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The implementation of multigrade teaching in rural schools in the Keetmanshoop Education region: Leadership and Management challenges

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Leadership has received much attention in both the business world and education. My thesis explores effective educational leadership through examining the management and leadership challenges that face principals in a multi-grade school.

Schools in sparsely populated rural areas in Namibia have had to resort to multi-grade teaching to be able to be economically viable. Hard economic realities force people to move to bigger towns and cities. The constant demand for better schools, effective principals, qualified teachers and an improved service to the communities coupled with the demand for better working conditions and salaries for teachers drained the education budget even further. To keep in line with the four major policies of education namely equity, access, quality and democracy, the operation of smaller, rural multi-grade schools has become a necessity. The alternative – which is to close smaller schools and operate fewer, bigger schools at an affordable and reasonable cost - would deny rural communities access to schooling.

This thesis is a case study of the leadership and management challenges of multi-grade schooling in a single school. The goal was to understand how education managers and leaders perceived their role in making it possible for teachers and learners to cope with multi-grade teaching. I worked in the interpretive paradigm to be able to interpret the social and cultural context of a rural, multi-grade school in the Karas region. The methods included questionnaires, interviews and observation.

One of the leadership models universally considered to be available to principals of multi-grade schools is instructional leadership. My study revealed that the concept was unknown to teaching staff, although there were indications that the model had been encountered. My findings also revealed that the communication between colleges of education and the regional education department staff was very limited. One of the major issues that arose was that principals were so occupied with teaching that important issues about training/evaluation and supervision of teachers, the 'visibility' of the principal, setting and implementation of the aims and goals of the

school and regular communication with parents and community leaders were neglected. Probably the most significant finding was that head teachers are not trained in the management of a multi-grade school, hence most if not all of the head teachers run multi-grade schools like a single-graded school. The single most important problem was that the importance of multi-grade teaching had never been highlighted, particularly in light of new staffing norms, in spite of the fact that it was a phenomenon that was likely to be a permanent arrangement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

The independence of Namibia in 1990 highlighted the demand for "the redress of unequal allocation and social disadvantages" (Ministry of Education and Culture - MEC 1993:21). The four major goals of education, namely: access, equity, equality and democracy, called for the rationalisation of the eleven ethnic education authorities into one, non-racial education system. The reality of what was happening in the extreme northern parts of Namibia made me realize that Namibia was indeed open to many challenges. As an Inspector of Education in the newly created Keetmanshoop Education region I became acutely aware of how regional problems were integral to the challenges of this new nation. I realised that the Keetmanshoop Education region with its well-resourced schools is as much part of the new Namibia as the war stricken, under-resourced, Ondangwa region.

In terms of what Hoy and Miskel (1996:135) describe as an "adaptability culture" it became clear that independence required the professionals in the newly created Ministry of Education to quickly adapt to the needs of our customers, namely the Namibian children, the teachers, the parents and the nation at large. The Keetmanshoop Education region had to increase its favourable ratio of 20,9 learners per teacher which was somewhat lower than 41,7 learners per teacher in the Ondangwa East region, to a more equitable and affordable national ratio of 35 learners per teacher in the primary school. The ultimate challenge for the Karas region was to reduce the number of allocated posts for teachers so that other regions could increase theirs.

No policy has been in place to cater for the need to create a multi-grade system caused by this reduction in teacher numbers. The question of how school leadership and management might be affected by these arrangements also becomes relevant. As a

researcher one is led to ask: What type of leadership/management model could be used to meet the challenges set by the post-independent education system?

My position as an Inspector of Education meant that I would need to consider these questions and relate them to the materials that we were using to train principals. The unfortunate reality is that our lack of knowledge of the concept of multi-grade teaching made us continue with the status quo. We failed to acknowledge the peculiar nature of managing and leading multi-grade schools continuing instead with the approach explained by Stronge (1988:40) as cited by Chell (1995:5) as being typical of principals, "where only 11 % of their time relate to instructional leadership". All the other time on the job was given to issues related to the management of the school, such as the appointment of staff, meetings and disciplinary issues.

Gradually, however, in the course of my work, the reality of what was happening in multi-grade schools made me realise that "if a school is to be instructionally successful as a learning community, it will be because of the leadership of the principal" (Findley and Findley 1992 as quoted by Doyle and Rice 1992:1).

During my visits to various schools, especially the small, rural schools the principals would constantly complain about:

- The combination of grades, varying from 2-4 grades for one teacher;
- General shortage of teaching and learning materials because of the allocation criteria (you are funded according to the number of learners in the school);
- The full programme of the teaching principals;
- The concerns raised by parents about large class groups.

The complexity of the situation made me interested in the role of school leadership in addressing the issues that, it seemed to me, would be a part of the school for years to come.

No materials were available on the topic of how the leadership of multi-grade schools could meet these challenges, especially against the background that the region had no choice but to implement the policy on fairness and sameness.

The findings of my research may help to create awareness of the 'realness' of the problems that face principals of multi-grade schools. My findings may also help to sensitise both national and regional authorities to the lack or absence of those instruments needed to redress the imbalance in the school system. Staff development will obviously become a major issue and the training of teachers and principals will be revisited.

The outcome of the research could provoke further research into related issues, such as:

- The effect of a staff development programmes on staff members in a multi-grade class;
- The professional support that leadership at a multi-grade school needs to perform their duties; and
- The role of the leadership of the multi-grade school in classroom management/effective instruction/community participation.

1.2 RESEARCH GOAL

My research is an investigation of the leadership and management challenges of multi-grade teaching and learning in the Karas Region. The goal of the research is therefore to understand how education managers and leaders perceive their role in making it possible for teachers, and learners to cope with multi-grade teaching.

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research is conducted in the interpretive paradigm where I "seek to understand phenomena and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting" (Cantrell 1993:84). Following Cantrell's lead, I intend to understand and interpret activities in a multi-grade school that reflect on the leadership and

management challenges of such a setting. Bush (1995:43) ascribes leadership "to the person at the apex of the hierarchy. It is assumed that this individual sets the tone of the organization and establishes… objectives". The significance that Bush attaches to the leading person is important when the challenges of such a leader in a multi-grade school are discussed.

No policy has been in place to cater for the need to create a multi-grade system caused by the reduction in teacher numbers referred to earlier. The question could also be asked how the leadership and management were affected by these arrangements? What type of model could be used to meet the challenges set by the post independent education system? These questions afforded me the opportunity to look at ways to identify schools that could give possible answers. I chose a multi-grade school in the Keetmanshoop Education region. The school has a ratio comparable to one teacher per class/grade, with the principal being responsible for a few periods in the upper primary phase. The distinction came after independence, when teaching staff was reduced until it has now reach the stage where the principal is a full time teacher, and various grades have been combined to make up multi-grade teaching. This is also a small rural school where the community is mostly dependent on livestock farming for a livelihood.

I used the questionnaire as a selecting tool. The questionnaires were distributed to all teachers (including the principal), as I had a small, rural, multi-grade school in mind for my research. Another questionnaire was distributed to the regional education staff to discuss their perceptions of multi-grade teaching in terms of the leadership and management challenges. The response from all the questionnaires could enlighten me on the perceptions associated with multi-grade teaching and also answers were given on instructional leadership. The knowledge of regional staff as implementers of policy at regional level, their knowledge and experience of both the subject matter and the teachers, were of extreme benefit to my research.

The questionnaires were followed up with one-on-one interviews to clarify any misunderstandings or misrepresentations. The interviews of parents and community leaders were done in-depth and in the local vernacular to encourage the respondents to

share their experience about school management and leadership. I translated the data into English from Khoe Khoegowab as I transcribed the interviews. An interview was also held with a tutor from the Windhoek College of Education to give me an understanding as to how the colleges prepare future educators.

I also had an in-depth, open-ended, one-on-one interview with the principal of the Karas Primary School. Her experience as principal of a small, rural primary school, which was put in a situation where it was expected of her to teach and manage a multi-grade school at the same time, was very important to the data collection. On her request, I conducted her interview in the local vernacular (Khoe Khoegowab) to enable her to express herself clearly on the subject matter. From the interview I could also learn about the difficulties she experienced being a woman at a school where previously only men had been principals. It was important to understand her experience and behaviour in the wider social and cultural context.

All interviews were tape-recorded and the data transcribed verbatim. I then looked for patterns that could help me to establish the main themes. I also used observation as a source of data to complement my understanding of the difficulties that teachers, parents and principals complained about. This helped me to understand the teaching methodology used in the multi-grade system compared to the single-graded class. The classroom observations were video-recorded to show what was happening in the classroom in terms of teaching a multi-grade class group. Data from the questionnaires, interviews and observation were synthesized into various themes. The names of the principal, and all other respondents were withheld for ethical reasons.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

In chapter two I present an overview of the literature to gain an understanding of the issues related to multi-grade systems in the world. I focus on the historical background to education in Namibia, multi-grade teaching and I look at leadership theory, focusing on instructional leadership.

In chapter three I give an account of the research methodology that I use.

In chapter four, I present the raw data without much comment arranged in the themes that arose from the data-gathering tool, in this case questionnaires, interviews and observation of classroom teaching.

In chapter five, I try to make sense of my data in terms of the research question and the goals of my research. Findings are discussed in terms of literature.

In my last chapter, chapter six, I give a full description of my conclusions, recommendations practice and future research, and consider the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is on how leadership and management are coping with the challenge of multi-grade teaching and learning in the Karas Education Region. The main research question is: How do education managers and leaders perceive their role in facilitating multi-grade teaching? To be able to investigate the role of school leadership and management in the implementation of multi-grade teaching I need to give an overview of the following essentials in this chapter:

The historical background to the education system in Namibia: The essence of such a history will indicate how the political powers influenced the education system in such a way that some regions in Namibia were advantaged as opposed to other.

Multi-grade teaching: From the historical background it becomes clear that the policy of equity and equality shifted roles, in the sense that those that were advantaged had to share their wealth with those previously disadvantaged.

Leadership theory focusing on instructional leadership (that is leadership aimed at bringing about effective teaching and learning): The multi-grade system forced by policy on previously advantaged regions challenged the leadership of principals in such a way that the question of what type of leadership model could effect the results expected from school managers becomes important. What is unique about multi-grade schools as opposed to single graded schools are issues like the age range of learners in a given classroom, inexperienced staff, high illiteracy rate of the school parent population and the role that smaller communities expect principals to play within the community. Brewer as cited in Doyle and Rice (2002:1) believes that principals need to be instructional leaders, which he defines as "a shift away from management (working in the administrative tasks) towards leadership (working on the system)." The idea of managing the school in terms of its administration has to make way for a broader vision of building the entire community of the school.

Murdoch and Schiller of the University of Newcastle (2002) presented a paper at AARE (Australian Association for Research Education) in which they discussed the issues, challenges and concerns of teaching principals in smaller primary schools. They were concerned about the general perception that "… the principalship role in smaller primary schools is a 'scaled down' version of a full time principalship and similar leadership and management approaches apply" (Murdoch and Schiller 2002:1) This they said was done without due "…recognition of the unique challenges of teaching primary principals who have the dual roles of school management and classroom teaching responsibilities…" (Murdoch and Schiller 2002:1). They recognized the extensive research done into understanding the role(s) of the school principal in leading the school, but pointed out how little attention was given to the challenges, issues and concerns of the principals of smaller schools, especially those in the rural outskirts. Such principals are caught in what Dunning (cited in Murdoch *et al.*: 3) calls the 'slipstream syndrome" in which these principals are expected to slip into roles that were made with the "larger school contexts in mind." They also draw attention to the changing roles of principals and their ever-increasing workloads without the "provision of adequate resources and training to meet the changing nature of their role" (Murdoch and Schiller 2002:3)

It is thus understandable that my research interest in the leadership and management challenges has been a concern to many in the field of education. The absence of policy on multi-grade teaching, the basic education reform of the post independence period and the implementation of the staffing norms all contribute to the question of whether or not such principals are coping with the demands of their task. The reform has not taken into account the professional development of the principal while in-service workshops are still being held for the subjects taught in schools. The concern of Murdoch and Schiller (2002:3) about the impact of what they termed "devolutionary trends" and with which principals also have to deal with in Namibia, is shared. Principals are at a loss in the multi-grade classroom "as they found themselves pushed into more managerial and entrepreneurial roles" (Murdoch and Schiller 2002:7). The discussion later on suggests the concept of instructional

leadership as a possible answer to the frustration of the principals in multi-grade schools.

2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

As early as 1805 the missionaries established formal schooling for the indigenous people of Namibia. The main aim of the education was for the reading of the Bible and the hymnbook to be able to understand the Christian faith. Some learners were taught skills to make them labourers in the household of the colonial masters. The South African Government took over control of education in Namibia under their apartheid policy in 1949. In 1977 an Administrator-General (AG) was appointed to Namibia that took control of education. The AG had the mandate to make or repeal laws, subject to the approval of the State President of the Republic of South Africa. Several laws were passed with significant implications for the people of Namibia. The best known are the National Education Act (Act No. 13 of 1980) and the Tertiary Education Act (Act No. 13 of 1980). One of the major implications was that the participation of the local communities in their schools was restricted to advise on issues like the school fund. Another Act that determined how education was managed was AG 8 of 1980 that established eleven Education Authorities. These Authorities provided education to relevant ethnic groups from substandard A to standard 10. The low income of the respective members made it unfavourable for blacks to sustain their schools and they were dependent on the Administration for Whites for handouts. The pupil teacher ratio for Blacks reflected the uneven distribution of qualified teachers, especially in the highly populated northern areas as reflected by Cohen (1994:156-170):

The Ratios of Pupils to Qualified Teachers, 1988

Ethnic Group	Pupil/Qualified Teacher*	Overall Pupil/Teacher
Caprivian	85:1	26:1
Coloured	35:1	24:1
Kavango	306:1	30:1
Nama	61:1	22:1
Ovambo	207:1	39:1
Rehoboth Baster	36:1	22:1
White	14:1	14:1

*Standard X plus teacher training

 Source: Adapted from South West Africa Department of Economic Affairs, 1988

As *Towards education for all* (MEC 1993:21 puts it: "the policies of racial discrimination have left a legacy of differential allocation of resources to different racial groups." After independence in 1990 the pressure was on the new, post-independence government to address "… the unequal allocation and social disadvantages" (MEC 1993:21). The eleven education systems created by Proclamation AG 8 of 1980 were based on ethnicity and in the post independent era these were converted into 7 education regions under a single and unified Ministry of Education and Culture. The Keetmanshoop Education Region (mostly catering for Whites, Basters, Coloureds and Namas) in which I conducted my study had a favourable ratio of the total learners per teacher as compared to other education regions. I will compare only two post independent education regions to support the claim that the system gave differential treatment to various regions. I will thus compare the scarcely populated south (Keetmanshoop) Education region with the densely populated northern region, the Ondangwa East region that represents the home of the largest concentration of Namibians, the Ovambos. The difference in the allocation will have a major impact on the way in which the south will handle the proposed policy of equity. The annual education census of the MEC (1994) shows a ratio of 20.9 learners per teacher in the Keetmanshoop Education region as opposed to 41.7 in the Ondangwa East region. The 1998 census showed more equity: 24.3 in

Keetmanshoop 24.3 and 37.1 in Ondangwa East. This was due to the governmental intervention, and the ratio seems more acceptable, but not yet fair in terms of resource allocation. One of the major goals of education is equity and according to the MEC (1993:35-36) had to do with fairness, while equality (another of the four goals) had to do with "… sameness, making sure that some children are not assigned to smaller classes … because of their race or the region of the country where they come from."

On 8 November 2000 the agreement between the Government of the Republic of Namibia and the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU), being the sole bargaining agent for teachers, confirmed the norm of Primary Schools to be 35 learners per teacher and 30 learners per teacher in Secondary Schools to be phased in over a period of three years. In the newly established Karas Region (Keetmanshoop Education region has since April 2003 been divided into the Karas and Hardap Education Regions), the policy of fairness and sameness caught up with us and we had no choice but to seek for alternatives to bridge the gap between a discriminatory pre-independence ratio and a more "fair and equitable" ratio as was proposed by the Unions and the government. The implication of the policy was that the Keetmanshoop region had to increase the number of learners per teacher to enable the Ondangwa East region to reduce the learners per teacher. This all had to be done in a given time and within the allocated budget. Those with the low ratio obviously claimed that standards were lowered and could not understand how a teacher could be expected to teach such a large group of learners. Principals, as managers and leaders of schools, had to combine class groups as a possible alternative to deal with the new challenge. They had to start to teach more subjects, while in the past some of them did not even teach a single subject. In the smaller rural schools with less than 100 learners principals had to teach multi-grade classes in addition to their normal duties as managers of the school.

2.3 WHY MULTI-GRADE SCHOOLS?

Researchers use various terms to describe the occurrence of more than one grade in the same classroom. Terms used include multi-grade, non-graded, multi level, split grades, vertical grouping, family grouping and multi age grouping (Horsman 1997: 9).

For the purpose of this discussion we will stick to multi-grade classrooms/teaching as defined by Horsman (1997: 9): "any classroom organizational structure which includes more than one grade and includes students of various ages."

It is generally accepted that the multi-grade classroom presents more challenges than the conventional single grade classroom as this extract from one of the few available reports confirms:

> The multi-grade classroom poses a paradox … many teachers are either untrained or trained in single grade pedagogy. (Teachers) regard the multi-grade classroom as a poor relation to the better resourced single-grade classrooms found in large urban schools and staffed by trained teachers. (NWREL 2001:1).

Ian Collingwood (1991) drew specific attention to the difficulties faced by multi-grade teachers in small schools. Collingwood (1991: 2-3) found that most of the countries in the world had problems like:

> Reduced instructional time for teachers;
> Curriculum materials designed for one year group only;
> Lack of self-instructional material;
> Inadequate pre- and in-service teacher training in the specific skills that are required;
> Wide range of abilities and interest levels in one classroom;
> Exam pressure, which forces teachers to concentrate on exam classes only;
> General shortage of teaching and learning resources and,
> Too many learners are in the classroom.

Muriel Poisson wrote in the July-September 2002 IIEP (International Institute for Educational Planning) newsletter that the extensive use of multi-grade classes raises a number of challenges. Poisson (2002:10) raised four challenges to all planners and administrative levels in education:

Concern for equity or for increased returns? Her study pointed out that the creation of multi-grade classes is out of a concern for either giving children in isolated areas access to school and to obtain higher returns from the school system by increasing the pupil/teacher ratio. In the context of scarce resources, the use of multi-grade classes makes it possible to reduce the number of teachers and hence the wage bill.

What is at stake in the Namibian context not only with a wage bill of almost 88% of the entire regional budget, but the reduction of the number of teachers for the Keetmanshoop Education region as pointed out earlier. The vast distances in the south and the isolated small communities necessitate the use of a multi-grade system.

What standards should be adopted? A common definition for multi-grade classes has been agreed on as shown by the study of Poisson (2002:10): "a class with a single teacher that includes several grades." The study pointed out the importance of "…regulating the creation of multi-grade classes through the use of a few basic standards, such as the maximum and minimum number of learners enrolled." Other criteria suggested included, "the school's accessibility in all seasons to allow regular supervision, adequate classroom space" or "the teacher's ability to provide individualized instruction for the different levels" (Poisson 2002:10).

