view is that of the contingency approach, which portrays organisations as unique, "different, facing different situations and requiring different ways of managing" (Weaver, 2005, p. 2). This view, Weaver (2005) argued, contributes to a better understanding of management as it "stresses there are no simplistic or universal rules for managers to follow" (p. 2). Therefore, managers require a situational theory type of approach in which they look at their unique or specific situation and determine the most appropriate way to deal with the particular situation.

Since democratic management is more participative in nature, it may be defined as a management style that "offers all legitimate stakeholders opportunities to participate" (Shields, 2004, p. 124). These views imply that both the democratic leader and the democratic manager involve other stakeholders in decision-making, they consult, delegate, empower, foster commitment, ownership and accountability and encourage

teamwork. For that reason, I use the concepts of democratic leadership and democratic management interchangeably in this study. In order for schools to become effective organisations, principals should combine leadership and management skills in their governance and administration practice. This approach would be more desirable because, as Schmuck (1986) argued:

> Leadership brings the energy, enthusiasm and commitment required to get educational development going and to keep it going. Management brings the efficiency, the concern with detail and coordination and the wherewithal to keep educational development on track. Without leadership, the educational organization can become a dull and routine place; without management, the educational organization can come apart at the seams with too many short-lived programs going every which way. (p. 27)

As is the case with leadership, some management styles have been identified: autocratic (authoritarian), democratic (participative), collegial and laissez-faire (free reign). The autocratic style of management is characterised by dictatorial or bossy managers or leaders with centralised decision-making. Managers who use the democratic management style empower other members of the organisation by involving them in, for example, decision-making. The collegial style of management advocates a collaborative relationship and shared leadership between managers and other members. The laissez-faire style allows members of the organisation other than the top managers, autonomy in making decisions. The following section examines some key concepts and practices in democratic ELM.

2.4 KEY CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

2.4.1 Participative/shared decision-making

Another critical pointer to democratic leadership and management is participatory or shared decision-making (SDM). Jones (2005) defined decision-making as making a "judgement or choice between two or more alternatives (that) arise in an infinite number

of situations, from the resolution of a problem to the implementation of a course of action (that involves) identification, analysis, evaluation, choice and planning" (p. 122). Liontos (1994) succinctly defined SDM as the "process of making educational decisions in a collaborative manner at the school level" (p. 1). This means that decisions in the school should be a result of consultation, consensus, openness, tolerance of diverse views, flexibility, sometimes majority vote, clarity, understanding, communication, information-sharing and involvement of all those affected by such decisions – teachers, parents, non-teaching staff and learners.

Participatory or shared decision-making may benefit schools because as Liontos (1994) summed up:

> SDM has the potential to improve the quality of decisions; increase a decision's acceptance and implementation; strengthen staff morale, commitment, and teamwork; build trust; help staff and administrators acquire new skills; and increase school effectiveness. (p. 2)

Under such conditions, teachers, learners and parents may be key players in SDM, for example when determining school policies. Lashway (1996) believed that the rationale behind this is "those who are closest to student learning are best equipped to make educational decisions" (p. 1). According to South Africa. Department of Education [DoE] (1996), decisions should be made by those who best understand the needs of students and the local community" (p. 29). Proponents, such as Lashway (1996), also argued that SDM has the potential to "improve student learning, create teacher satisfaction, and develop new forms of leadership" (p. 1). Therefore, schools may need to practise this democratic approach to ELM, which manifests itself in wider participation, involvement and inclusion, which is ultimately for their own good.

Bauer (1992) and Lange (1993) cited in Liontos (1994) felt that "the purpose of SDM is to improve school effectiveness and student learning by increasing staff commitment and ensuring that schools are more responsive to the needs of their students and community" (p. 1). The need for school management to practice inclusion cannot be emphasized

enough, although shared decision-making could conversely pose some challenges for schools. As Liontos (1994) warned:

> It places new demands on teachers and administrators. All participants must contend with a heavier workload and the frustrations that accompany a slower group process. Increased demands on participant's time may pose the greatest barrier to implementing and maintaining SDM. (p.2)

Simply stated, the implementation and maintenance of shared decision-making puts extra demands on the participants and as such requires a lot of commitment and open-mindedness. A study by Weiss, Cambone and Wyeth (1992) as quoted in Lashway, (1996) uncovered how SDM was a source of conflict among teachers:

> Disagreements that could formerly be politely ignored now had to be resolved; the balance of power sometimes shifted, with enthusiastic rookies having as much influence as veteran teachers; and time and energy were drained by the need to learn a new way of doing things. (p. 2)

Unhealthy competition among educators and the extra burden of committing to the transformation could thus be a potential source of conflict that could lead to an ineffective institution, if not well managed. Delegation, which may enhance SDM, is my next point of discussion.

2.4.2 Delegation

Delegation may be defined as the choice by a team leader to, in Jones` (2005) words, "entrust a team member with a specific task that he or she could have retained for him or herself" (p. 72). However, delegation should be used carefully in order for the assignment to be achievable. According to Business Training Media (2007), successful delegation comprises five steps, namely: analyzing the task, choosing the right delegatee, assigning the task, executing the task and conducting regular feedback sessions. Task analysis entails being "specific about what needs to be done to achieve the goal … setting a deadline and sizing up resources" (Business Training Media, 2007, p. 2).

In making the choice of the right delegatee, a manager should ensure, according to Business Training Media (2007), that "the right candidate should be highly motivated and possesses the needed skills for the assignment," while in assigning the task one should "give clear instructions … resources available, deadlines, follow-up steps and the amount of authority being given" (p. 2). During the task, the manager should "ensure that other team members are ready to support him/her [the delegatee] by communicating the assignment and the authority given" and in conducting regular feedback sessions, should "monitor issues so they don't become problems, and give the person opportunities to ask questions about the assignment" (Business Training Media, 2007, p. 2).

Another construct closely related to and arising from delegation is empowerment. Russell (2000) defined empowerment as "entrusting workers with authority and responsibility … teamwork and reflecting the values of love and equality" (p. 80). For French and Bell (1995), empowerment means, "leadership behaviors and human resource practices that enable organization members to develop and utilize their talents … (and) involving large numbers of people to help build the vision of tomorrow" (p. 29). Empowerment could be seen as the sharing of authority and responsibility as a team of equal organisation members who care for one another and have a shared vision and common goals. French and Bell (1995) understood empowerment as "involving people in problems and decisions and letting them be responsible for results" (p. 30). This means that people are given the opportunity to solve their problems and take responsibility for the solutions they themselves generate and take ownership of the consequences of these decisions. If things go wrong they should not blame the management for bad decision-making, but rather equally share the blame among themselves as a team. Against this background, school managers usually delegate matters related to day-to-day administration such as discipline, curriculum and extra-curricular implementation, parent enquiries and liaison with other institutions. However, some school managers may find financial and human resource management tasks not so easy to delegate, due to the high degree of accountability and responsibility required.

Three elements need to be considered when delegating tasks, namely, responsibility, authority and accountability. As Jones (2005) summed it up, "effective delegation involves giving someone else responsibility for the job, the authority to take decisions and in the short-term protecting them by retaining accountability" (p. 73). Accountability is, in Jones` (2005) words, "the ownership part of the job. We are accountable even if we didn't actually perform the task ourselves" (p. 73). Accountability is an important aspect of delegation because it can be a safety valve against the tendency of what Jones (2005) refers to as dumping, that is, "allocating tasks that we are not terribly fond of" (p. 73). Delegation premised on accountability may be perceived as true empowerment, which in distributed leadership, goes beyond the traditional view of delegation. According to MacBeath (2005, p. 353), when delegating tasks to staff, heads may hold staff accountable by trusting in their capabilities, clarifying the goals to be achieved and monitoring their performance, and in that way maintain their own accountability. This means that despite delegating, the head remains accountable for the attainment of organisational goals, which may be achieved by clarifying tasks and effective monitoring of the delegatees` performance. In this way, therefore, the leader does not abdicate his/her authority but remains ultimately accountable. Broader participation is examined next.

2.4.3 Broader participation

Broader participation entails the efforts by leaders and managers of organisations to accommodate and involve other stakeholders in the affairs of the institution such as developing the vision and mission and other activities in the running of the institution. This would include actively involving teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and learners in the vision and mission of the school to cultivate a sense of ownership and commitment to achieving the objectives. As Melber (1999) advised, in agreement with Fanon (1969), "people must know where they are going and why" (p. 11). Participation means what French and Bell (1999) referred to as "enabling others to act (by) fostering collaboration and strengthening others" (p. 89). This means that giving other stakeholders the opportunity to participate encourages collaboration and teamwork.

Drawing from the action research model in organisation development (OD), French and Bell (1995) summarised the benefits of broader participation as "widespread participation by client group members ensures better information, better decision making and action taking and increased commitment to action programs" (p. 7). In addition, French and Bell (1999) drew from research on group dynamics to show the importance of participation: "involvement and participation energize greater performance, produce better solutions to problems and greatly enhance acceptance of decisions … (and) enhances empowerment" (p. 88). Bush (2003) also indicated that "participation increases school effectiveness (and) is justified by democratic principles" (p. 78). In short, when people participate and are included in the affairs of the school, they become empowered and hence committed.

As participation involves the devolution and redistribution of decision-making authority, Leonard (1993, cited in Mungunda, 2003), noted that the underlying assumptions were "greater ownership, morale and commitment among stakeholders … and that decisions made at the local level are likely to be more responsive to the specific, individual school context" (p. 2). Participation and involvement in running a school are manifestations of democratic ELM. However, care should be taken in encouraging participation and involvement as some school leaders and managers may perceive this as a chance to relinquish their authority. This could however, be countered by utilising proper ways of delegating, as I have discussed in section 2.4.2 above.

A way of including other stakeholders in the education process is through consultation. MacBeath (2005) defined consultation as "the process by which heads listen to others but hold on to the right to decide" (p. 355). Consultation involves the seeking for and accommodation of other people's views, opinions and suggestions. French and Bell (1995), citing the action research model, highlighted the importance of consultation by stating that "superior results are produced when the ideas and energies of many people are sought" (p. 7). Consultation has however, its own demerits in that it delays decision-making and there is the potential of confusing issues and losing one's grip on issues. To this end, Jones (2005) cautioned:

First, there is the issue of time. The more you consult, the longer the decision-making process will take … the more people you consult with, the higher your chances of being confused by the mass of views – some no doubt contradictory – you will receive. Secondly, if too many people become involved you may well lose your grip over the whole process. (p. 128)

From this point of view it could be assumed that some leaders may feel that consultation may put them in a compromising position as decision-making becomes a cumbersome process. Such leaders may end up not consulting at all and subsequently be perceived as having authoritarian or dictatorial tendencies by some of their followers. Such situation would not auger well for their organisation. Next, I discuss teamwork.

2.4.4 Teamwork

When Barker (2007, as cited in Business Training Media, p. 6) advised that "we all have the ability to make a difference … as individuals, we can choose to take action and participate in the world around us … together, we can shape the future", he was actually illustrating the importance of working together as a united force, a team. As Senge (2006) reminded us, "the whole can exceed the sum of its parts" (p. 12). These ideas on teamwork show that when people work together as a unit they could become a more formidable force that may achieve more than when they operate as individuals. A team is not simply a group of people but rather, in Jones' (2005) words, "a deliberate assembling of people charged with achieving a task or tasks" (p. 22). Similarly, Everard and Morris (1996, cited in Jones, 2005) defined the concept of a team as:

A group of people that can effectively tackle any task which it has been set to do. The contribution drawn from each member is of the highest possible quality, and is one which could not have been called into play other than in the context of a supportive team (p. 22).

Teamwork is a crucial pointer of democratic ELM as it involves "consultation and collaboration among stakeholders in schools" (Monyatsi, 2005, p. 365), that is essential for the achievement of shared goals and shared vision. However, merely working

together is not enough. For people to realise their maximum potential and develop competent teams, Davidoff, Kaplan and Lazarus (1994) cautioned, "schools have to work consciously at the creation and maintenance of teams … through reflection on group dynamics for the purposes of addressing weaknesses and developing strengths" (p. 13). The analogy of meerkats, whose survival is attributed to "a single extraordinary talent: their ability to cooperate and create an interdependent culture" (Business Training Media, 2007, p. 4), illustrates the principles and essence of teamwork in social organisations. These writers listed the values of team-oriented behaviours as "the power of cooperation, respecting teammates, being accountable, communicating and learning from each other" (Business Training Media, 2007, p. 3). These are the survival skills meerkats use in their habitat that members of social organisations, schools in this case, could emulate, in order "to improve an attitude of teamwork and cooperation in (their) organization" (Business Training Media, 2007, p. 4).

Democratic processes could enhance synergy; a concept used in systems theory, which (synergy) is "the idea that lies behind teamwork" (Smith, 2003, p. 10). By implication, in a school the various stakeholders: school managers, teachers, non-teaching staff members, learners, school board and community members may work more effectively when they cooperate rather than when they work as isolated individuals or sections to achieve common goals and shared objectives. As Smith (2003) put it, "people working together can achieve more than a group of individuals working alone" (p. 13). Teamwork is a very important tenet of democratic ELM as it fosters collaboration, cooperation, coordination, communication, consultation and shared decision-making. The purposes of teamwork in a school, according to Jones (2005), include:

> Distributing and managing work; problem-solving and decision-making; enabling people to take part in decision-making; coordinating and liaising; passing on information; negotiating or conflict resolution; increasing commitment and involvement; and monitoring and evaluating. (p. 24)

These characteristics of effective organisations may provide an environment conducive to democratic ELM practices, which in turn could result in schools becoming learning organisations, the concept I highlight next.

2.4.5 The learning organisation

Democratic ELM may be associated with the concept of the learning organisation because learning together, collective aspiration, shared vision and transformation are collective activities that are a manifestation of democracy. Senge (1990, as quoted in French & Bell, 1995) defined learning organisations as:

> Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (p. 29).

Rowley (1997) defined a learning organisation as "an organization which facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself" (p. 83). Analysis of these two definitions reveals that a learning organisation is characterised by commitment to capacity development, through continuous learning, of individual members and the whole organisation. Change through new ways of thinking is fundamental to the organisation and all members of the organisation collectively aspire to achieve a shared vision. Senge (1990) compiled five disciplines that are required to create a learning organisation, namely: mental models, personal mastery, building a shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. Senge (2006) summarised the importance of the disciplines this way:

> Building shared vision fosters a commitment to the long term. Mental models focus on the openness needed to unearth shortcomings in our present ways of seeing the world. Team learning develops the skills of groups of people to look for the larger picture beyond individual perspectives. And personal mastery fosters the personal motivation to continually learn how our actions affect our world … systems thinking makes understandable the subtlest aspect of the learning organization - the new way individuals perceive themselves and their world. (p. 12)

The implications of the five disciplines for ELM include the following: firstly, that a shared vision leads to commitment to the school by all members, leading to a sense of collective ownership. Secondly, openness to changing their own mindsets (mental models) enables people to have different views of the world, in this case, organisations such as schools. Thirdly, team learning helps people to grow from the limited thinking of the self to a wider perspective of `us`, thus fostering togetherness. Fourthly, the motivation for life-long learning (personal mastery) and finally, the ability of people to see themselves as part of the larger whole (systems thinking), thus taking responsibility and accountability for their own actions.

