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The role of management and leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners: A case study of a school in Namibia

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Most schools that serve learners who come from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds face unusually difficult challenges. These schools experience poor performance and disciplinary problems, and teachers lack motivation and commitment. This study explores the role of leadership and management in the schooling of at-risk learners at Pandu Primary School. This school accommodates learners mostly from Hafo, a township characterised by poverty with a high crime rate. However, in spite of these factors school inspectors and advisory teachers perceive the school to be successful. The school uses an abundance of energy and unusually high levels of human effort in a very focused way to improve the teaching and learning standard.

The study found the co-existence of apparently conflicting management and leadership approaches in managing and leading the school. Strict control used in the school to make teachers work hard is an element of classical organisational theory, with its emphasis on span of control or number of workers supervised. Policies with strict rules are in place to create a calm atmosphere and serve as directives for teachers and learners. On the other hand, constructivist approaches – such as instructional leadership, transformational leadership, collegial model of management and open systems – are also clearly evident in the findings. Instructional leadership is evident in the emphasis on improvement of classroom practice. Elements of transformational leadership are seen in that the principal motivates the teachers and serves as a role model. The school also has some features of the collegial model of management, and can be described as an open system.

Thus, by drawing on management and leadership approaches informed by different traditions and philosophies, the school succeeds against severe odds.

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I am also thankful to my husband Mike, my three children Mukumo, Ndapandula and Ndinelago and my niece Irja for understanding and moral support.

DECLARATION

I, Emma Ipinge, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

DOE	The Department of Education (South Africa)
MBESC	Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture (Namibia)
NCAC	The National Coalition of Advocates for Children
NCE	National Commission of Education
UK	The United Kingdom
USA	The United States of America

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the study

The advent of compulsory school education in Namibia (Namibia Republic 1991: 12-13) has focused attention on children who, for a variety of reasons, did not have access to education in the previous dispensation. The national education policy, *Toward education for all* (Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC] 1993) reiterates Constitutional provisions that educators must be prepared to deal with all children who reach school-going age, irrespective of their social and economic status or ethnic origins and experiences.

Whilst receiving considerable attention internationally (see, for example, Lehr and Harris 1988, Knapp and Associates 1995, The National Commission on Education (NCE) 1996, Pianta and Walsh 1996, and Hixson and Tinzmann (online), the schooling of at-risk children in Namibia needed to be highlighted in new policy as recently as 2000. The *National policy options for educationally marginalised children* (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture [MBESC] 2000) was formulated to accelerate the implementation of the “education for all” policy. According to this policy educationally marginalised children are children who for one or other reason have difficulty in gaining access to basic education, drop out prematurely or have been pushed out from the formal education system by the system itself. They may be farm-workers’ children in remote rural areas, street children, children with physical or mental impairment, children in need of community-based rehabilitation, over-aged children or children from families in extreme poverty (MBESC 2000).

Internationally these children are termed as “at-risk” children. Other terms used for at-risk children are disadvantaged, culturally deprived, dropout-prone, marginal,

underprivileged, and impoverished (NCE 1996, Pianta and Walsh 1996, and Lehr and Harris 1988). Typically learners fitting this description attend schools that are impoverished and disadvantaged. Throughout this thesis I use the term “at-risk” to refer to these learners.

Hixson and Tinzmann (online), Knapp and Associates (1995) and Pianta and Walsh (1996) claim that it became obvious that large numbers of students from low-income families perform poorly academically and schools which serve these children face difficulties. However, research in the UK (National Commission on Education 1996: 5) found that many individual schools in disadvantaged areas had succeeded in providing quality education to all learners irrespective of their capabilities and by pursuing particular policies and practices. The Commission shows that disadvantaged schools in the United Kingdom succeeded against the odds chiefly because of strong, effective, positive and focused leadership. Similarly in South Africa, Christie (2000) identified disadvantaged schools that succeeded because they have strong management teamwork, exemplary principals and shared leadership. Lehr and Harris (1988) contend that literature on school effectiveness emphasizes the role of leadership in restructuring and re-organising schools, developing new strategies and alternative schools to provide effective education for the growing population of at-risk students who will be adults of tomorrow. These studies have played a significant role in shaping my research, by highlighting the management and leadership elements which enable schools to overcome disadvantage.

Current leadership thinking focuses on transformational and instructional leadership. Bass and House (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 394) assert that transformational leadership is when leaders inspire and motivate their followers and colleagues to view their performance from new perspectives, create an awareness of the mission or vision of the organisation and motivate them to look beyond their own interests toward those that will benefit the whole organisation. Instructional leadership is more task-focused; instructional leaders work directly with teaching and learning, focusing on school-based activities such as assistance to teachers, staff development and curriculum development.

It also includes exploratory studies of indirect effects of principal-teacher instructional meetings and behaviours, such as the effects of monitoring student progress and principal behaviour on teachers and classroom instruction (Blase and Blase 2000).

Hafo (pseudonym), a township in Namibia, is overcrowded and characterized by poverty with many children living with their parents in shabby shelters (commonly known as *pondoks*). Some of these children can be described as street children as they spend much of their time in front of supermarkets pushing trolleys and begging for money from tourists and other people for survival. The majority of these learners attend school at Pandu Primary School (pseudonym). According to the inspectors and advisor teachers' reports the school is perceived as successful (MBESC 2002). Their annual report states that the school has mechanisms in place to improve the performance of the disadvantaged learners to a level that is superior to other similar schools and the school is doing well academically (MBESC 2002).

My interest was to investigate the management and leadership behaviour applied in this school to provide quality education to learners from low-income families who are expected to perform poorly academically (Lehr and Harris 1988, Knapp and Associates 1995, and NCE 1996). I anticipate that my findings could inform other schools working with similar learners. The value of this research also lies in its being able to inform policy-makers about issues surrounding the implementation of policy on educationally marginalized children.

1.2 Goal

The main goal is to investigate perceptions of the role of management and leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners. A sub-goal is to explore how the national policy options for educationally marginalised children are understood and implemented at a management level.

1.3. Methodology

I operated within the interpretive paradigm, as I was interested in understanding the perceptions and experiences of Pandu Primary School management in addressing the issue of at-risk children. According to Cantrell (1993: 84) this paradigm enables a researcher to understand the situation of the phenomenon and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting.

The method of research is a case study. Janse van Rensburg (2001:16) states that this method reflects an interest in contextual meaning making, rather than generalised rules. Instead of surveying large groups, this method takes a close look at individuals or small groups in naturalistic settings. The school was chosen on account of the fact that many learners at this school come from low-income communities and the school is believed to be putting in extra effort to improve the performance of disadvantaged learners.

I employed semi-structured interviews as a data collecting technique. According to Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991:260-261) these interviewing techniques are used in an effort to obtain a more intensive understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and motivations than a standardized questionnaire permits. The semi- and unstructured interview is useful in scouting a new area of research, to find out what the basic issues are, how people conceptualise the topic, what terminology people use, and what their level of understanding is. The interviews contained open-ended questions to allow in-depth probing (Cohen and Manion 1994). I used a tape recorder to record the responses.

I interviewed the principal, one head of department, three 'veteran' teachers and two recently transferred teachers. The 'veterans' were included because they had seen the school go through several leadership and management changes. The school had experienced a fairly high leadership turnover rate. In interviewing the principal I focused on his perceptions of the leadership and management skills he provided. The other interviews probed respondents' perceptions of how the principal's leadership style influenced and promoted effective teaching and learning in the school. I also probed

their knowledge of the policy document (*National policy options for educationally marginalized children*) and how they understood it and implemented it.

I analysed the data using generic qualitative data analysis techniques. I transcribed the tape recordings of the interviews. The data were read and examined carefully looking for emerging themes/categories. After identifying the themes I sorted the data placing them under relevant themes/categories (Smither, Houston, and McIntire 1996:197).

For ethical reasons, the 7 participants were kept fully informed of the purpose of the research. They were informed that the information would be kept confidential, and their identities and that of their schools would not be revealed to the public.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

In chapter two I present an overview of literature that I have found relevant to my study. I provide a brief description of who at-risk children are, as well as the causative factors for children to be at-risk of failure, drop out and exclusion from schools. A discussion of the education of at-risk learners is included in this chapter. I discuss the concepts of leadership and management. I examine two case studies of successful disadvantaged schools. I also explore the educational policies designed to deal with the problem of at-risk children, which show the government's concern about the education of these learners.

In chapter three I address the aim of my study and discusses the research approach and method applied to my research project. The selection of the sample, data gathering, analysis of data, some ethical issues and limitations in my methodology are also discussed in this chapter.

In chapter four I present the data under themes and chapter five I discuss and interpret the findings of my study.

In chapter six I summarise the main findings, focus on the potential value of my study and discuss its limitations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

While the phenomenon of at-risk learners and their education is has received much attention of late, research into the nature and role of leadership and management in the schooling of at-risk children is relatively scarce (NCE 1996; Christie 2001). I could find no literature addressing this issue in a Namibian context. This chapter is structured as follows:

- The first section attempts to provide a brief overview of the characteristics of the children who are considered at-risk.
- The second section discusses the causative factors for children to be at-risk of failure, dropping out and exclusion from schools.
- The third section looks at the education of the at-risk learners.
- The fourth section examines the concepts of leadership and management.
- The fifth section examines the case studies conducted in disadvantaged schools who manage to maintain high educational standards.
- The last section examines the educational policies/reforms designed to deal with the problem of at-risk children, which show the governments' concern about the education of at-risk children.

2.2 Who are at-risk children?

The topic of at-risk children is a broad one, but this study examines the literature that deals with the education of learners from low-income groups. These children are internationally termed at-risk students. Historically, at-risk students were primarily those whose appearance, language, culture, values, communities, and family structures did not match those of the dominant white culture that schools were designed to serve and

support. These students are primarily from minority groups, the poor and immigrants who were considered culturally or educationally disadvantaged or deprived (Goodlad and Keating, as cited in Hixson and Tinzmann (online: 1). These learners are also labeled as “disadvantaged, culturally deprived, low socioeconomic, dropout-prone, marginal, underprivileged and impoverished” (Lehr and Harris 1988:9).

In Namibia the *National Policy Options for Educationally Marginalised Children* describes these children as “educationally marginalised” children. They are the children who for some or other reason have difficulty in getting access to basic education, fail to succeed in their schooling or who drop out of schools prematurely before they have completed primary education (MBESC 2000:3.) They could fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Children of farm workers
- Children in remote rural areas
- Street children
- Children in squatter areas and resettlement camps
- Children with physical or mental impairment /children in need of community based rehabilitation
- Over-aged children
- Children of families in extreme poverty
- Working children
- Orphans, refugee children and teenage mothers (MBESC 2000:3)

Not all children in the groups above are educationally marginalised. High proportions of children from these groups are at-risk in schools compared to those who are not marginalised (MBESC 2000). There are many terms for learners who are likely not to succeed in their schooling but I use the term at-risk throughout this thesis.

2.3 Causative factors

Researchers have identified certain major contributing factors that put children at risk and lead them to end up as academic failures or school dropouts. Donald *et al.* (2002:215) point out that in southern Africa the major influential factor causing children to be at risk in schools is poverty. They go on to explain that poverty and poor educational and social conditions often reinforce each other. Living under conditions of poverty may often actually lead to difficulties in learning. Poverty may influence the effectiveness of parenting and child development.

Donald *et al.* (2002: 206) further explain that another contributing factor is the damaging relationship between poverty, malnutrition, and cognitive development. They state that negative effects of this relationship might carry a risk for the cognitive development of large numbers of children who may develop specific learning needs.

The *National Policy Options for Educationally Marginalised Children* in Namibia also shares this viewpoint. It states that the main reason for children not attending school, for dropping out of school and not being successful in school is poverty. It further states that a large number of 'street kids' come from very poor families and some have been pushed out of homes in order to earn some money for the family's upkeep (MBESC 2000).

Pianta and Walsh (1996) have identified certain life hazards that directly and indirectly affect the relationship between child/family and schooling such as poverty, divorce malnutrition and maltreatment. They further explain that these children on their own are powerless to alter their exposure to such life hazards. The *National Policy Options for Educationally Marginalised Children* also illustrate this point by stating that these children are unable to break the vicious cycle (MBESC 2000). Kleinfeld and Yerian (1995:19) give an example of a student, Katie in the USA who was an A student but earned a D, because she had problems at home. Her father was almost always drunk at night and her mother sat in a chair all evening and watched television. Katie had to do all household chores as well as taking care of her nephew.

The National Commission on Education in the United Kingdom (1996:3) states that poverty both limits access to educational opportunities and reduces the ability of the children to benefit from the schooling that they do get. It provides a detailed number of effects that poverty has on learners' education as follows:

- Poverty resulting from unemployment or low incomes results in stress; and reduces or precludes money being spent on resources such as books, or learning opportunities such as 'outings' and holidays.
- Poverty also increases the need for teenagers to be in paid employment: in evenings and at weekends, reducing time for homework; in some cases, during the day, causing absenteeism; and taking the first opportunity to leave the education system.
- Health problems are likely, with their associated effects on physical and intellectual development.
- Housing problems are more likely: for example, overcrowded, bed sharing, lack of a quiet space for homework, and a greater chance of household accidents.
- Children's environment is unlikely to be conducive to their development, for example; greater pollution, limited access to gardens and other places to play.
- There is a greater prevalence of crime and drugs.
- Racism stifles learning because children are distracted by it and spend time trying to cope with it.
- Family disruption is more likely, with increased incidence of depression and neurotic disorder.
- Parents are more likely to have lower levels of education and parenting and educating skills and less likely to have knowledge about and confidence in the education service.
- Children are less likely to have a secure mastery and understanding of language, to have enough opportunities to read at home, to have high self-esteem, or to be subject to peer-group pressure to succeed at school (NCE 1996:3).

Donald *et al.* (2002) also maintain that child employment is another contributing factor. They explain that education is expensive, especially in poor communities. Therefore some poor parents think that keeping the children in school where there is no visible progress does not make sense for anyone. They claim that this is one of the reasons for many children dropping out of school. Hixson and Tinzmann (online) explain that in the United States of America students who live with one parent, are members of a minority group, and have limited English proficiency are defined as being at risk because statistically students in these categories are more likely to be among the lowest achievement group or drop out of school altogether.

2.4 Education of at-risk learners

According to the NCE (1996:1) “the gap in educational performance between schools in advantaged and those in disadvantaged areas is wide and increasing.” Schools that accommodate many learners from low-income families experience problems in teaching them. It further states that a major problem identified by teachers is that when these children enter school they could be as much as two years behind their peers in a middle-class area in terms of their experiences and skills.

Heath and Mangiola (1991) and Myers (1992) state that studies on school performance and drop out rates indicate that children from culturally different, low-income families are children at risk of failure and exclusion. Blyth and Milner (1996) are of the opinion that these children are at risk of exclusion and efforts are not made to re-integrate them when they drop out.

Knapp and Associates (1995) claim that those schools that serve large numbers of children from low-income families face the most difficult tasks in education. They further explain that educators have to deal with children who are not well versed in the skills necessary to succeed at school. Pianta and Walsh (1996:2) also claim that these children fail in school largely because “the relationship they have with schooling has deteriorated and attempts to fix it have been narrowed, reflexive and reactive.”

The problem of dealing with at-risk children has a long history. Bartoli (1995) claims that it has been known for a long time that African American, Latin, Native American, Mexican and poor students of all races have been over-represented in reading disability, low reading group, low academic track, learning disability and other special education categories.