Special treatment or inclusion in the basic system? Poisson (2002:10) raised several questions that are relevant to any nation that is in a position where Namibia finds itself in terms of decisions as to what to do with the reality of the increasing pupil/teacher ratio, namely

> …whether it is appropriate to provide special treatment for multi-grade classes by: creating a unit within the ministry of education dedicated to develop such classes; formulating special legislation or regulations for them; taking specific measures in terms of facilities, teacher training and monitoring of teaching methods; and by granting bonuses to the teachers assigned to such classes.

Success: at what price? Poisson (2002:10) again raised a number of crucial questions as to the cost of providing multi-grade teaching to learners.

> … how the cost can be shared equitably between the central government, local authorities and communities. Apart from this, the fact that the student performances obtained in multigrade classes are not always satisfactory raised a number of other questions: Should the creation of multi-grade classes be regarded as a temporary or long-term measure? To what extent can clusters, the consolidation of classes from several communities, etc. serves as viable alternatives.

The same questions have been raised in Namibia and it seems as if the answers are evading the administration. What is surely known is that education is extremely expensive and needs rethinking on the part of those who write policies. A cluster system has been introduced that is still in the embryo phase, smaller community schools in the vicinity of other bigger schools have been closed and a policy of decentralisation is currently being pursued to bring the cost of education down. The introduction of multi-grade classes is one of the measures only used by principals to be able to stick to the time and subjects allowed by the curriculum. Officially multi-grade is suggested, but no policy or training has been provided.

Marland (1993:1) raised concern about the educational provisions for children in rural Australia: "Because many of the schools in rural communities are small, many of the classrooms in which rural children are educated are multi-grade classrooms." Marland is well aware that multi-grade schools are not necessarily rural schools, and may be found in urban settings either by their own choice or by necessity. Marland (1993:1), as per information of the Schools Council, 1992 states that in 1990 "…34% of Australia's 7000 schools had a student enrolment of under 100, and so were small enough to make multi-grade classrooms a necessity".

Cohen (1994: 62-98) explained that the concept of multi-grade teaching was not really new in Namibia and that the idea stemmed from the learner enrolment and the scarcity of both teachers and facilities. She confirmed that individual teachers worked with learners where they were available and wherever it was possible. As stated in my historical overview the agenda for schooling was also different, as was the case with the missionaries: "…missionary education aimed to Christianise the indigenous people" (Cohen 1994: 62-98)

The question of resources that compelled principals to introduce multi-grade as an alternative, as hinted at earlier, will always remain an issue, especially after independence. The Namibian Government raised hope with their initial allocation of 23.2% to the Education sector, but as indicated by the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) there was a decrease until it has now reached 20% in 2002/2003-budget allocation. The expenditure per learner (unit cost) dropped

significantly considering the devaluation of the Namibian Dollar and the erosion effect of inflation. The inflation rate increased from 6.2 % in 1998 to 9.3% in 2001 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2002:3). According to Wylie (1994, cited in Dalin, 1998:20) as referred to by Jaftha (2003:2) schools in poor communities have greater financial problems than others and they also lose pupils to other schools more easily. The current policy of allocation of funds according to the number of learners in the school has left two concerns, one of administration and the other of instruction.

In this regard Howley (1996:1-2) states

> ...common justifications for building larger schools and closing smaller ones were administrative and instructional. In the administrative motive it makes economic sense to build larger schools so that staff and other resources can be used effectively. On the other hand the instructional motive tends to pay greater attention to the effectiveness of education.

Yet Namibia has also been caught up in "the growing concern about quality in education" (Caldwell and Spinks 1992: 9 as cited in Jaftha 2003:1) and has already adopted strong guidelines and policies on a national level. The intended establishment of a Teachers Service Commission separate, but linked to the Public service Commission and the decentralization of functions to the regions is an example of the change of purpose. Dalin (1998:23) as cited by Jaftha (2003:4) draws attention to the fact that

> decentralization is permeated with modern management philosophies. And that this has, among other things, led to school principals having to work far more on administrative tasks than before, resulting in less time for educational leadership.

Management of schools, according to Davidoff and Lazaras (1997: 45) as stated by Jaftha (2003:6), needs to have a vision – " the vision of a school is the particular way in which it sees itself contributing in a meaningful way towards society." If one looks at the challenges of school management in this century, complicated by the politically/economically sensitive issue of resource allocation and the fact that Namibia has no policy on multi- grade teaching or that a vision must " incorporate the hopes and dreams, the needs and interests and the values and believes of every stakeholder in the school" (Sergiovanni 2001:149) as cited by Jaftha (2003:8), one

begins to see the complexity of school leadership. Marland (1993:1-2) in his paper was concerned that

> [because] a sizeable proportion of Australia's youth receive their primary education in multi-grade classrooms, one might expect that teaching in such contexts should figure prominently in programmes of pre service teacher education.

The little attention given to multi-grade teaching in Australia, as pointed out by Marland, is also a feature of the pre-service and in service teacher training in Namibia. What is it that we expect from the manager of a multi-grade school in the Karas Education Region? To be able to put the Namibian situation in the context of international experience, we need to look around us to see what is available elsewhere.

2.4 MULTI-GRADE EXPERIENCES ELSEWHERE

In the Karas Education Region the leadership and management challenges have been applicable to features of the context suggested by Veenman and Raemakers (1995:2) that " … make great demand on their teachers in terms of classroom organization and the creation of effective teaching-learning conditions for the pupils." The experiences of others have shown that multi-grade classes are a reality as can be seen in the examples given by Veenman and Raemakers (1995:2). Multi-grade groupings in the Netherlands have increased to the extent that 53% of the primary school teachers have a multi-grade class. In England and Wales 40% of the schools surveyed reported an increase in multi-grade groupings. In Canada one out of every seven classrooms are multi-grade classes. Wolf and Garcia (2000:39) concur and use various examples to support their claim that multi-grade schools "common in rural areas throughout the world. In Peru, for example, there are approximately 21,500 primary multi-grade schools, 95% of which are located in rural areas." Namibia is no exception and in the Karas Education Region most of the multi-grade schools (almost 70%) can be considered rural schools. The conclusion of Wolff and Garcia (2000:39) that multi-grade schools are not likely to disappear is a challenge for a developing nation like Namibia.

Weindling and Earley as cited by Bush and Foreman (1998:5) brought a new dimension to the discussion stating that less than 50% of heads perceived themselves to be well prepared for headship when they were first appointed. In Namibia the situation is as Bush describes it in a global context, namely that "senior professionals take up their first principalship without any structured management training" (Bush 1995:3). The Keetmanshoop Education Region has developed a training manual which places a great emphasis on office management. This includes a formal system of evaluation including a form where one can mark off issues that are important in the management of the school, like minutes of a meeting or which acts of Parliament should be in the file. It is still surprising that except for 4 years or 11 years of experience as a trained teacher (depending on your tertiary qualification) no other requirements are needed to become a principal, let alone a principal of a multi-grade school in a rural community. Experience in general terms as a teacher and formal qualifications, rather than knowledge of multi-grade teaching, are still the norms for appointment as head to multi-grade schools in Namibia. No wonder that research is needed to determine the extent to which leadership and management is challenged in a seemingly complicated world of a multi-grade principal. For that reason we will pause to take a look at the concepts of leadership and management.

2.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Bush and Foreman (1998:11) give a distinction between leadership and management where leadership is associated with values and purpose while management relates to the implementation, or the technical aspects of leadership. If one can accept that position for a moment one can agree with Bush and Foreman (1998:11) that " …organizations and leaders/managers need both these dimensions to be effective and successful." Bush and Foreman (1998:17) quote Baldridge in stating

> traditional management theories cannot be applied to educational institutions without carefully considering whether they will work well in that unique academic setting…we therefore must be extremely careful about attempts to manage or improve…education with 'modern management' techniques borrowed from business, for example.

In Namibia the state has a constitutional responsibility to give free and compulsory education to all Namibians until they reach the age of 16 years or grade 7 whichever comes first. The reality of education as a social responsibility and the cost of running it, made schools realise that parents need to contribute. The tendency to operate schools along business principles, as was done by a small rural school by starting a goat farming enterprise, has proved to be complicated by high farming costs. The same school has now opted to sell the goats and rather stick to teaching the learners and to decrease their expenditure.

Peter McInerney, in his paper at the AARE (Australian Association for Research in Education, 2001:3), looked at the changes in educational leadership as a result of devolution in the public education system. He raised a couple of questions that brought up the essence of such devolution: "…ethical and political issues about the underlying motives behind devolution, the efficacy of local school management…the very meaning of public a education system." Devolution is alive in Namibia as it is pointed out later in the chapter, and already there is concern from the local authorities whether the policy is not aimed at dumping the responsibility of running education. Demands are already made that regions take the bulk of the costs; the Karas Region demands the taxes on diamonds and fish be directly paid to them, while central government has an attitude that they belong to the nation at large. Arguments like these must be countered before devolution can really be implemented.

While in Namibia principals could in the past rely on an average ratio of fewer than 18 learners per teacher in our region, the reality of 30/35 minimum learners per teacher is now facing them. As pointed out by Hillman cited by Bush and Foreman (1998:11) "leadership can no longer be exercised on the basis of experience and natural ability alone". In the dimension in which we work "…effective leadership and management development has two contrasting dimensions; challenge and support" (Bush and Foreman 1998:16). It is clear from these statements that there is more to being a principal than is perhaps taught at tertiary institutions or in training courses. With relevance to the devolution of power and the challenges that await principals, a vision is needed based on their experience as leaders in the communities. While it is generally accepted that the primary responsibility of the school principal is school

improvement the issues raised by Bush and Foreman (1998:11) remain the frame within which it must be achieved.

2.6 PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In the Namibian context the position of the principal in terms of what he/she is expected to do is clearly defined in the existing guidelines for example in the training manual for primary school principals or "Towards Education for All". Whether or not that is what he/she should really be doing is another question, taking into account "that the quality of the head is the single most important variable in school effectiveness" (Bush and Foreman 1998:3). The Namibian principals are generally perceived to be responsible for administration and management of the school, advised by their respective school boards. In terms of the current regulations they are expected to establish a School Development Fund (SDF) from which all developments and improvements additional to those provided by state should be done. As pointed out by Bush and Foreman (1998) the role of the headmaster in the improvement of his/her school is significant. The features of a well-managed school have been researched and presented in a national report for the Department of Education and Science. Leadership features are summarised below in seven points:

> Provides excellent leadership and a clear sense of direction;
> Has a consultative, listening style; decisive and forceful but not dictatorial; is open to other people's ideas; and is easily accessible to staff.
> Motivate staff; displays enthusiasm and optimisms; is positive…expresses appreciation to staff and celebrates special achievements.
> Models professional behaviour; does not stand on ceremony and is prepared to help out; takes ultimate responsibility and thereby makes staff feel secure; supports teachers in a crisis; protects staff from political or external interference and is supported by staff.
> Is well organized; is in touch with events in the school; keeps abreast of developments but avoids 'bandwagons'; prepares staff for future development and avoids crisis management.
> Strongly supports and regularly participates in staff and management development; and especially in primary schools, has a structured annual dialogue with staff.
> Often communicates personally with pupils; is regularly seen around school and is directly involved with pupils (Bolam *et al.* in Bush and Foreman 1998: 4).

I have hinted earlier at the demands placed on all principals in terms of their responsibilities. Bolam *et al.* cited in Bush and Foreman (1998:4) describes the ideal principal that will be able to create the conditions for what can be called an almost

perfect school environment. My view is that the features are not impossible to attain, and training can assist in creating a situation where most principals will be able to satisfy the conditions. However, with the development of subject areas the simultaneous empowerment of the skills of principals was not attended to. The situation is even worse in the case of principals in the rural and isolated areas of the country. Political and external interference in post-independent Namibia is rife, and principals do not know how to handle the situation. Due to the past history of taking instructions only from the Inspector of Education and with very little sense power among communities, the involvement of both learners and communities was limited.

Clark and Clark as quoted by Bush and Foreman (1998) asked the question:

> How can an understanding of school improvement inform our conception of educational leadership and our understanding of the preparation needed for school leaders?

The question directly relates to the features of the principal, and the results of his/her performance in the improvement of the school. The personal contribution of the principal in the performance of his/her school can never be underestimated and my opinion is that where a school shows improvement you will be able to see the role of good leadership in directing and motivating the staff. The experiences of Clark and Clark as well as that of Bolam *et al.*stresses that, "it is much easier to agree on the skills, attributes, and characteristics that leaders will need to be successful in the 21st century than it is to determine how to develop it" (Bush and Foreman 1998:4). My earlier reference to the lack of simultaneous empowerment of principals is now making sense, in that all principals do not necessarily have the natural abilities as spelt out, but almost all of them can be learned. Issues like participation in staff development are reachable goals only if deliberate attempts are made to include principals to be involved in all issues pertaining to that aspect.

In this section I looked at the principal in the context of school improvement. However school improvement in the self-managing school refers equally to the institution and how it operates as to the leadership practices and expectations in the

school. I therefore look at the leadership in a school that has improved to the extent that it is seen as a self-managing school.

2.7 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A SELF-MANAGING SCHOOL

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2002:2) describes a situation well known in the Namibian context where

> Traditionally, administrators have had sole authority and responsibility for organizing their school or district and determining its priorities, while teachers and other staff have had little responsibility for the overall success of their organization.

Caldwell and Spinks as quoted by McInerney (2001:3) advanced the following view:

> a self managing school is a school in a system of education where there has been a significant and consistent decentralization to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources.

While McInerney (2001:3) agreed that local school management is an appealing concept in the eyes of school leadership, because of greater school autonomy, fewer bureaucratic controls and a choice to make your decisions at the grassroots level, the question can be asked whether or not school leaders are ready for the challenge. The challenge is more than control of your own destiny, but requires developing the organizations vision and goals, articulating and modelling core values, developing collaborative learning experiences in addition to ensuring order and safety, managing the schedule, monitoring the School Development fund but most of all actively involving all stakeholders in the process. Lashway (1997:3) sees school leaders as agents of change. He elected three models which school leadership can use to define their actions in setting the agenda for a self-managing school:

> Hierarchical (using rules, policies, and directives to govern the top down). Transformational (using moral authority to create commitment to shared ideals).

Facilitative (using teamwork to create participation in collective decision making).

Deal and Petersen cited in Lashway (1997:3) suggested that the answer as to which one of the three actions is the most suitable could be best described in a paradox, for example the "…tension between heroic leadership and empowering leadership" where a principal really took charge and turned things around (being a hero), yet the secret was to disperse decision making throughout the school (being conscious of empowerment). Surely in the Namibian context, history has it that a very strict hierarchical system has been adhered to in the spirit of the sole authority of the principal. A balance between the three models is advisable, taking into consideration that the needs of the school community are always the priority. With reference to the one-eyed kings in the isolated, rural communities the balance is even more important, while recognizing the experience of the rural communities in setting the agenda for multi-grade teaching. If the vast experience of the local community is ignored or not recognised the suggestion to involve them in decision-making may remain a political dream.

Rudd, NAESP (2001:1) [National Association of Elementary School Principals] in his address as president is quoted as saying; "Regardless of location, racial or socio-economic demographics communities demand that principals lead the instructional and academic performance in their schools". The guide continued to identify six standards that redefine instructional leadership for today's principals:

Leading schools in a way that puts student and adult learning at the centre;
Promoting the academic success of all students (by setting high expectations and high standards and organizing the school environment and school achievement);
Creating and demanding rigorous content and instruction that ensures student progress toward agreed upon academic standards;
Creating a climate of continuous learning for adults that are tied to student learning;
Using multiple sources of data as a diagnostic tool to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement; and
Actively engaging the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success (*Ibid.*).

The reference to adults in the guide offers good reading in the sense that it expects principals to be first in line – to set an example – to be lead learners and teachers. The adults in the community are also recognised as part of the development of the school. The huge literacy programmes currently running in Namibia also prove that the political will is there to involve the broader community in the democratic process. The six standards redefine the complexity of the modern role of the principal, including the academic performance of learners, the development of staff, empowerment of local communities and in the rural communities the information centre. Namibia treats the rural principal as the source of all community activities, which include being the centre of pension payments, HIV/AIDS programmes, rural health outreach programmes, drought relief programmes and many more. In redesigning his/her role the quality of the school in terms of learner performance, staff development and the involvement of the community in decision making can never be left behind. The instructional leader's role is that of shared responsibility and to my mind is the nearest that any leader in education can come to fulfilling his/her task.

Sharpe (1995) as quoted by Tsui Yee Yeung (2000:2) referred to ten qualities of leadership that he thought were appropriate for the 21st century:

> Apart from acquiring professional skills such as obtaining a high level of knowledge and expertise in management and maintaining the focus on the real purpose of the organization, leaders also need to have the qualities of caring for people and setting a personal example for subordinates. They also need to have a believe in the competence and professionalism of their staff and a moral and ethical base for leadership judgment. Sergiovanni's servant leadership, described as 'furnishing help and being of service to parents, teachers and students' (1990: 152), clearly illustrates the idea of a leaders' work for the good of others. He further believed that 'servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that serving others is important but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community' (1992: 125).

The qualities underlined by Tsui Yee Yeung (2000:2) indicate the challenges that leaders at all levels are exposed to. The human touch is as important as academic and professional qualities. It is against this background that so many of the academics refer to leadership by example, and the ability to show trust in your staff and the

community. I can only stress what Sharpe said (quoted by Tsui Yee Yeung 2000:4), "Schools are people organizations. The staff, the clients and the raw materials, if I can use that phrase, are people. The outcomes are changes in people." Tsui Yee Yeung extended the idea further with the suggestion that a principal needs to have a good understanding of people, if he/she wants to be an effective leader. My earlier suggestion that the democratic process requires understanding of the way in which society operates, and that the school is central to all activities underlines the case that a principal needs to share his/her responsibility. I agree with various writers that being an instructional leader could pave the way for reaching the many ideals and qualities of a principal especially in the rural setting. It now becomes appropriate to look more closely at what is meant by instructional leadership.

2.8 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Smith and Andrews (1989:23) view the role of an instructional leader from the eyes of an outsider to best describe the way in which others perceive what an instructional leader is:

> Providing the necessary resources so that the school's academic goals can be achieved;
> Possessing knowledge and skill in curriculum and instructional matters so that the teachers perceive their interaction with the principal leads to improved instructional practice;
> Being a skilled communicator in one on one small group and large group settings;
> Being a visionary who is out and around creating a visible presence for the staff, students, and parents at both the physical and philosophical levels concerning what the school is all about.

Perkins-Gough (2002:1) declared that a new consensus is that instructional leadership cannot be separated from education leadership in general. According to her good education leaders keep student learning at the centre of their work, no matter what task or activity they undertake. From the outset instructional leadership should be seen as more than managerial responsibilities (Doyle and Rice 2002:1). Stronge as quoted by Doyle and Rice (2002:1) said, "If principals are to heed the call from educational reformers to be the instructional leaders, it is obvious that they must take

on a dramatically different role." According to Brewer as quoted by Doyle and Rice (2002:1) it

> requires focusing on instruction; building a community of learners; sharing decision making; sustaining the basics; leveraging time; supporting ongoing professional development for all staff members; redirecting resources to support a multifaceted school plan; and creating a climate of integrity, inquiry and continuous improvement.