2.5 BENEFITS OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The democratic style of ELM has great potential to create a school community that practises democracy. According to Sergiovanni (1996), such a community is a group of individuals "bonded together by natural will … together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals … this bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of 'I s' into a collective 'we'" (p. 48). Once the school community identifies itself as a unit, a sense of commitment to, ownership of and support for the school may be enhanced. This could be an important manifestation of democratic ELM. In this regard, Co-active (2008) enumerated the benefits of democratic management (and leadership) as:

> More commitment to an action in which people have played a part in decision making, there is a consent to the action taking place, there is a greater understanding and agreement about the action and ownership of the decision means the action is more likely to be successful. (p. 2)

Other advantages of democratic ELM, according to Jones (2005), include trust in others, reaching decisions by consensus in order to foster ownership of those decisions, hence commitment, listening to others and rewarding good performance (p. 15). When other stakeholders know that the leader has full confidence in them to allow them to take their own decisions, participate in decision-making, freedom to air their views and reward them for achievement, they will feel part of the organisation, be assured of ownership and

consequently become committed to achieving their shared vision and mission. As the Task Team Report (South Africa. DoE, 1996) pointed out, "a true culture of teaching and learning, as well as a supportive management culture can only thrive in a school where the major stakeholders feel ownership of the school's mission and ethos" (p. 29). Democratic ELM provides such a culture by advocating wider participation and inclusion, hence ownership and achievement.

Hepburn's (1984, as cited in Harber, 1997) summary of evidence from five research studies in the United States showed that "a democratic school environment can indeed foster democratic values, skills and behaviours" (p. 4). Along similar lines, according to John and Osborn (1992, as quoted in Harber, 1997), a study that compared two secondary schools in Britain, one authoritarian and the other democratic, found that "the democratic school was also more likely to encourage freedom of expression in the classroom" (p. 4). Harber (1997) further cited studies done in Africa, such as in Tanzania, where both staff and students felt that "participation had helped to develop responsibility, confidence, problem-solving through discussion and a friendlier and more co-operative environment" (p. 4). This empirical evidence suggests that democratic leadership and management in schools may be more desirable in many institutions as participation, an important aspect of democratic ELM, could lead to an enhanced achievement of goals.

Mayo's (1933, 1945) Hawthorne studies provided another argument for leadership and management styles that are inclined towards democracy, as according to French and Bell (1995):

> The research demonstrated the primacy of social factors on productivity and morale. People came to work as whole people; their feelings and attitudes about the work, the work environment and the supervisor determined their performance … group norms had more powerful effects on productivity than economic incentives. People were not cogs; organizations were not machines. (p.70)

The prominence of social factors, the undertones of respect and exultation of people as human beings with feelings, the positive influence of a positive environment on performance and the subsequent regard of organisations as living systems rather than

machines are concerns in democratic thinking and practice. In the final analysis, therefore, democratic ELM, which advocates, accommodates and fosters such notions, could be beneficial to the school.

2.6 LIMITS OF DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Although democratic ELM seems to be the most appropriate approach in schools, it has its limitations. There are situations, emergencies for instance, where the leader needs to take quick decisions. Under such circumstances, democratic ELM has the flaw of depending on collective decision-making because, as Jones (2005) contended, "in crises … there is no time to hold meetings" (p. 15). Another disadvantage of democratic ELM has to do with situations where "staff lack competence, crucial information (and) need close supervision" (Jones, 2005, p. 15). In such cases, the leader has to monitor and provide constant guidance to staff. Democratic ELM may not be quite effective in that regard. However, situational leadership, where the leader does not depend on one style but rather uses the technique of switching from one style to the other to suit the situation, may counter this. As Mind Tools (2008) argued, "a good leader will find him or herself switching instinctively between styles according to the people and work they are dealing with" (p. 5).

Socio-cultural limitations of democratic ELM could be experienced in certain situations where some of Dimmock and Walker's (2002, as quoted in Bush, 2003) dimensions of societal culture such as "male influence/female influence … patriarchal leadership" (p. 159), for instance, may be problematic. Similarly, Hofstede`s (1980, as cited in Jaeger, 1986) four dimensions of culture, namely: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism (collectivism) and masculinity (femininity), provide a useful perspective to the argument. In Namibia, male domination seems to be still perceived as an appropriate value in many spheres of social life including education while to a large extent, society, as Hofstede (1980, cited in Jaeger, 1986) would concur, "accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (p. 179).

These potential societal cultural factors could have an impact on the embracing of democratic ELM in Namibian schools, particularly in rural communities where the belief of patriarchal domination tends to be strong. Such communities do not seem to encourage risk-taking; therefore, there may be high uncertainty avoidance that could negatively affect change towards democratic ELM. Cultural factors such as blind loyalty may lead to others viewing democracy as a risk. If not all stakeholders do not believe in collectivity, although this is a cultural value within most Namibian in-groups, and involvement, and the power distance is high, it may lead to the existence of out-groups and consequently a lack of participation, disloyalty and unequal distribution of power and leadership. This scenario calls for a change in the cultural mindset. According to National Health Services, Scotland (2007, p. 2), "cultural change works best if there is a participative, not top down approach". This calls for concerted efforts by managers to work towards democratic ELM.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The democratic leadership and management of schools seems to be desirable because it could lead to school effectiveness in terms of improving the standard of leadership and management, learner performance and staff satisfaction. This chapter has reviewed literature that advocates for the move towards the democratisation of education and ELM. With this study, I would like to investigate the extent to which democratic ELM practices such as broader participation, communication, delegation, shared decision-making, learning organisation and teamwork are practised in a rural secondary school in Namibia. In the next chapter, I discuss the research methodology that I have used to investigate the democratic ELM practices in my selected school.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of my research is to determine to what extent democratic education leadership and management (ELM) practices are implemented in a rural Namibian secondary school, in the context of the policy of *Education for all*. This includes investigating participants` understanding of what constitutes democratic ELM as provided for in the policy and identifying areas of concern and need associated with democratic ELM practices in the school. As the study aims to uncover the meanings that lie behind the participants` experiences, the research follows the interpretive paradigm within the qualitative approach, using a case study. In this chapter, I explore the rationale of using the qualitative approach, interpretive paradigm and the case study method as well as describing the process of sampling, data collection and analysis. I also discuss ethical considerations, validity and the limitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Paradigm

A paradigm is a worldview or frame of reference from which a researcher attempts to uncover the complexities of the real world (Covey, 1989, p. 11; Patton, 1990, p. 37; Bassey, 1995, p. 12, as cited in Mungunda, 2003, pp. 29-30). This means the researcher approaches inquiry from a certain standpoint. As Mungunda (2003) stated, "researchers work from different beliefs about the nature of reality and how one sees the nature of reality as one is influenced by one's frame of reference or mental map" (p. 30).

In the tradition of qualitative research, this study followed the interpretive paradigm because the ultimate purpose of the project was to determine the perceptions and practice of democratic ELM in the school. Interpretive enquiry, as Connole (1998) pointed out, aims at "discovering the meanings and beliefs underlying the actions of others" (p. 17).

Furthermore, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) argued, "the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated" (p. 19). In other words, to understand the democratic ELM practices in schools and why things are done that way, I had to investigate the experiences and perspectives of the people involved in ELM – the key role-players. Interpretive inquiry provides such an opportunity.

3.2.2 Method

Since my investigation followed the interpretive research paradigm, the case study seemed the most appropriate method for this project. Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991, as cited in Tellis, 1997) asserted that "case study is an ideal methodology when holistic, in-depth investigation is needed" (p. 1). According to Guba and Lincoln (1986, as cited in Smith, 2005), interpretive research methods are "typically in-depth case studies of groups or individuals in naturalistic settings" (p. 6). In view of this, the study was conducted at the school premises, the participants` natural setting.

Further support for the use of the case study method is found in Tellis (1997), who noted that "case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data" (p. 1). The use of a case study enabled me to use a variety of research techniques that culminated in a composite picture of the participants` descriptions and understanding of democratic ELM practices in the school. The different research techniques I used to collect data are discussed under section 3.3.

Stake (1995, as quoted in Tellis, 1997) posited three types of case studies, namely: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. This specific type of case study can be categorised as instrumental, which Stake defined as "when the case is used to understand more than what is obvious to the observer" (p. 1). In this case I wanted to go beyond what I could see happening in the school by delving into the lived experiences of the participants based on their own accounts.

3.3 RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

I conducted the research at Ndamino (pseudonym) Junior Secondary School, in Libala (pseudonym) Education Circuit, in the Caprivi Region of Namibia. The school is situated in a rural setting, forty kilometres east of Katima Mulilo, the regional capital. It provides full-time tuition for 176 Grades 8-10 learners (87 boys and 89 girls), ten teachers (eight males and two females), one secretary (female) and three institution workers (two females and one male). The school is managed by a Management Committee (MC) made up of the principal, the head of department (HOD) and three senior teachers, supported by other committees such as the School Board (SB), Learner Representative Council (LRC) and Academic, Disciplinary, Maintenance, HIV/AIDS and Sports & Culture Committees.

The school has two blocks of classrooms, an administration block, a cluster centre and a block of ablution facilities for both staff and learners. The buildings are a permanent structure, set against a backdrop of a beautiful orchard and a garden, but in a poor state of repair and the classroom blocks need renovation. The school has electricity and piped water but the flow of water is very weak and seriously hampers the gardening venture. In terms of learner academic achievement, the school has had a consistent good pass rate in the national junior secondary certificate examination over the past six years.

The study involved ten participants – the principal (male), the HOD (male), the SB chairperson (male), the SB secretary (female), two LRC members (one male and the other female), two senior teachers (both male) and two class captains (one female and the other male).

Although major researchers in case study research such as Yin (1993); Stake (1995) and Feagin et al. (1991, as cited in Tellis, 1997) asserted that "case study research is not sampling research", Tellis (1997) cautioned that "selecting cases must be done so as to maximize what can be learned in the period of time available for the study" (p. 2). The selection of the case and the participants was convenient and purposive respectively. Firstly, the site was a typical rural school; rural schools being under-resourced in terms of

human and physical resources compared to typical urban schools due to lack of proper amenities like modern teacher housing, information and communication technology and other teaching/learning resources. Secondly, this was a convenient case because the school's management permitted me to do the research there at any time and the participants were available all the time. In addition, this was "a case from which there's an opportunity to learn" (Wilmot, 2006, p. 1). Thirdly, the sample was purposive in that I selected participants who, according to Gay and Airasian (2000), were "thoughtful and who have information, perspectives and experiences related to the topic of research" (p. 139). All the participants have experience of the leadership and management practices in the school.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

My choice of data collection tools was influenced by the nature of the research, the research question and the research goals. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel, Schurink and Schurink (1998) acknowledged that "data collection procedures in qualitative research involve four basic types: observation … interviews … documents and visual images" (pp. 47-48). In the context of interpretive case study research, I could best obtain the data to achieve my research goal by using three qualitative data collection techniques: interviews, document analysis and observation in order to discern features of democratic ELM such as accountability, consultation, participation, shared decision-making, teamwork, delegation, empowerment, self-management and a learning organisation in the school.

As Gillham (2000) said, "data are accumulated by different methods but bearing on the same issue and are part of what is called the multi-method approach" (p. 13). Using a multi-pronged data-gathering approach enabled me to cross-reference different types of evidence, that is, what the participants said, what I saw them doing and what documents and records showed. It is important to crosscheck and verify data from one source against another to obtain a comprehensive account of the findings of the study possible, instead of relying on only one source of data. According to Stake (1988, as cited in Denzin &

Lincoln, 2000), triangulation is the "process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning and verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 443), and may enhance the quality of research. I discuss triangulation further under validity in section 3.7.

3.4.1 Interviews

I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured one-on-one interviews for the following reasons: the face-to-face interview afforded me rich, direct one-on-one in-depth conversations with the interviewees since either party had the opportunity to seek immediate clarity when the need arose. As Gillham (2000) maintained, "the overwhelming strength of the face-to-face interview is the richness of the communication that is possible" (p. 62). Family Health International (n.d.) attributed the richness of communication in such interviews to the ability of this technique in eliciting "in-depth responses with nuances and contradictions" and getting an "interpretive perspective, i.e. the connections and relationships a person sees between particular events, phenomena and beliefs" (p. 30). Coupled to this is the flexibility of the semi-structured interview in allowing for:

> More space for open questions, a greater conversational style, freedom to change the order of questions depending on the answer you are getting and freedom to change the emphasis of questions dependent upon the responses" (How to conduct interviews, 2007, p. 1).

The semi-structured interview is useful in attempting to unravel the story behind the participants` experiences because the interviewer can pursue in-depth information by using open-ended questions. Three open-ended questions guided the interviews in this study: (a) Please talk about how you run your school/how your school is run. (b) *Education for all* talks about democratic leadership and management in schools, what is your understanding of this provision? (c) What would you like to see happening in your practice/in your school? I pilot-tested these interview questions in another secondary school before doing the main investigation. De Vos et al. (1998) justified the idea of a

pilot study as necessary "to obtain a picture of the real practical situation" (p. 181). Pilot testing alerted me to the need to refine the questions and to improve on my paraphrasing and probing skills to be able to uncover the meanings behind some responses. As Gillham (2000) stated, questions need to be "open and require an extended response with prompts and probes … to clarify the answer" (p. 62).

With the permission of the participants, I audiotaped the interviews and later transcribed them verbatim. The field notes I took during each interview aided the process of transcribing, especially where an interviewee was not always audible. To maintain the focus of the study I kept the interview guide and the research goals at hand throughout the interviews that ranged from 35 minutes to one hour per interview. The length of the interviews was a notable limitation to my study that I acknowledge in 3.8 below, depended on the amount of time that the participants granted me.

3.4.2 Document analysis

I studied the minutes of two of each of staff, Management Committee and School Board meetings, the school development plan (SDP), the school organogram and the log book. The principal allowed me to make copies of the documents on the school photocopying machine at a cost of N$1.00 per A4 page which was regarded as a fundraising effort. While some of these documents were from 2006 and 2007, others were from 2008, when the study was undertaken. The inclusion of a range of documents is important according to Gillham (2000), as records may "provide a useful longitudinal fix on the present situation" (p. 21). This quasi-historical view enabled me to trace the practice of democratic ELM over a few years. This enabled me to get some sense of the extent to which democratic practices are part of the school culture.

The process of studying and analysing documents entailed reading them thoroughly, looking for significant statements and phrases and "transferring significant quotations from documents" (Bassey, 1999, p. 83). Written documents can serve as a primary source of data since they provide what Gay and Airasian (2000) referred to as "first-hand

information" (p. 16). Gillham (2000) supported the study of documents to "provide a formal framework to which you may have to relate the informal reality" (p. 21). This is further evidence of triangulation, which I discuss later under validity.

3.4.3 Observation

Observation is a valuable data-collecting tool that entails the recording of a close examination of a situation by making field notes. Gillham (2000) pointed out, "observation has three main elements: watching what people do; listening to what they say and sometimes asking them clarifying questions" (p. 45). The advantages of observation include the ability to gain insight into a situation, getting first-hand information, yielding detailed information, triangulation with participants` interview accounts and documents, and above all, the fact that the observation is done in the natural setting of the participants, while they continue to engage in their normal social activities.

I visited the school over a period of five months to observe the interactions within the school community for potential indicators of democratic ELM practices like teamwork, empowerment, delegation, participation, involvement and shared decision-making. This is because observation "is the most direct way of obtaining data" (Gillham, 2000, p. 46). I used field notes to record the actions and behaviours I observed. An observation sheet is provided in Appendix C.