Knapp and Associates (1995) similarly contend that children from low-income families who attend school face an equally difficult task. For them the challenge lies in linguistic proficiency and relevance of teaching and learning:

The children who attend such schools face an equally difficult task. From their point of view, it is not always obvious what they have to gain from being in schools or from going along with what schools ask of them. For one thing, the culture and language of school are often unfamiliar, even if the children have grown up speaking English; for a growing percentage of children from low-income families, English is literally a foreign language. To complicate matters, what teachers expect of students in high poverty classrooms is not always clear or compelling; indeed, it often appears to the students that relatively little is expected of them (Knapp and Associates 1995:1).

Research indicates that schools contribute to the likelihood of children being classified as at risk. They have to face prejudice in schools. The National Coalition of Advocates for Children [NCAC] (1988) reports that today schools are open for everyone irrespective of racial, colour, linguistic, and cultural minorities and students from poor families/communities, or who have handicapping conditions are better represented than ever before. But the education of these students is characterised by low expectations, inferior resources, and differential treatment.

The MBESC (2000) claims that the accounts by many of at-risk children and their parents, of harassment, molesting, teasing, degrading by others in society are plentiful. Learners drop out of school for this reason and their younger siblings refuse to start school because of this. It is not only their fellow learners, but also their teachers who

behave in a non-professional manner. The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) says that:

Examination and test results do not tell the whole story. OFSTED's survey of schools in disadvantaged urban areas found that across the system as a whole the residents of these areas are 'poorly served by the education system', and that 'pupils have only a slim chance of receiving sufficiently challenging and rewarding teaching throughout their educational career'. The clear message is that pupils in disadvantaged areas are less likely to do well at school (the National Commission on Education (1996:2) in the UK.

In the same vein Lehr and Harris (1988:8) state that some teachers do communicate inappropriate expectations toward these students. They wrote that students categorised by teachers as at-risk are treated differently from high achievers. They claim that these learners are:

- Seated farther away from the teacher
- Given less direct instruction
- Offered fewer opportunities to learn new material
- Asked to do less work
- Called on less often
- Questioned primarily at the knowledge, comprehension levels
- Not prompted when they do not know the answer to a question
- Given less praise
- Rewarded for inappropriate behaviour
- Criticized more frequently
- Given less feedback
- Interrupted more often
- Given less eye contact and other nonverbal communication of attention and responsiveness (Lehr and Harris 1988: 8).

Clearly this kind of teachers' behaviour will affect learners negatively. Learners will not be motivated to learn and not even to try. They are more likely to have disciplinary

problems. Lehr and Harris (1988), however, state that some teachers exhibit such behaviour unknowingly. They further explain that it is not a question of how ‘bad’ teachers treat at-risk learners; the harmful behaviour referred to above occurs across the spectrum. They conclude: “And it is important that professionals change unconscious behavior to more effective conscious behavior” (Lehr and Harris 1988:10).

A study in Cape Town by Sharf, Powell, and Thomas (in Donald *et al.* 2002) of 31 street children indicated that only four learners said they liked their school experiences. There are many concrete reasons for this. Children being beaten at school was one common reason that motivated the learners to escape from school. A lack of support services and the teachers’ inability to cope effectively with failing students are other reasons that could be deduced from students.

The literature referred to thus far has focused on the educational and social needs of at-risk children, and on classroom practice. The issues identified, important as they are, are only marginally related to the practice of education leadership and management.

The next section focuses on leadership and management in two case studies of schools that managed to maintain high educational standards in spite of huge odds. First, management and leadership need to be compared/contrasted briefly, since I often use the terms inter-changeably.

2.5 Leadership and management

In this section I examine leadership and management. The two terms are hard to define. There are no generally accepted definitions of these concepts. It is also difficult to differentiate between them as they are often used interchangeably.

Donald *et al.* (2002:151) maintain that leadership is the art of doing the right things at the right time while management can be described as doing things right. The Task Team

Report on Education Management (DOE 1996:27) in South Africa states that “management is about working with people to make things happen.”

Lipham (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 373) sees leadership as “the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing an organisation’s goal and objectives or for changing an organisation’s goals and objectives,” while Bush (1995:1) describes education management as “a continuous process through which members of an organisation seek to co-ordinate their activities and utilise their resources in order to fulfil the various tasks of the organisation as effectively as possible.”

From these definitions it clear that the school needs both leadership and management qualities to function effectively. Leadership qualities are needed for leaders to initiate and develop directions, structures and procedures to achieve the organisation’s goals and objectives, while management is for managers to put mechanisms in practice to get things done. Fullan (2001:2) reinforces this by claiming that he has never been fond of distinguishing between leadership and management. They overlap and an organisation needs both qualities.

I now look at the leadership and management behaviour in the case studies of successful disadvantaged schools.

2.5.1 Case studies

Christie (2001) found that 32 black disadvantaged schools from seven provinces in South Africa have succeeded against the odds because of certain leadership behaviour. Almost all of the successful schools were in townships wracked by poverty and unemployment and sometimes by violence, but managed to increase their pass rates while other schools in the same conditions performed poorly with matriculation pass rates of 25% or less.

Similarly the NCE (1996) found that eleven disadvantaged primary schools in the United Kingdom succeeded against the odds under harsh conditions. The eleven schools in the

study were in areas of social and material deprivation, with high crime rates. The learners came from large and poor families. Some of them were immigrants who spoke English as a second language. Most of the parents were single and they were either unemployed or in a low-income group. Some of the school buildings were in poor condition.

Both studies revealed that success did not come smoothly. Christie's (2001) study found that the successful schools struggled. They had problems, but they were overcoming them. Similarly the NCE (1996) found that success and change at Fair Furlong Primary School - one of the eleven successful disadvantaged schools - did not come overnight. Planning and implementation of improvements went over a number of years.

What is of particular significance for my study is the role played by leadership and management in the ultimate success of these disadvantaged schools, and I now turn to these. The characteristics identified are: moral purpose, good relationships with other people, strong and positive leadership and management, centrality of teaching and learning, omnipresence, personal style, shared leadership, shared vision, team-building, promoting professional growth, school policies and an open door policy.

2.5.1.1 Moral purpose

Fullan (2001) explains that moral purpose means working with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of people in the society. The NCE (1996) found that many principals in the study were eager to bring about improvements in their schools. One principal of a successful primary school in the UK moved deliberately from a school in a middle-class suburb to one in a lower-class community because she felt that the children were not getting the education to which they were entitled. She said, "My vision was to offer these children the same quality of education that I had offered in my previous school - the same, as they would have in a very middle class area" (NCE 1996:31).

The NCE (1996) also found that one of these eleven schools was ordered by the ministry of education to close down due to the poor condition of its buildings, its poor record of

leadership and management and its appalling academic record. It found that the newly appointed principal intentionally resisted its closure and improved the pass rate tremendously. The examples mentioned here revealed that the principals in the study had brought about change because they had moral purpose.

Researchers of the study of eleven successful disadvantaged schools in the UK found that “in the past these schools were stuck in a cycle of low expectations, lack of direction and external perception of failure. Most had experienced inertia or had neglected to focus on, or even recognise, the need to improve on a continuous basis” (NCE 1996:313). The NCE (1996: 31 and 317) states that most disadvantaged schools in the study succeeded because the principal set high expectations and they were optimistic.

2.5.1.2 Positive and strong leadership and management

The participants in almost every one of the eleven schools in the UK study recognised the important roles the headteachers had played in the progress the schools had made. Similarly Christie (2001) found that all principals of the 32 schools in her study were strong managers and leaders. Their management styles included a sense of accountability to staff and at least some degree of staff consultation and participation. The NCE (1996:24) highlighted the strong leadership at Fair Furlong Primary School, one of the eleven disadvantaged schools in their study. It discovered that after the appointment of the headteacher who led the school to success, a teacher who had been teaching at the school at the time stated “We were getting lost and needed a strong leader”(NCE 1996:24).

2.5.1.3 Centrality of teaching and learning

Dean (1987) and the NCE (1996) claim that the core purpose of the school is to provide high-quality learning experiences and opportunities for the children. Dean (1987) says that this is the first and most important aim for all schools. All other aspects of the school

are subsidiary. Harden (1988:88) in the same vein states that “the sole purpose of the school is to serve the educational needs of the students.”

Christie (2001) found that all successful disadvantaged schools in the study viewed teaching and learning as their primary purpose and the major focus of their attention. These schools had well-organised programmes of teaching and learning. Many principals taught in their schools, since “being in the classroom helped them to be better attuned to students and their needs and to have greater insight into problems teachers face” (Christie 2001:46). In a study on teachers’ perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools Blase and Blase (1999) found that “according to teachers, effective principals demonstrated teaching techniques in classrooms and during conferences; they modeled positive interactions with students” (Blase and Blase 1999:134). These are some of the strategies identified in the NCE (1996) study, employed by principals to ensure that effective teaching and learning were taking place:

- Senior teachers were clearly involved in reviewing teaching and learning, assessment and progress;
- Teachers met to plan their work for the term and each teacher had a file containing lesson plans. Files were handed in to the principal weekly for comment and feedback;
- There were detailed procedures for record-keeping and for monitoring the children’s work;
- Every learner had a portfolio, which he/she built up as he/she progressed through the year. Pupils who had one a good piece of work were sent the principal for commendation;
- The staff tried to identify learners who had special educational needs, and provided additional help and support where necessary;
- Principals observed teachers teaching and talked to the learners. Efforts were made to support the teachers in the classrooms.

2.5.1.4 Omnipresence

The UK study argues that the principals in their study exercised ‘omnipresence’ as educational leadership behaviour. The principals kept high profiles, got to know pupils, following their progress and spending time observing the process of teaching and learning, and collecting information to underpin feedback to both teachers and pupils. They spent a couple of hours in different classes, observing the teacher and talking to the children about their work and following this up with feedback discussions with the teacher.

2.5.1.5 Personal style

The NCE (1996:339) found that the principals of the eleven schools in their study appeared to have similarities in terms of their personal styles of leadership:

In each case the vision of the headteacher is a pervasive and influential force, but the individual is not necessarily a dominating character. Their drive is essentially positive, confident and pro-active, supported by clear objectives, but not imposed on staff against their will.

The teachers in those eleven schools revealed that the principals’ leadership styles were characterised by accessibility, willingness to build the expertise and experiences of others into the management of the school, and a desire to get the best from every member of staff (NCE 1996).

2.5.1.6 Shared leadership

The NCE (1996) stated that in all eleven schools it appeared that autocratic modes of decision-making were avoided and leadership responsibilities were shared wherever possible. Leadership was not just shared with the senior management team and other post-holders, but extended to a wider range of staff. In some of the schools, certain

leadership responsibilities were delegated through the establishment of special groups. It further noted that “in none of the eleven schools does it seem that decision-making has swung so far the other way as to become an end in itself” (NCE 1996:340).

2.5.1.7 Shared vision

School vision is described as a quick look into the future. It is about what the school wants to achieve or where it wants to be for example, in five years’ time. The school’s mission statement is written based on the school vision. The mission statement explains what the school has committed itself to achieve (Du Preez 1998:5-7).

Christie (2001) found that each of the 32 schools in her sample had a clear educational vision. Principals, teachers and learners were able to articulate the schools’ visions. The NCE (1996) contends that if the vision is to stand any chance of being accepted and put into practice, all members of staff would need to understand and adopt it. It further argues that parents should also own the vision so that they can help in achieving it. Therefore the principal involves all teachers and governing board members in the drawing up of the school vision. Senge (as cited in Jaftha 2002) reinforces the importance of shared vision. He says that if one person or a group imposes vision upon people the organisation members will not be committed to it (Jaftha 2002).

2.5.1.8 Developing the team

The NCE (1996) pointed out that most of the accounts in the eleven schools suggest that it is not essential to have new staff to develop team work in the staff room. It states that the successful approach applied in eleven schools to develop teamwork was to ensure that the staff was fully involved in the decision making. Dean (1987:74) states that

there is increasing evidence that the school where the staff work as a team making decisions together is more successful than the school where all decisions are made by the head-teacher.

According to the NCE (1996), development of teamwork includes the following: Weekly formal staff meetings, publicizing the agenda and minutes of staff meetings and those of the new senior management team, the creation of a resource and preparation room and the establishment of a mentoring system for new teachers. Communication and professional development lie at the heart of team building.

Dean (1987) suggests that team development should be the responsibility of the head-teacher. The NCE (1996) found that many schools in the study developed teamwork through the following: The staff had short briefing sessions every day, information was exchanged continuously, and the head-teacher seized opportunities to encourage the staff to focus on their tasks. The following example, from Columbia Primary School one of the eleven schools illustrated this well:

The staff have a daily fifteen minute staff meeting which all teaching staff attend to discuss immediate matters of the day and take the opportunity to share each other's plans. Points are also raised for discussion at greater length at the full staff meeting. This is proven good practice. It enables matters to be dealt with as they arise and ensures that everyone knows what is going on the (National Commission on Education 1996:345) in the UK.

2.5.1.9 School policies

Almost all the principals of the eleven schools in the UK study introduced school policies NCE (1996). The policies were developed with the help of teachers, parents, and school governors. The principals, however, initiated the establishment of school policies. School policies were revised regularly and parents were also involved in this process. The following are some policies in those schools:

- Policy on behaviour and discipline
- A whole school anti-bullying policy (children were consulted in the drawing up of this policy)
- Policy on learners with special needs
- Admission policy

- Policy on attendance and punctuality (NCE 1996).

2.5.1.10 Open door policy (the involvement of parents and community)

The NCE (1996) found that the principals and staff considered the participation of parents as an important factor in the provision of effective schooling. Therefore education programmes and strategies were extended to parents and their involvement in the education of their children is developed. Parents are informed about the educational progress of their children. They are invited to observe how their children learn. Methods of informing parents about how they can assist their children to learn are developed. Dean (1987) recognizes that parental attitudes make a difference to children's success at school. She says that studies in the UK, Australia and the United States have shown that schools where children do well are characterised by good home-school relationships.

However, research in South Africa has revealed that schools could perform even if parents are not willing to participate. Christie (2001) found that parent involvement in almost of the historically black schools is problematic. Principals in her study revealed that parents are not interested in the schooling of their children but that schools are putting in extra effort to improve the learners' academic performance without the parents' support. She reported that the participants in the study realised that parents believe that schools have the sole responsibility for the learners' schooling (Christie 2001:56).

I now look at leadership theories that underpin the leadership and management qualities identified in successful disadvantaged schools.

2.5.2 Leadership theories

Two current leadership approaches that underpin many of the above mentioned improvement processes in successful disadvantaged schools are **transformational** and **instructional** leadership. Bass and House (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996: 394) assert that transformational leadership is when the leaders inspire and motivate their followers

to view their performance from new perspectives. The transformational leader encourages colleagues to look beyond their own interests toward those that will benefit the whole organisation. Similarly Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999:9) maintain that the main focus of transformational leadership is the development of commitment and capacity of organisational members.

Instructional leadership is more task-focused. It encompasses the actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning (Flath 1989). In the same vein Leithwood *et al.* (1999) maintain that instructional leadership focuses on what principals can do to enhance the effectiveness of teachers' classroom practices. Blase and Blase (2000) concur that instructional leadership is when the principal involved him/herself directly in school-based activities such as assistance to teachers, staff development and curriculum development. It also encompasses indirect effects of principal-teacher professional interaction, and monitoring the effects of student progress and principal behaviour on teachers and classroom instruction (Blase and Blase 2000).

School managers and leaders need both transformational and instructional leadership. Transformational leadership in schools largely refers to methods leaders use to motivate and encourage their colleagues to be committed to their work while instructional leadership refers to actions the head teacher applies to improve classroom practice. Therefore Fullan (2001:62) maintains that if instructional leadership is practised well it becomes transformational leadership.