Brewer suggested that the role of the instructional leader be expanded to incorporate a shift away from "management" (working in the system of administrative tasks) towards "leadership" (working on the system). Findley and Findley as quoted by Doyle and Rice (2002:1) stated, and thereby underlined, that "if a school is to be instructionally successful as a learning community, it will be because of the leadership of the principal". It would be very difficult to arrange the issues raised in order of importance, but the size of a school is very important in determining the priorities. From my experience the budget of larger schools usually highlight sport and transport as the major issues, while smaller schools are more concerned about workbooks, pencils, singing and those issues that concern actual teaching. One of the probable reasons for that is the allocation per learner according to the policy of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) that gives the smaller schools a very little amount to work with. Another reason is the question of visibility that was raised where larger schools are renowned for their good rugby teams or soccer teams. The Regional Office, as pointed out in the beginning, puts great emphasis on the administration of the school and thus principals are more concerned about bureaucracy and the image of the school than their interaction with the community.

To answer the question on what the role of the principal is, Kouzes and Posner as quoted in Doyle and Rice (2002:1) found five common traits among successful leaders; the leaders were at their best when they:

Challenged the process,
Inspired a shared vision,
Enabled others to act,
Modelled the way, and
Encouraged the heart.

Kouzes and Posner (1990:2) add that these traits are "available to anyone who wants to accept the leadership challenge." Stronge in Doyle and Rice (2002:32) reported that principals performed a lot of tasks in a given day but "only 11% relate to instructional leadership", even after they had been through several training sessions. Some of the tasks have to do with allocation of resources, use of school buildings, issues of discipline among learners and personnel and school development fund issues. Administration plays such a vital role in Namibian education that I agree that very little time is being devoted by principals to the actual teaching and learning situation. This is a challenge for the future.

Smylie and Conyers in Chell (1995:12-13) believe that "teaching has become a 'complex, dynamic, interactive, intellectual activity…(not a practice that can be) prescribed or standardized'." They further suggest that it is necessary for teachers to have authority to make instructional decisions, to be able to deal with the ever-changing environment in which their students find themselves.

> They are the instructional experts. Therefore the basis for school leadership must include the teachers (and parents), as well as the principal, in the role of problem finding and problem identification, a process currently referred to as transformational leadership. Principals, then become the leaders of leaders: those who encourage and develop instructional leadership in teachers (*Ibid.*).

This forms the essence of a shared instructional leadership and moves away from the centrally imposed personal views of the principal. In my own experience the emphasis on collaborative leadership can never be underestimated. Principals cannot do it alone; they will need the input of all stakeholders. The problems that are connected with the smaller, multi-grade schools must be seen against the background of how the small number of teachers and the isolated community contribute towards the effective running of the school.

Blase and Blase (1999:1) in their discussion of effective instructional leadership drew on the their research of teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. They described four broad areas that they thought described modern instructional leadership:

First, the prescriptive model is seen as one of the first models that clearly explain how an instructional leader must be able to give direction to all his\her staff, based on the democratic principles. Staff development and curriculum development are seen as a process where information and training is shared on an equal basis. The bottom-line is that all action must be geared towards participation in the quest to benefit the learners and by implication the school as a whole. If teachers and staff members are allowed to grow in their understanding of what is happening in the school the model explains that the result will be beneficial in the development of the natural curiosity and ability of each learner.

Second, Blase and Blase (1999:2) quote various experts on the relation between the teacher and the principal. Blase and Blase (1999:2) are of the opinion that regular meetings and interaction between the principal and the teacher could open up the doors to positively influence the learning in the class or the process whereby the performance of the learners are not only evaluated by closely monitored.

Third, Blase and Blase (1999:2) discuss one of the broad areas that they view as important, namely, "the direct effects of principal behaviour on teachers and classroom instruction." To that end they also relied on a synthesis made by Sheppard (1996) that supported the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the behaviour of the principal.

The last area described by Blase and Blase (1999:2) is the "direct and indirect effects on student achievement." This area looks at the effectiveness of the school in terms of the leadership that is being provided by the principal. Characteristics that are being considered have to do with the participation of staff members in the process and how the principal shares decision making with the staff.

The research of Blase and Blase (1999) again underlined the human touch that was referred to earlier, that the principal of a school should be able understand "the meanings human beings construct in their social settings" (Blase and Blase, 1999:2). It is thus important that principals in the smaller, rural schools acknowledge the importance of the experience of his/her stakeholders. Education in a multi-grade

setting is doomed for failure if the parents, teachers and the community at large are not invited to make a contribution to the school that I earlier referred to as the centre of all activities. Setting up a structure to support the principal to do just that is the focus of the next section.

2.9 STRUCTURAL SUPPORT

Given the traits and other guides attached to educational leaders, such obviously need a structure to "delegate functional and operational decisions to the location closest to task performance" (Doyle and Rice 2002:2). Doyle and Rice (2002:2) suggested that to be successful, a climate of mutual trust and respect among all stakeholders and members is a prerequisite "that supports delegation, authority and accountability." Doyle and Rice (2002:2) contemplated that all barriers and/or obstacles that prevent delegation should first be dealt with to create an atmosphere of trust. Leadership, free from bureaucratic tasks, they argue, leads to the

> inclusion of all stakeholders as part of the team- in such a way that all stakeholders understand how the organization operates, exclusiveness as special talents and unique contributions are recognized; intimacy in the sense of personal appreciation, communication, respect and dignity; clarity of roles; responsibility and accountability in the delegation of decision making; and encouragement of collaboration, co- operation and team learning (*Ibid.*).

The role of the leader as pointed out earlier will not only be to set the example as a role model and mentor, but also to be able to accept the many challenges that will eventually make a team. The role will be met with resistance in some quarters and in some cases with scepticism, but the truthfulness of the leader can overcome this hurdle. Some of the aspects will not appear in the job description of the principal, but require "working tirelessly in the system" (Doyle and Rice 2002:2). Boundaries created by the legislation and rules will be a challenge to the principal to "embrace leadership of the schools' primary aim and purpose" (Doyle and Rice 2002:2). It is a challenge to any leader to break down the barriers caused by the status, rank and appointment without causing chaos or uncertainty as to the direction of the organization. Senge *et al.* as quoted by Doyle and Rice (2002:2) stated,

People who understand each other intimately waste less effort. They don't have to undo mistakes provoked by inaccurate second guessing…The quality of decisions increases, due to truth telling…and commitment to common purpose.

Doyle and Rice (2002:4) concluded by stating that for an instructional leader to reach "…excellence in learning", it takes more than a strong principal with concrete ideas and technical expertise. It requires

a redefinition of the role of principal that is based in a model of instructional leadership that removes the barriers to leadership by eliminating bureaucratic structures, reinventing relationships, and developing a strategic time horizon (*Ibid.*).

In Namibia the bureaucratic system inherited from the colonial past allowed no democratic participation, hence the challenge is on the current leadership to rid themselves of the attitude of being the sole and authentic authority of the school. It is easier said than done, but remains a real challenge in a democratic system. In the multi-grade school the question of respect and trust becomes even more important. It cannot be expected of a principal of a multi-grade school to personally deal with all the issues already raised and take care of the many daily challenges that come up as the day goes by. The only way to survive is to create a spirit of trust and shared responsibility among all stakeholders.

The Kentucky Department of Education KDE (2002:3) promulgated the Effective Instructional Leadership Act, which underlines the importance of a clear legal definition of what an instructional leader is. The Act refers to the trainer, the participant and the requirements of the training programmes. The Act requires all instructional leaders (clearly defined as superintendents, principals and directors) to participate in leadership training over a two-year cycle. Such training will be for 42 hours over the cycle and the superintendent must approve the training, inclusive of the programme.

The content of the programmes must consist of specific competencies and must have applicability for improving the effectiveness of the instructional leader. The needs must be identified through the following procedures: personnel evaluation, individual

growth plan, the district plan for leadership development or the self-assessment of the instructional leader. The cycle intends to "…assist local educators as they strive to improve the quality and effectiveness of their leadership skills and to assist districts as they work to build leadership capacity …" (KDE 2002:3).

The purpose of the Act (KDE 2002:5) is to encourage and require the maintenance and development of effective instructional leadership in the public schools, and to recognize that principals with the assistance of assistant principals, supervisors of instruction have the primary responsibility for instructional leadership in the schools to which they are assigned.

Instructional leaders in their context have also been clearly defined according to their position in the district or school. The ultimate goal of the development of the skills of an instructional leader is to ensure the success of all children within their school district. District personnel and independent providers, like universities, colleges, private companies and individuals are encouraged through the existing structures, "…to develop leadership programmes to meet the unique leadership needs…that is both systemic and long term" (KDE 2002:5).

The focus of the programme should centre on selections from the following topics:
    Making instructional decisions that support teaching and learning;
    Establishing organizational direction;
    Developing and supporting high performance expectations;
    Creating a learning culture; and,
    Developing leadership capacity (KDE 2002:5).

What is clear from the Kentucky (KDE 2002:5-6) experience is that leadership development should not be taken for granted, but needs a clear and structured plan that will lead to student success. One of the parameters used is therefore that any programme must recognize "…that leadership development, improving instruction, professional development and school improvement in general are viewed as a loosely connected and evolving set of activities held together by the common focus of instructional improvement. Instructional improvement includes all aspects of improving student performance connected to good instruction…" If the challenge is there to ensure student or learner success a leader should be able to identify his/her

needs to ultimately improve the school as a whole through instructional leadership. Neither in the past nor in the current structure has leadership been described or prescribed; Namibia has always been silent on their expectations of a leader. It is thus no wonder that priority has been given to teacher development in terms of subject or curriculum content and that the principal as the focal point of the school has been left behind. It will be justified to point out that the salary structure of the current principals recognises the important role they play. I am of the opinion that any model for future instructional development programmes must include a legal definition with parameters that fits the Namibian expectation of their principals. A couple of the important parameters included in the programme for Kentucky (KDE 2002:6) must be of importance for Namibia:

There is no prescribed plan (one size fits all).
Leadership development takes time.
Programmes should be developed to support leadership competencies…
Records of programme delivery …must be maintained.

A model will now be discussed taking into account the Kentucky examples.

2.10 MODEL FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The model I now discuss requires "eliminating bureaucratic structures, reinventing relationships, and developing a strategic time horizon" (Doyle and Rice; 2002:4).

Instructional leaders must be motivated towards improving learning outcomes and learning excellence.
The role, responsibility, and accountability of the instructional leader require clarity and focus.
The organizational structure and characteristics must support the role of the instructional leader.
Successful relationships require inclusiveness, exclusiveness, intimacy, clarity of roles and encouragement.
The time horizon requires the capacity to think, plan, and implement strategies that go beyond the day-to-day routine of existing procedures.

To be successful principals need the opportunity to think strategically and to plan. The 'balancing processes and balancing act 'should be engineered to support innovation, change, and growth towards learning excellence. Success needs to be defined in terms of leadership achieving organizational purpose rather than clerical competence.

The context of the model by Doyle and Rice (2002) is agreeable as long as it takes into account that smaller schools are not a copy of the larger schools. Leadership should be able to accept the general conditions in the isolated rural communities. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP 2001: 1) deal with some of the features of rural schools in addition to what was discussed earlier:

Rural schools do more with less: The main course that the NAESP identified is the disadvantage that rural schools have with regard to size and geography. Funds are awarded on the basis of the number of students and fail to satisfy the same needs that were applied for. Secondly the rural school do much more than what their primary function dictates, that of educating the children. Lastly they are often the single employer in the community and therefore "serves as the social, recreational and cultural foundation…" (NAESP 2001:1).

Rural educators play multiple roles: The rural educator (please note that this includes the principal) endures "Lack of access to professional development opportunities; professional isolation; preparation for multiple subjects and grade levels and multiple extracurricular duties" (NAESP 2001:1). Despite all theses issues they are expected to deliver the quality of education and for principals to run their schools effectively.

2.11 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

Edmonds as quoted by Heneveld and Craig (1996:10) defined a list of characteristics of effective schools that effective school researchers commonly used:

Strong leadership of the principal;
Emphasis on mastery of basic skills;
A clean and orderly school environment;

High teacher expectations of student performance; and
Frequent assessments of student progress.

Rizvi as quoted by McInerney (2001:5-6) advocates a totally different angle to the view, suggesting that in these changing times we are moving "away from a social democratic view of devolution to approaches incorporating managerially and market-driven responses." McInerney (2001:6) further states that the central approach was "the application of a corporate managerially ideology…that efficient management can solve any problems [and] practices which are appropriate for the conduct of private sector enterprises can also be applied to public sector services."

Also given what Heneveld and Craig (1996:1-2) has said about larger schools being an economically viable option for the effectiveness of education it makes sense to ask how multi-grade schools could remain pedagogically challenging. Kennedy as quoted by Heneveld and Craig (1996:1-2) was of the opinion that "if there are twenty or thirty children and an efficient teacher, we have the essential factors of a good school." Given the view of McIrney, the essence of the question is about the availability of resources, and how the school can sell itself best to the market. The reality of the Namibian education scenario is that resources are scarce and it is expected from schools to generate enough funds to support some of the programmes offered. The school leadership needs to answer the questions on the marketability of their products, being the learners. In doing that they need to take note of Baldridge's warning referred to earlier about using methods of the private sector unconditionally in the public sector. After all a school is not a business and financial gain at all costs in terms of profit making is not its sole goal.

The question of an efficient teacher also comes into play and can be best described according to the 6 key instructional dimensions that such a teacher must adhere to as identified by Miller (1991: 2-3):

Classroom organization;
Classroom management and discipline;
Instructional organization and curriculum (also the effective us of time);
Instructional delivery and grouping;
Self-directed learning;
Peer tutoring.

However, for a school to be good/effective Smith and Andrews (1989:2) suggested, "we use our professional knowledge and skills to create conditions in which each child can grow to his or her full potential and all children are given equal opportunity to be successful in our society." They considered the creation of a quality workplace for teachers and the increase of opportunity for quality teaching in each classroom as fundamental to what is to be considered a good school. A paper by Saunders in the World Bank report (2000:2) discussed effective schools and suggested that "each society has its own and probably more than one interpretation of educational goods, so that a good school in rural Africa may look very different from a good school in Uzbekistan." Riley as quoted by Lesley in a World Bank report (2002:2) hinted that how schools develop remains a key political question for stakeholders to address. Her remark was made in the context of her involvement with the World Bank Education division that has input in various countries all over the world. I will now shift to the various characteristics and behaviours of instructional leaders, starting with what a good or effective leader is in line with the previous question of what an effective or good school is.

2.12 WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS?

School effectiveness has an element that requires change, but also refers to a school's attempt to "implement an innovation with the ultimate aim of producing positively valuable changes in student learning outcomes, in teachers' skills and attitudes and in institutional functioning" (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation as quoted by Heneveld and Craig 1996:13). The strength of such an attempt lies with the quality of the leadership, and their effectiveness in implementing it.

Heneveld and Craig (1996:37) highlighted their own perceptions of what they consider as the qualities of an effective principal:

> …effective school heads are highly visible and good communicators with
> people in the school and with their communities. They see that the school has
> the resources it needs to function successfully, and they have high academic

expectations that are reflected in their attention to coordinating the instructional process in the school.

Ruthford quoted in Smith and Andrews (1989:7) noted four features of effective principals:

(They) have clear, informed visions of what they want their schools to become - visions that focus on students and their needs;
Translate their visions into goals;
Continuously monitor progress, and
Intervene in a supportive or corrective manner.

In their research Smith and Andrews (1989:9-20) organized the general description of an effective principal into four broad areas that point to the interaction between the principal and the teacher:

1.The principal as resource provider:

"The principal marshals personnel, buildings, district, and community resources to achieve the vision and goals of the school. Personnel are assigned with careful consideration of their strength in content and personal skills" (*Ibid.*). Smith and Andrews (1989:11) quoted Sergiovanni who noted," excellent schools have a clear sense of purpose and structure, yet… a great deal of freedom is allowed for staff and students to determine how the purpose is to be realized."

2. The principal as instructional resource:

According to Smith and Andrews (1989:12), " The most obvious role of the principal as an instructional resource is to facilitate good teaching… the principal must stay abreast of new developments… maintain a personal development program."
According to Gauthier in Smith and Andrews (1989:13) "every school must believe that all children can learn and that all teachers and administrators can help them."

3. The principal as communicator:

The vision of the school or the organization needs to be communicated to every one of the stakeholders. Smith and Andrews (1989:15) explains that the principal must be able to show that, "he/she has a firm understanding of the purpose of schooling and can translate that meaning into programs and activities within the school." Smith and Andrews (1989:15) further argue that, "the principal has mastered confrontation and active listening skills…" They further argue that effective communication requires a "commitment…in establishing school goals, together with the staff, parents and students."

4. The principal as visible presence:

Without being disruptive or isolated from his/her office it makes common sense that a principal needs to be present in the school to be able to know what is going on in the school. Smith and Andrews (1989:18-19) go further by stating," As a visible presence, the principal interacts with staff and students… as the keeper of the vision…that reinforces school values." Again for teachers to perform, the principal should set an example of hard work and dedication not only to the task but the vision and goals of the school. He/she according to Smith and Andrews (1989:19), "must be regularly seen in and about the building, and actively participate in school development activities."

Let us very briefly look at the support needed for a principal in a multi-grade school to be able to meet this requirement of being an instructional leader or an effective principal.

2.13 SUPPORT/ASSISTANCE TO THE PRINCIPAL

The regional and local authorities need to provide the necessary resources to ensure academic goals are met. Supervision activities should be built on the understanding that training and direction need to be given before evaluation can be done with the aim to establish assistance in line with the needs of the staff member. Smith and Andrews (1989:40-41) summed up a few basic assumptions that are key to supervision both for the principal and his/her supervisor:

- The goal of clinical supervision is the improvement of instruction.

- Process and product (products, outcomes and results included) must be given attention.

- Professionals must be involved in their own evaluation.

- Clear expectations and standards are essential for the improvement of the principal's performance as they are for student learning.

Supervision is the overarching set of behaviours that characterize the supervisor – the principal relationship; evaluation is the highest level of cognition, and is essential to professional development.

As pointed out by Bracato (1990:4) as cited by Jaftha (2003:24) "To suddenly reverse the trend from accepting mandates for direction to determining direction of the school is a total reversal of roles…this produces a change in the status quo that can produce a great deal of confusion, anxiety and mistrust". Hopkins *et al.* (1994:15) as referred to by Jaftha (2003:24) pointed out that capacity building by central authorities is needed for staff members and parents to meet their obligation. Dalin (1998:15) as cited by Jaftha on the same page, concurs that intensive training is needed. We need to heed the sound warning by Bracato (1990:25) as highlighted by Jaftha (2003:25) that "…a once off training will doom the process to failure." The situation calls for ongoing training, and it is to be accompanied with conflict resolution procedures to deal with conflicts that will arise from time to time." Hopkins *et al.* (1994:15) are of the opinion that any support for the process at a school must take into account the needs of those involved. (Bracato, Dalin and Hopkins cited in Jaftha 2003: 24-25). The bottom line of all this is that in Namibia the function of supervisors to do policing must be replaced with a partnership that involves those that are supervised and those who supervise. For principals to be effective the system must be supportive in terms of training and ongoing assistance. The issue that was raised of multi-grade school principals starving for information and in-service training programmes for development must be addressed properly, heeding the warning that wherever a school is situated the aim is the same, namely to teach.

What is out there in Namibia in terms of instructional leadership in multi-grade schools?