The observation I employed can be described as detached, external, nonparticipant or peripheral and semi-structured. Peripheral in the sense that I was, as Smith (2002) put it, "present … but at some psychological distance" (p. 1). I watched some activities in which the participants engaged at a distance but never took part myself. An advantage of non-participant observation is to reduce intrusion and emotional involvement with the participants, according to Gay and Airasian (2000, p. 212). The observation was semi-structured because although my agenda was to look for democratic ELM practices, as Smith (2002) noted, I was "free to observe different things in different places at different times" (p. 2). I did not confine my observation to certain activities and certain places but

observed activities like assembly, staff-learner interactions in and outside the classroom, study sessions, sports and parent-staff-learner interactions.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was driven by my research goals and guided by my research methodology. In the tradition of interpretive case study research, the qualitative data generated from the interviews, document analysis and observation were sorted, stored in labelled files on a computer, thus building a case record, transcribed verbatim (interviews), systematically organised into categories, described and interpreted in words. Sorting was necessary to prevent mixing up the data, filing provided order for easy access and categorisation resulted in demarcating emerging themes. An example of an interview transcript is to be found in Appendix B while the themes are presented in chapter 4. In short, my data analysis entailed what Smith (2008) referred to as "handwork as data sorting, headwork as data presentation and heartwork as data interpretation" (p. 6). Data sorting, presentation and interpretation according to Smith (2008) entails, "what I `ve got – the data; what I `ve found in what I `ve got – information; and what I `ve learnt from what I've found – knowledge" (p. 6).

Data analysis in this research was mainly descriptive and interpretive, that is, describing and interpreting the experiences, beliefs, feelings, views, understandings and perspectives of the participants. As Gay and Airasian (2000) asserted, "qualitative (and interpretive) researchers use interpretation to analyze their data, the researcher both describes and provides an explanation of what has been observed and what it means to the participants" (p. 19). Description enabled me to "draw a picture in words of something tangible" (Bassey, 1999, p. 87), in this case, democratic ELM practices in the school.

Throughout the process of data analysis, I questioned the meaning of the verbal data, non-verbal behaviours, written claims and the like in relation to democratic ELM in the school and constantly referred to the data to interpret the findings. This approach helped me to maintain the focus on my research goals and objectives and a sense of the whole study. As O'Leary (2004) advised, "keeping a sense of the overall project refers to the

need to conduct your analysis in a critical, reflexive and iterative fashion that cycles between your data and your overarching frameworks" (p. 185).

3.6 ETHICAL STANDARDS

In order for the study to be valuable, I adhered to the ethics of research throughout the entire process. I established a relationship of mutual trust with the participants by maintaining trustworthiness, integrity and honesty. These values were manifestations of my "respect for democracy … respect for truth … respect for persons" Bassey (1999, p. 74). In respecting democracy, I obtained the participants` permission and informed consent (Appendix A) and explained their right to withdraw from the project at any time should they need to do so. I explained that I would give them the opportunity to read and edit the transcripts of the interviews as well as the narratives of my observation and document study of the indicators to democratic ELM. I undertook to communicate the findings of the research to the participants.

In the quest for trustworthiness, I remained honest to both the participants and myself in the process of collecting and interpreting data. Bassey (1999) cautioned that in order to respect truth, researchers "should not deceive others intentionally … (and) should try not to deceive themselves and others unintentionally" (p. 74). To ensure respect for persons, I transcribed the interviews verbatim, quoted and acknowledged data from documents and observation appropriately. As Bassey (1999) advised, in this way, I would "recognize those persons` initial ownership of the data and … respect them as fellow human beings who are entitled to dignity and privacy" (p. 74).

I further observed and maintained confidentiality and anonymity. Before commencing the research, I secured the permission of the Director of Education, the Circuit Inspector, the Principal and the School Board chairperson to allow me access to the school. Before each interview, I sought the consent of the participants and ensured their willingness to be audiotaped. I undertook not to divulge any information to anybody, other than my supervisor and examiner, without their consent, keep the data strictly confidential and

their identities anonymous by using pseudonyms. As O'Leary (2004) stated, "confidentiality involves protecting the identity of those providing research data" (p. 54).

3.7 VALIDITY

A major pre-occupation in qualitative research is not to colour the meanings participants attach to their experiences. Maxwell (1992) argued, "the first concern of most qualitative researchers is with the factual accuracy of their account – that is, that they are not making up or distorting the things they saw and heard" (p. 286). In this research validity, including credibility, dependability and confirmability, and this was achieved through reflexivity, member checking and triangulation. Reflexivity was realised by, as Janse van Rensburg (2001) indicated, "Noting (my) own views and feelings in a field journal, as potential influences on interpretation" (p. 9). Inviting the participants to read and comment on my interpretations or "taking interpretations back to (participants) or others to check" (Janse van Rensburg, 2004, p. 9) was an exercise of member checking. Stake (1995, as quoted in Tellis, 1997) saw triangulation as "the protocols that are used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations" (p. 2). The use of three such protocols or different sources of data: interviews, documents and observation in this case study ensured triangulation. Similarly, Tellis (1997) stated that "case study is known as a triangulated research strategy" (p. 2).

The interpretive approach ensured the validity of the smaller sample size, as I had no intention to generalise the findings to a wider population. My concern was "to closely explore and understand the meaning individuals make of their experiences" (Janse van Rensburg, 2001, p. 9). In the interpretive research paradigm, as Janse van Rensburg (2001) believed, "the emphasis shifts from finding or discovering a single reality to presenting the multiple meanings which research subjects make of reality" (p. 8). Stake's (1995, as cited in Tellis, 1997) naturalistic generalisation provides another form of validity though, which is "based on the harmonious relationship between the reader's experiences and the case study itself" (p. 2). This, Stake believed, would enhance greater

understanding of the phenomenon under study, as readers may identify with the account of a study.

The use of in-depth interpretive interviewing and field notes, together with my observation sheet provided rich descriptions, which is a form of validity. The field notes were written in a clear manner; with a lot of extensive detail describing the behaviours observed and were used to later reflect on the meanings of such actions. As Gay and Airasian (2000) remarked, "thick description is partially influenced by what is seen, but mainly by the detail and language the researcher uses in constructing the field notes" (p. 214).

Pilot-testing instruments also enhanced validation of the case study. The pilot exercise yielded valuable input for my research, as I had to slightly adjust my questions, which enhanced a better understanding by the participants. As De Vos et al. (1998) mentioned, the pilot-test gave me a "general impression of the feasibility of [the research instruments] and the data obtained" (p. 158). The piloting gave me a real feel for the exercise as well as the opportunity to carefully think about what exactly it was that I would be looking for in my research.

3.8 LIMITATIONS

Unlike in quantitative research where the researcher is completely "detached from the study to avoid bias" (Hoberg, 1999, p. 24), I acknowledge that in this qualitative study my values may have inevitably coloured the inquiry as I closely interacted with the participants. However, I dealt with this problem by observing what Hoberg (1999) termed "disciplined subjectivity" (p. 24). This I did by maintaining a distance, not participating in the activities that the participants engaged in.

Time was a major limitation in this study because I could not visit the school as often as I would have wished to due to the nature of my job. Apart from my position of Senior Education Officer responsible for Professional Development in the region, I doubled as

Acting Deputy Director, which made me shoulder more responsibilities and commitment. It would have been more rewarding for me to do my observation at least once every week of the five months since observation typically requires enough time to discern patterns and regularities rather than isolated incidents. However, I tried to visit the school at every opportunity to observe any activities even if only for a few minutes. The selective nature of observation could lead to observer bias, but because I only used observation to supplement other data- collection methods – interviews and document analysis, this pitfall was avoided.

A low level of literacy of two participants was a possible limitation in this research. The low literacy level seemed to render my questions difficult for them to understand and their answers irrelevant. As I share their home language, I was able to translate the questions whenever there were difficulties, but there were still problems. Another drawback was the way the minutes of the various meetings were written that made analysis of the documents very cumbersome. To sidestep the problem I resorted to checking with both the secretary and the principal for clarity.

Another challenge was the limited time I had for in-depth interviews. Although I wanted to have longer interviews to delve deeper into the participants` experiences, they granted me a maximum of one hour only.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I provided an outline of my research approach. I employed the interpretive paradigm, based on my research question and aims. I described the research method as a case study, which used the data gathering techniques of interviews, document analysis and observation. I further discussed the research site and participants as well as data analysis. I then outlined the achievement of research ethics such as confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, honesty and integrity by respecting democratic principles. I also paid attention to the question of validity for example through triangulation before highlighting some of the challenges of the study.

In chapter four, I present the data that I collected through the interviews, document analysis and observation.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present the data generated from semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, document analysis and observation. As I explained in the previous chapter, I interviewed ten participants: the principal, the head of department (HOD), two senior teachers, the chairperson and the secretary of the School Board (SB), two members of the Learner Representative Council (LRC) and two class captains. The purpose of the interviews was to record the participants` personal experience and understanding of democratic ELM in their school and identify any possible ways to deepen their understanding and practice. The interviews were based on three open-ended guiding questions:

- Please talk about how you run your school? For learner participants this question was modified to: Please talk about how your school is run. (Practice or implementation);

- *Education for all* talks about democratic leadership and management in schools, what is your understanding of this provision? (Understanding);

- What would you like to see happening in your school in terms of democratic ELM? (Identifying gaps and need for improvement).

I studied samples of minutes of MC, SB and Staff meetings and the School Development Plan (SDP) to complement the participants` interview accounts. I also visited the school from time to time for a period of five months from June to October 2008 and observed some activities in the school ranging from the school assembly, a Staff meeting, formal and informal teacher-learner interactions in and outside the classrooms, parents` visits to the school to the supervision of study sessions. My primary interest during this observation period was to find indicators of democratic ELM such as broader participation, communication, delegation, learning organisation, shared decision-making, shared leadership and teamwork as I explained in chapter 3. In order to enhance triangulation, the data that emanated from interviews, document analysis and observation

are integrated and discussed under the three guiding questions, while giving prominence to the themes or categories that emerged.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS` PROFILES

At the time of this study, the principal was a 38 year-old male qualified with a BEd (Honours) degree in Education Management. Before his transfer to this school in 2006, he was headmaster of a combined school in a different region. He had eleven years teaching experience. His vision was to improve the pass rate at this school, which has generally been doing well in the national Grade 10 examinations over the past five years. In addition to managerial and administrative tasks, he also teaches a promotional subject in Grade 10, which is an external examination class. He is referred to in this study as PR1. The second member of Management, the HOD was an experienced man aged 50; boasting 29 years of teaching experience and has a BEd degree in English and History. He had been a HOD for 16 years and employed at the school since 2000. He had a full-time teaching timetable that fully occupied him as a subject teacher and left him with little time for management issues. He was the only English language teacher in the school including Grade 10, which placed more demands on him as it is an external examination class. The HOD seemed to be focused more on improving the examination results in the school. He is referred to as PR2 in this report.

The third participant referred to in this study as LRC1, a Grade 9 boy aged 16 years, was the head of the LRC, a body that represents all the learners in the school on important decision-making bodies such as the MC, SB and Academic Affairs Committee. The LRC also serves as the link between the teachers and the learners, which placed this learner in a strong ELM position in the school. Participant number four, a 16-year old Grade 10 girl was the LRC head girl and by virtue of her position was involved in ELM in the school. As a link between the teachers and learners, she played a vital role in maintaining a good relationship between the two groups. Like the head boy, she had many responsibilities to fulfill towards the welfare of the other learners in her school. She is assigned the code name LRC2 in this report.

In terms of the Education Act 16 of 2001, the School Board is the highest decision-making body in the school. Leading this body therefore requires both vision and maturity. Participant five, the SB chairperson, was an energetic man in his late thirties who talked about running the SB and the school with enthusiasm. He seemed to have a lot of self-confidence and commitment to his role in the governance of the school. As SB chairperson he was accountable to, not only the parent community who elected him, but also to the learners, the staff and education authorities. This report depicts him as SBC. The sixth participant code-named L1Fwas a Grade 9, 19-year old female learner, who was selected for the research because as a class captain she was involved in ELM. Participant seven, assigned the code name L2M, was a boy aged 19 doing Grade 10. Like L1F, this learner was involved in ELM as a class captain.

Participant eight was a 43 year-old female teacher who doubled as secretary of the School Board. She possessed a Higher Education Diploma (HED), had 16 years teaching experience and had taught at this school for eight years. SBM, as this teacher is code-named in this report, was elected to the SB by fellow teachers to represent them as stipulated in the Education Act 16 of 2001. As both a senior teacher and the SB secretary, she was involved in ELM in the school's structures such as the MC and the SB. She headed the Academic Affairs Committee, which gave her another perspective of ELM. SBM knew the community very well and thus served as a good mediator between the school and the community.

Participant nine was a male teacher aged 49, qualified with a Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) and teaching experience of 28 years. MT1, as he is code-named in this research was a member of the MC by virtue of being a senior teacher elected to represent fellow teachers on this forum. Participant ten, designated as MT2 in the report, was a 41 year-old male teacher with a Further Diploma in Education Management (FDM), had 14 years teaching experience and was an executive member of the Namibia National Teachers` Union (NANTU). He represented the union on the school's important fora such as the MC and SB. MT2 had been teaching at this school for three years. His vision

for the school was the strengthening of collaboration among all the school's stakeholders, in particular between the teachers and the parents.

4.3 DATA PRESENTATION

4.3.1 Understanding of democratic leadership and management

I discuss data from interviews, document analysis and observation simultaneously, depending on their relevance to specific themes, in order to validate the findings. The data gathered by interviews was generated from verbatim transcription of the recorded accounts by the participants. I use direct quotations to indicate the words spoken by the participants. The question: *Education for all* talks about democratic leadership and management in schools, what is your understanding of this provision? was intended to uncover the participants` understanding of what constitutes democratic ELM as provided for in the policy. This question generated answers that indicated that nine out of ten or 90% of the participants showed an understanding of democratic leadership and management as provided for in the policy *Education for all*.

One manager participant, PR1, emphasised freedom and respect for people's dignity, which could be attained by respecting their ideas and points of view, as important tenets of democratic ELM in the school. This he explained as follows: "For the people to practically do their job best they have to be free and their dignity respected. Ideas and views have to be respected". Another manager, PR2, said he understood the policy provision on democratic ELM to mean shared or distributed leadership, practising delegation, involvement of others and avoiding autocracy. In his own words, the participant described his understanding of democratic ELM like this:

> To show democracy you should not as a manager run the school alone. Give powers to other members of the school; form committees and get people to lead those committees, it shouldn't be autocracy but members should take part. You should delegate always, but you delegate with authority.

One male teacher participant, MT, understood the policy on democratic leadership and management of schools in terms of broader participation by stakeholders in the school, namely the MC, teachers and parents. The participant put it this way: "From the administration to the parents, everyone is involved in the learning situation … the principal, the teachers, the parents, are involved; it is not only one person involved but all are involved". Asked if he meant that this is what was happening in the school, he replied in the affirmative. A second male teacher participant, MT2, described his understanding of the policy on democratic ELM as provided for in *Education for all* in terms of participatory management, broader participation, consultation, accommodating others` views, involvement and shared decision-making:

> This deals with participatory democratic management, people who are running the school cannot dictate to decide. A democratic leader should not lead the institute alone; he should make some consultations. Let other people also contribute … Let people have a say in whatever concerns the institute. Don't use this word `I have decided … `, no, use the word `we`. Let people feel that they are also part of the institute; they should also feel that they are important stakeholders of the institute.

That is how the participants described their understanding of democratic leadership and management of schools in the context of the policy *Education for all*. To sum up, the participants referred to respect for everybody's freedom and dignity by taking into account their ideas and views, delegation, involvement, consultation, shared decision-making and shared leadership, as important democratic ELM practices. Following up these claims on subsequent visits, after document study and observation, more data on this understanding emerged. For example, when asked what exactly he meant by participatory democratic management, MT2 explained that Namibia was governed through a democratic constitution and this required all public institutions, including schools to practice democracy.