Findley and Findley (1992:102) state that "if a school is to be an effective one, it will be because of the instructional leadership of the principal." Similarly Glickman (1990) states that the number one characteristic of an effective and successful leader is the capability to provide instructional leadership. Lehr and Harris (1988) similarly assert that a good instructional leader is one with a strong commitment to success for all students, and one who is committed to improve instruction for groups of students who are not learning well.

However, Flath (1989) argues that instructional leadership is practiced very rarely. Stronge (1993) in the same vein states that many school principals spend more of their time on managerial issues than on instructional leadership issues. Hallinger (1989) attributes this reality to the fact that many head-teachers lack the knowledge and skills to become effective instructional leaders.

2.5.3 Leading and managing schools with at-risk learners

Literature reveals the need for schools to revisit the way schools operate to improve the schooling of learners from disadvantaged families. Hixson and Tinzmann (online) call for leadership to restructure, re-organise, develop new strategies and alternative schools to provide effective education for the growing population of at-risk students, who will be the adults of tomorrow. Newman and Associates (1996) claim that the principal is the key to the successful restructuring of the school.

Hixson and Tinzmann (online) describe four strategic initiatives for restructuring the school to provide environments for all students as follow:

- Redefining the cultural norms of the school.
- Refocusing the content, methods, and priorities of the instructional program, attending to the personal/affective needs of students and staff.
- Establishing new relationships between the school and students' homes and the broader school community (Hixson and Tinzmann online: 8-12).

Lehr and Harris also see school principals as pivotal agents in the success of at-risk students. They state:

The principal is a key element in determining success for at-risk students... Research suggests that teachers' perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader are critical to the achievement of students, particularly low achievers.... The successful principal creates an encouraging, supportive atmosphere for both students and teachers that enable them to take risks knowing that they will not be

ridiculed if they are wrong but will be respected for trying (Lehr and Harris 1988:16).

School managers need to be conscious of the fact that the learners from low-income families' education is at risk as I described it in section 2.4 of this chapter. Therefore Costello (online) warns that there is a danger if leadership is driven only by the normative needs of students as a whole without specific and clear attention to the particular needs of those students who have historically been badly served by most public schools.

Similarly Goodlad (1984) maintains that there is a need for the schools to stop the continuing denial of equal access to knowledge for all students in desegregated schools and to halt the escalation of the numbers of students from disadvantaged areas performing poorly.

Literature highlights reasons why schools have to change in order to provide better education to all learners. Hixson and Tinzmänn (online) state that families and other community institutions traditionally used to address changing societal realities, but now schools are expected to do so. They further say that there is evidence of an increasing number of young parents who were themselves unsuccessful in school and who need additional support and assistance to support their own children's educational efforts.

Pianta and Walsh (1996) also call for changes to be made in schools that will positively affect the lives of children who attend them. They say that even small improvements in communication between teacher and parent could benefit the child immensely. Taylor (as cited in Pianta and Walsh (1996:154) said:

Ultimately, if the real change is to take place in the quality of students as they leave our school, we have to make real changes in our beliefs about learners. We must begin to believe that most students are quite capable of learning and achieving; that the dramatic differences we see in student performance are the result of conditions unrelated to students' capacity to learn...[but] we cannot ignore the dramatic differences between children as they enter school. We will have to accept that not all students are equally prepared to learn, that some are learning despite dramatic obstacles, while supportive environments nurture others.

2.6 Government education policies and educationally at-risk learners

This section focuses primarily on education policies on at-risk learners nationally and internationally. Literature reveals that governments are concerned about the education of at-risk learners. Eshiwani (1990) found that in Kenya, after independence in 1963, the government promised to offer equal education opportunities to all. Similarly, Odaet (1990) found that after independence in Uganda the government's pledge was to provide universal primary education. Cohen (2001:2) states that the *White papers on education and training* in South Africa were "needed to help bring about a change that would force education to meet the needs of all the learners." She further writes that these documents contain four goals of education and training policy, which are:

To ensure that all learners, adults and children have access to a lifelong learning process; to recognize that in South Africa massive inequalities have existed in the past in the provision of education and the central challenge to policy development and planning is the need to redress these inequalities; that all state resources must be provided according to the principle of equity so that all learners have access to equal educational opportunities; and to ensure that the provision of education is of good quality (Cohen 2001:2).

Namibia is no exception. The Namibian Constitution states that:

All persons shall have the right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge (Namibia Republic 1990: 12).

The national education policy, *Toward education for all* (MEC 1993) in Namibia reiterates constitutional provisions that educators must be prepared to deal with all children who reach school-going age, irrespective of their social and economic status or ethnic origins and experiences. The *National policy options for educationally marginalised children* was formulated to accelerate the implementation of education for

all declared by the Namibian Constitution and the national education policy *Toward education for all* (MBESC 2000:5).

The extent to which this has become an issue of international importance is indicated by a recent forum. In April 2000 the World Bank, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) convened the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (Oxfam Policy Papers 1999). The forum occurred three years ago and marked the tenth anniversary of the World Conference on Education for all, at which over 155 governments promised to ensure that all of the world's children would, by the end of the decade, have the opportunity to receive a good quality basic education.

Ball and Goodson (1997) state that policy for social justice for young Australians was initiated with the recognition that there could be a role for education in offering solutions for problems of students at risk and homeless learners in schools. This policy originated in the August 1989 Australian Commonwealth Budget. This initiative established the Students At Risk programme, designed to identify those students in government schools most at risk of not completing secondary schooling and to encourage their continuing participation by supporting a range of school-based projects.

All these constitute evidence revealing that education of children from disadvantaged backgrounds is a matter of general concern. However, the Oxfam Policy Papers (1999) point out that the promise of providing education for all in Saharan Africa has been broken and nowhere more comprehensively than sub-Saharan Africa. There are now more children out of school in the region than there were in 1990, and the majority of children in school receive an education of an abysmal quality. It further stated that if current trends continue, there would be 57 million African children of primary school age out of school in 2015. Hixson and Tinzmann (online) states that, for at least the last 50 years, America has been struggling to meet the challenge of successfully educating all students.

It would thus be a mistake to assume that the question of educating at-risk children is a problem faced by developing countries only. Even highly developed nations (such as the USA) experience difficulties in this regard, suggesting that it is a social rather than economic problem. Since schools seem largely to have taken over where society has failed, it seems appropriate that it is in schools where reform needs to take place most urgently. Education policies seem to provide a way forward.

2.6.1 Why do education policies fail?

The perception that policy generally fails to bring about change is a significant factor researchers need to take into account. Researchers tend to blame the government officials, politicians and policy makers for the failure of the policies. So, for example, Jansen (1998:1), in a South African context, argues that matric failures in South Africa are the result of bad policy and lack of intervention from the government officials and politicians:

In any respectable democracy, the failure of 294,254 matriculants (52,9% of the total of 556,246 candidates) would immediately lead to political costs for the government in power. In some states, the political head might resign in anticipation of being fired; in others, immediate cabinet reshuffles might result; and in many, urgent commissions of inquiry might be launched. Yet in South Africa, the results of the 1997 matriculants seemed only to reinforce the state of the government.

Psacharopoulos (1990) similarly maintains that the reason most educational policies are not successfully implemented is that they are vaguely stated and the financial implications are not always worked out. Jansen (1998:1) is of the opinion that the failure of education policy can be ascribed to the fact that too much attention is given to political consideration and little or no attention is given to the practical situation on the ground. The key motive behind the formulation of the education policy is, therefore, to score political points and not necessarily to achieve the objectives of educating the nation as such.

Rossi and Montgomery (1994) are of the opinion that policies fail because they only concentrate on one of the sources of the students' problems. This is similar to Ball and Goodson's (1997) study which found that some secondary schools in Australia refuse to implement the *Students at risk homelessness policy fund*. Ball and Goodson (1997:167) state that the principals and teachers of those schools argue that the provision of shelter, food, emergency funding, health care and counseling, had to be provided first, or else homeless students would not stay at school. They maintain that curriculum was not an issue to homeless students. The principals also argue that their school curricula were meeting the needs of all of their students and there was no need to change to cater specifically for homeless students. The principals further argue that the curriculum for homeless students is not different from those of any other students.

Stirling (1996:53) maintains that "the effects of policy can be examined in terms of whom it empowers, whose interests it serves, and whom it disempowers." She contends that the government education policy in the UK promotes inequality in education. She further states that disadvantaged children are at risk of exclusion from school. The government policies permit learners to be suspended or sent home several times while meetings are arranged with parents. In some cases, they are excluded from school permanently. She says this is an opportunity for these learners to engage in offending behaviour while they are at home with little or no care at all. Benson (1996) and Blyth and Milner (1996) are concerned about the negative consequences of exclusion, that the exclusion disadvantaged the children and parents: The children fall behind academically and parents get frustrated.

Jansen (1998) asserts that lack of political government intervention is another contributing factor to the failure of meaningful educational policies. He states that it is known that in many black schools, teachers are not attending to their classes at the beginning of the first term. The first term is devoted to deciding on staffing complements, finalizing timetables, organising sporting events and waiting for resources, but there are no political mechanisms put in place to address this.

2.6.2 Preventive strategies

Rossi and Montgomery (1994) suggest that to remove the barriers to the implementation of education policies the strengths and weaknesses of the schools should be assessed thoroughly. The suggested solutions should be compatible with the current strengths of the schools and all participants should understand the requirements of full implementation. Christie (1999:60) is of the opinion that “policy makers need to work with teachers as an important target point if policies for improving teaching learning are to succeed.” She points out that

if teachers are to implement policies for school improvement, it is essential for policy makers to address the subject knowledge and pedagogical skills that they need, and to target well conceived and well delivered in-service (Inset) programmes to support them (Christie 1999:60).

Rossi and Montgomery (1994) suggest that policymakers should be aware that suggested solutions might be different in different schools.

Researchers find that good school principals can contribute to the success of the policies in achieving education for all. Benson (1996), studying head-teachers in the UK, found that some schools resist the trend to exclusion. One of them argues that exclusion “is simply a way of ridding yourself of the problem in the hope that someone else will pick up pieces” (Benson 1996:218). This principal continued saying that schools need to be flexible to show young people schools can help them and make their schooling better (Benson 1996:218).

Hayden (1996) suggests that a child should not reach a stage of permanent exclusion before all the agencies react. She claims that main statutory agencies are education, health and social services. She says that all these agencies should play a role to reintegrate at-risk child to the mainstream, because there is no answer and future when the child is excluded permanently.

2.7 Overview

This chapter provides insights into who the at-risk children are, the contributing factors leading to their classification as at-risk learners and their education, as described in sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4. It explores the leadership qualities identified in disadvantaged schools which succeed against the odds, suggesting that leadership of disadvantaged schools should be different from leadership in advantaged schools. Possible theoretical frameworks for these leadership behaviours are also examined. The role of policy is briefly considered.

To examine this argument, it is clear that most improvement processes that helped schools to succeed against the odds can be applied in all types of schools, but there are remarkable leadership qualities that should be noticed. Schools serving disadvantaged communities need more energy and uncommonly high levels of human effort to be spent in a very focused way. The principals are the keys to releasing this energy and plan the strategies and implement them in order to achieve success.

The principals should set high expectations, be optimistic and have moral purposes more than anyone else in the school. Being a head teacher in a disadvantaged school one has to be serious about improving teaching and learning. The principals have to involve themselves in teaching if necessary to familiarize themselves with the problems faces teachers in order to identify and implement strategies that fit the problems at school. Principals should be clearly seen in the school observing classes, assessing and monitoring learners' progress and following up with the teachers.

The most important thing is that the headteachers and teachers serving schools with disadvantaged children should recognise and accept that not all learners come from nurtured environments and schools need to restructure their roles to cater for these children. The principal is the key to developing this acceptance and creating awareness amongst the staff members. The staff has to know that success does not come smoothly

or overnight. Once success is gained in the school the principal should encourage the teaching staff to sustain momentum and continue make changes.

The next chapter will identify and justify the research methodology selected as appropriate to achieve the goals of my research project.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the research paradigm and method appropriate to my research project. The selection of sample, data gathering, analysis of data, some ethical issues and the limitations of my methodology are also discussed later in this chapter.

My research goal is to investigate the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners. A sub-goal is to explore how national policy options for educationally marginalised children are understood and implemented at a management level.

3.2 Selection of research paradigm

Cantrell (1993) outlines three main research paradigms or perspectives: positivism, critical science and interpretivism. She states that each paradigm has the basic underlying assumptions that guide the researcher to select the approach appropriate to his/her study and how the research should be conducted.

I first discuss the underlying assumptions of positivism and critical science paradigms briefly. I then examine the interpretivism perspective, which is the paradigm of my research project. This serves to justify the selection of the research paradigm I am operating within.

3.2.1 Positivism

Cohen and Manion (1994) regard positivism as the scientific approach. Janse van Rensburg (2001:12) concurs that positivist researchers aim to discover law-like

regulations about social life. They perceive their findings as absolute truth that can be generalized. Positivist researchers believe that the reality is 'out there' in a known world. This is the major point of criticism of positivism. Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher criticized the positivists' aim to discover absolute truths to be generalized. He argued that subjective opinion on contextual events and situations should be considered (Cantrell (1993:23). It is for this reason that I choose not to adopt this approach, because the findings of my research cannot be generalized, though they can inform similar schools that serve disadvantaged learners.

3.2.2 Critical science

Cantrell (1993:83) states that the aim of researchers who operate within the critical paradigm is

to emancipate people through critique of ideologies that promote inequity and through change in personal understanding or action that lead to transformation of self-consciousness and social conditions.

Action research researchers would be most comfortable operating within this paradigm as they aim to take actions and bring about change to solve problems. Reality in this paradigm is multiple and created in the human mind. Reality is viewed in a holistic and divergent sense. Of cardinal importance in this paradigm is the fact that social issues/relations or values as well as economic interests come the fore (Cantrell 1993:83). The paradigm maintains that the social values which serve the economic interests of the ruling system dictates who is the most important personality and who is in control, thus the concept of equity and hegemony. The nature of knowledge is that "events are understood within social and economic context with emphasis on ideology critique and praxis"(Cantrell 1993:83). The researcher is committed to theories that free people from social and economic ideologies that promote inequalities. It is also for this reason I desired not to work within the perimeter of the critical paradigm.

I preferred not to operate within this paradigm, as I am interested in providing people's experiences of leadership at Pandu Primary School and not to attack the social and economic relations and thus not to provide emancipation but to reveal understanding as seen in the following section. Naturally, in an area such as at-risk children, social issues will emerge; it has been argued that the problem of educating at-risk children is also a social one. But assessing and addressing these broader social issues is not the focus of this study.

3.2.3 Interpretivism

My research was conducted within this paradigm. According to Cantrell (1993) interpretive researchers are keen to understand the meaning people make of daily occurrences and how they interpret them within the contextual social and natural setting. Similarly Winegardner (online) asserts that the central aim of qualitative interpretive research is to gain the perspective of the participants in the study. It is for this reason I decided to operate within the interpretive paradigm, as I seek understandings of the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners. I am also interested in the principal and teachers' experiences and perceptions of implementation of the *National policy options for educationally marginalised children* at the management level.

Interpretivists regard people as agents of creation of meaning in their settings and these meanings are valuable and useful for research (Janse van Rensburg 2001:16). People's interpretations and interactions with their situations create reality. Bassey (as quoted in Kirkegaard 2001) describes the paradigm as follows: "Interpretation is a search for deep perspectives on particular events and for theoretical insights. It may offer possibilities, but no certainties, as to the outcome of future events" (Kirkegaard 2001:27). Therefore I believe that the findings of this study would be worthwhile to schools accommodating similar learners.