2.14 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN MULTI-GRADE SCHOOLS IN THE KARAS REGION (NAMIBIA)

In terms of current national policies and conditions I can safely say that no distinction is currently made between single graded and multi-graded schools. In the BETD programme or in the manual used for the training of Primary School Principal no reference is made to multi-grade schools. However within the national and regional context all are keenly aware of the existence and importance of multi-grade schools. In Namibia the characteristics of multi-grade classes are more or less the following:

- More than one grade in the same classroom, usually two but in some cases three grades;
- Teachers are not bound to the same phase (a lower primary teacher might be teaching needlework to girls in the senior primary phase, while a colleague of hers/his teaches language to the lower primary class);
- Different curricula for each grade, and subsequently another set of evaluation/assessment criteria will apply;
- Usually an un/under qualified teacher in front of the class, especially in rural areas where mother tongue teaching is a major problem.

In a survey conducted by the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) the Keetmanshoop Education region gave a 3.92 score out of a possible 4 to multi-grade teaching as part of the principal's greatest needs. In a policy document prepared by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (Namibia 2003: 1-3) the transfer of political administrative, legislative, financial and planning authority from the centre to regional and local authority councils has been suggested. Such decentralization will take place over 3 stages namely:

Decentralization (Resources to be placed in the region, but responsibility remain at central level);
Delegation (Responsibility, accountability, and decision making to be given to the region.);

Devolution (Full ownership of service is transferred to the region).

The document further states that capacity building (including human resource development, infra structure needs, financial management and planning) will be one of the key critical elements for successful decentralization (Namibia 2003: 1-3).

After 11 years of independence, Act 16 of 2001 (referred to as the Education Act} saw the light. The Act confirms the transfer of the powers to the 13 political regions and consequently to schools. With the current structure of elected school boards (with the parents' component as the majority and the principal as a member) the community is now actively and legally involved in the governance of the school. They will have such functions as to recommend transfer of teachers, appointments, promotions, supervision of teachers/learners, control of the school's assets and determining the code of conduct for learners. This policy is in agreement with the observation by Ngcongo and Chetty's (2000:72) as cited by Jaftha (2003:26):

> Successful outcomes or organizational goals… are no longer the sole responsibility of the school managers per se, but become the joint responsibility of every individual who has an interest in the educational objectives, processes and outcomes of the school.

This notion featured strongly in an earlier policy document of the Ministry of Education (1993:7):

> …our commitments to education for all insists that we all- learners, educators, the community at large- share the responsibility for enabling learners to be successful…as educators we must hold ourselves accountable and work to improve our teaching.

The challenge for principals is to ensure that,

> a democratic education system is organized around broad participation in decision making and the clear accountability of those who are our leaders…teachers must be active creators and managers of the learning environment and not its masters or caretakers (*Ibid.*).

As pointed out by Beckmann and Blum (2000) and also stressed by Potgieter (1997) and Visser (1997) and referred to by Jaftha (2003:26), final authority over

management decisions lies with the principal. However, "…we will surely create frustration, not cooperation, if we expect our citizens to contribute their funds but not their ideas…" (MEC 1993:166).

The MEC currently runs several in-service training workshops to upgrade teachers. Advisory teachers have been appointed in the region to act as subject specialists that will be responsible for advice to, and upgrading of teachers. More and more it will be expected from the region and the schools to invite the community and some external support to assist with their programmes.

The goals for education, culture and training are basically the national goals set for the nation namely: equity, justice, democratic participation, and respect for human dignity. Building on those basic national goals are the four major goals of education: equity, quality, access and democracy (MEC 1993:32).

While all are called upon to work towards these goals and to plan as a matter of choice, they are clearly reminded that the resources are not unlimited: "To use these resources well, we must decide what is most important to us and than focus our attention, our creativity and our energy there" (MEC 1993:141).

In an environment that has dramatically changed since 2000, the educational goal remains to have an effective and efficient school system in place, with the instructional leader to work towards that goal. In this regard the SSSTA Research Centre (1995:5) stated in their report that there is no doubt that the principal is the focal point of a school "…who affects the quality of the individual teacher contribution, the height of student achievement, and the degree of efficiency in school functioning." Hoy and Miskel (1996:135) refer to an adaptability culture, "that supports the capacity of the organization to monitor the environment and respond quickly to the needs of customers or clients."

Real challenges are awaiting principals especially in a multi-grade school as also suggested by Findley and Findley (in Doyle and Rice 1992:1): "If a school is to be instructionally successful as a learning community, it will be because of the

leadership of the principal." The model earlier discussed and suggested as a possible way to introduce instructional leadership in Namibian schools, but with due consideration of the real differences between multi-grade schools and the larger, better resourced urban schools, struck me as a way to address the leadership challenges faced by principals of multi-grade schools. The preparation of the principal, community, teachers and the learners will only be a viable option if the warning is heeded that continuous support is needed.

Multi-grade schools offer challenges, particularly in Namibia where management has not been regarded as a priority. While small schools might not be the choice of most parents, they are a reality in the education system that should be able to maximise the potential of all learners for the benefit of all in Namibia.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Walker (1985:45) restricts the use of the concept of methodology to "the logic of methods". He described the term method as the "research recipe" and used technique to refer to "the detailed practice of these strategies". Lincoln and Guba (1988) as quoted by Cantrell (1993:86) made a stronger distinction by calling the method a hammer, "but using it in the service of carpentry is an instance of methodology". The methodology can, therefore be seen as the guiding principle for the researcher to find out something "new and original" (Neuman 1997:2).

Certain philosophical assumptions guide the way and direct the thinking and action as the researcher looks at the world (Neuman 1997:62). Cantrell (1993:83) distinguishes between various paradigms to look at the nature of reality. A paradigm can be broadly described as a way of looking at the world, but my research interest lies in the interpretive paradigm shift and therefore I will discuss the underlying assumptions and beliefs about it.

> Purpose of research. Understand and interpret daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meanings people give to the phenomena.
> Nature of reality? (Ontology). Multiple.
> Nature of knowledge (Epistemology). Events are understood through interpretation and interaction with the social context.
> Relationship between knower and the known is interrelated.
> Role of values in research is value bounded. (Cantrell 1993: 83)

Neuman (1997:7) distinguished three paradigms: Positivism, Interpretivism and Emancipatory research.

My study will be conducted within the interpretive paradigm where I "seek to understand phenomena and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context

of the natural setting" (Cantrell 1993:84). Phenomena in this instance refer to the role players' perception and experience of leadership and management challenges within the context of a multi-grade system in particular as it pertains to rural, isolated communities in the Karas region.

3.2 INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH

The basic philosophy of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. In the context of my study I will "attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt cited in Neuman 1997:11).

While positivism is the oldest and most widely used approach, the interpretive mode has gained in appeal for those in education. According to Neuman (1997:68) positivism has an instrumental as opposed to a practical orientation of the interpretive approach. It has to do with the way in which ordinary people manage their practical affairs or how they get things done in their everyday life. Neuman (1997:68) explains:

> In general the interpretive approach is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds.

We can arrive at the assumption that Neuman in this instance confirms that the perceptions and understandings of the key players can be observed through their daily actions. These actions will also put into perspective the challenges faced by key players in a multi-grade setting, as we observe them.

My goal is to understand the social life and how the people construct or develop meaning in their natural setting. To be able to do this a researcher needs to "know a particular social setting and to see it from the point of view of those in it" (Neuman 1997:69). A warning raised by Neuman (1997:69) is worthwhile to note, namely that interpretive research investigates "meaningful social action, not just the external or

observable behaviour of people." It is also important that any social action must be within the context of those who share the meaning system. This meaning system is a direct reference to our interpretation of a given situation without recognition of those who are in the situation every day, and are supposed to know the situation better.

Social life according to Neuman (1997:69)

> exists as people experience it and give it meaning. It is fluid and fragile. People maintain it by interacting with others in ongoing processes of communication and negotiation. They operate on the basis of untested assumptions and take for granted knowledge about people and events around them.

The essence of my research lies in grasping and understanding such social interaction. This is why I opted to observe the principal for a whole day, and allow her to reflect on her experience of what it is like to be a principal of a multi-grade school. Not only was it important to have her understanding of what she considered as her leadership and management challenges, but also others' understanding of these phenomena. The combination of such observations gave meaning and understanding to the researcher of what the social life is all about in terms of their understanding and the way in which it gave meaning to their environment. This is in line with Neuman's (1997:69) description of social reality as being "based on people's definition of it". Key questions for the interpretive research are:

- How do people experience the world?
- Do they create and share meaning? (Neuman 1997:70)

It is also of importance to understand common sense in the context that "it contains the meaning that people use when they engage in routine social interactions" (*Ibid.*). The social reality of others will reveal "the meanings, values, interpretive schemes, and rules of living used by people in their daily lives" (Neuman 1997:71)

Neuman (1997:71) explained in a comparative way that positivists evaluate a theory by using set procedures, whereas for an interpretive researcher however, a theory is true if it makes sense to those being studied and if it allows others to understand deeply or enter the reality of those being studied.

As regards good evidence, Neuman (1997:72) suggests that

> evidence in positivism is observable, precise, and independent of theory and
> values. Interpretive research sees the unique features of specific contexts and
> meanings as essential to understand social meaning.

In conclusion to my examination of interpretive research, Neuman (1997:73) states
"that interpretive research sees values and meaning infused everywhere in
everything." The goal is to understand how those in the world of education
experience the multi-grade school system and how their experience relates to the
leadership and management associated with such a school system. To be able to do
that the perceptions and understandings of a variety of persons must be sought and
examined in the context of their natural setting. This will eventually reveal whether or
not there is a separate challenge to the leadership of a multi-grade school system as
opposed to single graded school system. Although value neutrality expects a
"separation of facts from value-based concepts" as hinted at by Neuman (1997:470)
my research will include cultural values, which is the context in which the small, rural
and isolated community operates. Such cultural values need to be supported by facts
based on the reality that can be observed in the natural setting. Knowledge of the
local norms and traditions will best assist in the understanding of reality. Our
personal opinion and understanding of the reality cannot be under estimated, but it
must be within the context of the natural setting. The context and my personal
knowledge of the community will make it difficult for me not to be biased. The
challenge is to be as objective as possible and to rely on my local knowledge to
understand the challenge of leadership and management in a multi-grade setting.

Guba and Lincoln and Patton as quoted by Cantrell (1993:87) state that the
interpretive researcher mostly uses qualitative methods though not exclusively. The
following presents an outline of how I employed a qualitative research method.

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Judith Preissle (2002:1) described qualitative research as:

a loosely defined category of research designs or models, all of which elicit verbal, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory data in the form of descriptive narratives like field notes, recordings, or other transcriptions form audio- and video tapes and other written records and pictures or films.

The term qualitative research according to Cantrell (1993:87) "is used synonymously for a number of research approaches associated with interpretive and critical science perspectives". These include for example the case study that I will deal with later in the text. In qualitative research we are concerned "with how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how they make sense of their milieu through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, etc." (Berg, 1998:7 as quoted by Jaftha (2003:44) in his research methodology. It is clear that reference is made here to the culture of the people you observe, their beliefs, norms and values. If culture is about a way of living, it is an important instrument to measure the extent to which it influences the perceptions and understandings of the key players that are observed. Qualitative research as pointed out in my discussion of interpretive research is about the actions of those researched and the sense they make out of their context. Wamahui and Karugu (in Jaftha 2003: 45) argue that

> Educational researchers adopting [the qualitative] paradigm attempt to produce data that is holistic, contextual, descriptive-in-depth data that is rich in detail. They are concerned with the inner meanings of social actions rather than just their outward form. They are also interested in describing processes instead of simply the outcome or end results. In order to do this, qualitative researchers collect data from the natural setting, using themselves as key research instruments. Doing the qualitative method we need to be conscious about the content.

In the context of this quotation it is thus not only essential to look at the operations of school leadership, but how it is perceived by those who are key in the social context of the multi-grade school. What is happening at the school between staff members, learners and the principal is as important as the relation between the school management and the community at large. I will look at the instruments legal or informal that are used to drive the operations of the school and how management uses it to operate the school. The collection of data must therefore take place with due consideration of the social and cultural context within which such operations take

place. It is thus important to look at culture as a concept that is essential to the context of a rural school.

Culture according to Morgan as quoted by Bush (1995:136) must therefore be understood as

> an active, living phenomenon through which people create and recreate the worlds in which they live … we must root our understanding of organization in the processes that produce systems of shared meaning.

The issue raised implies the essence of leadership that I will discuss in my study.

Leaders have not only policies to guide them but rely on their own values and beliefs arising from their practice and experience. Harris as quoted by Bush (1995:130) stated that, "educational managers… are taken to be those capable of shaping ritual in educational institutions." There is no doubt that traditional values play a more pertinent role in the small, rural school than is generally seen in the urban schools for a variety of reasons. One of the most pertinent roles that are observable in the rural school is the definite set of principles or rules that newly appointed principals are expected to observe e.g. observation of religious ceremonies and the involvement of the principals in church activities. Qualitative research expects me to be able to understand these values in that context and to make sense of them. The role that culture plays in understanding the context in a rural setting can therefore not be underestimated. The inclusion and consideration of the cultural dimension in the natural setting of the principal and the other role players will enhance the validity and reliability of the perceptions and understandings and illustrate what any assumptions or findings are based on. Cantrell (1993:101) confirms the latter by emphasising the importance of understanding and interpreting the complex interrelations, in other words "to investigate the pieces as well as the whole…" If culture plays a role in the understanding of the researched, it is clear that it must be part of the whole to support the credibility of the findings.

3.4 CASE STUDIES

Cases are broadly described by Borgatti (1999:1) as objects whose behaviour or characteristics we study. He stated that the cases he refers to would normally be persons, but can be groups, departments or even organizations, but even events, like meetings. Johnson & Christensen (2000: 327) as quoted by Remley (2001:4-5) define case studies as bounded systems that can either be qualitative or quantitative. Stake (1995:62) as quoted by Remley (2001:5) described the qualitative case study researcher as one

> that keeps a good record of events to provide a relatively incontestable
> description for further analysis and ultimate reporting. He\She lets the
> occasion tell its story, the situation, the problem, resolution, or irresolution of
> the problem.

Bassey (1999:58) described an educational case study as an empirical enquiry, which:

Is conducted within a localized boundary of space and time (i.e. a singularity
or single event that is studied);
Is based on the interesting/appropriate aspects of an educational activity, or
programme, or institution, or system;
Focuses mainly on the natural context and within an ethic of respect for
persons;
Informs the judgments and decisions of practitioners or policymakers, or of
theoreticians who are working in such a way that sufficient data are collected.

The strength of a case study is that it concentrates on a specific activity, how it is interconnected or related and to make a generalisation. The instance/activity/programme/system/institution referred to by Bassey (1999:58) could vary from the introduction of a new curriculum, to how teachers/schools adapt to new situations, stages of development in an organisation, and so on.

My study concern itself with a typical rural, isolated multi-grade school in the Karas Education region in Namibia. The primary aim is to understand the specific case at hand and the secondary goal is to understand a more general process based on the analysis of the single case (Remley 2001:5). Stack (1995:64) as quoted by Remley (2001:5) is of the opinion that, "The more the case study is an intrinsic case study, the more attention needs to be paid to the contexts." My study being an intrinsic case

study will therefore describe in depth "the particulars of the case as a holistic entity as well as to understand its inner workings" (Remley 2001:5).

The implication is that I will be looking at a rural, multi-grade school from the view of some of its stakeholders to be able to conclude what the leadership and management challenges of a principal of such a school is, especially in the context of the post independent period. My study follows the same pattern as highlighted by Neuman (1997:29-31) namely that a "case study uses the logic of analytical instead of enumerative induction…[The researcher] considers the specific context of the case and examines how its parts are configured ". My case study is within the confines of my normal duty as an Inspector of Education which will enable me to complete the research within a limited time.

Neuman (1997:67-69) explains social action in the context of human action that is "subjectively related in meaning to the behaviour of others." The interpretive approach is a way of trying to get inside the viewpoint that you try to explain, understand it and then present your own view. You are expected to discover the meaning of the action of people, but because of its subjective element you need to explore the reasons for action. Neuman (1997:70) emphasizes that "individual motives are crucial to consider even if they are irrational, carry deep emotions, and contain false facts and prejudices." Researchers therefore need to be mindful of the subjective element to be able to make a meaningful and sensible interpretation of the natural reality. Another concern raised about the interpretive approach is that it is so specific in terms of its context that you can barely generalise the findings. Neuman (1997:71) states that "the theory and evidence are interwoven to create a unified whole; the concepts and generalisations are wedded to their context." Your ability to understand the context free of your own bias and subjectivity will determine the extent to which you are able to generalise within the context.

Next I will present my actual research process.

3.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.5.1 SELECTION OF SAMPLE

Cantrell (1993:90) has found that "The qualitative approach uses small, information rich samples *purposefully* selected (my emphasis) to allow the researcher to focus in depth on issues important to the study".

I used various strategies to assess the suitability of the multi-grade school I selected. One was a questionnaire to be completed by staff members at the school (Appendix A). All the staff members at the school completed the questionnaire to enable me to have rich and complete data on a multi-grade school and instructional leadership. The respondents declared themselves open to further interviews, as was the case with the regional staff (Appendix B), the implementers of policy in each political region. To be able to understand the context of the school and the community I completed two separate forms (Appendices C and D).

3.5.2 DATA-GATHERING

Firstly, I interviewed the principal (Appendix F) and the parent community using structured questions to be able to stay focussed on the issues at hand. Secondly, I made use of unstructured questions to give me an understanding of the multi-grade setting at the school and the leadership challenges at the particular school, as a way to follow up on the previous structured questions. Care was taken to stay focussed on the cultural context/background of the rural community especially with regard to their respect for leadership at all levels. If that were not taken into account the data could be affected in a negative way depending on the respondents' commitment to their leadership. My experience of working in the community as an educator, speaking the local language and growing up in the same cultural background made me very aware of the possible obstacles in that regard. Both the principal and her community members preferred to use the local vernacular (Nama) but in the end the principal opted for Afrikaans, mainly because of her professional training in that language. I played the tape back to all participants and they were happy with the interviews and had nothing to add to the text.

3.5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The idea of Lincoln and Guba as noted by Cantrell (1993:88) that the "design of naturalization inquiry [cannot be] given in advance, it must emerge, develop and unfold" was relevant to my study. The most problematic issue in collecting the data was whether or not the data was enough or knowing when I had reached the point of saturation.

While reading through the data I followed Cantrell's idea of "primary patterns (e.g. words, phrases, behaviour, thoughts, events), which repeat and stand out" (Cantrell 1993:98-99). I started with the two main themes or issues namely the multi-grade system and instructional leadership. I used coding to point out the real issues, using colours for clear identification. While I did that, I deliberately attempted to reduce the data by discarding what I deemed to be irrelevant or redundant.

Themes overlapped to such an extent that clarifying meanings of particular sections in terms of the main themes became a semantic challenge. Afterwards, I developed conclusions on the data provided and verified the findings or rather my interpretations with the respondents. Verification included making some comparisons with the existing structure both at the school and the MBESC. The involvement of respondents in the verification process was mostly limited to the factual correctness of my interpretation, so as to report the ideas of the respondents and not my own. What was important in the verification was that both the researcher and the respondents needed to be satisfied that conclusions expressed emerged from the data alone. During the debriefing sessions care was taken to crosscheck data.

I will now consider some of the issues regarding the rigour and trustworthiness of the research.

3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES

Before I started on my research, I approached the principal of the rural school where I wanted to do my research for permission. No problems were experienced to get permission, especially against the background that my findings could be beneficial to the school and the community. I also had a meeting with the staff and the school

board for their consent to interview them. A new school board had in the mean time been elected, but this in no way interfered with my intentions to interview the parents of the school.