These reflections by the participants were cited as being implemented in the school. Conversely though, PR2 notably admitted a shortcoming in their understanding of democratic ELM as follows: "Democracy is sometimes wrong because some people do always misuse it. We don't understand it correctly but we misunderstand it sometimes"

(PR2). He explained in a follow-up discussion that sometimes people do not do their work as required as they are free to say and do as they wish. However, none of the participants talked about meaningful participation, which raised questions about their full understanding of democratic ELM. The next section is devoted to data on the practice of democratic ELM in the school.

4.3.2 Practice of democratic leadership and management

In response to the question: Please talk about how you run of your school/how your school is run? The data from interviews, document analysis and observation revealed that the policy on democratic ELM as provided for in *Education for all* was practised in the school. One manager participant, PR1, explained that practices such as broader participation, consultation, empowerment through delegation, participatory decision-making, shared leadership and teamwork existed in the school. When asked to provide evidence of this, he cited the delegation of duties and leadership roles to the HOD, senior teachers, the LRC and the rest of the teachers. In his own words, he explained:

> Within the school we have some sections or structures, which the school has to follow. For example, we have heads of departments who have duties to do, we have senior teachers who have roles to do, we have SRC (LRC) members and of course the teachers themselves also have some roles to play.

PR1 further argued that by delegating responsibilities to others he was empowering them: "We empower the person with responsibility and authority" (PR1). He also mentioned that everyone in the school belonged to "small units or committees" through which "each individual contributed towards the running of the school". Another example he gave was the involvement, participation and consultation of the School Board who were invited to the school in order "to get their inputs" on important matters and claimed that taking decisions "involved everybody" (PR1).

Three other participants supported the claim for participatory decision-making. Another manager, PR2, said that the principal, the head of department and senior teachers, who were assisted by committees, including the School Board, ran the school. He expressed

himself this way: "We run our school in terms of … the principal, me as the head of department and we do have senior teachers … we do have committees here at our school to help us run the school and each committee has got its leader." (PR2)

According to a LRC member participant, LRC1, the principal "normally consulted the committees of the teachers, the LRC and the School Board". MT2 stated that the principal and the MC tried to maintain "participatory management", which he said entailed allowing each teacher "a say in the running of the school". He said they always had "meetings for teachers, learners and parents" where they "shared ideas".

Document analysis corroborated these practices of democratic leadership and management in the school. A careful study of the SDP revealed that the mission statement and the vision of the school, displayed in the principal's office, were products of a consultative process that involved teachers, the LRC and SB. This was reportedly a step towards practising what they preached as the vision and mission advocated for "effective management, and being transparent", according to the SDP. Other strategic objectives in the SDP pointed to delegation, empowerment, autonomy, shared leadership and accountability, which are practices related to democratic leadership and management. The various committees in the school were granted the autonomy to plan and execute the programmes assigned to them. For example, the Stock Control Committee was mandated to put in place a mechanism to maintain existing textbooks and ensure the purchase of a school photocopier before the end of 2008. Similarly, the Examinations Committee was empowered to, "in consultation with the subject heads and teachers, set school and subject targets for 2008". The SDP further reflected that "the principal and the subject teachers of the three worst performing subjects should come up with a staff development programme to improve results". This was seen as autonomy and empowerment to the teachers as they were afforded the chance to reflect on and devise strategies to improve their subjects, instead of Management doing it for them. According to the same document, "the Maintenance Committee should come up with a mechanism to maintain existing and purchase more school tools; the HIV/AIDS Committee should come up with a well-coordinated program; the Finance Committee should come up with a simple and

understandable mechanism (for) collecting, banking and spending SDP while the Disciplinary Committee should come up with a mechanism to reduce absenteeism among learners, teachers, secretaries and cleaners to less than 4%". It is clear that the committees were given the autonomy to run their own affairs.

The school's Annual Plan is drawn from the inputs of all stakeholders (teachers, Management, School Board and LRC), which shows that communication, consultation, broader participation, inclusion, shared leadership and shared decision-making was taking place in the school. Among the activities scheduled in the plan were: Teachers` reports, Learners` reports, Management, Staff, School Board and Parents` meetings. In other words, all the structures in the school were expected to give regular feedback and share information with one another so that everyone knew what was happening. There was observable evidence to support the data from interviews and document analysis that point to evidence of democratic ELM practices in the school. During observation, I noted the following (see observation schedule in Appendix C), both the MC and teachers took charge of and the LRC actively organised the school assembly at which information-sharing with learners was done by the MC and teacher committees. Learners were assigned tasks such as choir singing, all teachers and learners took part while the MC, teachers and LRC shared tasks such as making announcements at the assembly. When asked to explain the reasons for these practices in follow-up discussions, the participants said they felt this was a good way to encourage cooperation in the school.

Further evidence of delegation, broader participation, effective, open communication and shared leadership were recorded in the classrooms, where it was observed that learning continued in the absence of teachers, although the quality thereof was questionable. The MC gave the learners information through the class teachers, class captains and the LRC and vice versa, hence a two-way, top-down, bottom-up communication channel. Two teachers were observed consulting learners on learning objectives and another on sporting matters. One class was observed to arrive at a decision on studying instead of going for sport by majority vote. The principal and the HOD were observed delegating duties to staff and learners from time to time. The majority of learners participated freely and fully

in learning activities through learner-centred education (LCE). Four teachers were observed assigning leadership roles to ordinary learners and one to a LRC member. This was later explained by two of the manager participants as a way of grooming others for leadership roles – an indicator of shared leadership.

During outdoor activities and at break time, learners were observed talking and chatting freely among themselves and teachers also shared classroom experiences among themselves. The majority of teachers were observed to delegate activities to learners while many learners were seen participating in various activities. Many learners were witnessed assuming leadership roles such as supervising the watering of the garden. The trend towards delegation, open communication and consultation continued with teacher-learner interactions, where, for example, two teachers provided counselling by urging learners to take charge of their learning and their lives. Effective formal and informal communication through instructions and information-sharing was noted on three occasions. Six learners were seen consulting teachers on organising sport and on curriculum matters. On three occasions teachers consulted learners before assigning responsibilities to the learners. Five cases of teachers and LRC delegating activities to learners were observed while two teachers urged learners to participate in various activities such as gardening. Two teachers asked LRC members to manage classes while they were busy with other matters. A chat with two teachers revealed that their understanding was that their actions were empowering the learners, in terms of the principles of *Education for all*.

The observation further revealed that democratic ELM practices that include accountability, responsibility, participatory decision-making and shared leadership that were recorded during the interviews and document analysis could be corroborated. The MC showed the capacity to run the school with little help from the Ministry of Education. The MC was observed informing teachers, learners and parents of the latest developments and on the needs of the school. They consulted teachers and learners on administrative issues such as examinations and sports. On one occasion the HOD and the principal involved teachers in decision-making, while they were observed delegating

duties to teachers and learners on six occasions. Both the principal and the HOD were observed doing teaching duties and sharing administrative tasks with teachers and LRC on three occasions. Two managers, PR1 and PR2, said in a follow-up discussion that the rationale behind these actions was "teamwork" as they did not "want to leave anybody behind" but preferred to "move forward together".

Broader participation as a democratic practice was noted in various forms. The SB had the autonomy to conduct its own affairs independently and good communication between parents visiting the school to consult and the staff was observed. One parent consulted a teacher about the absenteeism of her child. However, there was no evidence of the school interacting with the entire community, for instance by way of parents` meetings during the period of observation. There were also no SB meetings observed as none were scheduled for the time of the observation. On the other hand, during one staff meeting that was observed there was effective, open and free-flowing communication where the MC, SB and LRC proposals were given to staff for input and feedback. The meeting was characterised by the debating of issues before decisions were taken. It was during such meeting that individuals and committees were delegated tasks, for example "Ms M to do Grade 8 registration". Notably, all members were free to participate fully and equally in discussions and some tasks delegated to teachers were administrative and managerial in nature. For example, teachers were given the task to "review the progress of their class groups in tests and assignments" for reporting to the parents later.

A number of themes or categories of democratic leadership and management practices emerged from the data. These include broader participation, communication, delegation, participatory decision-making, shared leadership, learning organisation and teamwork. I present these categories in the next section.

4.3.2.1 Broader participation

The data from interviews, document analysis and observation pointed to the practice of involving and consulting all stakeholders in the running of the institution. The participants reported broader participation, citing the practice to seek input from SB members and LRC on school matters. Participatory management and the democratic election of representatives were confirmed by one manager participant, PR1: "We call them (School Board) to get their inputs"; "two representatives of the learners who are LRC members, take part in SB meetings to make sure that the needs and interests of the children [learners] are taken into account" and therefore "they (learners and parents) are not left out". Both male teacher participants reported that "the principal and the Management try to maintain participatory management, where each teacher has a say in the running of the school" (MT) and that "one man cannot run the show, you have to involve others; if you come up with decisions or impose, people will not take your decisions" (MT2). A learner participant, L2M, said that parents had the freedom to elect their representatives on the SB and learners to elect their representatives on the LRC, without due influence by the MC and in his own words it was "not the teachers who do that for them".

When probed further, L2M, who had mentioned that the MC tried to maintain participatory management, explained he meant that the MC always involved the other teachers and the LRC in the running of the school instead of doing all the managerial tasks alone. He cited the example of teachers and LRC members supervising and monitoring afternoon and evening study sessions and sporting events. A member of the SB, SBM, corroborated broader participation as follows:

> Our school is managed by the principal and the HOD, that's the leadership plus the subject heads and then committees allocated to different teachers … the School Board members, they are there to assist the teachers in the running of the school … the LRC also they are helping. (SBM)

The minutes of the MC meeting indicated the involvement of the SB in school matters such as providing the "draft school development report for 2006 to the School Board". The reason for presenting the report to them is for the SB to review, comment on the school's progress and recommend the way forward. Further involvement was evident in the SB minutes that showed that "the principal gave a report concerning the examination results so as to get views form other members". The SB minutes documented more examples of involvement, inclusion and participation in the school: "The Board members were urged to follow up the request" and "The LRC chairperson requested parents to help in the education of their learners". Some traces of consultation, participation and involvement in the minutes of the staff meeting records analysed included: "The Disciplinary Committee Policy was distributed to the members for reading and comment in the next meeting" and "Rating summary of the School Self-evaluation (SSE) to be given to the teachers for their comments and revision of the SDP".

Participation, inclusion and involvement were identified as the strengths and priorities for the school in the SDP: "Learners are active in culture, HIV/AIDS and sports programmes … Some parents are active in school matters ... Good relationship among teachers ... Teachers are active in regional, circuit and cluster activities ... Promotion and spreading of HIV/AIDS education among learners, teachers and parents". Broader participation and involvement were observed on a number of occasions. All teachers and learners took part in the school assembly. The majority of learners participated fully and freely in learning and extra-curricular activities in and outside their classrooms such as gardening and all staff members were free to air their views in staff meetings. These strategies flourish best in a democratic ELM environment. The next practice is communication.

4.3.2.2 Communication

The data generated from interviews, document analysis and observation indicated that there was open, transparent, two-way communication involving both bottom-up and top-down approaches. One manager, PR1, informed the study that there was a free flow of information among the school's stakeholders, citing the example of SB members who

"have to go back to the community and inform them" of any matters discussed in Board meetings. A second manager, PR2, explained that two-way communication always took place among the school's structures and that the channel of communication was:

> From the learners to the LRC, to the class teacher and from the class teacher to the senior teachers, then to the HOD and from the HOD to the principal until it reaches the Head Office. It comes down like that: from the principal, the HOD, senior teachers, until it reaches the learners. (PR2)

A female learner participant referred to as L1F reported the existence of communication and information sharing, among learners who were sick and missed school, between parents and the teachers, whom she said "communicate in order to understand one another". The second male teacher, MT2, referred to meetings for all sections. He said that they "always have meetings where we share ideas". These utterances showed that there was feedback and information sharing between the staff and the parents through the SB, the channels of communication were clear and that there was an exchange of ideas at all levels of the school, including learners, during meetings. The minutes of the MC meeting indicated the cordial relationship and interaction that formed the basis of any kind of social dialogue. The meeting was also used for information sharing by the members for example, "the meeting was informed …" and "the principal highlighted at the meeting …"

Communication in the school was described as open and transparent. The participants talked about transparency in informing and updating the parents about developments, decisions taken in meetings and the use of the SDF. To this end, PR1 said that "parents should know what is happening with the school development fund (SDF) and they are the people who, through the School Board, authorise that we should use the money to buy things". One SB member participant, SBC, informed the study that the community was involved in school matters through communication because "after a meeting, we as the School Board members and the teachers call all the parents to come and tell them about what we have discussed". L1F said, as learners, "we tell our parents whatever is decided at school". This, the participant later revealed, was meant to afford their parents the

opportunity to raise any concerns they might have on the issue. Both MT and MT2 said there was transparency and openness as all the stakeholders worked as a team and all had to know what was happening in the school.

The participants said in a democratic setting, all stakeholders should know what is happening, hence the accountability on SDF, information sharing and awareness of any decisions. In this way, the participants believed, there would be trust in the MC and SB by all members. As a sign of transparency and openness the minutes of the MC reflected that "the meeting was informed (of) the approximate monies of N$5 000 the school has for now and planned to purchase one photocopier", "the parents will be informed on Wednesday 3 October 2007 at 15H00. On the same day the School Board will be informed at 12H 00 before the parents meeting … the agenda was read to the House, and the House adopted it". The SB minutes show that a good measure of transparency exists in the school: "The principal highlighted the Board members on figures of the school enrollment" and "The principal gave a financial report". The minutes of the staff meetings reflected transparency in the budget, "The relevant organs should trace their funds when needed".

I observed three instances where the principal and HOD called all staff members to the staffroom and informed them about the need to intensify the Grade 10 revision classes. The MC informed the learners about the postponement of a sports competition due to examinations and a discussion with a parent who was summoned to the school about her child's truancy was handled well by a senior teacher. Open communication was necessary for delegation, the subject of discussion in the next section, to be effective.

4.3.2.3 Delegation

Many of the participants disclosed that delegation was a notable feature in the school. Both document analysis and my observation confirmed that assertion. Some of the participants even highlighted the reasons behind delegation such as empowerment, autonomy and giving opportunities to other people. One of the participants, a manager,

said he did not just delegate tasks to his colleagues but delegated "with authority to empower them" (PR1). He cited the example of creating a platform for the HOD to demonstrate his capability of running the school in his absence and said that was empowerment. The HOD in turn "empowers the subject heads and that goes down to our LRC members as they are given some tasks to do". Such views were echoed by two learner participants who said that they had to "give other people chances to show their ability in doing something" (L2M) and that "when a teacher goes out he comes to the class and selects learners, giving them specific tasks to do, who later have to give feedback to the teacher" (LRC2). A teacher participant, MT, cited the empowerment of committees through delegation, as each committee had a leader and "the teachers or learners who serve there have to manage their own affairs". A manager participant, PR2, argued for delegation and said:

> To show democracy you should not as a manager run the school alone. You should give powers to other members of the school … in terms of empowering and delegation, once you delegate everything will be easier for you as a leader because yours is just to monitor who is doing that, how is he doing it and they will bring in feedback to you. (PR2)

Further evidence of delegation of certain administrative duties and activities to staff members in the school is documented in the minutes of the MC meeting. For example, "Mrs M will be responsible for the Grade 8 registrations; thereafter the Registration Committee will meet to scrutinise the registered learners for final admission" and "it was agreed in the meeting that Mr M was to find out from the school secretary how much the school has in the Maintenance account". Delegation and empowerment were evident from the minutes of staff meetings as in: "Miss N was elected to be the accounting officer for lost books ... The orchard and vegetable fund is to remain in the hands of Mr M and Mrs M".