Cantrell (1993:83) maintains that reality within the boundary of the perspective of interpretivism is "multiple and divergent." This means that reality is captured through

different methods such as observation and language interactions. The reality is also perceived differently by different people in the same social setting. Reality is based on social meanings and these meanings are not static.

The epistemological assumption in this paradigm is that events are understood through the “individuals’ mental process of interpretation, which is influenced by and interacts with social context” (Cantrell 1993:83). This means that the researcher has to engage in conversation with the involved/affected individuals and find out how they perceive and experience the researched area. This is why I decided to interview the teaching staff members and found out their experiences as well as their perceptions.

Janse van Rensburg (2001:17) asserts that

interpretive researchers are often not that interested in taking action through or even after their research; their focus is on unraveling the complexities of social life as they and the research subjects experience it.

The aim of this study is not to take action or solve problems before or after, but to gain understanding of the meanings that some members of Pandu Primary School make of the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners. It is possible, however, that the outcomes of studies like this one may lead to research that does intend to take action to remedy the situations or to replicate findings. In this sense my research may be regarded as exploratory.

By operating within an interpretive orientation I also acknowledge its assumption that the interpretive researcher is interested in contextual and subjective meaning-making. The researcher also brings his/her values and beliefs into the research (Cantrell 1993:84). Similarly, Winegardner (online) asserts that the perspective of the researcher helps the participants to make conceptual and theoretical sense of the phenomenon in terms of the researcher’s professional experience. She further states that the way the questions are framed and what they discover in this paradigm is influenced by the epistemological orientation of the researcher. The researcher determines the questions that would uncover

how people construct reality. In my case, I framed questions according to my professional knowledge about aspects that hinder success in disadvantaged schools, for example, lack of effective teaching and learning. I therefore focused on how the managers (principal and heads of department) promote effective teaching and learning at Pandu Primary School.

It is important to recognise the fact that critical science and interpretivism overlap in the sense that events are understood through individuals' sense of reality, which is influenced by and interacts with social contexts; realities are multiple and created through the human mind. The prime difference of these two paradigms is that the critical paradigm focuses on liberation and critique of ideologies while interpretivism concentrates on the understanding and interpretation people develop on daily occurrences. It is for this reason that this study cannot be framed within a critical paradigm.

I now look at the research method.

3.3 Research method: Case study

Anderson (1998:152) asserts that a case study is a familiar term but is often mistaken for other research types such as historical and evaluation research. He describes a case study as an approach that deals with contemporary events in their natural context. Bassey (1999:58) also asserts that a case study is an empirical inquiry that "is conducted within a localized boundary of space and time." My research focuses on the role of current leadership at Pandu primary school in the schooling of at-risk learners.

Anderson (1998:153) asserts that historical and evaluation research is distinctive from a case study. The historical research deals with past events and evaluation research seeks to understand what happened and compare it to what was planned. In contrast with a case study, it seeks to understand how things happen and why. Robson, (as cited in Winegardner online) in the same vein states that a case study is a relevant approach to answer the research questions concerning themselves with 'how or why'. This study

aimed to find out how planned actions to promote effective of schooling of at-risk learners are carried out and the reasons why such strategies are developed.

A case study is conducted to understand the phenomenon, an educational activity, programme, institution or system (Bassey 1999). Winegardner (online) similarly states that another characteristic of a case study is particularistic, which means that it focuses on a particular situation, event, programme or phenomenon. My research focuses on the role of leadership in a particular institution (school).

Anderson (1998:152) claims that a case study does not aim to find rules, which should be generalized, but seeks to bring to life a particular case. However, Cohen and Manion (1994:106) consider the case study as an approach to establish generalizations about the wider population to which the unit belongs. As interpretive research this case study searches for contextual perspectives and perceptions of teachers, heads of department and principal on the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners, rather than searching for general rules. I am also interested in exploring their contextual experiences on the implementation of *National policy options for educationally marginalised children* at their school.

Stake, (as cited in Anderson 1998:155) maintains that when a researcher selects a case, the first thing to consider is whether it is to be an intrinsic, instrumental, or a collective case study. Anderson (1998:155) explains that intrinsic studies are used to gain a better understanding of a specific case, whereas an instrumental case study helps refine theory or provide insight into an issue. A collective case study examines a number of cases jointly to seek understanding into a population or general condition. My study can be categorized as an intrinsic study as I aimed to gain understanding of the role of leadership in a specific case, which is a school.

Yin, (as cited in Winegardner online) provides some guidelines to case studies researchers:

- The case study researchers should have an inquiring mind and a willingness to ask questions before, during and after data collection and should challenge themselves concerning why something appears to have happened and be happening.
- They should have the ability to listen, to include observing and sensing in general and assimilate large bodies of data without bias.
- They should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate unpredictable events.
- They should work with understanding on issues studied in order to interpret the data as it was collected.
- They should be determined to see where the data are contradicting each other and if additional information is required.

These guidelines helped me to prepare my study. I prepared basic questions before the interviews and probed deeper during the interviews. I listened carefully in order to probe. After the data collection I did some follow up telephonically. I was also prepared to accommodate unpredicted issues raised by the participants. I read and re-read the data to discover similarities, agreements and valuable information mentioned by single participants as appear in chapter 4.

The next section looks at sampling.

3.4 Sampling

I decided to utilize purposive sampling. Cohen and Manion (1994:89) state that in purposive sampling, the researcher selects the case on the grounds that satisfy his/her needs. The school was chosen purposively on account of the fact that many learners at this school come from low-income families/communities, who are perceived as more likely to be at risk. Good reports of inspectors and subject advisors on the management and leadership of this school informed the selection of the school with disadvantaged children. The school is generally believed to be putting in extra effort to improve the performance of these disadvantaged learners to a level that is superior to other similar schools.

I interviewed the principal, one head of department, three teachers who had seen the school go through different leadership and management, and two recently transferred teachers. I questioned the principal on his leadership and management behaviour and skills he applied to running the school. From the head of department and 5 teachers I gathered their perceptions on how the principal's leadership behaviour may have influenced and promoted the teaching and learning in the school. I also explored their experiences of the implementation of national policy options for educationally marginalized children. I purposively selected these respondents because I believed they would provide rich data.

Anderson (1998:156) states that in any methodology, a researcher should have a work-plan, which shows how the data will be collected. The next section takes a closer look at the work-plan on how the data was gathered.

3.5 Data-gathering

I applied only semi-structured interviews as techniques of collecting data. According to Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991:260-261) these interviewing techniques are used in an effort to obtain a more intensive understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and motivations than a standardized questionnaire permits. The semi-structured interview is useful in researching a new area of research, to find out what the basic issues are, how people conceptualize the topic, what terminology people use, and what their level of understanding is. The interviews contained open-ended questions to allow in-depth probing (Cohen and Manion 1994). I used a tape recorder to record the responses.

I interviewed one participant each weekend. Before I interviewed the next participant I familiarized myself with the data collected. This enabled me to probe further in the next interviews.

3.6 Analysis of data

I employed a generic qualitative research approach to analyse the data collected. Anderson (1998:158) explains that this approach is used to “organize the data into descriptive themes that emerged during the data collection and preliminary analysis.” The interview data were first transcribed. Then I read through the data to search for emerging themes. After identifying the themes I sorted out the data placing them under the relevant themes.

I engaged in continuous and ongoing data analysis. After the first interview I started to transcribe and present the data collected. This helped me to work with the data easily because the data were not piled up. This approach also helped me to identify significant issues early in the process, and focused me on what to look for in subsequent data-gathering sessions.

3.7 Some ethical considerations

Anderson (1998:16) maintains that all human behaviour is subjected to ethical principles and rules, and research practice is no exception. Cohen and Manion (1994:354) and Anderson 1998:18) assert that one of the most important principles for ethical acceptability is that of informed consent. The participants should be informed about the purpose and the benefit of the research. Cohen and Manion (1994:354) also consider permission to have access to the organization where the research is conducted as crucial. They also maintain that privacy, confidentiality and anonymity should be taken into consideration before and after conducting the research.

I approached the principal of the school where the research was conducted for permission to interview some of the staff members, including him. I asked the identified participants whether they did or did not wish to participate in my research project. I obtained full co-operation here. I informed them about the purpose of the research, which is a requirement for my study to complete the master’s degree, and the potential value of my findings.

We agreed that their identities and that of the school should be pseudonymous. Therefore I make use of pseudonyms when I refer to them in the data. They also selected locations where they wanted to be interviewed. Two of them preferred to be interviewed at their homes and the rest at school. All participants preferred to be interviewed on the weekends.

Two of the research participants were known to me since we used to attend subject workshops together. Here I had to be particularly alert to the danger of assuming attitudes when I interviewed them.

3.8 Limitations of my methodology

The interview is generally regarded as the prime source of case study data. However, to obtain a more comprehensive picture researchers are encouraged to use multiple data sources such as documentation, file data, direct observation, participant observation, site visit and physical artifacts (Anderson 1998:155). According to Patton, (as cited in Winegardner online: 1) multiple sources of data provide a comprehensive perspective and validate and cross-check the findings. In terms of the scope of this study, however, I thought it sufficient to limit myself to interviews. Using multiple data sources would have resulted in much more data than one may reasonably be expected to cope with in a half thesis. To make sure that the data I collected were reliable I decided to include three key teachers (participants) who had seen the school go through different leadership approaches of different principals and two who were recently transferred from other schools. I felt this approach would work against superficial responses, or attitudes developed over only a limited or extended periods of time. Allowing weekly intervals between interviews also helped to alert me to key issues early in the process.

Another potential limitation is that the participants may have found it difficult to reveal problematic areas, because they may not have been sure to whom I would communicate the information. To counteract this possibility I assured them that their names as well as

the name of the school would not appear in the data and the data would be kept confidential.

One of the potential limitations of a case study method is the difficulty involved in generalizing the findings (Winegardner online). Anderson (1998:134,152) contends that a case study is not conducted to understand other cases, but to understand that particular case. Anderson further explains that generalization is not a fundamental component of qualitative research, therefore qualitative researchers should not be bothered by this limitation. Therefore the findings of my research would not be generalized, but could nevertheless inform other schools working with similar learners and inform the policy-makers about the issues surrounding the implementation of the *National policy options for educationally marginalised children*.

Another issue that I would like to discuss before I leave this chapter is what validity means in qualitative research. According to Winegardner (online) validity refers to the accuracy and value of the interpretations of the findings. Unlike positivists, qualitative researchers reject objectivity as a validity criterion. Anderson (1998) and Winegardner (online) provide some of the prominent features to determine the validity of qualitative research as follows:

- The ability of the researcher: This has to do with the extent to which and how well the researcher can understand, record, gain insight into and interpret the data.
- Usefulness: the extent to which the case study informs ... people.
- The link between the research questions, raw data and findings.
- Contextual completeness, in which comprehensiveness is a standard of credibility.
- Member checking, confirmation of data by the participants in the study.
- Gathering of data over a long period, and
- The use of multiple sources of data.

From these I have considered some of the prominent features as crucial to determine the validity of my study. I have collected valid information that could enlighten the principals

and teachers in disadvantaged schools about strategies used to improve the performance of disadvantaged learners to a level that is superior to other similar schools. I interpreted the data in a meaningful way as they appear in themes. Individual participants have been offered the findings for confirmation. The fact that the data were not gathered over a long period and multiple sources were not used this should not be used as an excuse to devalue the validity of this study. These limitations are inherent in the nature and scope of this small research project.

I now present the data, providing a closer look at what my research participants have to say about the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners at Pandu Primary School.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data obtained from my interviews. I interviewed the principal, the Head of Department and five teachers (3 veterans and 2 newly transferred). The purpose of the interviews was to gain information as well as the perceptions of the respondents on how the school deals with the challenge of providing an education for at-risk children. The following questions formed the basis for the interviews:

- Would you please tell me the types of learners who attend school here (their background, communities and academic performance)?
- Tell me about the role of leadership in the following aspects:
 - Promoting effective teaching and learning
 - Reading programmes/remedial teaching/compensatory teaching
 - Monitoring of learners' progress
 - Developing learners' attitudes toward school
 - Developing teachers' attitudes toward learners
 - Teachers' efforts to help learners perform better
 - Class visitations/monitoring/supervision
 - Staff development/ professional development and teacher in-service training
 - Resources
 - School policies
 - School-fee
 - School uniform
 - Parental involvement
 - Feeding scheme

Learners' school attendance

Learners' punctuality and absenteeism

Discipline

What would you describe as the most significant challenges that you face as a principal of a school with many at-risk learners? (Principal only)

- How do you perceive your role in determining the success of at-risk learners? (Principal only)
- How would you describe the leadership provided by the principal? (Head of department and teachers only)
- How would you describe the success of the school? What is achieved? Is there any hard evidence?
- Has the school always been successful? (Pioneer teachers only)
- How do you compare the leadership of this school with your previous school? (Transferred teachers only)
- Are there any other bodies helping the school to make these children's schooling possible?
- How do you experience the implementation of national policy options for educationally marginalized children?
- How is the implementation of this policy monitored at school?
- What are the factors influencing the successful implementation of this policy?
- What do you think should be done to enhance the success of this policy?
- Is there anything else you want to tell me about the leadership of the school (difficulties/challenges/suggestions and good things you like about the schools)?

What follows here are leadership strategies (planned actions) employed by the school to make the schooling of learners from low-income families possible. Data are arranged according to the questions I asked, and the seven respondents' answers are combined under each sub-heading. A discussion of these findings under themes will form the basis of Chapter Five.

First I give the background of the school as well as of the learners as described by the respondents before I look at the mechanisms and strategies.

Pandu Primary School

Pandu is a larger senior primary school in Namibia, taking in learners from grades 4-7. The learners on roll are about 800, all black, coming from different ethnic groups, with 25 teachers, including the management members. The average class size is 40.

The majority of these learners come from poor backgrounds. Most of them come from Hafo, a township, and a few from different rural schools in different parts of the country. This township is overcrowded and characterized by poverty, with many children living with their parents in shabby shelters (commonly known as *pondoks*). Some learners come to school without having breakfast or something to eat during break time.

Most of these children's parents are illiterate/uneducated. They are not capable of helping their children with their schoolwork. Parents from this community experience unemployment problems. Many of them have no formal jobs. The Grade 4b teacher said that according to the occupation information in the address list of her class only 8 learners out of 42 have parents who have formal jobs (mineworkers, nurse, Edgar's' worker and policeman). Many parents are domestic workers, cleaners, casual workers and so on.

Many of these learners live with single parents, either mothers or grandmothers. The grade 6d teacher informed me that according to information in the address list of her registered class 20 learners out of 42 learners stay with their mothers only, 12 learners with their grandmothers only and only 10 stay with both parents.

The respondents stated that many learners, especially boys, are mostly on their own after school. They said that some of these children could be described as street children as they spend much of their afternoons in front of supermarkets pushing trolleys and begging for

money from tourists and other people for survival. The learners' academic performances are different. Some learners produce outstanding work, some are average learners and a few are below average. The new learners experience severe reading and learning difficulties, especially the grade 4s who enter the school for the first time.

The following section presents the strategies applied by the school to make the schooling of these learners possible and successful.

4.2 Teaching and learning environment

Much is done to ensure that effective teaching and learning is taking place. The principal said that they try to promote effective teaching and learning in order to achieve the vision and main goals of their school. He responded that the vision is to ensure that learners get a sound academic foundation to enable them to phase in well with secondary schooling. They aimed to ensure that learners can read and write and be equipped with the basic mathematical skill necessary for secondary school requirements and to provide quality teaching to enable all learners to be promoted. The principal revealed that the vision of the school was created in collaboration with all staff members. Three veterans and head of department interviewed confirmed that they played a role in creating the school vision and goals and also mentioned that they tried by all means to achieve the school goals.