The Regional Director of Education in the Karas Region, and the Regional Director of the Hardap Region expressed their interest in my research and explicitly gave their blessing.

I was constantly aware of the views of Best and Kahn (1985: 45-47) that "…subjects are informed of the purpose of the research". They call it "informed consent" and it is clear that participants should be free to participate or to decline to take part. Best and Kahn (1985:45-47) also warn against the invasion of privacy, especially where access has been granted, but content is being used without clearance from the participants. In this case I observed some classes and looked through personal records of teachers. The principal of the school was observed for a full day and with her consent a video camera and tape recorder were used.

The participants agreed that their identity be disguised in all records and reports. Being a supervisor of the particular school, I promised that information obtained during my research would not be used for any purpose other than research. We did, however, agree that where shortages/limitations were experienced such information could be used to provide training to remedy the situation. Although originally agreed to, the school requested that the name of the school be withheld as an additional means of protecting the identity of the teachers and the community. A relationship of trust and respect exists in my normal contact with the community and I had to be alerted to doing anything that could hamper that relationship.

We also agreed that the findings would be incorporated in the normal staff development of the school. In that way the research would benefit the school directly.

3.7 LIMITATIONS

The participants are staff members that I normally supervise during the course of my work as an Inspector of Education. I had to be mindful of the relationship between the respondents and myself because it involves legitimate power in terms of my appointment. Neuman (1997:445) expressed the warning that ethical issues may involve an "abuse of power and trust". There was also the possibility of window dressing to create a good impression. However since the classroom observation has very limited influence on the instructional leadership of the school, I was still in a position to make a fair judgement. My experience helped me to see through many of the things staff members tried to do in order to make an impression on me.

As for the leaders in the community, they had very extreme views of the leadership of the school varying from "poor leadership" to "too much of herself in the school". There was however agreement on her initiative. One could also observe that some of the negative feelings had to do with political rather than administrative judgments of the community leadership based on their affiliation.

Some of the administrative documents like the minutes of meetings have been reduced to single words and sentences and were not very helpful to see participatory and democratic practice in action. The attendance of a school board meeting enabled me to make a judgment on the normal practice. On the other hand making, an analysis of only one meeting could invalidate my opinion.

I am, however, confident that my professional experience and analysis was executed in such a way that could provide me with valid findings. The sample size, especially with the staff members, made it possible for me to save on time and money. The small group made it possible to verify the answers to the questionnaire with each other in a short, given time. I followed up the questionnaire with an interview to confirm their answers as genuine and valid.

I now turn to the presentation of the data.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three I described the methods I used to obtain the data. The information from the questionnaires and the interviews that I used was analysed and broken down into various main ideas or themes. In this chapter the themes that emerged from the raw data analysis will be presented.

This an interpretive study, so I am reminded that "the goal of social research is to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings." (Neuman 1997:68-69). The focus will be on how leadership and management are coping with the challenge of multi-grade teaching and learning. As stated by Neuman (1997:70) "… people may or may not experience social or physical reality in the same way." The experiences of the various respondents will be highlighted throughout the chapter and their voices will establish the meaning of their social reality. Direct quotations will make the meaning less abstract and be able to provide the detail that will show the richness of their social/professional life.

The names of the respondents used in the next few sections are all indicated in pseudonyms to protect their identity. The name of the school has also been changed to Karas PS. Karas PS is situated in one of the 13 political regions namely Karas, and has a staff of 6 (3 female teachers, 2 male teachers and a female principal). One of the female teachers, although very experienced, is a recent appointment to the staff and the only interaction I had with her in the course of this project was to observe her multi-grade class. The main activity of the rural community is subsistence farming with both goats and sheep. No other employment opportunities are available except for the school that provides for one cleaner and the post of a school secretary.

4.2 THE THEMES

4.2.1 PROFILE OF TEACHING STAFF AT THE KARAS P.S

Although other stakeholders were also interviewed, this profile is of the teaching staff of the Karas P.S. The Principal of the school is well qualified with her initial training as a lower primary teacher. Due to the scarcity of needlework teachers during the pre-independent period, she was transferred to a secondary school. Though she has been a teacher for 20 years, she has only two years of experience of multi-grade teaching. She has served as principal for 10 years at this particular primary school.

The rest of the staff comprises 2 male teachers (one qualified in lower primary teaching and the other an unqualified teacher), who have only this year been admitted to the BETD INSET program (Basic Education Teachers Diploma In service training). The college graduate has two years teaching experience with less than one year teaching in a multi-grade class. The BETD INSET teacher has five years teaching experience with 2 years of experience in the multi-grade setting. The other two are female teachers with teaching experience of 24 years and 10 years respectively. Both have less than one year teaching experience in the multi-grade system. The teacher with 10 years teaching experience (we will call her Ms W and the other one Ms M for the sake of convenience) will be a qualified teacher in the year following the time of writing as part of the BETD INSET graduates. Ms M, although having taught for 24 years, is not a trained teacher. She did attend workshops on the lower primary reform after independence. Ms G has not been included in the original interviews because of her recent appointment to the school.

4.2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE MULTI-GRADE SYSTEM

TEACHING STAFF:

From the questionnaire it was clear that all staff members had only been exposed to the multi-grade school with the implementation of the new staffing norms in 2002. Thus all of them have less than two years experience of teaching in a multi-grade

class. Furthermore none of them had received any formal training in the teaching of the multi-grade class.

Except for the principal who did not really find teaching in a single graded class different from teaching a multi-grade class all staff members indicated a definite "yes" when asked if they found teaching in a multi-grade class different from the normal single graded class.

The staff described the major differences as follows:

Ms W. found the following issues quite frustrating:

"Different age groups; variety of activities to be prepared; lot more work in a multi-grade

class."

Ms M. is of the opinion that there is an advantage to the teaching of a multi-grade class:

"Learners learn work of the previous class."

Mr E. (College graduate) had the following to say:

"Class control in the single graded class was better and you could attend to learners better."

Mr A (BETD INSET TEACHER) pointed to the following differences:

"Class management of single graded class is easier."

If they all were given the choice to either teach a single graded or multi graded class all except the principal and Mr E would prefer to teach in a single graded class. Mr E described the multi-grade class as an "unlimited challenge" while the principal also thought that it opened up challenges for teaching. A suggestion that was offered by all participants was that the staffing norms not be applied to rural schools because, as stated by Mr E, "These learners (in the rural areas) are away from development and need proper attention." The principal is of the opinion that the training of the teachers in the multi-grade system will change the negative picture about the multi-grade system.

PARENTS:

I interviewed a female member of the School Board (Ms MA) and a community leader (Mr PA) on their perceptions about the multi-grade system. Both were adamant that they were also taught in multi-grade classes during the earlier pre-independence period. Their grades started from substandard A to Std 2 (in other words they went through 5 standards/grades). Mr PA explained to me that he was at a school in the same area as the Karas PS with an average of 30 learners per year, with only one male teacher teaching all grades from substandard A to Std 2. Mr PA was very unhappy with the fact that his own children at the Karas PS could not read or even write properly. He believed that the following were reasons for the phenomena:

> The reason why teachers are struggling with teaching in our schools today is because of the many subjects that they are expected to teach. In our multi-grade schools it was important for the teacher that you be able to read, write and do arithmetic.

Both Mr PA and Ms MA were concerned about the fact that the principal, who was supposed to make sure that teachers were doing their work, was also a full time teacher. Mr PA stated in no uncertain terms:

> I recognize that we are a young nation, but why does the government not live up to its promise of free education? This thing that we have no money is unacceptable to me. What happened to the money or is it a question that we do not know how to work with it?

He used a proverb in Khoe Khoegowab to express his unhappiness and to recommend that the government not lie to its people, but stick to its commitment, "!Hanub ge !umi tama" or if freely translated, "government does not lie"

Both of them felt that the Ministry should, however, not apply the staffing norms to rural schools because of the high rate of illiteracy in the area, coupled with the fact that the young parents leave their children with their grandparents so that they can seek employment in bigger towns. They were both adamant that the multi-grade system was not the real cause of the inability of their children to read and write, but rather the lack of commitment on the part of teachers, the failure of the principal as

leader of the teachers to supervise and the absence of proper and regular visitation by the regional education office.

REGIONAL OFFICE PROFESSIONAL STAFF:

I issued 10 questionnaires to the professional staff in the regional office and 7 were returned. The respondents were one TRC Manager (Teachers Resource Centre Manager) three Advisory teachers, one Inspector of Education, the Chief Education Planner and the Senior Advisory Teacher, heading the professional development section of the region. Except for one respondent, all the staff felt strongly that the region did not have clear guidelines on multi-grade teaching. From a general perspective, all of the respondents felt that teachers, principals and regional staff were not properly trained and informed about the issues related to the supervision and management of multi-grade classes. Except for the TRC manager, all officials felt that the curriculum and/or the prescribed texts had not been adapted to fit multi-grade teaching, thereby leaving schools "at sixes and sevens". All respondents felt that higher priority should be given to the training of teachers for multi-grade classes.

4.2.3 PREPARATION OF MULTI-GRADE TEACHERS

I interviewed a member of the lecturing staff at the Windhoek Teacher Training College in the capital city and asked the question whether her students were being prepared for the leadership and management challenges at the multi-grade schools. Her reply was as follows:

> To be honest at the moment, NO. The first time that I heard the word "multi-grade" was from you (*the researcher*) during our contact session. But it rang a bell, for in the past we had things like Sub A, Sub B, Klein A (*sic*), Groot A *(sic),* where 2 grades were put in one class. I do not even know if many of us at the college know that these types of things are happening.

She continued to say, however, that, with regard to leadership and management training, students were prepared for general administration, such as completion of attendance registers:

> With professionalism we get to develop leadership and management skills…another topic; school as an organization is also discussed. Practical assignments are given to find out, for example, what type of leadership is practiced at the school, e.g., democratic or autocratic or whatever.

Although she felt students were prepared for the leadership and management challenges at the school, sometimes "students go out and come back and what they are writing is as if nothing happened at the school."

4.2.4 ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

4.2.4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP IN A MULTI-GRADE SYSTEM

Most of the respondents emphasised the pivotal role of leadership in the school.

PARENTS:

Ms MA described the role of the principal as "!gurus" meaning: "the nucleus" of any school development. Therefore, she strongly felt, the principal was a full-time teacher and not in a position to supervise the other teachers. Mr PA saw the principal as a leader of the community because she was in charge of the school and in particular in control of the teachers:

> The role of the principal in the school is extremely important. What I do not like is that teachers have been reduced and the principals are now expected to teach full-time. It is logical to me that they will not have enough time to attend to issues of concern.

Mr PA, being a farmer, compared teachers and children with goats and observed that:

> Anything that is alive needs to be supervised – teachers must be supervised so that they do not run lose. The teachers must feel the presence of the principal – not only feel but also see it. If she is occupied in the class for the whole day how can she be able to supervise?

He made the comparison between a goat herder that looks after 200 goats and another one after 1000 goats. He argued that if you increase the responsibility of the goat herder so as to care for 1000 goats as opposed to 200, he will not be able to do a good

job, but maybe with fewer goats he will be able to satisfactorily attend to the goats and bring in some profits. The principal should be released from full time teaching, so that she would be able to attend to supervision. Furthermore, for a teacher, one class group will work better than the current two to three class groups in a curriculum with so many subjects to teach.

Ms MA agreed with the view that the principal was so important to the school community that she needed to be available for consultation. This is what she had to say: "The current situation, according to me, is such that as parents we feel that learners are being neglected and in a way they do not get what they are supposed to get at the school." She gave an example of the grade 1 teacher who assisted in teaching grade 5-7 Khoe Khoegowab, while the teacher was supposed to use that time for remedial teaching: "What is happening to the grade 1's when she is teaching grade 5-7?"

Ms MA reiterated:

> We send our children to the school trusting that the adults *(principal and teachers)* will take care of them. The main responsibility and the custodian of this trust is the principal. If there are any shortcomings it must be the principal that observes first and acts accordingly so that the matter is resolved properly.

She explained that both the school board and teachers must be involved in "setting the scene for good governance at the school." According to her, leadership was lacking at the school and they *(the parents)* got poor results (like children who cannot read). At this juncture, I need to include my own experience of these poor results while I was writing the data section. To underline the seriousness of the statement, I recall an urgent phone call on 17 October 2003 from the Advisory Teacher for lower primary education seeking advice from me, after she had visited the Karas primary school and discovered that almost 60% of the grade 1's did not meet the requirements for promotion to the next phase/grade. The main reason was their lack of ability to read properly at the level expected of a grade 1. This experience bears out the statement made by Ms M.A. Ms MA thought that it was unfair to the grade 1 teacher to be allocated so many classes/subjects. Ms MA stated, "It is the responsibility of the

principal to address these issues with the teachers and, if need be, with the elected School Board."

Ms MA described broad, open and regular communication between the principal and parents as a very important cornerstone of development and progress at the school. She concluded with a remark that the regional office should take up its responsibility and pay regular visits to the schools in the rural areas.

THE PRINCIPAL:

She emphasized that she needed training in the supervision and management of the school, especially with regard to the multi-grade system: "If only the MBESC (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture) can arrange for training with respect to the multi-grade school system, it could go a far way in supporting our efforts to bring education to all." About the management of the school she stated:

> It is very difficult to be a fulltime teacher and principal at the same time.
> Parents expect me to be available at all times and various GRN (Government
> of the Republic of Namibia) programmes and community activities are run
> from the school since it is central to all members of the community.

The principal was very serious about the support that parents needed to give to them as teachers. She however acknowledged the absence of the real parents of children and the high illiteracy rate: "In a way we get some response from parents (at least some of them do understand) when we ask them to assist learners at home."

The principal was well aware of the criticism levelled against them (the teaching staff) because of the failure of learners to read. She also acknowledged the pressure on her when learners did not perform, but identified a lack of training in the multi-grade system as part of the problem. She planned to start with a series of discussion/information sessions in which the community would be informed about their responsibility. An outcome of the first few sessions was that a male teacher (originally trained for adult literacy programs) was being appointed and paid by the community.

On a direct question whether she had ever heard of instructional leadership, the principal was not sure whether she understood what the concept meant. She had heard about instructional leadership at a workshop of principals. She thought a "good" principal led by example and made sure that the tasks were spread evenly to all teachers.

THE TEACHERS:

The teachers generally expected a lot more assistance from the leader of the school and to that end a few questions were put to them to establish their knowledge, understanding and feelings about leadership. The teachers responded in the negative to the question concerning whether they had heard about the concept of instructional leadership before. All teachers were of the opinion that their principals were not effective as instructional leaders (the concept was first explained to enable them to respond to the question.)

Two of the major leadership issues raised by the respondents (the teachers), which they expected the principal to adhere to, were:
-        To give more support and time to teachers.
-        To be part of community activities.
One of the respondents felt that the principal did most of the administrative work on her own and did not delegate as expected from a "good" principal. This is what they had to say on the topic of a "good" principal:

Mr E defined a "good" or "effective" principal as follows: "a good principal should be a leader and not a manager. One good quality of a leader is to listen and not interfere while others speak."
Mr A described a good principal as someone who "should be more open and concerned about his teachers, learners and community."
Ms M: "He/She must always assist his/her teachers. Have meetings where the teachers share ideas and teaching methods."
Ms W: "An effective principal is a leader in all aspects. Be determined to reach success but also flexible for failures."

All respondents felt that a good principal would not be the only one who makes decisions at a school, but rather would delegate certain tasks/responsibilities to her team.

On the question concerning what the respondent would do should they be appointed as the principal of a multi grade school, several interesting responses with regard to the importance of the leadership tasks were forwarded:

Mr A: "… make more time to visit classes and give advice."

Mr E: "I will give all my teachers in-service-training and keep them updated with new approaches."

Ms M: "Ask for in-service training. Hold meetings for sharing ideas."

Ms W: "Will have meetings regularly with teachers to talk about problems experienced in classes to learn from each other in order to improve teaching."

REGIONAL OFFICE PROFESSIONAL STAFF:

A questionnaire put to regional education staff chosen because of their vast experience of leadership at schools consisted of various issues related to their perceptions of the leaderships and management issues related to the multi-grade system. One of the advisory teachers was not sure whether the leadership at schools was strong enough to handle multi-grade management, but all the other professional staff strongly felt that principals were not able to handle the management of such schools.

On the question concerning whether principals should be expected to teach, all professionals except one had the notion that principals should teach. All of the respondents felt that the principals should participate in staff and management development. Five of the seven professionals felt that the principal should not have sole authority and responsibility to organize his/her school and to determine priorities. One of the advisory teachers felt that administration should be the sole authority of the principal, while the other one was not sure.

A specific question was put to all professionals whereby they were expected to explain their understanding of effective leadership. The following are their representative responses, given in terms of their position in the regional administration:

Inspector of Education: "Leadership must have the ability to control, guide, manage, monitor, organize, supervise and support."

TRC Manager:

> Effective leadership is one where participatory decisions are made and which leads to participatory action. An effective leader executes his/her authority by merging his/her discretion with the intentions of his followers within the parameters of the mutually accepted value system and culture of operation of the organization.

Advisory teacher No.1: "Not a boss but a slave of his people. He places the needs of his people first than his personal interest and needs."

Advisory teacher No. 2: "Smooth running of an organization according to the rules. Happy staff members, learners, parents, community etc."

Senior Advisory teacher: "Being able to direct your team towards continuous empowerment for continuous adaptations and improvement of service in an ever changing environment."

Chief Education Planner: "Setting example by doing things right."

4.2.4.2 VIEWS OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF ON THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

Other issues of interest that the regional professional staff commented on will also be reported here since they are worthwhile to consider, coming as they do from professionals who are first in line to see that schools implement policy.

(a)   On the point that leaders should understand that serving others is important, the following was said:

- The SAT (Senior Advisory Teacher) said, "Leadership should not be something that you get by virtue of your status/position, but because of your willingness to serve per excellence."

- AT1 (Advisory Teacher) agreed with her "that to serve is to lead, to guide is part of serving."

- AT2 was of the opinion that "serving is long forgotten. Leadership now wants to be served."

- AT3 felt that "the serving leader communicates the best with his/her community. This will lead to parental involvement and whole school development at last."

- The TRC manager was of the opinion that the people who are supposed to be served namely the teachers; learners and the parents "must gain from leadership."

- The Inspector of Schools stated: "Absolutely. Schools are accountable to society and as teachers (we) are involved in agreeing on aims and policies to promote pupils learning."

(b)   On the question how principals can be empowered to cope with the leadership and management challenges expected from them to run their schools effectively, some broad varieties of possible actions/solutions/methods were recorded:

- SAT: "Principals be appointed on the basis of leadership qualities and not qualification

- and experience only. Special/continuing courses to develop leaderships. More

- opportunities to share with each other."

- AT1: "Training sessions, courses, upgrading courses at Colleges/University –also

- in-service training by Inspectors on cluster level."

- AT2 also suggested various training possibilities.

- AT3 is of the opinion that parental involvement in all aspects of the school "is the most appropriate answer to their outcry."
- The TRC Manager had some very powerful and challenging ideas on the empowerment of school leadership and I will let him talk to you about it:

Principals do not cope with the current leadership and management challenges in schools because of the reason that they see themselves purely as administrators and they lose sight of other educational and empirical operations. Principals need to make a paradigm shift not only in the epistemologies, but also in the praxis.