During my observation, I recorded the following instances of delegation. These include examples of teachers delegating learners to conduct a choir at assembly, the principal and HOD delegating teachers to conduct the assembly and make some announcements (something usually done by the principal), teachers delegating learners to supervise

classrooms in their absence and LRC members assigning tasks such as captaincy and supervision of school ground cleaning teams. I also observed that when teachers assigned tasks to learners and gave them a timeframe for feedback, things went well. These practices may be seen as manifestations of democratic ELM.

However, a senior manager, PR1, claimed that delegation was done even at policy level, but sounded not quite democratic:

> Although I have to delegate in one way or the other, some of the policies will be implemented by some of my teachers who will be under my leadership, either a senior teacher or the head of department, even the LRC … they might be given some limited powers which they have to exercise. (PR1)

The use of phrases such as "limited **power**", "**my** teachers" and "**under** my leadership" can be problematic in the context of democratic ELM as they could be interpreted as carrying undertones of autocratic tendencies. However, these utterances did not overshadow the positive picture of delegation that emerged from the overall study. Next I look at the learning organisation.

4.3.2.4 Learning organisation

There were indications of the school striving towards becoming a learning organisation since the principal was committed to building a shared vision through involving others in designing the school vision and mission. The MC was determined to base the SDP and the Plan of Action for Academic Improvement (PAAI) on identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, for example with the use of the Teacher Self-evaluation (TSE) and School Self-evaluation (SSE) instruments. These are processes that involve commitment, hence ownership of the vision and personal motivation for continuous learning (from one another) towards changing people's mindsets about the world to achieve a collective aspiration. Some of these thoughts were provided by PR2 and SBM who both said that when delegating, sharing ideas and consulting others on various issues there was reciprocal learning as teachers, managers, learners and the community continuously learned from one another. SBM said for

example, when teachers and learners were delegated and involved in running the school, they were "learning the leadership skills" and when given responsibilities "I `ll learn a lot, even leadership skills". They believed that nobody knew everything simply because "you are the principal or whoever in the school". PR2 also alluded to reciprocal learning when he said: "through delegation you will know and learn a lot just because in schools it is a two-way … I learn from learners and they learn from me. It does not mean that they are the only people who always learn but I also learn from them" (PR2).

In preparing the SDP and PAAI, neither the MC nor SB dictated to the teachers; rather the teachers themselves were the architects of such plans. To this end, the participants explained the procedure for developing the SDP in support of the minutes of a staff meeting. One manager, PR1, said that "teachers are expected to complete the SSE forms before October 15, 2008" and emphasised that they (teachers) "complete the TSE forms and thereafter draw their own personal plans". Another manager, PR2, explained, "Each teacher is required to draft a PAAI for their subjects, which is then incorporated into the Annual Plan". The significance of the completion of the SSE, TSE, PAAI and SDP is that everyone continued to learn how to develop strategies that were required to achieve personal and institutional growth, a characteristic of a learning organisation.

According to the minutes of the MC meeting, "the House was given the opportunity to exchange views and share valuable experiences", which is a sign of a learning organisation, where people are prepared to share and learn from one another's experiences. In a follow-up discussion with the principal after observing his interest in urging other stakeholders to share in the vision of the school and make it their own, he reiterated his wish to see a community that was truly motivated, committed to the achievement of their common goals and proud of their school. This could be achieved through other democratic ELM practices such as SDM that I turn to next.

4.3.2.5 Shared decision-making

According to data generated from the interviews, document analysis and observation, all stakeholders in the school participated in the decision-making process. In describing the decision-making process in the school, two managers said SDM involved "all stakeholders … the learners, teachers and the School Board" (PR1 and PR2). One SB member, SBC, reported that even when the MC made a unilateral decision, such a decision would still be subjected to review by the SB and said, "If the committee disagreed, it (the decision) won't go through". Another SB member, SBM, emphasised that participatory decision-making was practised in the school, as "decisions were not taken by one person. There were consultations before a final decision was taken". Two teacher participants confirmed that decisions were made by all stakeholders and not only the principal and HOD. According to MT, "most of the decisions are taken by the staff not just the principal or the HOD, but the staff as a whole". MT2 said that "everyone participates in the decision-making of the school … why I said that it is participatory management is because the principal does not decide alone but teachers take part in the decision-making of the school".

SDM was discerned from the following examples extracted from the minutes of the MC meeting, "the meeting agreed to meet with all persons with accommodation problems and deliberate over it to reach an amicable solution once and for all", "the House decided that follow-up should be done so as to have it in place" and "it was agreed in the meeting that the Disciplinary Committee, after dealing with S`s issues for such a long time …". The SB minutes also indicated SDM among the members: "The School Board members agreed that parents who are Board members will donate N\$20.00 while teachers who are also serving on this Board will donate N\$30.00 for refreshments" and "All parents agreed to pay N\$150.00 with effect from January 2008".

SDM was reportedly achieved through consensus and consultation in the school. PR1 reported that he did not impose decisions, but rather let stakeholders deliberate on an issue in order to reach consensus. PR2 stated that when all staff members discussed

issues they always came to an agreement and passed a unanimous resolution before the decision became binding. To this end, he elaborated that:

> Decisions are taken in such a way that partners should feel free and the way the decisions are taken, that is to sit down; we take a leader from each committee, the principal, the HOD, Management and discuss. It's not one man to say out the decision but we discuss and exhaust the matter … when the decision is passed, we need also the chairperson of the LRC and teachers of different committees … then we talk and talk and exhaust the matter and then the headmaster will say, `Alright, as the majority do believe that we should take this, and that is what we should take`. We always do it collectively. (PR2)

MT echoed that everyone was involved in taking decisions by way of reaching an agreement. The minutes indicated that consensus was reached in the MC meeting, for instance, when "the House also agreed to seriously look at our Grade 9 promotional strategies". The minutes of SB meetings also indicated consensus among the members in that "during the parents` meeting, the House agreed to elect one member to join the current School Board".

The majority of the participants claimed consultation with all stakeholders always took place before decisions were made because this was seen as democracy. One manager, PR1, for instance, said democracy was important and therefore the ideas and views of others had be respected and accommodated when decisions were made. SBM claimed that consultation was happening as even the principal did not "do things on his own" but had to consult the HOD or other teachers. One teacher, MT, reported they always consulted one another and "learners bring their ideas to the teachers, the teachers have to take their ideas to the HOD, the principal and the School Board. This is not a one man or individual's business". Probed on whether learners and parents were consulted on all matters, including curriculum implementation for example, MT clarified that learners and parents were consulted only if it was necessary before decisions were taken. MT2 gave the examples of consulting the SB "when purchasing any school property" and consulting the learners "when making school rules for learners".

To consult the relevant stakeholders, the MC meeting agreed not to finalise one issue but rather to have it "discussed in the next meeting as to how they should officially work". Further evidence of consultation was found in the minutes of the SB: "Both afternoon and evening studies would only begin after the parents` meeting", at which parents would be informed and asked for their input and support. During the observation period, I observed how one class arrived at a decision to study instead of going for sports by majority vote. The class captain asked the class their preference in the matter. The class could not reach consensus until the captain decided to subject the matter to a vote in which the majority voted in favour of studying and thus settled the issue.

On three occasions, I observed teachers consulting learners rather than imposing tasks on them... On another occasion, I observed a consultative session at which the MC involved the teachers in deciding whether to cancel a scheduled sporting event that clashed with examinations or not. After thorough discussion, the staff as a whole decided to postpone the event in the interest of the learners. In a staff meeting, it was observed that all points on the agenda were discussed first before any resolutions were made. The next section looks at shared leadership, which is close to SDM in a democratic ELM setting.

4.3.2.6 Shared leadership

The leadership in the school was shared, distributed and dispersed among the members of staff since not only the principal and the HOD formed the MC, but senior teachers and when necessary two LRC members were co-opted on to the MC. Through the interviews, the participants confirmed that the administrative structures in the school, such as the MC, comprised "the principal, one HOD, two senior teachers, including the LRC and the School Board, this is part of the administration and that's how the school is managed" (PR2). Another participant, MT, said the school was "managed by the principal and the HOD, that's the leadership plus the subject heads and then committees of different teachers". Because the description showed a view of formal leadership, I followed the matter up and wanted to know if there was any practice of informal leadership in the school. MT then said that the MC, SB and LRC were formal organs, but in an effort to

break the rigidity, the school community had come up with informal organs such as the Examinations, Sports, HIV/AIDS, Maintenance and other committees set up internally. Another teacher, MT2, added, "Each committee has its leader". PR1 stated that he sometimes did not personally make announcements and directives during assemblies, but instead let the HOD take responsibility for these tasks. The reason for this was to give the HOD the opportunity to take the leading role and send the message that the HOD shared the leadership and management role with the principal.

From the interviews, minutes of staff meetings and observation, it was revealed that the principal and the HOD shared leadership and managerial duties with other staff. Senior teachers and when necessary LRC members became part of the MC. Notably, senior teachers were not appointed by the principal, something PR1 said was an indication of the MC`s willingness to share leadership with all the teachers. Senior teachers were elected democratically hence giving them equal opportunity to share leadership. One participant stated, "Among the teachers themselves they have to choose who they feel should be the senior teachers" (FT). Both the MC and the teachers were observed sharing leadership tasks, for example making formal announcements, assigning learners to supervise their counterparts during Physical Education and delegating learners to take the lead in organising events such as the Entrepreneurship exhibition. Other shared leadership roles observed included heading the examinations and accountability for funds allocated to various committees, which contributed to teamwork.

4.3.2.7 Teamwork

When asked about the practice of teamwork in the school, the participants mentioned that they always did things collectively, that they present a united front and the different structures work hand-in-hand. One manager, PR1, specifically highlighted the importance of teamwork as they believed in the slogan "united we stand, divided we fall." He cited the example of having committees such as the SB, LRC, teachers that worked in small units yet working collectively for one common objective, something achievable through team spirit. Participants such as PR2, LRC2 and SBM claimed that there was a team

spirit and cooperation in the school and cited some practices as evidence. One learner, LRC2, noted, "Teachers talk, laugh and they are happy, working as a team".

If a parent had a problem, they would discuss it with the teachers. "It's a team, they discuss in a civilised way, no arguing, no fighting" (LRC2). One manager gave an example of togetherness among the staff, "teachers sit together and discuss how they will operate in each committee, so they work as a team". A teacher participant who served on the SB referred to the cordial atmosphere that brought the members of staff together, for example, "we have a tea club which brings us all together. During break time the teachers, the principal, the cleaners and the secretary come together … that brings us together so there is unity at this school".

During my observation, I noticed the team spirit in classrooms especially when the learners engaged in cooperative and peer learning on projects and assignments in subjects like Agriculture, Life Science and Physical Science. That seemed to generate a sense of unity and oneness among the learners and their teachers. The tea club, with the MC members oblivious of their positions, seemed to bring about the relaxed atmosphere of a social team different from the in-class approach at all other times. The brief meetings I observed between individual teachers and parents had signs of cooperation and collaboration. The staff meeting observed was similarly characterised by a spirit of cooperation and teamwork as everybody made an effort to pull in the same direction.

4.3.3 Gaps in implementation of democratic ELM

The third question posed to the participants was what gaps, if any, they saw in their practice of democratic ELM. The question led to participants suggesting what improvement they would like to see regarding the practice of democratic ELM. Although the data from interviews, documents and observation showed that democratic ELM practices such as broader participation, communication, delegation, learning organisation, shared decision-making, shared leadership and teamwork existed in the school, some participants expressed some reservations about the extent of involvement, consultation and teamwork. One manager, PR2, said that he wanted to see "more cooperation,

coordination, organising, marketing (of the school) and initiative" by all stakeholders, especially the teachers. A learner participant, L2M, said that he wished to see wider participation maintained at all times. During a follow-up conversation, he reiterated that consultation and SDM existed in the school but that he wished to see the principal consulting before taking any decision, no matter how minor the decision was so that no loopholes for unilateral decision-making were left, as that would be "unfair".

Although communication was reported as a prominent democratic ELM practice that existed in the school, the participants` understanding of the concept fell short of identifying the role of communication in conflict identification and resolution, for example. Their understanding was also centred on verbal communication since they did not refer to other modes of communication such as suggestion boxes, bulletin boards, reminders, notes and internal memos, which could be vital tools in an open and transparent ELM environment. One male teacher, MT, acknowledged that the practices of teamwork and SDM existed in the school but argued that he "would like to see more teamwork among the teachers, the principal, the HOD, the LRC and the School Board". The same participant seemed skeptical about SDM that involved learners, as he wanted the "LRC to be given more powers in decision-making". The second male teacher participant, MT2, acknowledged the involvement of parents in the running of the school but explained that there was a need to do more as he expected "to see teachers formulating social organisations that involved parents". He cited the introduction of a Teacher-Parents` Day (PTA) as an example of such a social organisation. In addition, he stressed that there was a need to involve parents fully in academic affairs, for example "the Academic Committee that we have here comprises of teachers only".

A careful analysis of the data pointed to a superficial understanding of the concept of teamwork. The participants understood a team as being the same as a committee, whereas a team is an advanced practice with highly skilled group dynamic processes and thus different from typical committee work. The connection of the practices associated with a learning organisation to those in the school proved difficult. According to the data

presented in this chapter, the participants did not assert themselves enough on issues like a shared vision, mental models, team learning, personal mastery and systems thinking.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented the data supplied by the participants in the interviews and in the official school documents such as minutes of School Board, Management Committee and Staff meetings, the School Development Plan and the Annual Plan. The third type of data presented came from my personal observation of events in the school carried out over a period of five months. The three modes I used to collect data served the purpose of triangulation, as the data from interviews, document analysis and observation seem to confirm the participants` understanding and implementation of democratic leadership and management. In the next chapter, I discuss the data.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four, I presented the data on the experiences and understanding of democratic leadership and management practices in a Namibian secondary school generated from semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observation. In this chapter, I discuss the data in the context of the relevant literature against the background of my research goal and research questions. The chapter addresses a number of themes or categories that point to the participants` understanding and gaps in their understanding and the practice of democratic ELM that have emerged. The main themes include broader participation, communication, delegation, learning organisation, shared decision-making, shared leadership or what MacBeath (2005) referred to as "school-wide leadership" (p. 361) and teamwork. I integrated the information I obtained from interviews, documents and observation and addressed the data under the themes I identified.

5.2 Broader participation

In order to implement the policy of *Education for all* effectively, it is important for all stakeholders in a school to understand what democratic ELM entails. Most of the participants in this study understood democratic ELM in terms of broader participation by all stakeholders in the school, through practices such as involvement, consultation, inclusion and consensus. As Co-active (2008) would argue, "the understanding of the importance of each of these is crucial to successful democratic management" (p. 1). The involvement of stakeholders in school matters was perceived by the participants as critical to achieve wider participation in a democratic setting. Hart (1992, as cited in Simovska, 2004) underlined the connection between participation and democracy that interpreted "participation as the fundamental right of citizenship" (p. 7). An example the participants gave was the broadening of the MC to include senior teachers, LRC and SB members, as opposed to the formal bureaucratic structure that is comprised of only the principal and the HOD. The reason for the democratic election of representatives on

bodies such as the SB, LRC and teachers` committees, the participants reported, was to involve the parents, learners and teachers through those committees. This practice was seen to manifest inclusion, an important element of democratic ELM that could enhance wider participation.