The principal mentioned that they try their best to make sure that teaching and learning is taking place as early as possible at the beginning of the year. He mentioned strategies to put this into practice as follow: The decisions about the allocation of resources and subjects and distribution of learners into their respective classes are made before the learners commence schooling. Three teachers reported that their school starts with teaching on the first day.

Efforts are made to promote effective teaching and learning. Four teachers stated that the principal practises formal class visitations once per term. He tries to visit all the teachers, including the heads of department. They said that before the visitation he gives guidelines

on what he is interested in. They also mentioned that heads of department do visitations of the teachers allocated to them. The principal emphasised that the purpose of the class visitations is to make sure that learners are provided with teaching of good quality. He said:

After every visitation feedback is given. During the feedback the teacher visited is given an opportunity to reflect on his/her lesson presentation to identify the weaknesses and strengths. The principal or the head of department gives compliments on work well done and indicates the areas that need to be improved.

The principal also revealed that informal visitations take place throughout, because some teachers do not favour formal visitation of the kind conducted by the management. They call it “window dressing.” Teachers also said that they know their colleagues and underlying issues better than the principal does. The head of department said that through informal visitations, management notices that the impression they got during the formal class visitation is not a true reflection of what is happening every day.

All teachers stated that the lesson preparation books are monitored closely. They said that they are handed in every Monday morning. The principal checks the lesson preparation books before the lessons are given. The principal said this concerning the monitoring of lesson preparation books:

I used to take the lesson preparations in every Friday. I changed because some teachers informed me that some teachers just write their lesson preparations on Thursdays for handing them in on Friday.

The principal explained that to make sure that proper teaching and learning is happening, the management team decided to place one head of department and key/strong teacher in every block of classrooms. He said that the idea of placing one head of department in every block is to supervise the teachers in a specific block while the strong teachers serve to set examples to others and influence them to work hard.

The principal underscored that this should be done because some teachers need supervision all the time:

If we do not do informal visitations some teachers will sit in their classrooms reading newspapers while learners play in the classrooms. They are not committed.

Three teachers asserted that another thing that promotes effective teaching and learning and encourages them to teach hard is that the principal himself is also teaching an examinable subject. They noticed that when he is busy with a class he hates to be disturbed. They said that he hardly stops his class to respond to a person at the door.

The principal serves as a role model. Two teachers revealed that when the siren sounds the principal moves to his class as soon as possible. If teachers do not leave the staff-room quickly when the siren sounds he orders them to move to their classrooms. If they walk slowly to their classes he sometimes makes no comment but looks disapproving while moving past them.

All teachers stated the fact that the principal ensures that teaching and learning is taking place. One of the newly transferred teachers illustrated:

There isn't much time to relax at this school. After the examination I was marking in the class. The principal entered my class unexpectedly and asked what the learners were doing. I said that they were doing map work. He walked around in the class, scratched his head and told me in a rather kind fashion that the two boys were just playing and he left.

Similarly, one of the veterans mentioned that:

Teaching has become a culture of our school. Even if the principal is not present you won't really see many teachers not teaching. We are used to it every time.

4.3 Reading programme and compensatory teaching

The respondents stated that the learners do experience reading problems. The principal clarified that the 1998 reading ability statistics in grade 4 showed that 82 learners out of 210 could not read English at all, 75 read poorly and only 53 read well. There were also other learners in other grades who were not able to read especially those learners from rural schools. The principal recalled:

The situation was unfavourable and unbearable at the school that year. Teachers became difficult and demanded that learners should be tested before admitted in the school. I couldn't agree because this school serves the poor community and parents have nowhere to take their children. I also knew that the regional office wouldn't accept it. Then we staff members agreed to place the learners in the classes according to their capabilities in mind to pay extra attention to learners with learning difficulties when they are grouped together. This did not help much.

The principal is a committed person. He said that in 1999 he wrote a letter to the education regional office stating the problem and applied for permission to implement a reading programme and assistance. Then the circuit inspector intervened. He supported the idea. The remedial teacher was sent to train the teachers who were willing to help these learners. The resources and training were provided. The reading programme was implemented in 1999. Learners with reading problems were identified by the language teachers. The remedial teacher did the diagnostic tests. Other remedial teachers in the town were also consulted to help with the first diagnosis at the beginning of the reading programme in order to place these learners groups according to their reading ability.

The reading programme became part of the culture of Pandu Primary School. The respondents reported that at the beginning of each year the language teachers have to identify learners with reading difficulties. A reading period takes place three days per week (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) and lasts for 40 minutes. The learners with severe reading problems are in one group and learners with moderate reading problem are in another group. The teachers who teach learners with severe reading problems

accommodate only 10 learners, while the teachers who teach the moderate reading groups accommodate 15.

There are only 12 teachers who were trained to help these learners. According to allocated norms, the number of learners with reading problems exceeds the number of teachers who were trained to help these learners. Some of the teachers in school supervise those learners with no reading problems during the reading period.

Teachers explained that because of the shortage of trained teachers the principal introduced peer-assisted reading. Every year he asks the grade 7 language teachers to identify the grade 7 learners who read well. He trains them to help fellow learners with reading difficulties. He prepares the reading materials and each learner is responsible for one learner with a reading problem. The principal supervises the peer reading groups himself. The two classrooms where the peer-assisted reading takes place are next to each other. Therefore the principal moves from one classroom to another. He seldom visits other reading classes during this time.

The school has a timetable for compensatory teaching. The research participants stated that they are required to give extra teaching to learners with learning difficulties after school. They said that all teachers teaching examinable subjects at their school are provided with the timetable showing the dates when they do compensatory teaching. For example, English and Afrikaans are on Monday. Teachers are expected to provide hard evidence to the principal and heads of department on what has been done.

4.4 Monitoring of learners' work and progress

The respondents reported that there are mechanisms in place to improve learners' work and their progress. All respondents mentioned that teachers are required to hand in all learners' workbooks and their continuous assessment (CA) to the principal before the end of each term. The principal compares the marks in the learners' books with CA recorded marks. He does this in the afternoons. He checks as many books as he can from different

grade/class sections. If he finds that the recorded CA marks are not consistent with the standard of the marks reflected in the books, the teacher responsible for that subject would be asked to explain. Teachers said that three heads of department are also responsible for checking the marks and books in their grades as grade co-ordinators, but the principal has overall responsibility to check anyone's marks in the school, including the heads of department.

The principal disclosed the reason for doing this.

We learned that some teachers give false marks. The Craft and Technology and Home Ecology subjects made the school to discover this. Each learner in grade 5,6 and 7 has to choose between Home Ecology and Craft and Technology. It happened that learners were given marks in both subjects. Teachers responsible for these were called in and we, the management team warned them seriously, but it happened again. Therefore most teachers felt that the management members should compare the marks in the books with CA sheets.

The head of department in connection with monitoring learners' work has this to say:

This is a difficult task for us. To compare the marks on the CA and in the books takes much time. If we don't do it some teachers get upset and demand that it should be done.

Three teachers reported that the quality of the work given to the learners is monitored. The subject heads have to see to it that the work given to the learners is of good quality. They have to examine the books and give feedback to the principal. One of them, who is a subject head said that the principal insists that subject heads are more knowledgeable in their subjects and should be able to do it properly. She said:

In a way we are forced to do it because the principal might discover that the work is not up to standard when he checks the quality and quantity of work during class visitations.

There is another mechanism to monitor the learners' progress: two teachers mentioned that at the beginning of the second and third term, pass and failure rates in each subject

are provided to all the teachers. Each subject head calls a meeting to discuss with the subject teachers how the learners' performance can be improved. Three teachers reported that subject teachers are expected to come up with suggestions on how they plan to improve the learners' performance. The subject head should report back to the principal on how the suggestions will be carried out and implemented. They say that some of the solutions will involve compensatory teaching after school or involving those parents who are capable of helping their children with extra work.

4.5 Learners' attitude toward the school

The respondents reported that some learners are positive toward the school. They are committed, working very hard, are self-motivated and produce excellent work, but some learners come to school unprepared, they do not do their homework, they do not concentrate well in the class and some damage school property.

The principal stated that learners are motivated to be positive toward the school. He said the school policy requires teachers to identify problematic learners and refer them to grade guardians, the counselling support group committee, to the police or the Welfare office. The principal maintained:

Many learners at our school completed their primary schooling and managed to proceed successfully to secondary level because of assistance they received from these groups.

Teachers mentioned the ways the school uses to motivate the learners. They said that during the assemblies on Tuesdays and daily short gatherings the teachers take turns to contextualise the Bible verses to the learners' behaviour and social life. One teacher said that the principal is fond of the verses from the book of Proverbs. She recalled that when it is his turn he underscores some verses from Proverbs such as "a wise son makes his father proud of him and a foolish one brings his mother grief", and "Being lazy will make you poor, but hard work will make you rich."

Outside people such as the regional governor, regional education director, mayor and pastors from different religions are also invited to address the learners, encouraging learners to take their education seriously.

4.6 Teachers' attitude toward the learners

The respondents reported that most teachers show a positive attitude toward the learners and they accept and recognize the fact that many learners come from poor backgrounds and need help from the school. The principal and two teachers who taught in the former white schools noted that teaching in a school with learners from low-income families is not the same as teaching in a school with learners from middle or high income families. They told me that at their school they have to explain everything in detail. One of them said that if learners are to pass a test, drilling and thorough revision should be done and they must be reminded about the test every day. One of the veterans experienced that:

Working with these children is not easy. At this moment I am very angry with parents who do not help their learners with the task I gave. Sometimes I get frustrated and devastated but I have to keep on saying to myself that it is not the children's fault. They are careless parents sorry, Emma but I can't help it. Some children are cute who need responsible parents.

The respondents informed me that mechanisms are in place to see to it that teachers are positive toward these learners, especially the slow ones. Two teachers stated that they have to be positive toward these learners, because they developed a school policy which stipulates that learners with learning difficulties should not be called bad names such as "stupid thing, dull, idiot, or lazy-born." Teachers reported that learners are also aware of this policy. They are motivated by the management team to report incidents like that and they say that learners really report it when it happens.

Three of the teachers asserted that another thing that makes them do their work professionally is that learners' performance in different subjects is compared. If a high rate of failure or pass is experienced in a particular teacher's subject an investigation will be undertaken. If it is found that there are some irregularities in the provision of the

learners' marks, that particular teacher will be dealt with. One of them said that one teacher has already signed a misconduct charge for awarding false marks.

The head of department commented that the reason for taking strict control is to monitor whether the learners are graded according to their capabilities.

We had cases in the past that learners passed with very high marks, even the slow ones. In another case learners' marks were very low in a particular subject comparing to other subjects... We discovered that learners passed with marks because they were provided with questions and answers before the examination, while the latter case was caused by the joint examination, where the two teachers taught the same subject in the same grade. They had to set the question paper according to the syllabus. It happened that one of them did not cover the whole syllabus and never informed his fellow teacher... After examination the learners were complaining about things asked in the examination which they were not taught. So we are now trying to eliminate all these problems.

4.7 Building teachers' commitment, staff development and professional growth

The principal revealed that from bitter experience, he learned that the best way to build teachers' commitment is to involve teachers in planning and decision-making. He explained:

I give them opportunities to suggest and decide what they believe to be the best to make them committed. I also ask them to tell us, the leaders what they want us to do to increase commitment amongst the teachers. A suggestion box in our school is very helpful.

The principal also indicated that another way to increase the teachers' commitment is to discuss with teachers individually or in a group during staff meetings ways to improve the learners' performance. He said that through this he learns a lot concerning how individual teachers feel about the function of the school, especially the quiet ones.

The leadership of the school also pays attention to professional development. Teachers said that on completion of the formal lesson visitations and controlling of learners' books, the management team organises workshops to inform the teaching staff about their findings. The head of department stated that examples of good and bad lesson presentations are presented during the workshop without mentioning teachers' names. She said that mentioning of names caused conflict amongst the staff members in the past. The principal emphasised that some teachers apply excellent techniques in their classes and the management finds it necessary that these should be shared with all members of the teaching staff.

The teachers mentioned that once the teachers have registered for furthering their studies or have completed their studies, they are requested to update their fellow teachers about the new teaching or management approaches that struck them as effective during their studies. The management members themselves also try to increase the teachers' professional growth by presenting workshops on lesson presentations.

4.8 School policies

The participants reported that the school has developed several policies. There are policies on learners and teachers' behaviour, absenteeism, homework, punctuality, corporal punishment and school rules. The principal reported that these policies were developed collaboratively by "The concerned and committed teachers ..."

The respondents stated that the policies were developed in an effort to create a safe, calm and orderly atmosphere in the school for all parties, teachers and learners. Teachers spoke positively on the subject of how the policies serve as directives and practical frameworks for the teachers as well as for the learners. One veteran emphasised:

Without policies teaching time would be disrupted. In the past, before we developed these policies we spent much time arguing on how the cases or problems should be dealt with.

Another veteran claimed:

Because of these policies, learners know their rights at school and where to go when they experience problems.

It would be appropriate at this stage to give some detail on the various policies the school developed. The policy on behaviour stipulates how the learners should behave toward teachers and fellow learners. The usage of bad language by teachers to learners is forbidden. They are expected to behave professionally toward their colleagues, too. The principal said that teachers who find themselves guilty of this would face the consequences. He clarified: “I do not protect any one who makes himself/herself guilty of these.”

The absenteeism policy stipulates that unexplained absences are unacceptable. If a learner was absent due to illness he/she must bring medical proof to school. If the learner was absent due to other reasons, the parents should inform the school about it either by phoning, visiting the school or writing to the principal. The principal said that if a parent fails three times to inform the school about the absenteeism of his/her child he/she would be called to school. The participants said that the homework policy is consistent with the absenteeism policy. If the learner fails to do his/her homework three times, parents will be informed in writing and requested to visit the school.

One respondent stated that this policy also requires teachers to do home visitation if the learner stays away from school for more than 5 days without parents informing the school concerning the whereabouts of the learner. The head of department stated that non-black teachers find it difficult to do visitation in the township, commonly known as “*lokasie*.” However, the policy had to be enforced because:

We can’t help it, because we notice that some learners regained their schooling as a result of home visitation.

The respondents explained that the policy on punctuality does not only include arriving at school on time but it also encourages teachers and learners to be punctual at the classrooms after the break.

The principal underscored the fact that for policies to be implemented successfully teachers and learners should be familiar with the content of the policy concerning him or her. The teaching staff decided that learners should be introduced to the content of the policies concerning them during the time allotted for non-examinable subjects e.g. Moral Education. This should be indicated in the scheme of work and senior teachers should see to it that this is carried out during the class visitation. One teacher said that during morning devotion on the assembly day the principal reads extracts from the policies to the learners when he sees it is necessary.

The principal said that he makes sure that teachers are familiar with the content of policies. He elaborated:

When the policy is finalised I call a staff meeting. Then I read it out. Some teachers do not like the idea of reading out, they make remarks such as “we know how to read we can just read to ourselves.”... This does not dissuade me because I know that some teachers do not make time to read the policies by themselves. When they are faced with a situation they appeared not to be familiar with the policies. On the acceptance of the policy, I make them sign for receiving and understanding the content policy and file the lists with their signatures, which are kept in the strong room where teachers have no access to destroy them. This prevents unnecessary denial.

Some teachers reported that the policies are revised when they find them too complicated to put into practice.