Paradigms shifts, according to the TRC Manager, should not only be "in the mind, but actions will be needed." He followed this up with the vision that they (*the principals*) needed to reflect on their own action. He was extremely critical of what he termed "old behaviour" where principals still stuck to leadership and management principles that were no longer relevant in a democratic society, like the attitude of being in charge and making all the decisions: "If you do not like my decisions you are free to look for another school." He added: "Principals should be made aware of management strategies geared for reality teaching and not necessarily an ideal situation that is a myth that exists in education." To stress this statement "reality" and "ideal" were underlined in red ink in his questionnaire response. He ended his statements with the approach of principals to possible challenges, that they should not start a complaint spree, but rather sit down and analyze the needs of their schools.

The Inspector thought training was a good idea, as pointed out by the AT'S. He however added that the terms of appointment of principals should be changed to a 5-year contract period and where they could not cope with the demands and challenges of the job, the contract should not be renewed.

The Chief Education Planner concurred with the view of training but recommended that training include "the motives for implementation and organization; in other words analysis of policy."

4.2.5 COMMITMENT TO TEAMWORK

All respondents referred to the need for teamwork at any given school to make quality education possible. Ms MA (previously referred to) thought that the involvement of the School Board in all activities of the school was necessary, especially with regard to the provision of resources (financial assistance). In this regard, Mr PA, as a parent and community leader, stressed that before independence not much pressure was put on parents to make a contribution to the SDF (School Development Fund). Things like the appointment of a temporary teacher (paid by the parents) as in the case of their school, to assist with the teaching of Khoe Khoegowab were unheard of. Government took care of all these matters, but "as one people we need to stand together to be able to reach our goal and for that the leadership of the principal is much needed."

Ms MA also noted:

> It is a lack of dedication and observable progress in the school that force parents to take children out of the school to surrounding schools. If the triangle of teachers, parents and the principal is working effectively towards the progress of the school, the school will grow from strength to strength.

The principal as well as the teachers were all of the opinion that if parents do their part in assisting learners at home the job of teaching will be so much easier. The teachers all felt that the principal needs to play a bigger role in convincing parents to assist learners back home. All four of the teachers felt the need for regular meetings and exchange of ideas and were of the opinion that this important communication is very much neglected at present.

4.2.6 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN THE MULTI-GRADE CLASSROOM

I took some time to observe Ms G, a newly appointed female teacher that had been in the profession for more than 15 years but had taught multi-grade classes for only two years. Her biggest concern teaching the combined grade 2 and 3 class was that multi-grade teaching had not been a topic of discussion in the in-service training workshops in the lower primary reform she attended. She was of the opinion that such training

was much needed. Her former principal did visit her and gave her some "ideas." On the question concerning what the major differences between a single grade and a multi-grade class is, she had the following to say: "You are dealing with groups of different ages-learning abilities. You teach two grades at the same time."

After the observation of the class, she explained that she worked with two groups (grade 2 and 3 respectively) but that these groups were again subdivided into several learning groups, according to their levels. The other method used was that she taught the same topic to both grades (especially in the language area). She could not tell which of the two worked better. Her preference was a single graded class.

She had a problem with principals who were not able to advise on the curriculum and instructional issues that should be a high priority in any group. Principals, according to her, should be able to conduct workshops on multi-grade teaching and "create platforms where teachers can come together and share ideas." She felt learner performance could be effective if the principal were able to give support in terms of resources and staff development.

4.2.7 GENERAL COMMENTS

The Inspector of Education concluded, "It is essential that clear cut guidelines on multi- grade teaching should be formulated." The CEP (Chief Education Planner) had the following advice as part of his recommendation:

> Training of the principal is very important. Extend it to the teachers. Get the regulations in place and set up a curriculum panel for cost interventions such as multi-grade teaching- and very important: Get the understanding and insight in multi-grade teaching in place.

AT2 had strong feelings for principals who could not cope with the challenges of leadership and management: "Non-performing principals should be degraded after a period of 5 year service." The latter is in line with the 5-year contract that was earlier suggested by the Inspector of schools. The AT3 called on all stakeholders to be involved in the building of the school and to share responsibility in decision-making.

The TRC manager said that Multi-grade teaching was not a new phenomenon. He also argued that resources not be seen in isolation and that the teacher, the learners, textbooks, the environment also be seen as such. "The best resource is in any case the mind of the individual." He is of the opinion that multi-grade teaching is not negative and those items that cause difficulty should also not be emphasized. "The problem that does exist is the fact that the authorities deny its (*multi-grade system*) existence on the one hand, but make it a reality with which teachers and principals have to cope without proper help."

4.2.8 CONSULTATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

The principal (as pointed out earlier) was of the opinion that she was not properly prepared for the challenges of a multi-grade school. Yet she stressed:

> I am always prepared to learn and will be happy if the Regional Office can give some courses on the multi-grade system so that I am well aware what is expected from me to be able to assist the teachers.

She confirmed in the interview that she had a high turnover of teachers each year, mostly because of teachers being frustrated by the multi-grade system. The second factor was that young people (or for that matter teachers who are settled somewhere) were not willing to come to the small, rural and isolated schools. She denied that her attitude caused problems for novice teachers for wanting to leave, as claimed by the parents, but rather blamed the fact that the school was remote and far from the nearest town. She further explained that she had a clear vision for the school that could seen in the mission statement of the school that emphasized education through participation:

> I use my vehicle and my own money, my time and efforts to make sure that needed resources are available. I am willing to learn and to work with all the stakeholders. It is therefore that I maintain a position of an open door.

The principal also felt very happy and pleased with the development initiatives that she started in the community e.g. the establishment of a hostel (an informal hostel had recently been completed with the assistance of the European Union (EU), the procurement of a brand new computer (through the Chinese Embassy) and the

renovation of the school hall (with the assistance of the Ministry of Works). She concluded: "I hope people see my efforts and value my input to the community." The principal felt that consultation was crucial in any school, but even more in a small, rural school. The criticism that she did not delegate was, according to her unfair and unjustified.

I will now look at the meaning of the data.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three I outlined the various methods used to gather data on the challenges that principals (and also school management) face with respect to leadership and management of multi-grade schools. My preferred method of questionnaires, interviews and the observation of the learning environment provided the necessary insight, as explained in chapter three. In chapter four I presented the reader with a narrative description of the various stakeholders in education and their perceptions and understandings of the challenges of principals in a multi-grade setting. It was important, in chapter four, that the stakeholders were allowed to speak to the reader using their own words and experience. In this chapter I discuss my findings from the data and interpret them in terms of the natural setting in which they occurred. The meaning from the content will be explained in terms of my research goals in order to understand how education managers and leaders perceive their role in making it possible for teachers, and learners to cope with multi-grade teaching.

I am mindful of the view stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1982:154) quoted by Cantrell (1993:97) that "Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others". However, in my interpretation, I will remember to be conscious about my own prejudices and wishful thinking and not just to fit my own understanding into the national setting. Analyses are supposed to make sense of one's data and one should not be trapped in bringing out one's own limited view without due consideration of the context, the perspectives and understandings of one's research participants.

In the following few sections I discuss my main findings but will base this discussion on the themes that I identified in the earlier chapter. I have no doubt that new themes/ideas may arise from the discussions if such discussion is coupled with the interest of other researchers.

5.2 PROFILE OF THE TEACHING STAFF

As pointed out in chapter two (MEC 1993:19) the educational system in the pre-independence period was based on the apartheid laws of South Africa. The result of the policies was that Whites had preferential treatment in terms of the allocation of resources, followed by the Basters and Coloureds, all based on AG 8. AG 8 allowed for the recognition of the second tier authorities, and a formula whereby each person pays income tax to his/her administration. Higher income groups obviously could afford more luxuries in terms of school resources. Smaller groups like the Namas were dependent on the White Administration for handouts, and much frustration and tension towards the system arose. The school that I studied used to be governed by the Administration for Namas, one of eleven ethnic authorities in the then SWA/Namibia. One of the legacies that can still be observed in some of the schools, is the number of un/under qualified teachers at school, referred to earlier.

The profile of the teaching staff at the school that I selected is no exception. Only one of the staff members is a college graduate, while Ms G, Ms M and the principal are teachers from the pre-independence period. The principal did a course prescribed for the Nama speaking students at the then Coloured College of Education in Windhoek (Std 8 + 2 years of training)). The principal used the opportunities offered after 1980 to further her studies in the field of education. The BETD INSET programme is an innovation of the post-independence government to assist experienced teachers (at least 5 year teaching experience) to obtain a diploma (Category C) in a way that is a combination of the distance and the face-to-face modes. From the 6 teachers 50 % (3) are with the BETD INSET while one is still unqualified and only two teachers (including the principal) meet the requirements for appointment as teachers in a government school. In practice this means that 35 % of the staff can be regarded as qualified for their job in terms of the appointment criteria of the Ministry.

I also pointed out in my earlier discussion that the Keetmanshoop Education region had a favourable ratio of 20,9 learners per teacher as compared to 41,7 in the Ondangwa region according to the annual education census data of 1994. Teachers in the Karas region had fewer children to teach in their classes and were used to single

graded classes only. The implementation of the post-independence staffing norms in 2002 compelled all regions to look for alternatives in terms of class sizes and the only viable option was multi-grade teaching. The favourable pre-independence ratio of the Karas region made it a real issue of concern.

Post-independent requirements for the appointment to the post of principal are a BETD qualification (equivalent of three year tertiary training) with an additional requirement of at least 11 years of experience in the teaching field, or if the applicant has the equivalent of 4 years or more tertiary training, at least 4 years of teaching experience is required. The principal was appointed to the post of primary school principal while teaching at a secondary school. She had no prior experience as deputy principal, head of department or even a senior teacher before her appointment. A two-day in-service training course was held at the school after her appointment, dealing mostly with issues related to the administration of the school.

5.3 PERCEPTIONS OF THE MULTI-GRADE SYSTEM

TEACHERS:

The goals of education prescribe to all stakeholders the vision of the new government. The four major goals of education are: democracy, equity, equality and access. As described in chapter two, equity had to do with fairness, while equality had to do with sameness, based on a policy of a unitary state where every citizen has a right to fair and equal treatment. The ratios allocated to the various administrations, calculated on the basis of their annual income, was no more relevant and in future all regions will be treated the same, irrespective of where they are. The statement was made in response to the unequal distribution of resources to regions in the pre independence period. It was only in 2000 that the Government signed an agreement with the NANTU (National Teachers Union of Namibia) to make the implementation of a national policy on staffing norms mandatory for all political regions.

The interviews with teachers pointed out that all at the school had two years or less experience in teaching multi-grade class. Although the principal sounded positive about the multi-grade class, the request for training by the MBESC indicated her loss as to what was the right thing to do, in terms of managing a small, rural multi-grade

school. All teachers found teaching in a multi-grade class different from that of a single graded-class. The major differences can be summed up in the words of Ms W., who stated the difficulties of a multi-grade class as follows: "Different age groups; variety of activities to be prepared; lot more work in a multi-grade class". The principal indicated the positive issues related to the multi-grade class, namely that you could prepare one grade at the same time for the next grade, while the senior class reinforced that which they were taught the previous year. I could also observe how the material was used to bring the concepts in grade two and three together. Mr E described multi-grade as an "unlimited challenge", a view to which the principal subscribed.

The concluding statement by the principal that they needed training for multi-grade teaching summed up how stretched her leadership was with regard to the quality of teaching at her school. Surwill (1980:8) made the remark that "all teachers regardless of what they teach, who they teach, or where they teach need certain generic competencies". Some of the competencies according to him are "… the teachers ability to maintain discipline, to motivate students, to apply appropriate evaluative techniques pertaining to pupil progress, to teach academic content with care and skills, etc." With regard to those teaching at the isolated rural schools he was of the opinion that such teachers should receive "professional preparation specially designed for this challenging career". The call for training made by the principal is in line with the findings of Surwill that all teachers need to be prepared for their tasks. I could also derive from her comments that Surwill was right in suggesting the difference in the challenges of the rural school as opposed to that of urban schools, for which teachers were normally trained.

One cannot really fault the attitude of the post-independent government in terms of the four goals of education, whereby all discriminatory practices should be removed soon after independence. What is of concern, however, is the fact that teachers have not been adequately prepared for the task ahead of them. The description of "professional preparation specially designed" by Surwill (1980:9) offers an opportunity to redress the imbalance or the lack of preparedness of the teachers in an appropriate and professional manner. The call of the principal to be trained is, to my mind, valid and sincere and should not be ignored. She wants to do her job properly,

but the old education system that she was used to has been changed to make room for an arguably better one. She needs training to be able to cope with the demand of the new system.

I also found that the sentiments echoed by the teachers were not really different from those experienced by teachers elsewhere, even in the developed world. Collingwood (1991) and Marland's (1993) observations referred to in chapter two are relevant to the situation in Namibia. Collingwood (1991:2-3), as discussed in chapter two, found problems very much like the ones experienced at the Karas PS. Complaints about not enough time for two grades, lack of resources, examination pressure that made teachers concentrate more on the curriculum, different ability groups in the classes and a curriculum that does not provide for multi grade teaching are typical examples. Given that scenario, there is an urgent need to make sure that the question of the multi-grade school system be attended to.

   PARENTS:

Both parents interviewed concurred with the statement made by Cohen (1994:62-98) that multi-grade teaching was not new in Namibia. The main aim of the first colonial government was to Christianise the indigenous people. Therefore, reading the Bible and the hymnbook was the objective of the missionary education. Today, the agenda has changed to that of the development of all facets of the child. One can thus understand the unhappiness of Mr PA with the lack of reading skills and his predisposition to blame it on the many subjects offered nowadays to learners. One of the recommendations by Surwill (1980:5) is that teachers teaching at rural schools must have "a strong background in the teaching of reading". The respondents in Montana indicated to Surwill (1980:5) that "they received minimal preparation in the teaching of reading and felt this continues to be a definite weakness". I am of the opinion that the teaching of the three R's can never be compromised and support the view that reading needs to be a high priority in all primary schools. The curriculum should be adapted to fit the teaching of basic competencies into all of the many subjects offered. In that way, the pressure on the principals to make sure that learners can read, write and do basic arithmetic can be relieved.

Surwill (1980:6) found that "The range of responsibilities that go along with a teaching contract in a rural school may shock some students preparing for a teaching career in a rural community". This, he said, was because of the variety of responsibilities allocated to a single teacher in terms of teaching and extra mural activities, contrary to the belief that, because of the size/location of some rural schools, not much is happening at these schools.

The recommendation of Mr PA that principals should not be full-time teachers confirms the argument raised by Murdoch and Schiller of the University of Newcastle (2002:1) as referred to in chapter two. It seems as if the role of the principal in the small, rural and multi grade school is seen as a smaller job and to that end Mr PA feels that being full-time teachers keeps them away from the important task to supervise the personnel. The argument that afternoons be used to do administrative tasks is eaten up by the preparation for the next day, parental visits, meetings, (some of which have nothing to do with education as such, but which is of a great benefit to the local community) and other community/related activities.

Again, reality dictates the important issue raised by Poisson (2002) as to who will pay for the cost of providing multi-grade teaching, especially against the *│ânub ge /umi tama* (the government does not lie) statement of Mr PA. The promise of government to provide free education is being challenged by the parents. Poisson (2002) saw this as an equal responsibility to be shared between the central government, local authorities and communities. Taken that almost 88 % of the current regional budget goes to the remuneration budget, the concern raised by Poisson makes sense. I would add to the list of issues raised by Poisson and referred to earlier, the equally important role that the private sector needs to play in the management of schools in general, and small isolated schools in particular.

The issue of concern, according to both parents, is that learner enrolment drops annually and one of the reasons is that "the performance of multi-grade classes is not always satisfactory " (Poisson 2002:10). The parents are concerned about the commitment of teachers to their task and the lack of supervision on the part of school management. From the data, the respondents were clear that lack of effective professional training in the multi-grade system is one of the major contributing factors

to their poor performance. I am of the opinion that school leadership should play a more focussed role in motivating teachers and learners to improve their performance. The challenge in the current case is that the principal is positive about multi-grade teaching, but her calls for training by the regional office need to be heeded.

REGIONAL OFFICE PROFESSIONAL STAFF:

The respondents from the regional office all agreed that there were no clear guidelines for multi-grade teaching, in the region or, for that matter, on a national level. The general perception was that teachers and principals, as well as the regional office staff, had no prior training on aspects pertaining to the supervision and management of multi-grade classes. Principals, as found in a survey done by Gibson (1992:13) in Queensland, "simply did not feel it was their role to assume responsibility for implementing curriculum. (They were) generally too busy, untrained, unsupported or unwilling to participate, principals leave this task to teachers". Teachers, he further stated, "clearly see themselves as central to the success of the process and willingly take on the classroom responsibility … they also describe a critical need for leadership and support". Namibia is no exception to this kind of finding and workshops have been held since the introduction of the reform process to introduce/involve teaching staff in setting up/understanding the curricula. However, as stated by the professional staff, principals are not really involved in the success of the curriculum, because of the factors already identified by Gibson (1992). I agree with the notion of Surwill (1980:5) that teachers "be required to demonstrate how they would effectively plan a curriculum for a multi-grade level setting". Although the TRC Manager is of the opinion that curricula and/or the prescribed text have been adapted for the multi-grade system, all other respondents disagreed.

5.4 PREPARATION OF TEACHERS FOR THEIR WORK IN THE MULTI-GRADE CLASSROOM

The focus of this section is on the preparation/training of teachers for teaching in a rural, multi-grade school. It must be noted that the curricula followed at the Teacher Training Colleges for the training of pre-service teachers were also used to teach in-service-training teachers. I found that teachers were still trained with the single-grade

class in mind and in the words of the college educator it was left to individual tutors to introduce them to the "real thing". Miller (1991:1) discovered in his research that "the time requirements and skills needed were simply not part of their prior training and experience" when teachers were ultimately placed in a multi-grade setting. Surwill (1980:6) refers to the marketability of teachers and although he actually meant secondary teachers, the same is required from teachers in a multi-grade setting of a primary school to stay marketable with regard to the demand for teaching posts.

The College has a committee that is responsible for all issues related to practice teaching, for example, the suitable placement of students at various schools for their practice teaching. The tutor explained that students were placed in almost all cases in the Windhoek schools to enable tutors to evaluate them at the local schools. This is contrary to the recommendations of Surwill (1980:6) that "students should be provided the opportunity to visit rural classrooms to observe teachers demonstrating the teaching of these various subjects". In this instance, however, the case of limited financial resources weighed against the benefit of real experience and exposure to what was happening in the field of education, could not be approved. Students need to be informed about what it really feels like to be "out there". Windhoek does not have one single multi-grade school and is therefore not an appropriate venue for student teachers who are expected to work in the rural multi-grade setting. No wonder that the Inspector of Education referred to several cases where newly appointed teachers left their schools after a few days because of the combination of classes in rural schools. Surwill (1980:9) also makes it clear that

> … it appears that students preparing to teach in rural schools are in many cases, faced with the unique responsibilities on the job, that to a degree these unique responsibilities are common to all rural classroom teachers, and for the most part they are not common to teachers in an urban setting.

From my interview with the lecturer I learned that not much was being done to recognize the unique nature of the rural multi-grade classroom and to that effect, the preparation of pre-service teachers leaves much to be desired.