Research and literature on leadership and management theories have shown that participation by stakeholders is an important element of democratic leadership and management styles and models. A study by Nsubuga (2008) on 24 secondary schools in Uganda concluded that:

> The democratic leadership style encourages everybody to participate in the affairs of the school as a whole (as) the staff feels they are part of the school and they are part of the leadership of the school … Most schools would improve their performance by becoming more collaborative and more democratic. (p. 24)

The participants highlighted the soliciting of input from SB and LRC members on school matters, which they described as a tenet of participatory management because it meant that learners and parents were "not left out". The MC minutes confirmed the involvement of the SB in school matters, for example, the draft school development report had to be presented to the Board for their scrutiny and action. Parental involvement has the potential to improve school performance. As Nsubuga`s (2008) study found, the role of parents was "instrumental both to the students learning achievement and to the well being and performance of the school" (p. 12).

This development can be seen as a positive step in Namibia where education reforms continue to redress the shortcomings of the past. The SBC compared the present situation where school boards are mandated to help run schools with the past when there was no such concession. This supports the Minister of Education, Nangolo Mbumba`s lament of a "lack of democratic participation within the education and training system (as) teachers, parents, administrators and workers were largely excluded from the decision-making process in education [inherited from the past]" (Namibia. MBEC, 2006, p. 1). However,

no evidence of consultation on policy matters like appointment and transfer of staff and curriculum expansion, was revealed by the participants, although the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 clearly stipulates the powers and functions of the School Board as, among others:

> To advise the regional director of education on educational needs and the curriculum of the school (and) subject to the Public Service Act [Act 13 of 1995], to recommend to the Permanent Secretary the appointment of teachers and other staff members at the school. (Education Act 16 of 2001, p. 15)

The participants informed the study that learners participated actively in the affairs of the school. Learner participation was critical as it benefited the school. Hannam`s (2001, cited in Bennis, 2008) British-based study of 16 student-participative schools reported that managers, teachers and learners in those schools viewed "student participation as enhancing students` self-esteem, motivation, sense of ownership and empowerment in addition to raising scores on the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams" (p. 2). This practice was necessitated by the fact that learners are the primary beneficiaries of schools.

The participants understood democratic ELM to mean respecting other people's ideas and views, giving other stakeholders the chance to take part in the affairs of the school. They also cited welcome contributions from others by means of consultation making everyone feel being part of the institution. As Siseho (2008, quoted in Teach, 2008) contended, "Participation and consultation are some of the most important ingredients of ensuring success" (p. 11). The teacher participants reported "each teacher had a say in the running of the school" because they believed in democratic ELM principles like collectivism. They mentioned for example, the monitoring of afternoon and evening study sessions and sporting events as ways to involve them. In all such matters, they claimed, the MC always consulted them. To this effect, the managers, SB members, learners and teachers who were interviewed said they were consulted on some administrative and managerial matters like study times, uniform, teacher housing and the use of SDF. Observation confirmed such practice, as two teachers were observed consulting learners on learning

objectives and another on sports. Six learners were seen consulting teachers on sport and curriculum matters. The MC was observed seeking opinions from both teachers and learners on examination administration arrangements. One parent was recorded having consulted a teacher about the absenteeism of her child. Proposals about study times were given to staff and LRC for their input before finalisation in the SB. These were interpreted as efforts to achieve democratic ELM in the school.

Democratic ELM may also mean freedom from dictatorship, intimidation or coercion for both staff and learners from Management. In a climate free of total control by the authorities people may feel more comfortable to air their views and concerns, just as SBM contended that in a free environment, learners and teachers "can even tell [share] their problems". Teacher MT2`s view revealed that he regarded democratic ELM as participatory in nature, devoid of dictatorial tendencies such as unilateral decision-making and characterised by consultation. It entailed getting contributions from others, adopting a "we" [inclusion] rather than an "I" [exclusion] attitude and making others "feel that they are also part of the institute" as well as "important stakeholders" (MT2, p.11). This consultation, broader participation, inclusion and involvement, according to MT2, created a sense of ownership and hence commitment to the school by the stakeholders, rather than by particular individuals. Literature on democratic ELM confirms this line of thinking, for example, as Bryson and Anderson (2000) summed up the importance of participation and involvement, "participation can build commitment to plans and to implementing actions" (p. 145).

The ideas of participation, involvement and inclusion of all stakeholders in the affairs of the school are consonant with the characteristics of democratic ELM forms such as transformational, servant, distributed and situational that I discussed in chapter 2.

However, one senior teacher and one learner expressed concern regarding the way consultation and wider participation occurred. Both participants wished to see improved consultation and broader participation when it came to decision-making. As Shields (2004) emphasised:

Democratic education offers all legitimate stakeholders opportunities to participate. Democratic participation in decision-making cannot be accomplished simply by issuing an invitation and holding an open meeting; it often requires teaching people how to participate, making them feel comfortable, and empowering them to feel competent and capable. (p. 124)

In other words, this was something the participants saw as a gap in their practice and therefore wished to see an improvement in that respect.

5.3 Communication

The participants` understanding of the policy on democratic ELM showed that the policy entailed communication. The data from interviews, document analysis and observation informed the study of the existence of open, transparent and two-way communication, information sharing and feedback. Communication, being the lynch pin element, plays a vital role in a democratic setting as the other elements such as broader participation, delegation, learning organisation, shared leadership, SDM and teamwork all involve effective and high quality communication. The leader has to urge stakeholders to participate, explain delegated tasks, elucidate the vision, give direction, facilitate group decision-making and facilitate teamwork. Literature on democratic leadership and management confirms the importance of communication as key to the democratic leadership style since the leader has to engage in "seeking the opinions of others and letting your opinion be known" (Money-Zine, 2007, p. 1). To underscore the importance of effective communication, Mincu and Associates (2003) argued, "poor communication can sabotage every positive thing that an organization is doing" (p. 5).

To rally other members of the institution towards collaboration requires effective communication. According to Manager Tools (2007), "managers rely on communication to achieve the very basic requirement of their role: aligning and inspiring others to achieve more than they could do on their own" (p. 1). Communication may be realised using different modes since "there are a lot of different kinds of communication (such as)

meetings and feedback" (Manager Tools, 2007, p. 1). Goleman (as quoted in Institute for Management Excellence, 2003) cited communication as one of the "underlying emotional intelligence competencies" (p. 1) of democratic leaders and managers. This implies the need for ELM to embrace communication.

The participants said that there was a free flow of information among the school's stakeholders, for example, the School Board provided regular feedback to the community on matters discussed in Board meetings. An example of reciprocal communication took place throughout the school's structures with the channel of communication starting from the learners to the LRC, the class teachers, to the senior teachers, the HOD and finally the principal and vice versa. A reference to meetings for all sections as a platform for information sharing and exchange of ideas was made. Information sharing is vital to the entire school and, as Petress (2002) amplified, "the most valuable resource for any leader is information (and) leaders are not the only members who need to be/stay informed" (p. 4). Leaders should subsequently be both information givers and information seekers, just like other stakeholders in the institution. Petress (2002) contends, "Information is the basis for knowledge, decision-making, rule making and interpretation, the weighing of alternatives, and assigning tasks" (p. 18). This is testimony that communication is a vital tool through which other democratic principles could be achieved.

The participants described the communication process in the school as open and transparent. Transparency exemplified by informing and updating the parents about developments, decisions taken in meetings and the use of the SDF, in order to elicit feedback from them. This openness was considered important because all stakeholders had "to know what was happening" as this would encourage them to "trust" the MC and always participate in school matters. Communication was understood to contribute towards a cordial working relationship among the school's stakeholders. It is necessary to enhance harmony within the institution. This is in tandem with Petress's (2002) observation that school managers as the gatekeepers "keep communication channels open (and) facilitate interaction among members" (p. 10). The minutes of the MC and those of the SB reflected tendencies of transparency and openness by documenting the giving of

financial reports to the members so that everybody could monitor and account for the budget. One Namibian school principal underlined the need for communication in schools at a one-day conference: "I know it is difficult to teach an old dog new tricks, but we need to share leadership information … no one person can operate in isolation. We have to share our concerns, fears, problems, frustrations and successes" (Philander, 2008, unpaged).

Open communication was observed in instances where the principal and HOD informed and encouraged all staff members to thoroughly prepare the Grade 10 learners for their final examinations. Effective communication among the various structures in the school was noted during observation, for example the exchange of information on sports, examinations and truancy. Any democratic institution needs to have open rather than secretive ways of handling issues and thus practise transparency. However, it should be borne in mind that transparency requires honesty and truthfulness rather than gossiping and rumour mongering. To this end Jones (2000) sounded a valuable caution:

> Despite the difficulties that might arise, leaders need to be genuine about what they discuss with their team, even and especially when it is at all negative. Effective team leaders seek collaboration – they open discussion with the relevant people rather than indulge in clandestine or corridor conversations. (p. 38).

My observation confirmed the possibility of the school's communication channels being effective. Effective formal and informal communication was observed on three occasions, including sharing of classroom experiences by both teachers and learners. On three occasions, I witnessed parents visiting the school to get information on the latest developments in the school. The MC equally briefed teachers on the latest developments such as national examination programmes and workshop invitations. Since communication has a bearing on delegation, I look at delegation next.

5.4 Delegation

The participants` understanding of democratic ELM in terms of the policy of *Education for all*, pointed to a strong tendency towards delegation. The data from both document

analysis and observation confirmed the assertion made by the participants in the interviews, that delegation was prominent in the school. Delegation was evident throughout the school as the principal delegated tasks to the HOD, who in turn delegated to senior teachers and so on down the chain to learners. Delegated individuals who were empowered to manage their own affairs led the various committees of teachers and learners. The participants gave the reasons for delegation as empowerment, autonomy and giving opportunities to other people. Jones (2005) summed up the benefits of delegation as follows:

> Delegating eases the strain on us as team leaders and creates time for more important tasks … helps to exploit the specialized knowledge and experience of team members … helps to promote and develop the abilities, initiative, self-reliance and competence of team members. Delegating often has a positive effect on the motivation and job satisfaction of team members. (p. 73)

To lead and manage a school democratically a manager/leader should involve other people by sharing power, forming committees, letting other staff members lead the committees and delegating some tasks "with authority", which shows a devolution of power and empowerment of others. This notion of delegation and empowerment is in line with Russell (2000) `s definition of empowerment as "entrusting workers with authority and responsibility" (p. 80). Two of the manager participants reported that when they delegated tasks to colleagues they always made sure to delegate with authority while they retained accountability over the tasks. More literature on democratic leadership and management consider empowerment as an important element of delegation. For example, Burns (1968, as quoted in Institute for Management Excellence, 2003) noted that "transformational leadership is about empowering people not controlling them" (p. 3). This could be seen as a way of creating an enabling environment, which McGregor's (1950, as cited in Institute for Management Excellence, 2003, p. 4) Theory Y rather than Theory X of management advocated. Harber (1997) would concur with this idea because he viewed democratic leadership as effective and hence argued that "effective leadership is seen in terms of empowering others rather than exercising power over others" (p. 5).

The practice of empowering other members of the school community by delegating tasks, activities and responsibilities is a democratic principle embedded in servant leadership. The central principle being "empowerment involves entrusting workers with authority and responsibility" (Russell, 2000, p. 80) and "delegation is not abdication; rather it involves both trust and accountability", as Miller (1995, as cited in Russell, 2000, p. 80) suggested. The goal of empowerment is to share and multiply leadership throughout the organization. By delegating tasks the principal therefore encouraged and empowered other members to acquire and practise leadership skills to the extent that the institution ultimately experienced shared leadership. According to Wilkes (1996), "servant leaders multiply their leadership by empowering others to lead", and Manz (1998), "wise leaders lead others to lead themselves", both cited in Russell (2000, p. 80). This is what the leadership at this school claimed to be doing.

The minutes of the MC meetings documented the delegation of important functions such as the registration and admission of learners to staff members. The minutes of staff meetings showed that staff members were empowered to be the accounting officers for textbooks and the orchard and vegetable fund, for example. My observation recorded many instances of delegation involving the morning assembly, learners supervising classes and maintenance tasks as documented in Appendix C. PR1 and PR2`s statements that they delegated authority and responsibility to their colleagues leads me to the third element of delegation, namely, accountability. As Jones (2005) elaborated:

> Responsibility: if we are responsible for the job it normally means that we are the ones who actually carry it out. Authority: this is the decision-making part of the job. We make decisions about the way the job is done. Accountability: this is the ownership part of the job. We are accountable, even if we didn't actually perform the task ourselves. (p. 73)

In this view, the essence of delegation may consequently be perceived as giving other stakeholders the responsibility to perform certain duties, empowering them with the authority to take decisions while carrying out the delegated responsibilities and remaining accountable so as to back the delegatees up, according to Jones (2005, p. 73). This practice seemed to auger well for the school as it encouraged ownership of the school

activities by many people, thus relieving the leadership of some pressure. During the observation exercise, I saw several learners being delegated tasks and responsibilities such as overseeing the watering of the garden; supervising afternoon studies and sports and monitoring classes where teachers were absent. Similarly, the principal and the HOD were seen delegating tasks to several teachers and later demanded feedback, a sign of accountability. When the principal went on leave, he delegated the HOD to act on his behalf as acting principal. This meant that even when the principal was absent, the structure of leadership in the school was maintained.

However, the practice of delegation is a complex, specialised task that should be handled professionally if it has to be effective. Jones (2005) posited a model for delegating effectively, which comprises the following steps: "analyse your time, break down your tasks, prioritize your tasks, estimate time for completion, group related tasks and make your choice" (p. 77). In this research, the participants did not go as far as showing a deeper understanding of delegation at this higher level. Nonetheless, their own level of understanding of the concept matched their practice as long as delegation was made within the delegatees` "comfort zone" and perhaps their "stretch zone" instead of their "panic zone". Jones (2005) used the term comfort zone to mean "those aspects of their work in which they are quite experienced and proficient"; in the stretch zone, "team members are testing their ability to handle unfamiliar tasks …" while the panic zone takes them "into skill areas that are far beyond their capability" (p. 80).

5.5 Learning organisation

The MC`s commitment to building a shared vision through involving others in crafting the school vision and mission and the determination to base the SDP and the PAAI on a SWOT analysis, using the TSE and SSE instruments could be read as signs of a learning organisation. Driver (2002, as cited in Alas & Vadi, 2006) considered a learning organisation as "the antithesis of the traditional bureaucratic organisation" (p. 159). The reason is that these are processes that involve commitment, hence ownership of the vision and personal motivation for continuous learning from one another towards changing

people's mindsets about the world to achieve a collective aspiration. The participants said when delegating, sharing ideas and consulting others on various issues there was reciprocal learning as teachers, managers, learners and the community continuously learned from one another.

One manager participant reported the practice of organisational learning which was, according to Finger and Brand (1999, as quoted in Smith, 2001), "characterized by the recognition that individual and collective learning are key" (p. 1). Organisational learning is worth mentioning here because it is "the activity and the process by which organizations eventually reach the level of a learning organization" (Finger & Brand, 1999, as cited in Smith, 2001, p. 1). One SB member participant alluded to organisational learning during the interviews as she referred to learning that was reciprocated among the different individuals and structures in the school. This is in agreement with Kerka`s (1995, as quoted in Smith, 2001) view that conceptualisations of the learning organisation seemed to assume that "learning is valuable, continuous and most effective when shared and that every experience is an opportunity to learn" (p. 4).