4.9 School fees and school uniform

The principal asserted that the school fee at their school is one of the lowest in the town but parents are not willing to contribute, even the parents with better income.

Here we cannot just inform the parents about how much they have to pay and wait for them to come. They will never come. Strategies should be put in place to make them contribute financially.

The head of department stated that to make parents contribute to the school fee is “a pain in the neck. We tried out different ways but none of them works perfectly.”

The principal said, concerning this:

Every end of the month we send out bills targeting the parents’ salaries in the hope to get some contributions. Some parents ignore the bills they never respond. Then we have to write personal letters informing these parents to come and make arrangement with the principal on how the outstanding amount will be settled. By this way, we get more parents paying school fees but not all of them.

Teachers noticed that the methods of school fee collection do not work effectively. Therefore the management members, with the help of teachers, organise parents’ evenings to inform parents about their children’s performances. They organise it in such a way that each grade has its own day. The class teachers get an opportunity to talk to the parents individually about the learners’ performance and the outstanding school fees.

The participants commented that the school has many welfare cases. The ministry of health and social services (Welfare officers) pardons some families from paying school fees due to the extreme poverty the families live in. These learners have to show letters from the Welfare office, in order to qualify for exemption from school fees. The school decided that these letters should be renewed every year, because parents might get a job and fail to inform the school.

The head of department stated that the school struggles a lot to make the parents pay school fees and buy school uniforms for their children. She stated that at the beginning of the year she takes an opportunity to explain to new parents the importance of the school uniform:

I point out the importance of school uniform which make learners from poor and rich families look the same. I also explain to the parents that when a child is in torn clothes she/he may suffer psychologically.

She also mentioned that the school asks for donation to buy school uniforms for children who are very poor. The principal showed me a cheque of N\$2 500.00 from a local business to purchase clothing for needy children. He said that these children are taken to Pep-Stores by a group of teachers in a school bus to try on their clothes.

The principal revealed the fact that school parents and teachers agreed that learners should come to school in school uniform. It was decided that when the parent cannot afford to buy full school uniform she/he should inform the class teacher about it. He further said that the parents agreed that the school uniform should also be clean and neat. The class teachers have permission to make the learners wash their school clothes. The teachers also reported that teachers should inform the principal before this action is taken. They said that the school is responsible for buying the washing powder. The head of department revealed that the learners hate to wash their clothes at school. She said:

If you tell him/her that she/he will wash his/her clothes the next morning she/he will come in clean clothes.

4.10 Parental involvement

The principal said that in order to involve parents in the running of school and other school activities, they changed the way they used to approach the parents as discussed briefly in the previous section. The principal and head of department stated that the school board members were elected according to the regulations of the Education Act. The principal explained:

In the past we used to call one meeting with all school parents. They did not respond much. We then decided to call the parents according to grades. For example the parents of learners in grade 4 have their own meeting. If a parent has more than one child he/she will attend only one meeting because the purpose of the meeting is the same, however discussion might change when unexpected matters arise during the meeting with particular grade parents.

Teachers mentioned that the school also uses the learners to tell their parents to attend the meeting and if the parent cannot come he/she must inform the school in writing. The teachers say that class lists are used as attendance lists to find out whose parents did not attend the meeting. Parents sit according to the class sessions in the hall and the class teacher sits next to them. The respondents said that this approach has improved parents' attendance up to 60 per cent.

The head of department revealed that, after the grade meetings, management comes together and analyses the outcomes of all four meetings. Then the parents will be informed in writing about the major outcomes emerging from all meetings.

The principal stated that they encourage parents to attend the meeting by using the language parents are conversant with during the meeting. He said that many parents speak Afrikaans better than English, so parents' meetings are mostly held in Afrikaans. If there are parents who do not understand Afrikaans, translation is made.

The respondents also reported that they noticed that when the parents are in smaller groups they participate actively in discussion and decisions. The principal said that this also helps the teachers get to know the parents better. However, he felt that it was quite demanding for management members. He said:

I have to attend all four meetings and the heads of department attend two meetings in their capacity of subject teachers as well as grade co-ordinator.

The research participants stated that the parents are involved in setting firm and strict rules to maintain discipline in the school. Parents also decide which project the school has to engage in in order to raise funds for that particular year.

The respondents reported that the school organises occasions to inform parents about the progress of their children. They said that the parents whose children are not progressing well are invited to meet the class teachers individually. The other occasion is the parent evening, which is about collecting learners' progress reports and talking to the teachers

about their children's progress, behaviour and outstanding school fees (as discussed under 4.9). The principal noted that some teachers are not in favour of two evenings, but he believes that it is necessary. He said:

I think it is an embarrassment for the parents to be informed by the progress reports at the end of term that his/her child is not progressing well.

The head of department revealed that they are trying very hard to involve parents in the schooling of their children, but some parents do not respond positively to their call. She said that:

Sometimes, we have to go to the homes and find out why the child is not coming to school or take the child to the clinic.

4.11 Feeding scheme

The principal perceived his positive attitude toward the feeding scheme as crucial to its continued success. He said that the ministry provides only mealie meal and cooking oil, not the cook. The unemployed parents whose children qualify for this scheme were requested to prepare the meal for their children, but never responded. He made it clear:

If everything is put in these parents' hands nothing will happen. We held several meetings with these parents. During the meeting they pretended they were willing to help. The timetables were drawn up with them showing the dates they were free to come, but they never showed up... Therefore we decided to use money from the school fee fund to pay one lady who is preparing the porridge. We also buy the gas for making porridge, as we have no electric cooker to prepare the porridge. We wanted to quit this scheme because of many inconveniences but there are many learners who really depend on this porridge to make their days.

The teachers stated that at the beginning of each year they are expected to identify learners who qualify for this project. The principal provides them with the criteria for selecting these learners. One of the teachers said that the identification of these learners is done formally. She explained:

On that day the learners do not go where they supposed to go the first period. They go to their register classes and the class teachers have to find out the necessary information from the learners. After the identification the learners' names are given to the principal. When you hand in the names he ticks off your name. Teachers who did not respond will be called over the intercom to do so.

Two teachers revealed that when the feeding scheme commences the timetable for the feeding scheme is drawn up by one of the heads of department. Teachers supervise learners at the porridge site and see to it that the learners wash their plates. One of them said that the management members are not on this schedule but they take turns to visit the porridge area to see that everything is going well.

4.12 Discipline

The principal maintained that if they did not apply firm and strict rules the school would collapse. He justified:

We have to be strict because we accommodate many learners who have no purpose for schooling. When we just relax a bit these children go crazy damaging the school properties and hurting one another. Some children show barbaric manners that one doubts that they are normal human beings. A terrible thing happened this year when a girl was in the toilet relieving herself and two boys just forced the door open and touched her behind. Four other boys burgled our tuck shops and other two schools' tuck shops. They get involved into criminal activities too.

The respondents are aware of the abolition of corporal punishment. They said they try not to use corporal punishment as a way to maintain order and discipline in the school. They do the following to maintain discipline:

- The teachers and prefects work as a team. Every morning before the first bell for readiness sounds, some prefects with the aid of one teacher stand at the school gate to write down the names of the learners who come late. When the second bell goes off to move into the building the learners and teachers first assemble at the front of the office block. Every teacher has to stand in front of the class he/she

starts with. Every teacher accompanies his/her class when they move in or out of the building.

- During the intervals all teachers have to come out of the classrooms when the learners change classes to make sure they walk in an orderly fashion. The boy prefect stands at the back of the line while the girl prefect stands in front. The class prefects always carry attendance books to every class where they go for teachers to write the offences in. The teachers also write in these books when a learner misbehaves during his/her period. The principal takes these books in at the end of every Friday to examine them. When he notices serious offences he takes appropriate action.
- The participants also stated that they use 20 learners from grade seven to maintain order. These learners are called “terrain prefects”. During the intervals these prefects have to stand at certain spots. They restrict other learners from entering the building wherever they want to. The respondents cited some examples of the rules that the “terrain prefects” enforce, such as grade seven learners may not enter the ground where the grade four learners play during the break or may not use grade four toilets. Two teachers per day also do yard duty to assist the terrain prefects.

The principal emphasised strongly that all prefects are protected.

If the problematic learners threaten one of these prefects, we take no chances but call the police and the particular learner will be hand over to the police before other children to serve as an example.

The principal also mentioned that the police were involved to help learners attend school regularly. He asserted:

Some learners play truancy/slope off without parents knowing it. Some of these learners put on their school uniforms but go straight to town. Some come for a few hours and slope off during break.

He said that when the number of these learners increased, the management decided to take photographs of these learners and give them to the police. They invited the police to come and look at these learners' faces before they handed the photographs over to them. The principal said that the school manages to keep the learners at or in school because of this.

However, the head of department reported that these learners are so clever that they find another way to stay away from school. She said that they started to lock themselves up in the toilets after break. She said that the school immediately stopped this before it spread further by calling the police to take them out of the toilet. She mentioned that the police sometimes cane them or punish them through community service after school. Other learners were informed about this. One respondent supported this action:

We have to act seriously in order to prevent violence and vandalism at school. We also protect their parents because they have to replace damaged properties when the culprits are discovered.

The principal prefers not to exclude a learner during the school year. Instead he requests the parents in advance to take their child to another school the following year.

4.13 Teachers' perceptions on the overall leadership provided by the principal

The teachers stated that the principal provides motivational leadership, because he is a very hardworking and dedicated person who is always striving for success. They report that he assigns direct and clear responsibilities. One of the newly transferred teachers observed:

Here everyone knows what she/he is supposed to do. At the beginning of the year every teacher is provided with list of his/her main responsibilities.

Another newly transferred teacher stated that she liked the way the leadership of the school strives to achieve the goals. She observed that goals are not just set but efforts are made to achieve them. She cited two examples: One is that the school aims to ensure that learners should be able to read and write and be equipped with basic mathematical skill that enables them to face secondary level schooling. She said that the reading programme in the morning and compensatory teaching after school is in place to achieve this goal.

Another example she cited is that the school strives to provide quality teaching to enable all learners to be promoted to secondary schooling, as discussed earlier in “teaching and learning” section. She said:

I am very impressed by the way the school is operating and I am happy to come to a school like this because I like to work in a well-organised school. I hope I will learn a lot here.

4.14 Has the school always striven for success? What is achieved?

The three teachers who have been there since the beginning of this primary school affirmed that the previous two principals were also hardworking, but were not focussed like the present principal. They disclosed that there was no reading programme or compensatory teaching. One of them said:

In the past learners experienced reading and learning difficulties but they were not given attention. We went on with those who performed well. No one suggested helping them except complaints from individual teachers here and then that learners perform poorly academically. If the learner couldn't read in the past it was not really our concern.

These three teachers confirmed that much has been achieved although not as many of the goals were achieved as they would have liked. They highlighted some achievements such as school policies that are in place to that serve as framework. The standard of teaching in the school is high and the senior teachers are clearly involved in the assessment and evaluation of learners' progress. Pupils make good progress in learning. One of the three

teachers claimed that many teachers become more committed. She mentioned the fact that some teachers keep on teaching hard even if the principal is not present.

Three teachers and the head of department insisted that the pass rate had increased and many learners from their school now perform well academically at secondary level. One of them said that every year she buys newspaper containing the results of grade 10 and 12 results and noticed that many of their former learners do well. She proudly said that one of the learners who obtained 42 points out of 42 attended their primary school.

The teachers also stated that the discipline problems are minimised. They revealed that discipline problems occur here and there but they are under control. They also confirmed that the testing of the reading ability of learners in the reading program at the end of the year, show that the learners' reading ability has consistently improved. However, the head of department reported that reading with understanding needs attention. She said that they had decided to implement reading with comprehension the following year.

The participants also noted that parental involvement had improved; however, they also mentioned that a lot needed to be done to involve all parents in school activities. The principal mentioned that, with the minimal school fees they received from parents, the school managed to buy a risograph, a modern duplicating machine to make sure that learners receive adequate copies of assignment sheets. He said:

We managed to buy a school bus to transport our learners when they play sport out of the town. We have an alarm system and this has reduced burglary. Through class visitation I am proud to say that many teachers are competent now.

4.15 Problems and challenges

Both newly transferred teachers noted that they were not told how the school operates. One of them complained:

I used to confuse when I people mentioning school policies and I had no idea about them.

Another newly transferred teacher commented:

I replaced a teacher who offered remedial reading to learners with severe reading disability and I was willing to take up this responsibility when the management approached me about it because I wanted to learn. I was not given any guidance. I was puzzled when the learners said that they have not finished with blending sounds. I didn't know anything about blending sounds. I had to lie that we will do them tomorrow.

She also mentioned that she was not informed about how the structure of the written work in the learners' exercise books should be compiled for controlling and checking the learners' written work and marks at the end of the term. She explained:

I gave the written work in my own style. I was not informed that the headings in the exercise books should correspond with the headings on the continuous assessment sheets to make it easier for the management members when they check the learners' work. I embarrassed when my learners' books were checked I received a bad comment that the learners' works are "muddled up, not easy to follow."

One of the old teachers felt that the leadership of the school did not appreciate the extra efforts contributed by the teachers. She said:

For me to be motivated and bring innovations into the school I need to hear a word of thanks from the mouth of the management. I observed that the management members do not recognise that we are doing extra effort to prepare for reading programme and compensatory teaching just to mention a few. When we fail to submit things on a specific day as agreed they call an emergency meeting. When I enter the staff-room I hate to see those stern faces. I think that some of us have proven that we are responsible people and we deserve to be told in a polite way.

Two teachers revealed that they did not favour the freezing of the reading period when the principal is not present. They stated that when the principal is absent one of the heads

of departments who acts in his position likes to stop the reading period so that the school can come out earlier.

4.16 Challenges and hindrances that prevent the school leadership from promoting effective teaching and learning

The principal and the head of department explained that problematic learners hinder effective teaching and learning. The principal said that some learners are so rude that teachers refuse to allow them to attend their classes. The head of department and three teachers felt that ineffective punishment given to learners, combined with lack of parental supervision, causes learners to become irresponsible. The head of department said:

There is not much the school can do to punish these learners. What we do mostly is to call their parents or the police but some parents cannot control their children.

The principal mentioned that maintenance of school buildings is very costly because of the vandalism caused by learners and outsiders, especially when they are not detected.

The principal revealed that the severe absenteeism of some staff members prevented effective teaching and learning in the school. He explained that the secretary stays away from school often due to illness. He said:

During her absence I have to do the administration work and receive all the school visitors. This makes it difficult for me to make sure that effective teaching and learning is taking place in the school and to teach my own classes.

The principal noted that some teachers are union activists and they have to attend workshops from time to time. They stay away for up to two weeks at a time and learners do not receive proper lessons during these times. He also mentioned the fact that due to illness on the part of teachers and their children, some teachers stay away from school. He noted that when many teachers are absent the situation becomes very difficult,

because some relief teachers are not competent and cannot maintain discipline in their classes.

The principal and head of department both mentioned the fact that the teacher-learner ratio is not ideal. The head of department complained that this problem makes it difficult for teachers to control learners properly, pay proper attention to learners with learning difficulties. The principal stated that inefficiency of some teachers motivates him to prompt, motivate and encourage them continuously.

I have presented the descriptive data in this chapter. I have tried throughout this chapter to make the voices of the respondents heard as much as possible. Whereas the data were collected from seven respondents, I have tried to present them as a whole in order to group similarities and agreements.

The data can, however, not speak for themselves, and I attempt to make to sense of the data in the following chapter through discussion and reference to relevant literature.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four I presented the experiences and perceptions of the principal and teachers of Pandu Primary School of the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners. In this chapter I discuss the main findings, attempting to interpret the respondents' experiences and give meaning to them with reference to relevant literature.