On the direct question concerning what was being done to prepare pre-service students for the leaderships and management challenges in the rural schools or, for

that matter, to any school, the tutor responded that they did discuss some leadership concepts with students, as has been pointed out earlier. A reason for concern to me is that the tutor stated that sometimes "students go out and come back and what they are writing is as if nothing happened at the school". I am also in doubt whenever the generic concepts of "democratic and autocratic" can be considered as preparation for students to meet the leadership and management challenges at schools. I am more concerned about their readiness to recognize the uniqueness of the rural setting and their role in managing the challenge in such a way that quality education can be provided.

The BETD INSET teachers are in a more advantaged position in terms of their preparation, because of their attachment to a formal school. Miller (1991) mentioned the use of developmental theories of learning and learner-centred models of instruction to give new meaning to the multi-grade system, and to that end the INSET teacher has a chance to practise the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education. He argued: "For many rural educators, multi-grade instruction is not an experiment or a new educational trend, but a necessity imposed in part by economic and geographic conditions" (Miller 1991:2). My earlier reference to the budgetary constraints and the availability of resources/jobs is surely implied in this statement by Miller and to that end, reality dictates that teachers be better prepared for a teaching career in the rural, multi-grade school.

5.5 ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

The role of leadership might as well be described as the role of principalship in the context of what is expected of a principal as a leader of people in his/her management of a school.

In the earlier section I made reference to the unique responsibilities of those involved in the management of the rural multi-grade school. The teachers, without exception, made comments about the involvement of the principal in community activities. To me this is one of the outstanding concepts of the involvement of the principal in activities that, in the urban setting, a principal will consider as not constituting a part of his/her business at school, unless it is directly related to the school. Issues like

storing drought relief food, dissemination of maize to pregnant mothers, organizing women's groups, heading the water point community and serving on various development committees are all issues in which the principal of Karas PS is involved. No wonder Ms MA described the role of the principal as *!gurus* (nucleus). Hallinger in Murdoch (2002:3) sees the principal as the "linchpin" for change in schools and a key factor in successful school improvement. The role of the principal in the rural school in Namibia has always been that of church leader, welfare officer, traditional leader, magistrate, lawyer, advisor, mother/father etc. and therefore it is important to the community that principals be visible. Mr P.A. stressed this when he stated that the principal is "the leader of the community".

Smith and Andrews (1989:1-5) reviewed the central role of the principal in the USA and defined the various roles of the principal as "building manager, administrator, politician, change agent, boundary spanner and instructional leader." The suggestion is that indeed the role of the principal cannot simply be confined to teacher and head of administration.

To Mr P.A., the fact that the principal is a full-time teacher in control of a school is unacceptable, while he is clear that he understands that being a young nation has its price. However, the main role of the principal is to make sure that teachers teach, and, in the words of Ms M.A "that children get what they are supposed to get in the school". The simile of Mr PA that teachers are like goats and must not be allowed to "run loose" is a reminder of the importance that he attaches to supervision and control. Smith and Andrews (1989:7) quote Rutherford (1985:32) on his exposition of an effective principal:

> Have clear informed visions … that focus on students and their needs;
> Translate the visions into goals;
> Continuously maintain progress; (my emphasize) and
> Intervene in a supportive or corrective manner …

Which is, perhaps, why Mr P.A. asks the question of how the principal can do all this if she, in this particular case, is fully occupied in a grade2/3 combined class.

Smith and Andrews (1989:7-9) see the following as being among the characteristics of a strong instructional leader:

Places priority on curriculum and instructional issues;
Creates a climate of high expectations in the school;
Functions as a leader with direct involvement in instructional policy by:
Communicates with teachers;
Supports and participates in staff development activities;
Establishes teaching incentives for the use of new instructional strategies;
	and
Displays knowledge of district adopted curriculum materials.

The ultimate concern of Ms M.A. and Mr P.A. was what happens to their children. The fact that principals are occupied with their own classroom management made them realize that the first priority of principals will be the management of their own classrooms and the performance of her/his own learners.

To the requirement that teachers are to be supervised/controlled by the principal, as stated by Mr P.A, Smith and Andrews (1989:7-9) had the following to say: "Continually monitors student progress towards school achievement and teacher effectiveness…Teacher evaluation is:

Characterized by frequent classroom visitation, clear evaluation
criteria, and feedback … and is used to help students and teachers improve
performance.

These are all ideas taken from several research reports and are associated with strong principals (Pessell and Cookson as reported by Smith and Andrews 1989:7-9). My finding is that there is genuine concern about the quality of education in the multi-grade school. The concern has been born out of observable decline in the reading skills of learners in comparison to "what we received as children when we were still in school", as stated by Mr PA. The lack of commitment on the part of learners is blamed on the poor performance of teachers, but to Ms MA the *!gurus* is the expectancy that they have of the principal to maintain, supervise and control the teachers at the school.

Ms MA was also of the opinion that the principal, as leader of the school, should be the first to be aware of any shortcomings with regard to the resources needed to provide quality education. The research by Gibson (1992:4) indicated "… that teachers require materials, time and support in order to introduce new documents into the classroom. The role of the principal is seen to be central to the provision of these

resources". It is in line with the idea put forward by Smith and Andrews (1988:11-12) that the principal is also a resource provider. The challenge does, however, according to them, go beyond the mobilisation of resources. Principals are required to:

> Match staff members' needs to staff development opportunities;
> Convince staff members that they are very important instructional resource people in the school. (The TRC manager made reference to the importance of the teacher as a resource);
> Know staff members' strengths and weaknesses and know about the instructional resources that may be helpful to them.

To be able to see beyond mobilisation of resources the principal must "stay abreast of new developments in materials and strategies for improving strategies" (Smith and Andrews 1989:12). In the context of a rural school, Muse reported in Surwill (1980:8) that teachers felt that their "pre service education did not adequately prepare them for the curricular demands and poor facilities encountered in the rural schools". My opinion is that the information on what resources are available should be shared with teachers and parents equally. The goals and mission should also take into account what schools can deliver in terms of the resources at the school. The idea links up with the requirement that a principal be seen as a resource provider.

Ms MA also expected a broad, open and regular communication between the principal and parents as a very important cornerstone of development and progress at the school. The experience of disagreements at the school between the community and the principal at the Karas P.S. is well known and well documented. Ms MA thought that a breakdown in communication, caused by a failure of the former principal to provide the necessary updates on what was actually happening at the school, was the reason for their request to remove two of their earlier principals from their posts. Ms MA also alluded to what she saw as a problem in the training of principals, which causes the failure to communicate. Smith and Andrews (1989:15-18), described the principal as communicator in one of the four broad areas of being an instructional leader: "The principal articulates a vision of the school that heads everyone in the same direction". They argue that a communicator will determine the goal and mission with the staff, parents and learners as partners. The instructional leader, according to Smith and Andrews (1989:15-18):

> Demonstrates skill in working as a team member;

Demonstrates the ability to use a variety of group process skills in interaction with the staff, parents, and students;
Facilitates groups in selecting courses of action through problem solving techniques.

Regional education staff admitted that priority had been given to the reform process without due recognition of the need for the simultaneous empowerment of leadership and provision of management skills required to effect the changes.

In terms of the question of change, I found the research done by Gibson (1992:9-10) extremely interesting: "…. Change motivated by a philosophy of "change for change's sake"… imposed unrealistic demands upon classroom teachers, lacked professional validity and was seen to typify the negative leadership so common from central administration". The role of the principal as "local instructional leader" was seen as very important in administering the process, ensuring that goals were reached and staff adequately motivated and informed. The Regional education staff all felt that leadership and guidance be provided by the principal. This statement concurred with the results of Gibson's (1992:10) research: "Many teachers felt that it was the principal's role to provide an appropriate leadership model for the administration of the curriculum process". This is in line with the attitude that principals be involved in staff development and to be conscious about changes in instruction and curriculum.

One of the major concerns raised by the teachers is the lack of support and attention that they receive at the hand of their principals. Analysis of this data revealed that teachers felt that the principal was not readily available to them to discuss issues of general concern. The principal explained the interpretation of what is meant by an open door policy as, "depending on whether he/she has a proper appointment made with the secretary." Teachers, on the other hand, felt that the principal is not sufficiently flexible and accessible for meetings. Again this might be the problem of having to teach as well. Sharpe (cited in Tsui Yee Yeung 2000:2) described ten qualities of leadership for the 21st century as discussed in chapter two. What is most significant in his description is that not only should leaders be exemplary and set the tone to reach the goals of the school, but leaders should be confident that their staff has the ability to follow suit. If leaders do not put their trust in their subordinates, the result may cause more damage to the relationship between them. 'Servant leadership'

as discussed earlier (Tsui Yee Yeung 2002:2) puts people before the leader, where it is more important to be of service to others.

I think that the relationship between teachers, parents and the principal is crucial for the goals and mission of the school, but even more important for the national/regional objectives. If there is constant communication between these stakeholders, teachers need not to feel isolated. Smith and Andrews (1989:19-20) refer to it as the "visible presence of the principal as keeper of the vision of the school". Iannaccone and Jamgochian as quoted by Smith and Andrews (1989:19), state:

> Being positive, cheerful, and encouraging, making themselves accessible to the staff, making their presence felt often by moving around the building: doing things with teachers: and involving teachers and getting the staff to express and set their own goals are overlapping elements of *positive school climates and effective, visible principals* (my emphasis).

As much as a principal is concerned with instruction and curriculum, the human resources of the school, especially in a multi-grade system where you almost always lack resources, is always your best investment and should not be neglected.

The assessment that the principal does not delegate and does all the administrative work is seen by Smith and Andrews (1989:1-5) in the broader context of a good school where the ultimate obligation is: "we use our professional knowledge and skills to create conditions in which each child can grow to his/her full potential and all children are given equal opportunity to succeed in our society". If principals do not delegate, the 'knowledge and skills' of the teachers, are not used to their fullest in the interest of the learners, that are suppose to be the ultimate beneficiaries. To be able to delegate properly an effective principal will know his/her strengths and weaknesses and "play to my strengths and share up my weaknesses". Leadership or the style of leadership should not really be an issue, if the purpose of a school is well understood. "Teachers' attitudes and traits have some influence on how principals do their job" according to Smith and Andrews (1989:6), therefore I believe principals should be able to react to such attitudes and traits. The bottom line is that the principal must be a team player that includes his/her stakeholders in making the team a winner.

Regional education staff are of the opinion that principals in the region are not strong (in terms of their training and preparation for their task) enough to handle the management of multi-grade schools. The principal agreed and called it a "lack of training" in the system. The professional staff were critical about the official requirements for appointment to the position of principal. Some argued that qualifications should not be the only criteria, but "the willingness to serve" and not necessarily to be served by others. Some other views reflected by the respondents were that principals should not see themselves as administrators and thereby lose sight of other educational and empirical operations: paradigm shifts should not only be in the mind, but action will be needed.

Beare (1998:23), as referred to by Murdoch (2002:2), labelled those principals of primary schools who teach, "the heroes in the building of the nation". Beare hereby expresses the importance of the small rural school and the role it plays in the development of "Education for All". The goals of access, equity, equality and democracy can only become a reality if recognition is given to the role of the teaching principal. The role of the teaching principal within the Namibian context is complicated by the role they have to play in the achievement of the political goals. As stated underneath the Australian set up also did see the changing role of the principal and therefore embarked on various management programs to meet the new challenges:

> The role of the school principal has undergone significant changes as a consequence of devolutionary trends and principals are now required to deal with the dilemmas that autonomy (*decentralisation*), efficiency and accountability (*democracy*) bring to the school setting (Lexacic, 1998; Sackney & Dibski, 1994 as quoted by Murdoch, 2002:3).

A paradigm shift, as reported earlier, needs to be made in the context of the professionalism of the principal and his ability to have a vision, but also the willingness to seek assistance from his/her stakeholders.

5.6 COMMITMENT TO TEAMWORK

Respondents all referred to the need for teamwork as a prerequisite to quality education. The swing towards teamwork is emphasised in the literature, for example:

Traditionally, administrators have had sole authority - and responsibility- for organising their school or district and determining its priorities, while teachers and other staff have had little responsibility for the overall success of their organization" (Annenberg Institute 2002:2).

According to Cohen (1994:201) the pre-independent education system was virtually all south African-based. "As such, it was lacking in national character, confirming the ineffectiveness and powerlessness of the boards as independent policy making bodies". The statement by Ms M.A. that school boards should be involved in all activities of the school should thus be seen in a serious light and within the context of the current policy that promotes the involvement of boards in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the school. The changed and perceived role of principals as instructional leaders expects the players to adapt to the new democratic vision as contemplated in the Education Act. Lashway (1999:3) wants to see "distributed leadership, with leaders urged to disperse decision making throughout the school community". He does admit: "school leaders have had little training to prepare them for the challenge" (1999:2). The challenge of being an agent of change, according to the principal of Karas PS, is not new to the Karas region. Taking into account that Namibia is a young nation with an education system that is in transition, the facilitative model is a good way to guide the action of the principal "using teamwork to create participation in collective decision making" (Lashway 1999:3).

I agree with Ms MA, that if the triangle of parents, principal and teachers is working effectively towards the progress of the school, the school will grow from strength to strength.

5.7 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN THE MULTI-GRADE CLASSROOM

During my observation of Ms G, I could sense her commitment to the task of quality education. Her concern however, whether or not she was on the right track, is valid and adds up to the same sentiment expressed by the head teacher. The head teacher felt that she was not sure how to advise teachers on their problems: they all try to make the best of it. The NAESP (National Association of Elementary School

Principals) in the USA, in their 2001 report, page 2 about the ever-expanding responsibilities, identified six standards for today's principals. With relevance to the learning environment I quote some of the standards they set:

Heading schools in a way that puts student and adult learning at the centre.
Promoting the academic success of all students…and organizing the school environment around school achievement;
Creating and demanding rigorous content and instruction to ensure student progress.

I agree with the SSSTA research centre report, on page 5 that "the task of the principal must be kept focussed on activities which pave the way for high student achievement (Ubben and Hughes, as cited in Findley and Findley 1992: 102). After all, the quality of the school is determined by the achievement of the learners. It is therefore a challenge to the multi-grade school to bridge the concern of Mr PA that learners are produced that are not able to read effectively.

5.8 CONSULTATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

Much has already been said about the importance of consultation in the management of the school. The willingness of the principal should be seen as a major step in the direction "towards a vision of greater group involvement based on capacity and on priorities" (Mohr and Dichter 2002:3). Mohr and Dichter also explained that "Groups are powerful …and it is useful for the leader to solicit input, envision a design, and then present a plan to the group. The group can digest it, modify it, and then look for agreement" (2003:3). The scenario where the principal leaves it to the group to make decisions is as unacceptable as the situation where the principal makes all decisions. The self-reflection that the professional staff hinted at is important in order for any leader to share his/her input, but also to be able to correct actions.

5.9 GENERAL COMMENT

No clear guidelines for the implementation of the multi-grade system have been set, according to the Inspector of Education, and perhaps the "denial of their existence", as stated by one of the respondents becomes an issue. Marland (2003:1) claimed in his paper that "Multi-grade classrooms, are dotted all over the educational landscape …multi-graded ness is not an uncommon occurrence." As can be seen from the data

provided in the literature review concerning multi-grade schools, they "are not just a feature of rural schools… either by necessity or choice". Marland (2003:1) stated, "Issues of equity and social justice in Australia have focussed attention on the educational provisions for children in rural Australia". In Namibia "education has come to be considered as a basic human right, to be available to all people" (MEC, 1993:2-3). The challenge for all stakeholders is to protect this fundamental right, as enshrined in the Namibian Constitution (article 20).

The CEP agreed with the setting of guidelines and added: "Get that understanding and insight in multi-grade teaching in place". He considered the training of the principal as a prerequisite. In the SSTA centre report (1995:5) the approach to effect the necessary changes are quoted as: "Firstly, there must be an understanding of the meaning of the term 'instructional leader' and, secondly, there must be an examination of what leadership qualities are needed and what actions are necessary to fulfil this role". Again the challenge is to recognize the multi-grade system as a reality and not "a new experiment or educational trend" as described by Miller (1991:2), that has been imposed on the region, and indeed on the country, because of the four major goals of education. Economic and geographical conditions (vast distances) made the Karas region one of the targets for the implementation of the programmes concerned with social justice and equity. The foundation of the liberation struggle has always been to rectify the injustices of the past; therefore the challenge was on this region to implement policy, irrespective of whether or not the policy appears to be actively working against them.

Various respondents called for a 5-year contract with the provision that non-performing principals not be allowed to stay on in their posts. If the principal is seen as the "pivotal point within the school that affects the quality of individual teacher instruction, the height of student achievement, and the degree of efficiency in school functioning" (SSTA Report 2003:5), the idea is not far-fetched. The challenge to all is to prepare principals for their respective and changing roles.

In conclusion to this chapter, I would like to quote Miller (1991) as discussed in chapter two, who stated that the multi-grade system has many rewards (as also expressed by some of the teachers) and many challenges. Issues like teaching two

grades at the same, organisation and management of the multi grade class with the few resources available and to establish a learning culture in the class, where learners are able to help each other, will always remain a challenge.

Whether we agree with this or not, it points to the implications that it has for the role of the "! gurus" (the principal) "to take on a dramatically different role as stated by Strong in the SSTA report (2003:5). I now continue make some recommendations as to what the Karas region can do to address some of the challenges.

5.10 SUMMARY

It is clear that many skills are required to meet the leadership challenges, such as, to name a few: communication, evaluation, decision making, interpersonal skills, decision making skills, people skills and problem solving skills.

From the various viewpoints one could argue that there is a need for greater awareness of the reality of multi-gradedness, and an even greater responsibility on the part of all stakeholders to provide support to the principal and management of the school. The importance of instructional leadership and its role has been highlighted throughout my study, and a greater awareness of the concept and its application can contribute to more understanding and support of school leadership. The instructional leadership call is not without complexity especially against the background of the various roles of the principal as pointed out in chapter four. The expectations raised by Smith and Andrews (1989:18-20) stress that the principal as instructional leader needs to be visible at all times. This means that the principal must not only be accessible to all stakeholders, but also be felt in formal and informal observations. Some may see the direct supervisory role as a spying game, and therefore it is important that the principal be trained and empowered to deal with situations of conflict. Staff members must be allowed room to move, and the principal must be supportive of the initiatives. It is therefore important that the goals, vision and mission should be a product of the staff and not that of the principal alone. Regular feedback to staff members and a genuine commitment to the task may pave the way for better understanding.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of my study is on how leadership and management are coping with the challenges of multi-grade teaching and learning in the Karas region. In order to illustrate this, I have shown the various challenges from the perspective of several of the stakeholders in education, to be able to do that. The experiences of the stakeholders represent members of the ordinary farming community, ranging to highly professionally and qualified staff at the school and the regional education office.

In this final chapter I start with an overview of my findings as discussed under the various themes in the previous chapter. Secondly I consider the implications of the findings for principals in the multi-grade school. There is a similarity between the multi-grade school principal and almost all rural principals or, as I call them in chapter five of my text, the teaching primary school principal. The next step will be to make some recommendations for future research and to light the fire to provoke further interest in the multi-grade school system. It will be advantageous for teachers studying at colleges, and, in fact, for all principals and teachers to learn from the recommendations outlined and build up an awareness of what to expect, as well as how to support principals of multi-grade schools. In the last section I look at the limitations of my study.