Besides organisational learning, another indicator of a learning organisation in the school was dialogue. Senge (1990, as cited in Smith, 2001) emphasised dialogue or conversation as crucial to the discipline of team learning, arguing, "Team learning entails the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine thinking together" (p. 5). The reason Bohm, Factor and Garrett (1991, cited in Smith, 2001) postulated was such dialogue "could increase and enrich corporate activity" (p. 5). This view was parallel to Argyris and Schön`s (1978, as cited in Smith, 2001) double-loop learning theory, which "requires learning situations in which participants can examine and experiment with their theories of action" (p. 5). Double-loop learning is "necessary if practitioners and organizations are to make informed decisions" (Argyris 1974, 1982, 1990, as quoted in Smith, 2001, p. 5). Connections between these characteristics of a learning organisation and democratic ELM therefore become discernible since according to Watkins and Marsick (1992, as cited in Smith, 2001), "learning organizations are characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted,

collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles" (p. 3). Employee involvement, collaboration, collective accountability and shared values are all elements of participative, democratic ELM that may take several forms such as transformational, situational, servant, shared, distributed and dispersed leadership.

Lessons may be drawn from Senge`s (1990) five core disciplines of personal mastery, mental models, team learning, shared vision and systems thinking, in building the learning organisation. According to Larsen, McInerney, Nyquist, Santos and Silsbee (1996), these disciplines corroborate the belief by OD practitioners like Argyris, Brown and Handy, "in the ability of people and organizations to change and become more effective, and that change requires open communication and empowerment of community members as well as a culture of collaboration" (cited in Larsen et al., 1996, p. 1). These characteristics of learning organisations, particularly team learning, shared vision and the participants claimed systems thinking, albeit in a rudimentary way, to exist in the school.

The participants said that the teachers were involved in preparing the SDP and PAAI, without the MC or the SB dictating to them. The minutes of MC and staff meetings confirmed the procedure for developing the SDP as starting with the teachers completing the SSE and TSE forms independently after which they drew up their own personal plans, the PAAI for their subjects, for incorporation into the Annual Plan. The significance of the completion of the SSE, TSE, PAAI and SDP is that everyone continued to learn how to develop strategies required to achieve personal and institutional growth, requirements of a learning organisation. According to Gherardi and Nicolini, (2001, as quoted in Alas & Vadi, 2006), "learning does not take place solely in the minds of individuals, but rather stems from the participation of individuals in social activities" (p. 159). The participants` accounts fell short of the main characteristics of a learning organisation in two respects: no evidence to suggest collective accountability towards change and systems thinking was articulated, as espoused by Senge (1990). These are critical characteristics that could propel an institution like Ndamino Junior Secondary School in the right direction if it was to become a real learning organisation.

5.6 Shared decision-making

Decision-making is a major leadership and management task because it is a "process by which problems are solved, disagreements become resolved, questions are answered, ambiguities are sharpened, options are limited and individuals/groups commit to matters at hand" (Petress, 2002, p. 23). For this reason proponents of democratic ELM advocate participatory or shared decision-making. Both Bauer (1992) and Lange (1993, as cited in Liontos, 1994) asserted that "the purpose of SDM is to improve school effectiveness and student learning by increasing staff commitment and ensuring that schools are more responsive to the needs of their students and community" (p. 1). A study of six American schools over a period of fifteen months by Lange (1993, as quoted in Liontos, 1994) found evidence to support SDM in democratic ELM settings:

> As autonomy was achieved, better decisions were made than would have been under centralized school management. Trust also increased as staff gained understanding of management complexities and principals learned to respect faculty judgment. (p. 2)

The data generated from the interviews, document analysis and observation strongly suggested that all stakeholders in the school participated in the decision-making process. The participants said that SDM involved all stakeholders: learners, teachers, SB and the MC. Decision-making was described as participatory because MC decisions were subjected to approval by the SB and most decisions were preceded by consultation of stakeholders. The participants claimed that important decisions such as the increment of SDF involved consultation and consensus by all stakeholders. Both MC and SB minutes confirmed that consensus was reached by committee members before decisions were made. The participants said ideas and views of others were respected and accommodated during the decision-making process.

Consultation of stakeholders before decision-making was widely reported among the participants as the way of achieving SDM on important issues such as purchasing school properties, making school rules and study sessions. While the minutes of MC and SB

meetings revealed the practice of SDM, three teachers were observed consulting and negotiating with learners before assigning them tasks. Involving stakeholders such as teachers in decision-making is imperative because, Siseho (2008, as cited in Teach, 2008) advised:

> Our managers should ensure that teachers are involved in decision making and in matters which affect them. The more the teachers are involved, the more they adopt the vision of the school/circuit/region or ministry, and they will have a sense of ownership in decisions and be geared towards achieving the set targets or goals. (p. 11)

Decision-making is a key value in democratic ELM. Ninety percent of the participants held the view that the process of taking decisions was neither a one-man show nor confined to Management, thus suggesting broader participation, involvement and consultation of stakeholders. Literature on management skills in schools suggests that democratic or SDM is desirable because the "best decision requires the input and full involvement of (the) team", which results in "commitment to the final decision (that) is crucial to the success of the plan (like the SDP)" (Jones, 2005, p. 129). It is mainly the commitment and accountability to the decision taken together and the consequent action to achieve the agreed objectives that make collective decision-making a worthy practice. As Dew (1995) advised:

> While it is certainly easier for one person to make some decisions, the quality of the decision making is often improved by involving the team. Implementation of decisions is almost always easier if everyone has an opportunity to share in the decision making. It's a basic truism that those who create tend to support. (p. 8)

Closely related to decision-making is consensus, another crucial element of democratic ELM. In this regard all stakeholders who participated in the research felt that the school was always striving to reach consensus on decisions. One class was observed arriving at a decision by consensus regarding a decision to study for examinations rather than play sport. In an ad-hoc staff meeting teachers debated on issues in order to arrive at decisions. Despite visible consultations, no shared decision-making was observed between the school and the parents during the period of observation.

SDM in democratic ELM should be accompanied by empowerment, accountability, responsibility and commitment. According to Goldring and Rallis (1993, as quoted in Keeja, 1998), "creating opportunities for shared decision making is simply not sufficient … teachers must feel empowered enough to participate in the processes of and be dedicated to the organisation" (p.1). This also entails commitment because involving people in decision-making results in them taking ownership of, becoming committed and hence accountable to the organisation. As Lashway (1996) stated, "involvement in decision-making will create ownership, commitment and a sense of empowerment, as collaboration leads to new roles and relationships" (p. 1). For these reasons, schools would do well to realise that SDM should not be taken at face value. They need to consider some important factors in the implementation of SDM, for example the following guidelines would be useful: "start small, go slowly … agree on specifics at the outset … be clear about procedures, roles and expectations … give everyone a chance to get involved … build trust and support" (Liontos, 1994, pp. 2-3). In this way, SDM could become entrenched in the school.

Despite a general picture of satisfaction, one teacher participant felt that although parents were involved in many ways in school activities, there was still room for improvement. He expected to see more effective "social organisations" such as Academic Committees, that are inclusive of parents rather than one that was comprised of teachers only, some joint fund-raising efforts and a parents`day. The idea of the participant to involve parents more in structures and activities such as the Academic Committee, fund-raising and parents` day, is consonant with Leithwood (1994)`s conceptualisation of transformational leadership as, among other characteristics, one that strives for "developing structures to foster participation in school decisions" (Bush, 2003, p. 77). The participant believed this would involve parents more in SDM.

5.7 Shared leadership

While the data from interviews revealed that the participants understood the policy on democratic ELM as sharing, distribution and dispersal of leadership tasks and roles

among all the members of staff, document analysis and observation corroborated such understanding. The inclusion of senior teachers, SB and LRC members in the MC was perceived as a sign of democratic ELM practice in the school. Inclusion is a major leadership ethic according to literature on shared leadership. Heifetz (1993, as cited in Doyle & Smith, 2001) for instance, pronounced that "leadership must be inclusive – (meaning) we all share in the process" (p. 2). The participants reported the practice of shared or participatory leadership in the school, which in terms of both servant and distributed leadership is a form of empowerment and teamwork. Literature on distributed leadership advocates that scenario. According to MacBeath (2005), such leadership is:

> Characterized by a widening of the scope of leadership to include others [staff] who may not hold any formal leadership position in the school … leadership roles are further extended to pupils. Headteacher and teachers hold in common the need to encourage pupils to exercise leadership and structures [like the LRC and training programmes] are put in place to assist pupils to develop leadership skills. (p. 364)

Constructivist leadership argued that for "teachers to consider themselves as leaders [there is a need for] building leadership capacity through broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership (which) invites teachers into the processes and actions of leadership" (Lambert, 2003, p. 421). By so doing, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001, as cited in Lambert, 2003) argued that "leadership is stretched over leaders, followers, and activities within a reciprocal interdependency" (p. 424). The fact that the principal delegated tasks to the HOD who then delegated some of his regular duties to the senior teachers, was evidence of shared leadership observed in the school.

I observed the sharing of leadership in the making of announcements by the LRC on behalf of the MC. Participation by learners and teachers in various activities including organising assemblies, learner-centred education in classrooms, discussions, teaching duties (principal and HOD) and meetings. Such practice was in line with democratic ELM where there is sharing of power and authority. According to Petress (2002) "democratic leadership occurs when power, authority, initiative is shared among members" (p. 8). Team spirit was observed in learners` coordination of activities like

sport on their own, class groups working together on certain tasks, peer coaching among the staff and two parents cooperated when they were summoned to the school regarding the behaviour of their children. The involvement of stakeholders in sharing leadership benefits the whole school in that it:

> Gives a chance for insights to emerge … the more people take on an issue or problem as theirs and involve themselves in thinking through responses; the more likely they are to act and to carry things through. They have an investment in making things happen. It is their solution, not somebody else's. (Doyle & Smith, 2001, p. 4)

In democratic ELM shared leadership can be seen as situational, emergent, distributed and dispersed throughout the organisation. Ehin (2005) confirmed that "anyone is capable of being a leader (and) depending on their talents, skills and experiences certain people are able to assume leadership roles more often than others" (p. 2). This understanding was expressed by the participants, in particular the school manager and teacher participants as they viewed such practice as giving them the opportunity to put their knowledge, skills and experience to practice.

Ehin (2005) characterised shared leadership as situational and flexible:

> Shared leadership is characterized by emergent behavior of individuals attempting to facilitate the integration of people's personal goals and aspirations with the vision of a given social group as a whole. It's a process of continuous change where different individuals … are looked to for guidance and advice when a group is faced with different internal and external circumstances. It's founded on voluntary actions intended for mutual benefits and involves no intimidation or bossing. In essence, no one gives up his or her autonomy or power in the process. (p. 5)

This view promotes a sense of sharing leadership without coercion or other constraints; hence it fits in the realm of democratic ELM. For Doyle and Smith (2001), shared leadership is democratic leadership because the approach "involves people and can foster a belief in democratic principles and processes such as self-determination and participation" (p. 3). The same researchers drew from Gastil (1997) and advised that to

develop shared or democratic leadership, there is a need to encourage "ownership, learning and sharing" by all stakeholders (Doyle & Smith, 2001, p. 4). To sum up, shared leadership should be characterised by quality interactions, working together, interdependency, communication, value for honesty and seeking a common good, in the true spirit of democratic ELM.

5.8 Teamwork

The participants` understanding of teamwork in democratic ELM revolved around collectivity, unity, cooperation and collaboration. The committees that the participants described as self-managing or autonomous may be likened with Rowley's (1997) concept of "a self-directed team (SDT) (that) is a small group of employees who have day-to-day responsibility for managing themselves and their work" (p. 82). The school seemed to be doing well on this score but the quality of the committees` management of their own affairs was not portrayed more explicitly. It is imperative for the committees to be more self-directed since research on autonomy indicated that "humans have an innate need to be autonomous, to feel a sense of control and self-governance over one's actions" (Deci and Flaste (1995, as cited in Bennis, 2008, p. 3). The idea of systems of committees that PR2 cited can be likened to collegial approaches to leadership according to which, "the decision-making process inside committees is thought to be egalitarian … the assumption is that decisions are reached by consensus or compromise rather than … the head or principal" (Bush, 2003, p. 74).

There was a true display of team spirit during cooperative and peer learning among the learners. The staff meeting was similarly characterised by a spirit of collaboration and teamwork as everybody made a mutual effort to pull in the same direction. The findings revealed the school's implementation of democratic ELM through teamwork, cooperation and collaboration among the school community. Teamwork is a fundamental tenet of democratic leadership and management in any organisation. Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics basketball team once underscored the importance of teamwork:

> We were a team of specialists, and like a team of specialists in any field, our performance depended both on individual excellence and on how well we worked together … we had to complement each other's specialties … and we all tried to figure out ways to make our combination more effective". (Senge, 2006, p. 216)

Russell's belief in teamwork was echoed by a manager participant who said that the school believed in the adage "united we stand, divided we fall". Work teams are usually non-hierarchical and as such could give high morale, more freedom and autonomy to encourage contributions from all team members in a relaxed atmosphere. Effective teams are important due to their potential for "flattening the leadership hierarchy and maximizing the leadership contributions of all members of the organization, thereby increasing productivity and morale (as) many minds are better than one" (Lindahl, 2008, pp. 1-2). Teams (or committees in the context of this school) need to be "open and inclusive, rather than rigid" as "participation by team members hinges on organizational need and the importance of the vision, mission and outcomes" (Nash, 2005, p. 2). The data generated in this research yielded evidence of a vision and mission statement in the school, but it is not clear how teams were inspired to work towards achieving these goals.

Distributed, dispersed or shared leadership and learning organisation models in democratic ELM provide useful insights into teams. Collaborative teams that are formed for specific purposes should have "fluid membership, which changes according to the task, the roles and the requisite talent" (Nash, 2005, p. 1). Participative or democratic ELM uses team members to contribute to the decision-making process in the organisation, which "not only increases job satisfaction by involving employees or team members in what's going on, but it also helps to develop people's skills" (Mind Tools, 2008, p. 2). Group decision-making could lead to positive team dynamics and improved productivity, according to Mincu and Associates (2003, p. 4). This is because team members would feel in control of their destiny and subsequently commit themselves to working hard for the well being of the organisation. The various committees established in the school could achieve these desirable effects if all stakeholders understood the benefits.

Teamwork may lead to good school performance and quality education because, in successful schools where the school community works as a team, according to Nsubuga (2008), "teamwork can enhance quality management as teams can utilize resources more efficiently and effectively, increase organizational effectiveness, improve the quality of educational programs and create better learning and working environments" (p. 25). In this view, as Steyn and Van Niekerk (2002, as quoted in Nsubuga, 2008) concur, successful teamwork may be regarded "an indispensable ingredient in the process of building successful schools" (p. 25).

However, some participants were not entirely satisfied with the reported teamwork in the school. PR1, for one, acknowledged the prevalence of team spirit in the school but would like to see more (team) effort being practised by all. To address this legitimate concern, the principal may "promote group development, teamwork, collaboration, innovation and continual growth, trust in staff and students, and caring and respect to enhance teacher efficacy" (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, p. 138). Two other participants, a senior teacher and one learner expressed similar concerns, wishing for more teamwork, cooperation, coordination and understanding among all members of the school community. The notion of teamwork in the school seemed too simplistic to constitute a thorough understanding of the concept in terms of professional specialised teams in organisations. However, it should be noted that teamwork in schools could be problematic though, since teaching is to a large extent an individual activity.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed the data collected from interviews, documents and observation and the findings of the research project. The picture that emerged from the findings of the study, in line with the research goals, can be summed up as follows: firstly, the findings revealed that participants have an understanding, although it may be limited, of what constitutes democratic leadership and management in schools; secondly, democratic ELM practices such as broader participation, communication, delegation, learning organisation, shared decision-making, shared leadership and teamwork were being realised to a certain extent in the school and thirdly, some shortfalls in the

implementation of the policy on democratic ELM were identified and suggestions for improvement made. The next chapter will summarise the main findings, highlight the limitations and potential value of the study, and make recommendations for both further research and practice.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the understanding and practice of democratic leadership and management in a rural school in Namibia and identified areas for improvement. The concluding chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the research, and its potential value, and some recommendations for practice and suggestions for future research. I also reflect on the limitations of the study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Based on my research goals, research questions and the data obtained from interviews, document analysis and observation, the main findings of this research show that the participants have an understanding of the policy on democratic leadership and management in schools as stipulated in the policy brief, *Education for all*. The picture that emerged concerning the practice of democratic leadership and management in the school may be described as one of by-and-large satisfactory implementation that could be improved for real entrenchment. With regard to the identification of areas for improvement, the findings indicate that although the participants pointed out some gaps that existed in their practice, they seemed unsure of what steps to take in order to improve the situation.