5.2 Leadership and management approaches

Looking across the findings I recognised the co-existence of apparently conflicting management and leadership approaches. Leadership and management styles emerging from different traditions – positivism and constructivism – are clearly seen in the data. These two traditions seem to oppose each other. Classical management theory (scientific management approach) is rooted in positivism. This approach suggests that reality is uncomplicated and easily knowable, a belief which gave rise to Taylorism according to which humans are virtually reduced to machines (Hoy and Miskel 1996:9).

More recent constructivist leadership and management styles challenge these notions (Schmuck and Runkel 1994:9). Constructivist theories such as instructional leadership, transformational leadership, collegial management models and open systems are based on a different view of reality, where different perceptions of organisational life are recognised, and thus different ways of doing things become possible, as reported in chapter 4. From this point of view one might mistakenly assume that principles of classical management would not be in evidence today as Dalin (1998:33) states that they belong to “a bygone era.”

The following account is to show how the leadership and management styles that have their origins in different traditions are evident at Pandu Primary School to make the schooling of at-risk learners a success.

5.2.1 Classical organisational theory

The respondents' experiences show elements of classical organizational theory being in this school. However, Dalin (1998:33) claims that classical organisational theory belongs to a bygone era in many ways. According to Dalin (1998), the fathers of classical organizational theory (Max Weber, Henri Fayol and Frederick Taylor) described a number of principles, which should be followed if an organisation is to succeed. Hierarchical structure is a classical principle which states that an "organization is a pyramid in which the one on top always has authority over the one under him" (Dalin 1998:32). The management structures and practices of this school has elements of this principle.

The data reveals that responsibilities and supervisions at Pandu Primary School are structured bureaucratically in order to make sure that tasks are carried out properly (pages 49-50). This is the classical principle of "span of control" or "worker supervision" (Hoy and Miskel 1996:10). Hoy and Miskel (1996:10) state that "in subdividing from the top downward, each work unit had to be supervised and coordinated with other units..."

The classical principle of rule structure, which states that decisions and actions in the organisation should be governed by "clear-cut rules" (Dalin 1998:33) is seen in the data: the school management used strict control and strong supervision to make teachers teach hard (page 50). Policies with strict rules were developed to create a safe environment and regulate behaviour (page 58).

The classical principle of goal- and task-orientation which states that schools are goal-seeking organizations and results are measured in terms of pupils' achievements (Dalin 1998) can also be recognised in the data. The elements of this principle are evident in the efforts made by the principal to promote effective teaching and learning and achieve the school goal which is to provide quality teaching which enable learners to phase secondary level well (pages 48-50).

Strict control and strong supervision is part of the nature of this school. The Ministry of Education and Culture (1995) states that all schools are different. It explains that some schools are large, others are small, schools serve different communities, and resources and facilities in some schools are better than in others. It further states that the principal's task is to ensure that the school provides the best possible education for all learners. The teachers and learners at Pandu Primary School are not exceptional: they are different and are dealt with differently as reported earlier in chapter 4 under sections 4.4 (page 53) and 4.12 (page 65).

Christie (2001) similarly found that the 32 successful disadvantaged schools in South Africa used strict rules. She said that schools provided "a demarcated safe and orderly space for teachers and students. There were clear boundaries in place, operating both symbolically and materially" (Christie 2001:51).

Classical organisational theory is not the only management and leadership approach evident in the management of Pandu Primary School. The following section examines the multiplicity of constructivist approaches (instructional leadership, transformational leadership, the collegial model of management and open systems) used at Pandu Primary School as the management team responds to different circumstances to make the schooling of at-risk children a success.

5.2.2 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership focuses on actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning and enhance the effectiveness of teachers' classroom practices (Flath 1989, and Leithwood *et al.* 1999). Blase and Blase (2000) are of the opinion that instructional leadership is when the principal integrates school-based activities such as assistance to teachers, staff development and curriculum development. These instructional leadership features are exemplified by several phenomena at Pandu Primary School.

The principal and heads of department at Pandu Primary do classroom visitations of teachers allocated to them. This can be associated with instructional leadership in that the instructional leader should have the ability to delegate responsibilities and tasks to others (Leithwood *et al.* 1999). This means the principal is not the only person doing visitations: he knows when to delegate.

Another example of the principal knowing how to delegate his power and responsibilities to his colleagues is exemplified in the statement made by the principal that the head of department and strong teachers in each block are placed there to make sure that teaching is taking place in the classrooms. The principal and the heads of department enhance effective teaching and learning by doing class visitations (pages 49-53) and checking learners' work and marks (page 52). This is an instructional leadership feature for promoting growth in student learning and enhancing effectiveness of teachers' classroom practices (Leithwood *et al.* 1999).

Efforts are also made to promote growth in student learning. The school has a timetable for compensatory teaching where teachers are expected to provide hard evidence to the principal and heads of department of what they have done to improve the performance of learners with learning difficulties.

Professional growth and assistance to teachers receive attention through lesson presentation feedback and workshops (page 49 and 57). This is similar to the practice evidenced in the study of 11 successful disadvantaged schools in the UK whereby teachers are encouraged to visit other teachers and to become peer coaches (NCE 1996).

The principal of Pandu Primary School tried to achieve the school goals in a very focussed way by introducing reading programs and compensatory teaching in order to achieve the school goal that aims to promote all learners (Section 4.3 page 51). Bamburg and Andrews (1990) in the same vein suggest that to be an effective instructional leader, one should have clearly focussed goals and provide and obtain the resources and opportunities needed to achieve such goals.

The management and leadership of Pandu Primary School also tried to increase and develop professional growth as reported in Section 4.7 (page 56). Similarly Blase and Blase (1999) found that effective principals provide opportunities for teachers to learn new strategies and learning techniques at staff development meetings. Dean (1987) also emphasises the importance of professional development in every school. She claims that each school needs a professional development programme. Professional development should be the responsibility of a senior member of the staff and staff should support him/her. She also says that there is a need for the establishment of a professional development committee. This committee should be responsible for identifying the needs of the school as a whole and for individuals, and planning and implementing the overall development programmes. This is clearly done at Pandu Primary School as reported in Section 4.7.

Leithwood *et al.* (1999) maintain that instructional leadership includes strategies that a principal takes to create an effective teaching and learning environment and enhance the effectiveness of teachers' classroom practices.

The following are instructional leadership features that emerged from the data promoting effective teaching and learning: Visible management, managing academic environments, evaluation and follow-up and organisational culture. I discuss each in turn.

5.2.2.1 Visible management

In order to make sure that the learners are receiving proper teaching, the principal applies visible management. He is clearly seen as being involved in teaching, observing lessons, supervising, walking around and talking to teachers and learners (see page 50). The Ministry of Education and Culture (1995) suggests that this kind of leadership behaviour gives the principal opportunities to sense the atmosphere of the classroom to see whether it is pleasant, relaxed or unhappy. This can also be associated with omnipresent leadership described by the National Commission on Education (1996) in the UK. It found that the principals of successful disadvantaged schools exercised this kind of leadership behaviour. It states that the principals are clearly responsible for administration and spend hours in different classes observing teachers and talking to learners.

5.2.2.2 Managing academic environments

The way the academic environments are managed shows an element of instructional leadership as the principal concentrates on promoting effective teaching and learning (Leithwood *et al.* 1999). Time is not wasted on other things at the beginning of the year. Mechanisms are in place to make sure that teaching and learning starts on the first day as reported earlier (page 48). This is very different from many black schools teaching does not start on the first day of term. Jansen (1998) states that it is known that in many black schools, formal teaching is very rare at the beginning of the first term. The first term is devoted to deciding on staffing complements, finalising timetables, organising sporting events, waiting for resources, but there is no political mechanisms put in place to stop this. This is not happening at Pandu Primary School.

The academic environment is managed in that learners who do not progress well academically are identified and helped accordingly as reported on page 53. Dean (1987:40) also sees this kind of identification as an important process in helping learners with learning difficulties. She says:

It is essential to analyse children's problems so that the work provided matches their needs closely. For example, there should be a careful analysis of a child's phonic knowledge, if there are reading difficulties and of particular problems in mathematics and work should then be designed to match these particular problems (Dean 1987:40).

The academic environment is also managed in that teachers are expected to provide marks fairly. Mechanisms are in place to prevent the teachers from awarding learners false marks as reported on page 53.

It has emerged from the data that the principal tries very hard to manage academic environment but the newly transferred teachers feel that they are not well informed about the operation of the school (see their complaints on pages 69-70). This is also clear from the data that there is a need for management to give new teachers an induction course. Dean (1987:189) has the following to say, concerning the induction course to new staff:

New staff, however experienced in the work, needs induction into the particular school organisation and systems. There should be a meeting, probably with the headteacher or the deputy to explain school policies and systems: the provision of information on children; briefing on relevant work already undertaken by staff; and some arrangement for checking they are settling in happily and for dealing with any problems.

The data revealed that an induction course was not given. This is seen through the complaint made by one of the new teachers that she was embarrassed when she received a report that her learners' work was mixed up and difficult to check.

I also noticed a perception that there was a lack of appreciation from the management members for the extra work engaged in by the teachers (see the complaints of two veterans on page 69. Dean (1987:187) maintains that appreciation is needed in the organisation to make the staff committed. She states that:

The way in which you recognise, encourage and praise the work of teachers affects their commitment and enthusiasm and readiness to try new ways of working. Teachers who feel secure in your approval are ready to take the kinds of risk, which lead to genuine innovation and improvement. One important reason why a headteacher should not teach full-time is that he or she needs time to help other teachers develop their work.

Appreciation from the management side of Pandu Primary School is needed to motivate the teachers in order to continue doing extra efforts for these children from poor backgrounds.

5.2.2.3 Evaluation and follow-up

The data shows that evaluation is taking place in this school. Dean (1987:220) states that:

Evaluation is an extension of the everyday task of weighing up situations and people and making assessments in order to make decisions about action. In making professional judgements we need to be more objective and to think clearly about the judgements we make. We evaluate in order to assess past action and learn from it, ready for new planning and action.

This kind of evaluation is happening at Pandu Primary School that enables the teachers to recognise their achievements and areas that need to be improved. For example, learners who take part in the reading programme are tested at the end of the year and improvement strategies are worked out (see page 68). The National Commission on Education (1996) in the UK also found that the principals of successful disadvantaged

schools were clearly involved in reviewing teaching and learning methods and monitoring pupils' progress.

There is a tendency amongst older teachers to follow up on students from their school and find out how they perform academically at secondary level (see page 68).

5.2.2.4 A healthy organisational culture

The elements of culture emerging in the data revealed the essence of instructional leadership. Leithwood *et al.* (1999) states that instructional leadership is seen when the leader is promoting a productive culture. Schein (1992:5) described culture as a concept in which the managers try to develop the "right kind of culture" or "culture of quality." He states that culture is concerned with certain values that managers try to inculcate into their subordinates. This type of culture is seen at Pandu Primary School. A culture of hard work was developed at Pandu Primary School. The data revealed that the principal, by working hard to improve and increase the students' growth, instilled this culture into the teachers. They became committed as reported on page 50. This forms the basis of instructional leadership; Leithwood *et al.* (1999:8) maintain that instructional principals concern themselves with values that promote the effectiveness of teaching.

Literature indicates that culture is about people in the organisation and the way they perceive and do things. Hoy and Miskel (1996:128) defined organisational culture as "symbols, ceremonies and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of that organisation to its employees." It consists largely of what people believe about what works and what does not work. It is an expression of people's deepest needs. The teachers at this school know what works well in their school especially those who had taught in former white schools as reported in chapter 4.

Acceptance and acknowledgement of the situation in which the teachers work can be regarded as part of their culture. One respondent mentioned: “Working with these children is not easy... but I have to keep on saying myself that it is not the children’s fault.”

It is also culture of this school that learners are valued as valuable partners in maintaining discipline and order in the school as reported on page 65. Many teachers believe in the culture of hard work. Many things happen because of teachers who give feedback to the principal (see page 49).

5.2.3 Transformational leadership

According to Bass and Avolio, (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:394) transformational leaders behave “as role models to their followers.” They further state that transformational leaders show behaviour that influence the followers to imitate their leaders and want to be like them. The data revealed that the principal of the school in the study uses this kind of leadership approach to motivate his teaching staff as he role models the central importance of classroom practice. This is clearly exemplified in the statements made by the three veterans (see page 50).

Hoy and Miskel (1996:393) also maintain that “the basis of transformational leadership is in the personal values and beliefs of leaders”. Bass (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:394) is of the opinion that transformational leadership is seen when the leader creates an awareness of the mission or vision of the organization and motivates them to consider the best interests of the organisation before rather than merely those of themselves. The data reveals that the principal of the school in the study creates awareness among the teachers regarding the core purpose of the school, which is to provide high quality teaching and learning. Dean (1987) also maintains that other aspects of a school should be subsidiary. The principal’s professional conduct models this very well as he emphasises the core

purpose of the school, which are recognised by the followers who follow suit (see page 50).

5.2.3.1 Encouragement and motivation

According to Hoy and Miskel (1996:394) transformational leaders motivate the followers to believe that the organisational's problems can be solved. The data revealed that some learners at Pandu Primary School lack self-motivation and confidence and display unacceptable behaviour. The principal tried to create a positive attitude amongst teachers and learners through assemblies as reported on page 54. Similarly, Dean (1987:51) maintains that young children should be taught to know that certain types of behaviour please adults and other kinds of behaviour displease them. She further states that encouragement should be made intentionally and rationally, based on a particular situation.

The respondents mentioned that the Bible verses read during the assemblies are contextualised with the learners' social life as reported on page 54. The data revealed rational encouragement. The school also invites outsiders to address and encourage the learners to be responsible and take their education seriously. Thus learners would associate themselves with these opinion-leaders and admire them and this can motivate them to work hard in order to be like them.

5.2.3.2 Innovation and creativity

According to Bass and Avolio, (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:395) "transformational leaders stimulate followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems and approaching old situations in new ways." The data indicate that the principal is creative and innovative. He also stimulates the teachers to be creative and innovate by trying things out and when things do not work out well, he introduced new

ideas. This is demonstrated in the grouping of learners according to their capabilities which resulted in the reading programme as reported on pages 51-52.

Another good example of creativity is that when some members of the teaching staff noticed that many parents did not attend the general parents' meetings they decided to have grade meetings, as reported in chapter 4 under section 4.10. This is what the national educational policy, *Toward Education for all*, (MEC 1993:160) requires from educators. It says that educators must be innovators. They must encourage and protect the culture of innovation on which society depends.

The data show a high degree of creativity and innovation in the school. The teachers became more creative as they learn a lesson from their daily experiences. The teachers came up with many solutions to problems in the school. For example, when some learners played truancy the school informed the police, took photographs of these learners and gave them to the police. While this may seem a fairly harsh response it is nevertheless effective and appropriate to the circumstances. These learners were punished through community service.

5.2.3.3 Vision

Bass and Avolio (as cited in Hoy and Miskel 1996:394) state that transformational leaders get organisational members involved in the creating of organisational visions and goals. There is evidence of this element at Pandu Primary School. The principal involved his staff members in the creation of the school vision as reported on page 48. The data revealed that the vision at Pandu Primary School was not imposed upon people because staff members were involved. This is in line with what the National Commission on Education (1996) contends, namely that if the vision is to stand any chance of being accepted and put into practice all members of staff would need to understand and adopt it.

The principal said that they tried to promote effective teaching in order to achieve the school goals. The staff is focused on the vision of the school. Christie (2001) found that

the schools in her sample had clear educational visions. Principals, teachers and learners were able to articulate their visions.