6.2 SUMMARY OF MY FINDINGS

By looking at the multi-grade school system and the challenges that it poses for school managers, I became aware of the major ignorance of educators in the region with regard to the existence of the unique challenges multi-grade schooling offers to

leadership and management. The principal of the school I studied progressed from being an ordinary secondary school teacher to principal of a primary school. Even with 20 years of experience, she still could not cope with the demands on her that the multi-grade classroom exerted. The problems she experienced with the system were a direct result of the implementation of the staffing norms in 2000. Her cry for support from the MBESC is sufficient evidence of the bad experiences she had in implementing the staffing norms. The fact that the principal had a combined class of grade 2 and 3 concerned the community/parents so much that they were adamant that the principal and the MBESC failed their children. The parents felt that the principal should be in the office to supervise the teachers and to attend to the issues pertaining to the smooth running of the school.

The teachers at the school felt that the principal did not do enough to support them in the implementation of the multi-grade system. They were of the opinion that the principal should lead by example and give them enough support to be able to cope with the demands of the multi-grade class. The teachers have also described the role of the principal as leader of the community – a sentiment echoed by the parents/community. Naturally this brings many additional challenges and responsibilities to the position.

The high priority the principal placed on dealing with her teaching responsibilities did not sit well with the parents. While the principal claimed to be accessible, the parents felt that she did not respond to the needs of the community/parents. The driving force behind the principal seemed to be her commitment to the learners. Although she had no formal training in the multi-grade system, she worked out strategies to improve learning in the classroom.

The regional education officials considered the role of the principal as being complex in nature. They were clear on the position that principals do not have any leadership training and because of that lack of training were in no position to administer the school properly. Staff development and motivation of teachers were seen as crucial responsibilities of the principal.

The goals of education, in terms of the pre-independence government are access, equity, quality and democracy. The staffing norms are not only the result of a policy of equity (fairness) in the country, but parents complained that a lack of commitment on the part of teachers make parents take their children out of the school. The drop in enrolment, which the parents blamed on the lack of direction from the principal, in addition to the non-commitment of teachers, is yet another challenge to the leadership of the school.

All agreed that the focal point of the school was the principal "who affects the quality of individual teacher instruction, the height of student achievement, and the degree of efficiency in school functioning" (SSTA Research Centre 1995:5).

The principal was aware of the many challenges that she faced in terms of her leadership. She claimed that she tried her best, but admitted that the challenges were too much to cope with. Support was lacking and she was of the opinion that the support of both the Ministry of Basic Education and the parental component was needed to enable her to do her job properly.

As I have pointed out, she considered the implementation of the multi-grade system as a positive step and was of the opinion that, with a little bit of help from stakeholders, she would be able to fulfill her leadership role. She had formal training as a primary school teacher, but admitted that there is much more to principalship than the day-to-day administration of the school. The evaluation and supervision of the teachers that parents constantly referred to is part of her responsibility. She was equally concerned about the educational outcome, especially when the parents referred to the failure of learners to read.

She took up the position of principal under conditions where she had "enough" teachers in the classes and a head of department that could coordinate teaching and learning activities. She also had some time available during the day (she had lesson-free periods) to monitor the progress of teachers and to be able to check whether or not teachers were delivering the goods. She recognized the importance of being a

leader in the school and setting the vision and priorities, but was very aware of her limitations in terms of being prepared for the job.

The fact that colleges are not informed about the concept of multi-grade teaching is a matter of concern. The challenges to the principals can partly be addressed if student teachers are fully prepared for their service in the small rural school.

Although, at times, the principal was very frustrated, she showed signs of hard work and commitment. Being a woman in a position of authority – in a male gendered environment and culture - was already difficult enough, for she was aware of the critical eyes watching her, but the lack of support from stakeholders caused the situation to worsen.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The research was undertaken mainly with a focus on the multi-grade school, but revealed much about the modern principal. The role of the principal in the improvement of school programmes highlighted the importance/relevance of the challenges that schools face.

The data supported the multi-grade school as a viable alternative to the single graded school. The data are contained in the responses of the teacher that I observed, and the positive attitude that she projected in the interview. The only condition that was suggested is for the principal to furnish guidance and direction to meet the challenges of the modern school. The data further highlighted the interdependence of all stakeholders in education if the challenges of a multi-grade school are to be met. The role of the parent/community in this relationship (interdependence) has been the source of the concern of the community leader.

As I indicated in chapter five, multi-grade schools are predominantly represented in isolated, rural areas, but research has indicated the willingness of the developed world such as the USA to use multi-grade schooling. To this end, my research indicated the

importance of ongoing staff development and a commitment on the part of the teacher to work hard. Such staff development needs to be relevant to the needs of all the stakeholders in a multi-grade school. Another finding was the importance on the part of the principal of supervision and evaluation of staff, being the leader of the team, and support of the educational endeavours related to the mission, vision and goal of the school.

The concern for reading ability raised the question on the quality of education and linked this to the need for good instruction and the deliverance of competencies and skills, in accordance with the policies of the national body. My research indicated the need for effective leadership, leadership characterized by rules and routines being not only clear but also shared, and where resources are made available to reach the goals of the school.

The idea of a general curriculum instead of a rural-appropriate curriculum offers educators the opportunity to be concerned about the absence of policy on multi-grade schools in Namibia. The reason for the implementation of multi-grade teaching can be considered in the context of the vast distances, the economic conditions and the scarce population density in the southern part. Miller (1991:2) considered the need to distinct between single-grade schools and multi-grade schools, based on his assessment of academic achievement, in what he terms, "significant differences". This best describes the danger of simulating the small, rural and mostly multi-grade school and urban schools as if they have the same leadership challenges, and without due recognition of the reality and complexity of the school society. He also warns against the generalization about subject and grade levels.

Although my study has shown many challenges it has also indicated the complexity of the multi-grade school as educational strategy. The positive response from one of the teachers and the leadership of the school should, however, be regarded as an appreciation of the teacher's approach to solving the complex challenges.

I will now continue to make a few recommendations in order to address the challenges that were identified. This section will show that these are challenges and not problems that cannot be overcome.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUTLI-GRADE SCHOOLING

I earlier emphasized the fact (chapter two) that the multi-grade system is not new in Namibia, and confirmed it with data provided by parents. Data also revealed that those receiving college education were not familiar with the concept of multi-grade schooling. There is thus a need for a clear policy about multi-grade schooling to enable the leadership and managers at all educational levels to cope with the quest for direction. The national curriculum contents, teaching and learning materials (even the lower primary reform) and related education activities are geared towards the single-graded schools. The fact that teachers are trained for single-grade settings and are thus unprepared for the multi-grade teaching environment only increases the confusion. Models for multi-grade teaching (like in Colombia and Australia) can be developed with the assistance of UNESCO or the World Bank. I referred to the questions raised by UNESCO in this report. The actions in education must be brought in line with the reality that multi-grade schooling has been necessitated by our economic and geographical conditions.

The leadership's requirements in terms of vision, mission and goals force us to rethink the current situation of employment of management at schools. Staff development to improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership skills also requires capacity building for school managers. Efforts to determine a well planned training programme for school leadership must be supported. One of the guidelines must be to create a learning culture and to support high performance expectations. Every effort should be expended in developing programmes to support quality education.

Leadership and students at colleges should be required to master the skills to handle a multi-grade class. A strong background in the ability to teach reading seems to be a valid concern, and should be considered. Staff development, in terms of leadership, should go beyond supervision and include the ability to assist and direct.

Leadership/management will fall short of expectations with regard to support if students at colleges are not prepared for their task. To that end, student teachers must be assigned to rural schools to observe the teachers and principals in the actual situation.

The setting up and planning of a multi-grade curriculum/scheme of work must be a consideration.

A network can be established at regional and national level and be linked with NIED so that multi-grade principals can share their experiences and challenges with each other. The current cluster system can be utilized to further the development of such a network.

Several efforts to prepare principals for their jobs were made by the Ministry of Education with the assistance of various NGO's, but the data indicated that subject development was the main concern. A formal programme involving all regional staff must be started to train principals and management in the performance of the relevant tasks. Issues rose in the data included: communication, resource provision, staff development, visibility, vision and mission, cooperation, participation and teamwork.

Instructional leadership must include teachers, parents and the principal. Problems and solutions must be based on the vision of collaborative efforts. All training programmes must be made sensitive to the democratic process in the country.

The challenges can be met if all programmes of the MBESC provide room for partnership based on mutual trust and benefit. A central office (whether regional or local) acting as an enforcement agent can be harmful to the vision of a school if its powers are not exercised with caution and restraint.

6.5 POSSIBLE AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the second chapter I indicated my two main themes as "multi-grade" and "instructional leadership". I realize that multi-grade schooling is a topic that could well be researched in the context of the absence of policy on multi-grade teaching in Namibia. The researcher can look into the meaning of multi-grade schooling and the specific role of classroom management, with very specific reference to instruction and curriculum. The results of the study will hopefully impact on what is happening in the classroom of a multi-grade school. One can look at the role of the teacher in the class, but also peer tutoring as an option in bringing the learning material to the learners.

Another aspect that could be helpful is the probing of the role of the parent/community in multi-grade schooling. The data in my findings illustrated the concerns of the parents and could well provide a way to investigate how they are involved and what are the issues they think could be properly addressed. Their expected involvement in the management of the classroom in terms of instruction and curriculum could be made clear, and thereby their role be made clear.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF MY STUDY

The study that I undertook has some limitations.

In the first instance, it is a very small-scale study that involves one rural school in the Karas Education Region. Although I also made contact with a few teachers at a second rural school, I did not use the data obtained from the questionnaire for my research. I interviewed one principal, both in her capacity as teacher and being the manager of the school. I observed only one lesson from a newly appointed, but experienced, teacher and interviewed 4 teachers (2 male and 2 female) on the issues of multi-grade teaching and leadership at the school. I used a questionnaire, but the second time around I added some questions that were to clarify the already provided data. A bigger study would obviously have the advantage of generalizing findings, but may lack the depth a case study can achieve. The scope of this study argued

against increasing the scope beyond what was reasonably achievable in the given time.

An issue of this magnitude and importance needs to be studied on a much broader scope, and I would strongly recommend a national survey to obtain base-line data. Clearly policy will need to be developed, and a study of this kind would provide important parameters.

Constraints related to time and financial resources did not allow me to go beyond the information provided by my informants, especially in the case of the principal. Obvious disagreement on the approach of the principal in terms of involvement, for example in community activities could have been probed with involvement of other relevant stakeholders. Indeed, this would be a fruitful area for future research. The validity of the results in terms of the challenges to leadership has, however, been crosschecked with professional staff and the interview with college staff.

Having said that, I am quite confident that the issues emerging from this study could be of huge value to education in the Karas region and the country at large.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

SCHOOL:

Questions to Teachers

Profile of Teacher

Name [Optional]

Age

Qualifications: School

Qualifications: Professional

Qualifications: Other

Teaching Experience in General

Teaching in multi-grade classes

Teaching in Primary Schools

Teaching in Secondary Schools

Teaching in Combined Schools

MBESC (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture) In-service-training

workshops attended

Other relevant workshops [Relevant to Education]

Multi grade

Do you currently teach in a multi-grade class?

If yes, name combined groups.

Do you have any experience in the teaching of multi-grade classes?

When was the first time that you taught a multi-grade class?

Did you ever receive training in the teaching of a multi-grade class?

Do you think it is necessary to have multi-grade training?

If you were trained, indicate where and who trained you?

What was the content of your training all about?

Did you receive any kind of assistance from the Principal of the school in the setting

and teaching of your multi-grade class?

What kind of support did you receive from the regional office in terms of assistance?

Did you find teaching in a single graded class different from teaching a multi-grade class?

What were the major differences?

If you ever had a choice, which type of class (single graded or multi graded) would you prefer? Why?

Do you think that your teaching has been effective? Elaborate.

If you had the chance in the same multi-grade class what would you have done differently?

If you had a choice, would you enrol your child at a multi graded school? Elaborate.

If you could improve on the current situation at your school, what would you suggest to the MBESC?

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Have you ever heard of the concept before? If yes, please state where and when.

What is your understanding of instructional leadership?

Do you think that your principals have been effective as instructional leaders?

What are the things that you think they are doing right?

What are the things you think they should be doing?

Do you think that a principal should be teaching at all or not or rather partly?

Do you think that a principal should make all decisions at a school?

Which decisions another body and or institution or person should take?

Examples of areas include: Curriculum; Discipline of teachers; Discipline of learners; In-service-training; Personnel; School Budget; School development fund; Stock control/inventory etc.

What is your idea of a "good" principal or an "effective" principal?

If you were to become a principal of a multi-grade school what are the things that you will be doing?

Do you think that a principal of a multi-grade school is doing less work that his/her colleagues at a single grade school? Give reasons for your view.

Would you rather be a principal at a multi-grade school than a single grade school?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR REGIONAL STAFF

The purpose of the research is to find out how principals cope with the leadership and management challenges of multi-grade teaching at rural schools. Special attention will be given to instructional leadership. The research will benefit Namibia in general but most definitely the Karas/Hardap Educational regions.

The identity of participants will remain confidential and anonymous to the extent allowed by Namibian/International laws.

Information on the findings will be released to Rhodes University in South Africa and, if so required, to the MBESC (Namibia).

Participation is voluntarily but participants are encouraged to answer all question as fair and honest as possible.

Any questions related to this research should be directed to Mr Petrus David Titus at 0812565453 (cell) or 063-223744 (h); 063-222811 (w) or e-mail: tit 257@yahoo.com

TO BE COMPLETED BY REGIONAL STAFF (DIRECTORS; INSPECTORS OF EDUCATION; ADVISORY TEACHERS; TRC MANAGERS; PLANNERS; PRINCIPALS.)

POSITION:………………………………………………………….

DATE COMPLETED:……………………………………………………

REGION:………………………………………………………….

TOWN:………………………………………………………….

GENDER:………………………………………………………….

NATIONALITY:………………………………………………..

QUESTION 1

For each of the statements underneath, please tick () the column/box that best represent your own opinion.

	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Not sure 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
A Multi grade					
(i) There are clear guidelines on multi-grade teaching in our school system.					
(ii) Teachers are fully equipped for teaching in a multi-grade class.					
(iii) National policies/directives exist that direct principals.					
(iv) Principals are trained in the supervision and management of multi-grade classes.					
(v) Teaching materials are available in schools to support multi-grade teaching.					
(vi) Curriculums have been adapted to fit the current staffing norms.					
(vii) Specific curricula/prescribed texts are available for multi-grade teaching.					
(viii) Most teachers are willing to teach multi-grade classes.					

(xi) Regional staff are trained in the supervision of multi-grade classes.					
(x) I do not think that multi-grade classes should receive higher priority as it currently does.					
(xi) The leadership at schools are able enough to handle multi-grade management.					
(xii) New pre-service graduates are well-equipped for teaching at rural schools.					
(xiii) Most teachers teaching at rural schools are fully qualified.					
(xiv) The main reason for the creation of multi-grade classes are:					
(a) to give children access to school					
(b) to reduce of the wage bill					
(c) because of scarce resources					
(xv) The creation of a unit within the MBESC is needed to develop multi-grade classes.					
(xvi) Preferential treatment (e.g. bonuses) to teachers assigned to multi-grade classes are needed.					
(xvii) Learner performance in multi-grade classes is not satisfactory.					

(xviii) The allocation of funds according to the number of the learners in a school is justified.					
B. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP					
(i) Principals should be administrators.					
(ii) Principals should not be expected to teach.					
(iii) Leadership can no longer be exercised on the basis of experience or natural ability.					
(iv) The quality of the headmaster is the single most important variable in school effectiveness.					
(v) The principal must take ulti-mate responsibility for the actions of his/her teachers.					
(vi) Principals should avoid crisis-management.					
(vii) Principals must participate in staff and management development.					
(viii) Principals have sole authority and responsibility to organize his/her school and to determine priorities.					
(ix) Safety and security of learners are not the concern of the school management.					

(x) Principals should lead the in-structional and academic performance in the school.					
(xi) Management must demand rigorous content and instruction.					
(xii) Principals must be lead learners and teachers.					
(xiii) Schools are people organizations.					

COMMENTS:

1. Leaders should understand that "serving others" is important. Do you think that this also applies to the school community?

………
………
………

2. What is your understanding of "effective leadership"?

………
………
………

3. Should the creation of multi-grade classes be temporary or long term? Explain.

………
………
………

4. Do we need special legislation or regulations for multi-grade classes? Why?

………
………
………

5. Do you think that the current principals are coping with the demand of multigrade teaching in their schools?
……… ……… ………
6. How can principals be empowered to cope with the challenges of the leadership and management expected from them to run their schools effectively?
……… ………..……………………………………………………………………………………………………….
7. Any other comments you would like to make.
……… ……… ………..……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION RECORD (NARRATIVE)

Topic: …………………………………………

Teacher: …………………………………………

Grade(s): …………………………………………

1. Sequence in which lesson develops.

_____

_____

2. Management of content/time:

_____

_____

3. Layout of classroom (Seating arrangements):

_____

_____

4.   Instructional dimensions:

4.1   Classroom organization:

_____

_____

4.2   Classroom Management and discipline (Schedules and routine)

_____

_____

4.3   Instructions organization and curriculum (e.g.   strategies/activities/routine)

_____

_____

4.4   Instructional delivery and grouping (methods group activities
across and within Grade levels, quality of learning)

_____

_____

_____

4.5   Self directed learning (learner skill)

_____

_____

_____

4.6   Peer tutoring

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.   Any other observation.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW WITH A FEMALE COLLEGE LECTURER (TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE)

Background questions: Where are you employed? What is your role at your institution? How long have you been teaching pre-service teachers?

What would you say are the most important issues that you dealt with in your training of pre-service teachers?

Do you prepare pre-service teachers for multi-grade schooling? If yes, what are the things you do? If no, do you think it is a topic worthwhile to teach or to learn about?

What in your view, should your contribution be in preparing students to teach in rural schools?

Who determines the schools at which pre-service teachers do their practice teaching? What are your expectations whenever you send out learners?

What are the instructions to: a) Pre-service teachers b) School principals/teachers during the period of practice teaching?

What in your opinion should the role of the Teacher Training College be in preparing the teachers for the leadership and management challenges at the schools?

APPENDIX E

OBSERVATION OF LEARNING

Name of Teacher: …………………………….Subject: ……………………………

Grade(s): …………………………….Topic: ……………………………

Total of learners in grade: …………………….Date: ……………………………

Indicator: Learners participate actively in the lessons.

Critical questions: Are learners actively engaged in the lesson?

Criteria	Frequency		
	1	2	3
- Are learners properly seated	☐	☐	☐
- Learners ask questions	☐	☐	☐
- Learners listen attentively	☐	☐	☐
- Learners are all busy	☐	☐	☐
- Learners are involved in the management and organization of the class.	☐	☐	☐

Coding:

1.Not at all.

2. Some of the time.

3. All of the time.

Elaboration (include other relevant criteria or make any remarks)

_____

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW OF PRINCIPAL/PARENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

What is your idea of a leader?

Is a school principal also included in your definition of a leader?

What are the things you expect a principal to be/to do?

Do you have any prior knowledge of a multi-grade school? If yes, explain.

Are you happy with this school being a multi-grade school in terms of what learners get out of it?

Is there anything –in terms of teaching/instruction/management that you would do different?

How important is leadership in the school given the school being a multi-grade school?

Who do you think is responsible for the leadership? Indicate the level of importance in terms of parent involvement, principal's leadership role, government's role, teachers and that of the community in general?

Anything you want to add?

Additional questions to the Principal: Are you happy with the leadership at the school? Explain.

If you could do anything different what would it be**?**