The findings revealed that the participants described their understanding of democratic leadership and management in schools in terms of respecting people's views and ideas, sharing power, forming committees and getting people to lead the committees, letting others take part in running the school, not being autocratic, delegating with authority, giving learners freedom to discuss their problems, involving teachers, the School Board and parents, wider participation, consultation, communication, teamwork and making people feel they are part of the institution by involving them in decision-making. On probing, the participants explained that such practices were necessitated by the fact that

Namibia being a democratic country required institutions like schools to exercise democratic principles that would foster good school performance. This is in line with the findings of a study on schools in Uganda, which "established that school performance and in particular students` academic excellence in secondary schools in Uganda is positively related to the democratic leadership style" (Nsubuga, 2008, p. 26).

However, the data from the interviews, documents like minutes of Staff, MC and SB meetings and from the observation of interactions in the school indicated that the participants` understanding of what constitutes democratic leadership and management was satisfactory. Although the participants confirmed the practices of communication, teamwork and learning organisation characteristics in the school, these were however, not well articulated. The participants confirmed the consultation, inclusion and participation of the teachers; learners through the LRC and parents through the SB in decision-making on issues such as establishing the mission and vision of the school, drawing the SDP, determining the SDF, negotiating study times and school uniform. On more serious matters like the appointment and transfer teachers, learners were not in any way involved while the SB participated in such issues either as observers (in teacher interviews) or as mere signatories on transfer forms. The decision on transfers actually lies with the Inspector of Education backed by Regional Office. Therefore, the involvement of the SB on such crucial matters was limited and far from satisfactory in line with both the Education Act 16 of 2001 and the policy on *Education for all*. However, this research acknowledges the complexity of such policy matters and it would perhaps be too much to ask to expect the SB and LRC to be fully involved at that level.

6.3 POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

Education policy makers, education programme implementers, school managers, school boards, teachers and learners could draw valuable lessons from this study. As stated in chapter 1, the paradigm shift from pre-independence non-democratic ELM practices to participatory democratic ELM in post-independence Namibian schools seemed not to be fully realized, especially in rural schools that are at the periphery of development and

change. The findings of my study point to the fact that although the participants showed an understanding of democratic ELM enshrined in the policy of *Education for all*; this was only implemented to a satisfactory extent, thus not quite entrenched in the school. While there is a need to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of the school community, despite many challenges, gaps have been uncovered in both the understanding and the practice of democratic ELM and these shortcomings need to be addressed. However, this finding should be understood in the context of the past colonial administrations from which Namibia and other African states have emerged, where the practice of democracy was not promoted.

The scenario that emerged from the study has implications for practice. Firstly, the findings show that it is possible to run schools even in rural Namibia in a democratic manner by involving all stakeholders in shared decision-making, shared leadership, creating work teams and empowering stakeholders by allowing them genuine and wider participation in school matters. A study on Ugandan schools, for example, found that "where leadership is shared, teamwork is valued and usually organizations in which teamwork flourishes are more effective than organizations dominated by a single individual". Nsubuga (2008, p. 25). Secondly, many of the stakeholders in the school seemed to be well sensitised on policy matters relating to democratic ELM, which shows the potential for local governance among school community. However, the findings call for a mind shift from colonial misconceptions of democratic thought as an indicator of dissent, towards a proper understanding and improved implementation of the democratic ELM practices of broader participation, communication, delegation, learning organisation, shared leadership, shared decision-making and teamwork as espoused by transformational, servant, distributed and situational leadership styles.

Lessons to be learned from this research are that more needs to be done to make participation by all stakeholders more meaningful, to make communication more focused and to use delegation to achieve true empowerment. This would make the school more of a learning organisation, to make shared leadership and participatory decision-making more real and to make teamwork more effective.

As Petress (2002) argued:

> Both management and leadership require someone who is forward looking, attentive to detail, has effective interpersonal and communication skills, and has an ability to inspire, motivate, and maintain the trust of others. Managers lacking these qualities will struggle to lead effectively unless they have organization/group members able and willing to compensate and/or to forgive a manager's missing skills. (p. 1)

School managers would do well to consider adopting, when and where possible, the leadership and management qualities espoused by Petress (2002) as quoted above and other scholars referred to in this study in order to galvanise their own practice. The democratic dispensation in the country needs to transcend all forms of leadership and management. In Namibia, where education reforms are continuing, schools are expected to be in the forefront of transmitting democratic values especially to the learners who are the future leaders of this country. As Nsubuga`s (2008) study concluded, "the ongoing educational reforms require educational leaders who can work in democratic and participative ways in order to build successful relationships to ensure effective delivery of quality education" (p. 26).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Following the findings that there are areas of concern in the way that schools understand and interpret the policy on democratic ELM as provided for in *Education for all*, the study recommends a number of strategies to address the situation. Firstly, policy makers need to realise that an important policy like this one needs to be unambiguous to all implementers. The intention of the policy on democratic ELM in schools is for school managers, teachers, parents and learners to apply it easily. The majority of parents in rural Namibia are not working class citizens who could easily understand the language used by technocrats. In the same vein, when documents are given to schools, is there any guarantee that teachers would thoroughly read and understand such policies for proper interpretation, given the heavy teaching workload most of them are carrying?

Secondly, Education managers in the Caprivi Regional Directorate should embark on a strategy to ensure a common understanding and interpretation of the policy in all schools. Such a strategy may include the training of trainers who could then cascade such training down to school level. It could not be established if any orientation on the policy was given to the various stakeholders. One of the teacher participants, who belonged to the NANTU, said that his understanding of participatory democracy came from his involvement in union affairs. Would teachers who were not in the same position be as well informed? According to Namibia. MoE (2007), "principals (themselves) have expressed a strong demand for professional development and training that would enable them to manage school affairs, lead others … develop efficient use of resources" (p. 25). One participant, SBC, similarly complained that "the Government don't want to train the School Board members; they don't want them to know their rights; we are just working with our experience" (SBC). I recommend that education administrators make an effort to help school managers genuinely move towards true democracy, rather than face value and ad-hoc implementation, as "encouraging (school) leaders to move from autocratic to democratic leadership styles is the key to creating empowerment" (Dew, 1995, p. 1).

Thirdly, there were areas of concern in the understanding and practice of democratic ELM by the MC, the SB and LRC members; this indicated that this was a school-wide trend that needed improvement. The starting point should be self-reflection and introspection by school managers/leaders. As Mind Tools (2008) advised, aspiring leaders should make an effort "to understand and adapt their own styles, so that they can improve their own leadership" (p. 1). After they themselves have demonstrated the commitment to improve their own practices, school mangers would then be in a position to inspire their colleagues and the rest of the stakeholders. Teachers, learners and parents should also be encouraged to make concrete rather than flimsy and piecemeal efforts towards a better understanding and practice of democratic ELM. As Nsubuga (2008) argued, modern education requires "new leadership approaches in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness" (p. 3). The democratic leadership styles of transformational, servant, situational and distributed, discussed in chapter 2 would be appropriate in this regard. Maicibi (2005, as cited in Nsubuga, 2008) rightly pointed out that "without a

proper leadership style, effective performance cannot be realized in schools" (p. 4). In addition, the democratic practices of broader participation, communication, delegation, learning organisation, shared leadership, shared decision-making and teamwork, discussed in chapter 4 would be enhanced.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Given the scope of this research, it is recommended that further studies be embarked on to explore the issues of democratic ELM in schools as there is still a need to broaden the understanding and interpretation of the policy of *Education for all* in order to improve its implementation. A follow-up project covering areas such as the role of regional, circuit and cluster education and school managers/leaders in the realisation of the policy would be beneficial to the region, the country and the education fraternity at large. Another potentially influential area for research would be the nature and influence of decentralisation and devolution of education power and authority at the local level.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This small-scale case study focused on one secondary school and ten participants. The research was thus limited in terms of its scope and the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. Stake (1995) cited in Bassey, 1998, p. 4) declared that a "case study seems a poor basis for generalization … (and) the real business of case study is particularisation". If more schools and participants were included, not only would more data be generated, but the scope of the study would also be broadened. However, Stake (1995, cited in Bassey, 1998, p. 4) supported the case study method by conceding that "instead of making grand generalisations, researchers (may draw) from their research conclusions in the form of assertions" that he later termed "propositional generalisations". Another counter claim could be that "the purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case" (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 448). The use of triangulation with multi-pronged data collection methods compensated for the inability to generalise the findings.

The interpretive nature of the research, coupled with the purposive selection of the school and the participants, was a further limitation as it implies a strong sense of subjectivity. There is a danger that the researcher's preconceptions might influence the selection of the sample and consequently, the findings of the study. My position as both Senior Education Officer and Acting Deputy Director at the time could have influenced the interviewees` responses and actions that I observed during my visits. This argument resonates with Yin's view of reflexivity (1994, quoted in Tellis, 1997, p. 8) where "the interviewee expresses what the interviewer wants to hear … (and) the observer's presence might cause change". However, the detailed descriptions generated by the data may help the reader to make an informed view of the conclusions.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I summarised the findings of the research, which indicate that there is evidence of understanding and practice of democratic ELM as provided for in the policy of *Education for all* in the school under study. However, there is a need to improve on this understanding and implementation especially in areas such as communication, teamwork and learning organisation characteristics that were not well articulated by the participants, as I noted in Chapters 4 and 5. The participants were unsure of the exact improvement they wanted to see in their practice. The gaps in their knowledge and practice should be viewed against the background of the colonial past where democracy was not encouraged. The chapter also explained that the positive efforts uncovered in the study confirmed that democratic ELM could be harnessed in Namibian schools including those in remote areas. I recommend that education administrators, school managers, teachers, parents and learners all need to make an effort towards improving the gaps in the understanding and practice of democratic ELM.

Finally, the fact that research findings from case studies may not be generalised together with the subjective nature of interpretive research were also cited as limitations to the study.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Robert Nalisa Mabuku is hereby given permission to conduct research with the school management, teachers, School Board members, Learner Representative Council members and class captains or any other members of the school community; for a research study he is required to do for his Master's degree. We understand that data for analysis will be collected from interviews, document analysis and observation; and that information from the participants may be used in the report. We have been assured that our school and all the respondents will be accorded anonymity and confidentiality in the report.

SIGNED BY:

1. ……………………………………….   DATE: ……………………………
PRINCIPAL

2. ………………………………………..   DATE: …………………………….
SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRPERSON

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW NO. 1 VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT (EXCERPT)

Date: 3 June 2008

Venue: Head of Department's Office; Ndamino Junior Secondary School

Participant: Principal

Start time: 10:00

Key: RM = Researcher/Interviewer; PR1 = Participant 1

RM: Good morning, sir?
PR1: Morning, sir. How are you? …

RM: … this interview is simply meant for me to … you know, learn from you, get information from you; I don't expect any wrong or right answers but rather it is your experience that I `m interested to learn about. So please feel free to express yourself … My first question to you is: Please talk about how you run your school.

PR1: … Although there are some government policies, but we are also having some provision as a school to have our policies, which should be well-understood by our stakeholders. In this line I `m referring to the school board, teachers and children, so that at least everyday children should know what is expected of them, what they have to do…

RM: Ummh! You are talking about stakeholders and eeeh … policies. Can you just elaborate on that?

PR1: … I can single out an example, for example, admission policy … through that policy you have to combine both the stakeholders which are involved, especially the school board members so that they should understand …

RM: Okay! Eeeh … I know that in a school the principal is the accounting officer. Eeeh … however, when it comes to the running of the school, how exactly does it happen?

PR1: … For example, heads of departments … senior teachers … SRC members and the teachers have some roles to play ... there are small units to which each individual within the school have to contribute …

RM: … you are talking about HODs, senior teachers, LRC and so on. Now, how exactly do they feature in the running of the school?

PR1: … Let's start with the head of department … is the second-in-command … in case of the SRC they have some roles for example sports activities.

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION SHEET

Activity	Autonomy Self-management	Communication	Consultation	Decision-making	Delegation	Participation	Shared Leadership	Teamwork
Assembly	HOD & senior teachers take charge; LRC actively organise	Information-sharing with learners by Management and/or Teacher committees	Not observed	N/A	Learners assigned tasks e.g. choir	All teachers and learners take part	Sharing of responsibilities among MC, teachers & LRC	Evident in collaboration by class groups
Classroom	Learning continues in absence of teacher (though quality may be questionable)	Learners get information from MC via teachers, class captains & LRC & vice versa: two way (top-down/bottom-up) communication	2 teachers were observed consulting learners on learning objectives; another on sport	1 class arrived at a decision on studying instead of sport by majority vote	Principal & HOD observed delegating duties to staff & learners several times a week	Majority of learners participate freely & fully in learning activities via learner-centred education	4 teachers were observed to assign leadership roles to ordinary learners & 1 to a LRC member	Teamwork prevails in all the classes; cooperative & peer learning in most of the classes; a sense of unity & oneness seems to exist in most of the classes
Outdoors & break time		Learners talk & chat among themselves; teachers also share classroom experiences	N/A	N/A	Majority of teachers observed to delegate activities to learners	Many learners observed to participate in various activities	Many learners assume leadership roles e.g. supervising watering of garden or orchard	Learners form social teams; all staff members gather for tea in one room – sense of unity
Teacher-learner interaction	2 teachers were observed urging learners to take charge of their own learning & lives	Formal & informal communication by way of instructions & information-sharing observed on 3 occasions	6 learners seen consulting teachers & HOD on organising sport activities, curriculum matters, etc	Teachers consulted learners s times regarding some responsibilities to be assigned to them	5 cases of teachers or LRC delegating activities to learners were observed	2 teachers were seen urging learners to participate in various activities e.g. gardening	2 teachers asked LRC members to take charge of managing classes while they were busy with other matters	Cooperation between staff members & learners was observed 4 times
Management	Observed to have capacity to run the school	Informs teachers, learners & parents of latest	Principal & HOD observed consulting	On one occasion HOD & principal observed	Principal & HOD seen delegating	Principal & HOD participate in teaching	Principal & HOD were observed to share	Principal & HOD appeared to be inseparable from

	with little help from Inspector & Regional Office	developments & school needs	teachers & learners on administrative issues	involving teachers in decision-making	duties to teachers & learners e.g. HOD acting as principal	duties	administrative tasks with teachers, the LRC & SB on 3 occasions	the rest of the staff e.g. tea club
Interaction with community	SB is given autonomy e.g. conduct own affairs independently	Good communication was observed between community members visiting the school & the staff learners	1 parent was observed consulting a teacher about the absenteeism of her child	No evidence	No evidence	No evidence	No evidence	Good understanding between teachers & 2 visiting parents seems to indicate cooperation & team spirit
Meetings	No evidence	Effective, open & free-flowing communication in Staff meeting.	MC, SB & LRC proposals & decisions are given to staff for input & vice versa	Debate of issues before decisions are taken	Individuals & committees are delegated tasks e.g. Ms M should take care of Grade 8 registration	All members are free to participate fully & equally in discussions	Some tasks delegated to teachers are administrative & managerial.	The cooperation prevailing in meetings points to team spirit among the staff