The principal has a clear purpose to serve the learners from poor communities as he refused to test the learners before admitting them to the school. This is similar to the attitude revealed by one of the principals in the NCE (1996) study who moved deliberately from a school in a middle-class suburb to one in the working-class community because she felt that the children were not getting their entitlement. She said, “my vision was to offer these children the same quality of education that I had offered in my previous school - the same as they would have in a very middle class area” (NCE 1996:30).

The principal of this school really has children and the community at heart. This observation is based on the fact that he makes sure that learners receive effective teaching and learning by checking learners’ work and involving subject heads in checking if the learners’ work is up to standard.

5.2.4 Collegial management

The school management reveals features of the collegial model of management (Bush 1995). The data reveal that to create a safe and calm atmosphere in the school, the school developed several policies, as described in chapter 4 under sections 4.7 and 4.8. The respondents stated that these policies were formulated collaboratively by teachers. The principal said “the concerned and committed teachers initiated the formulation of some policies.” Bush (1995:65) in the same vein states: “Collegial heads seeks to create formal and informal opportunities for the testing and elaboration of policy initiatives. This is done to encourage innovation and to maximize the acceptability of school decisions.”

The teachers' commitment at Pandu Primary School was built through collegial leadership because they were given opportunities to suggest and decide what they believe to be the best to make them committed. This is similar to what Baldrige, (as quoted in Bush 1995:64) describes:

The basic idea of the collegial leader is less to command than to listen, less to lead than to gather expert judgements, less to manage than to facilitate, less to order than to persuade and negotiate ... the collegial leader is not so much a star standing alone as the developer of consensus among the professionals who must share the burden of the decision.

Collegial models recognise and acknowledge teachers' expertise. Bush (1995:53) is of the opinion that "collegial models [are] particularly appropriate for organisations such as school and colleges that have numbers of professional staff. Teachers possess authority of expertise arising directly from their knowledge and skill." This can be seen in the way the principal persuades the subject heads to see to it that the work given to the learners is of good quality. They have to examine the books and give feedback to the principal. This means that the principal recognises and acknowledges the subject heads' expertise.

5.2.5 Open systems

According to French and Bell (1995:89) an organisation can be described as an open system when it actively interacts with its external environments. Similarly, Bush (1995:34) maintains that "in education, open systems theory shows the relationship between the institution and external groups such as parents, employers and local education authority." There is evidence from the data that the school interacts with its external environments, notably parents. The fact that the school goes out its way to involve parents shows its commitment to the notion of open system management.

5.2.5.1 Parents and school

Dean (1987) states that it has become common practice to involve parents in school activities. She states that "...this has a lot of advantages in that parents begin to see how teaching takes place, but may well make them good advocates for the school" (Dean 1987:215). The Namibian Education Act (2001:15) lays down that "there is, for every state school, ... a school board to administer the affairs and promote the development of the school and learners of the school." The management of this school is aware of this regulation. Parents are involved in the governing of the school and the school board members were elected according to the regulations of the education act as reported in chapter 4 under section 4.10.

Literature reveals that parental involvement is crucial to effective education. Bush (as cited in Bush 1995:43) cites an example of a headteacher who emphasised that

you can't really work with children successfully in a school unless you have parents' co-operation and understanding... it's very important that parents are very much involved in school life.

The National Commission on Education (1996) found that the principals and staff of the schools investigated also considered the participation of parents as an important matter in order to provide effective schooling. The commission says that education programmes are extended to parents and strategies to involve parents in the education of their children are developed. Parents are informed about the progress of their children and invited to observe their children learn.

In contrast, Pandu Primary School involved its parents slightly differently, in that parents are not invited to come and observe how their children learn during the lesson presentations. The school organises occasions to inform parents about the progress of their children as reported on pages 61-62.

Dean (1987:40) states that “the school may also like to consider the kind of help which could be given to children with learning difficulties by their parents who are often keen to do something to help and also by volunteer parents within the school.” At Pandu Primary School, parents whose children are not progressing well are provided with extra work.

5.2.5.2 Pastoral care

The staff members at Pandu Primary School also comprehend the environment where the learners come from. Thus they decided to provide pastoral care. According to Parrott (online) pastoral care could be described “as the provision made for the physical and emotional, moral, academic and spiritual well being of the student, the welfare of staff and pastoral support for the family.” This provision is clearly seen in referral of cases to the grade guardians, counseling support group committee, police officers and welfare officers for help when learners experience behavioural problems, lack self-motivation, damage school property or are involved in criminal activities.

Pastoral care at Pandu Primary School is also seen in the way the class teachers take responsibility for making sure that learners’ clothes are clean and for buying washing powder (see page 61).

Parrott (online: 2) states that a pastoral care framework for students includes physical and emotional well being such as a safety policy, education in principles of nutrition and diet, provision of medical assistance and facilities and a means of identifying students at-risk. This provision can be seen in the developing of school policies, which were formulated to create a safe and calm atmosphere and regulate the behaviour of teachers as well as learners in the school as reported in Section 4.8.

Nutrition and diet of learners are taken into consideration as reported in Section 4.11. The school leadership also sees to it that learners who are sick receive medical assistance by taking them to the hospital when they notice that parents do not take responsibility or cannot afford to take them. Learners whose parents cannot afford to buy school uniforms are also taken into consideration (see page 61).

5.2.5.3 Personal communication

Personal communication is used to help parents become involved in their children's schooling. The school organises opportunities for the teachers to talk to parents in person. The class teachers talk to parents individually about the learners' poor performance, behaviour or outstanding school fees as reported in Section 4.10.

Personal communication is also used to convince parents to buy school uniforms for their children. The head of department who is responsible for learners' dress code stated that at the beginning of each year she takes the opportunity to explain to the new parents the importance of a school uniform (see page 61).

Another element of personal communication is that teachers who do not carry out their duties are called in individually before action is taken. Parents whose children give many problems are also invited to come to school to help discipline the child (see page 62).

5.3 Conclusion

The heart of this chapter was to discuss the findings in order to identify and compare leadership and management approaches and styles employed in the leading and managing of Pandu Primary School with literature and to make sense of data. It is obvious from the discussions that the leadership and management team has made remarkable progress in employing different leadership and management styles/approaches as they addressed

different situations and problems occurring in their school. This is similar to what Leithwood *et al.* (1999:22) calls “comprehensiveness of perspectives.” They argue that many leaders customarily employ only one or two approaches and as result these leaders fail to recognise and address problems that remain troublesome in their institutions. At Pandu Primary School, the management team uses multiple leadership and management approaches. It is also interesting that leadership and management styles that have originated from different traditions- positivism and constructivism - are used hand in hand to respond to the situations of the school.

I have learned that the success in this school has come as a result of extra effort made by the principal and the teachers, hard work and commitment of the teachers. The data revealed that improvement strategies were implemented successfully because the principal was the key in initiating and implementing them. I believe schools serving disadvantaged communities can learn from this case study.

In the next chapter I summarise the main findings, suggest recommendations for practice as well as for future research and discuss the limitations of my study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

My research focus was to examine the role of leadership and management in the schooling of at-risk learners. I stated in the methodology chapter that the selection of the school in the study was informed by the good reports of inspectors and subject advisors. The school is believed to be putting in extra effort to improve the performance of these disadvantaged learners far better than other similar schools. The purpose of the interviews was to gain information as well as perceptions of the respondents on how the school deals with the challenge of providing education for at-risk children.

This chapter summarises the main findings discussed in chapter five. In this chapter I also put forward the potential value of my study, propose some recommendations for practice and future research as well as limitations of my study.

6.2 Summary of main findings

The main issue that emerges from the findings is the co-existence of apparently conflicting management and leadership approaches. Leadership and management styles emerging from different traditions – positivism and constructivism – are clearly seen in the data. These two traditions seem to oppose each other.

The following account shows how the management team (principal and heads of department at Pandu Primary School) reveals elements of both of these traditions as they respond to different circumstances to make the schooling of at-risk children a success.

Strict control used in the school to make teachers work hard is an element of classical organisational theory, with its emphasis on span of control or number of workers supervised. The management of Pandu Primary School places one head of department and dedicated teachers in each block. The head of department is there for supervising and strong teachers are expected to influence fellow teachers who not strongly committed. The principal walks around in corridors and enters the classrooms unexpectedly, another manifestation of external control. The heads of department and subject heads are expected to provide the principal with hard evidence on how they carry out their tasks as described in chapter 5 section 5.2.1. The principal does class visitations of anyone in the school including the heads of department and examines the quality of work given to learners. Lesson presentation is also monitored on a regular basis by the principal. The participants reveal that strict control is necessary because some teachers are not as committed as they might be.

Policies with strict rules are in place to create a calm atmosphere and serve as directives for teachers and learners. For example policies prohibit teachers from insulting learners and learners are not allowed to enter the building wherever they want as they may damage the property. This resonates with classical organisational principles, which states that decisions and actions in the organisation should be governed by “clear-cut rules” (Dalin 1998:33).

On the other hand, constructivist approaches – such as instructional leadership, transformational leadership, the collegial model of management and open systems – are also clearly evident in the findings.

Instructional leadership is evident in the emphasis on improvement of classroom practice and feedback given after the formal class visitations, monitoring of lesson presentations and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses between the respective teacher and the observer. On the completion of the formal visitations the management members organise a workshop to inform the teaching staff about their findings. Bad and good examples of lesson presentation are demonstrated without mentioning names to prevent conflict

amongst teachers. This emphasis on improving classroom practice is characteristic of instructional leadership.

Growth in student-learning is promoted in variety of ways, such as compensatory teaching and the peer reading programme.

The findings further show elements of transformational leadership. The principal of Pandu Primary School motivates the teachers and serves as a role model by teaching a promotion subject, trying to be punctual, and not tolerating disturbances when he is busy with a lesson. Thus he role-models the central importance of classroom practice.

The school also has some features of the collegial model of management. There are policies on behaviour, punctuality, corporal punishment, homework and absenteeism. The policies were initiated by teachers. Teachers speak positively that policies serve as directives. Interestingly learners are also aware of policies concerning them. Teachers say that because of the policies learners know where to go when they experience problems.

Teachers' commitment is built through collegial leadership. The principal of Pandu Primary School uses this quality leadership by giving teachers opportunities to suggest and decide what they believe to make them committed. He also motivates teachers to make suggestions freely by keeping a suggestion box.

Pastoral care is given attention at this school. These initiatives range from counseling for children with behavioural problems grade guardians, the counseling support group committee, the police and welfare, to material help such as food and uniforms.

Learners are encouraged to take their schooling seriously. The school invites outside people such as regional governor, mayor and pastors from different denominations to address and encourage learners to take their education seriously. The principal also takes opportunities during the assembly days to encourage the learners.

The school can be described as an open system because attempts are made to involve parents in their children' education. The school involves parents in the schooling of their children.

It emerged from the data that the principal has children at heart. He refuses to have learners tested before being admitted to school. He uses his innovation and creativity to make things happens at school.

Academic environments are managed to make sure teaching is starts at the right time. Unlike many black schools Pandu Primary School starts with teaching on the first day.

Finally, I would like to conclude this part by suggesting why these two apparently opposing approaches to management and leadership exist side by side in the same organisation. I would suggest that the principal (and other senior teachers) is responding to the special circumstances in the organisation. As the data have revealed, teachers are not all as committed as one would like and the learners, being at risk, clearly need special attention and closer monitoring. The management of the school responds to these circumstances by strict control, firm policies and rules. On the other hand, management's commitment to developing professionalism and delivering a quality product leads to an emphasis on developing teamwork and building commitment amongst teachers. These findings reinforce the notion that organisational reality is complex, unpredictable and not easily captured in any single theory.

6.3 Potential value of my research

The purpose of this study was to acquaint myself with leadership and management features that enable schools in disadvantaged areas to be successful while others collapse. I have developed this curiosity through my experience as a teacher at different disadvantaged schools where we grappled blindly with the challenge of educating

disadvantaged learners. I have now gained greater insights into how disadvantaged schools could be led and managed to succeed against odds.

I also hope that the findings of this study could serve as guidance to principals and teachers working with learners from deprived families, especially in Namibia where this topic is under-researched. The findings would also be relevant to Ministry of Basic Education officials responsible for professional development of schools generally, and schools with at-risk learners in particular. The value of this research also lies in its being able to inform policy-makers about issues surrounding the implementation of policy on educationally marginalized children.

6.4 Possible recommendations

I suggest that principals and teachers in disadvantaged schools, Ministry of Education officials and policy-makers should to be aware of the following improvement strategies:

- Principals should know that schools serving disadvantaged areas need plenty of energy and unusual high level of human effort should be spent in a very focused way. They need to rise to the challenge of transformational leadership.
- Principals need to seek ways to establish organizational policies to regulate learners and teachers behaviours.
Principals of disadvantaged schools especially those schools that are not performing well need to recognise the fact that learners from deprived areas are less likely to do well at school. They should identify learners with learning and reading difficulties and implement reading programmes and compensatory teaching. Work should be designed to match learners' problems. Instructional leadership offers a model for implementing appropriate behaviour.
- The principals should be creative and innovative to try things out and revisit them when they did not work out well.

- They should be strong leaders who are well focused to face the most difficult educational challenges of at-risk children.
- They should develop vision and moral purposes to offer learners from poor communities quality education.
- Principals should involve outside bodies such as police, welfare to help these learners to be retained in schools if necessary. They should also invite other people to encourage learners to take their education seriously.
- Teachers in disadvantaged schools also need to realise that their initiatives and positive attitudes toward these learners have a great contribution to the success of these learners' education.
- I also recommend that the Ministry of Basic Education should make the case studies of successful disadvantaged schools available to the principals. Informative workshops should be organised to inform principals about successful disadvantaged schools. Successful principals can be used to train fellow principals.
- I also recommend that new teachers in the school should be given induction course and principals have to show appreciation for teachers extra efforts they do so that teachers can be more committed and feel encouraged to take risk in what they are doing.
- The policy makers should plan strategies to implement policies at school level.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

As I already mentioned this area of my study is under-researched particularly in Namibia. I therefore suggest that future Namibian researchers should conduct similar studies. I hope that a variety of similar case studies will make a tremendous contribution to the challenge of educating at-risk children.

I also hope that my study could expose research studies dealing with the plight of at-risk learners. My research question focused only on the role of leadership in the schooling of at-risk learners, which is the field of my study. Therefore I recommend future researchers

need to investigate experiences of teachers teaching in disadvantaged schools at classroom levels.

It would be extremely valuable to gain at-risk learners' perspectives on how they experience their schooling. This would add another dimension to our understanding and possibly point towards alternative strategies for successful classroom practice, leadership and management.

This was a small scale case study. It would be worthwhile if future researchers conduct large-surveys to establish what is happening nationally or regionally in terms of the schooling of at-risk learners.

The policy issue shows that the national policy options for educationally marginalised children were not implemented effectively. Further researchers need to find out why there is so much ignorance and how is policy meant to be implemented.

6.6 Limitation of my study

I have identified some limitations:

The first major limitation is that this was a very small-scale study. I interviewed only seven staff members including two newly transferred teachers who are still in the learning process. For this reason I think that the findings cannot be generalized but my study would inform schools working with similar learners and policy-makers about issues surrounding the implementation of the *National policy options for educationally marginalised children*.

Another limitation is that I employed only one technique, which is interviewing. I believe that visiting and observing the school could have added different perspectives to my

study. For wider information I could have interviewed all staff members, parents, learners, inspectors and advisory teachers but clearly this would have been appropriate for a bigger study only, outside the requirements for a half-thesis.

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