

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The underlying motivation for this research is embedded in the spirit of democracy which has pervaded every aspect of life in the RSA recently. Unfortunately, calls for democratisation of schools have not been accompanied by a thorough understanding of the participation process nor its implications for practice.

Consequently, participation often took the form of one set of stakeholders forcing its opinions on others on pain of mass action. This served to underscore the inherent conflicts deeply rooted in misconceptions on participation. Forces of transformation involving a major paradigm shift in the values and norms of a society long accustomed to authoritarian modes of management and tasting, for the first time, the fruits of freedom of speech and expression, further exacerbated the emergent conflict between principals and teachers in particular. This process was not without deleterious effects on the management of schools in a situation which was already volatile.

The present research, therefore, aimed at placing participation on a more scientific footing than the practice has been hitherto. Hence during the course of this investigation particular attention was paid to the definition of what school management entails and what participation therein meant. Suggestions were proposed as to the best way of implementing participation by the proposal of a model for teacher participation in school management. These points are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

7.2 SUMMARY

The first chapter serves as a blueprint of the research project. It sets out an introductory motivation why the research was carried out, defines the aims of the research, explains how the data was collected, which population was involved and stipulates the headings of the chapters. In this way, the chapter guides the readers concerning what is contained in the research project.

The theme of the second chapter was an exposition of the concept participation. To this end various concepts associated with participation were explored and a conclusion was reached that participation, as defined within the constraints of this research, refers to a system of school governance in which school members, particularly teachers, are involved in decision making processes which constitute the function of managing a school.

The beginnings of a theory of participation are made in a discussion of the theories underlying participation. Here it was indicated that although participation is embedded in the humanist oriented theories, it is mostly anchored in democratic theory and finds expression in practice in the Japanese management model.

Against this theoretical background, the characteristics of participation were investigated including vertical and horizontal relationships among participants, extent of participation and format thereof. This aspect aimed at clearing some of the misconceptions which cloud participation efforts in practice. Additionally, factors which impact on participation were addressed in order to identify those factors which may be magnified in attempts to maximise participation. Naturally, the whole exercise of participation aims at reaping positive fruits for the advancement of school goals and thus, the outcomes of participation were also stipulated. In this regard, an indirect relationship between school effectiveness and participation was proposed due to the impossibility of adequately controlling the many intervening factors involved in this relationship.

In Chapter 3 the focus fell on forms of participation. This was a more pragmatic approach although it retained the generic nature found in the preceding chapter. In discussing the management tasks, ways in which teachers could be involved in school management were explained. The legal requirements and implications thereof with regard to teacher involvement in managerial duties without the accompanying and protective legal authority implied in principalship, were investigated. This was followed by a proposal of structures which may be employed in implementing participation in schools. It was suggested, in this respect, that participation structures should be consistent with the authority structure already in place in the schools to minimise the disruptive effects of introducing change.

An orientation to the empirical research was presented in Chapter 4. This covered the aspect of instrumentation which included the search for appropriate measuring instruments. It was pointed out that the absence of a relevant measuring instrument led to the construction of a questionnaire. The pros and cons of the questionnaire as a research instrument were also indicated. A conclusion was reached that, notwithstanding its disadvantages, the questionnaire was most suitable to answer the purposes of the research with the understanding that its disadvantages would be eliminated when administering this instrument in the field.

The population involved in the investigation was also described in this chapter. It was said that principals and teachers in the Vaal Triangle formed the population from which a sample was selected using a two stage sampling procedure. Since the sample consisted of two independent groups, the most suitable statistical techniques chosen consisted of frequency analysis, computation of means, rank ordering and the use of both the ordinary and paired t-tests.

The choice of the above statistical techniques allowed comparisons to be made between the two groups of respondents. As explained in the chapter, comparisons were necessary due to the differing views of principals and teachers concerning the extent of participation - the root cause of conflict between the two groups. Lastly, the method of presenting and analysing results was explained.

Chapter 5 presented the results of the empirical investigation. First to be indicated were responses pertaining to personal and school details of the respondents. This formed a well of information from which reasons for responses could be drawn. Using a frequency analysis, a comparison was made between the principals' and teachers' responses with regard to actual and desired participation, processes and structures of participation as well as the outcomes of participation. To discover activities in which teachers participated most and those in which they participated least, rank ordering was used. In determining the differences in the magnitude between the two independent samples, a paired t-test was applied regarding actual and desired participation with respect to each group. An ordinary t-test was

applied regarding actual and desired participation with respect to each group. An ordinary t-test with respect to processes and structures of participation was used.

With the aid and guidance of the information from the literature study and empirical investigation, a model was developed to explain how participation ought to be implemented at every tier of the education system in order to maximise teacher participation in schools. This model development is the subject of Chapter 6. The proposed model was presented by means of diagrams and verbal explanations. First an overview of the model was given followed by an explanation of each component of the model.

7.3 FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO RESEARCH AIMS

This section deals with the findings of the research in accordance with the stated research aims (cf. par. 1.3) in order to indicate how each aim was achieved. A stipulation of the findings follows:

7.3.1 Findings on research Aim 1: To investigate the nature of participative management

With regard to the aim of investigating the nature of participative management, the following findings may be stated:

- * Although various concepts and theories are on offer to explain what participative management entails, participation derives its greatest meaning from the concept of empowerment and democratic theory. In a school, it refers to a type of management in which teachers are empowered to take decisions jointly with other stakeholders concerning management and operational tasks (cf. par. 2.1.2; 2.1.8; 2.2.8; 2.2.7.4).
- * Teacher participation involves the functioning of professionals within a hierarchical authority structure of the school at the head of which is a principal as the ultimate authority bearer, legally accountable and

responsible for the line function management of the school (cf. par. 2.3.1, 2.2.4)

- In participation the exercise of authority is co-operative and sharing in orientation, allowing more teachers to exercise delegated authority by acting in leadership positions. A dialogical leadership, the essence of which is consultation, discussion and consensus decision making occurs in participation (cf. par. 2.1.5; 2.3.2).
- Characteristic of participative settings is the existence of a subtle yet powerful school ethos defined by shared values, assumptions, beliefs, norms, attitudes, work ethic and expectations which bind and bond school members to one another and to school goals (cf. par. 2.3.3; 2.2.5.4).
- The desire to participate and the manner of participating differ according to the teachers' interest and expertise, the content of the decision and jurisdictional powers afforded the teachers (cf. par. 2.3.4; 2.3.5).
- Mandated, formal and direct participation is more likely to take root in a school than voluntary, informal and representative participation (cf. par. 2.3.6).
- Albeit the existence of a variety of intervening factors, influence of the principal, pragmatism, implementation of decisions and relevance to academic results, are the most decisive factors influencing participation (cf. par. 2.4.1; 2.4.3; 2.4.4).
- School effectiveness, in terms of student outcomes and professional growth of teachers, constitute the ultimate end towards which participation efforts are directed (cf. par. 2.5.2).

7.3.2 Findings on research Aim 2: To examine the forms of participative management which exist for teachers in a school

Concerning the above aim the following were found:

- School management consists of the performance of specific duties in each of the major management tasks planning, organising, leading and controlling with the aim of ensuring that teaching is carried out in an orderly fashion (cf. par. 2.1.2; 3.2).
- Participation finds its greatest link to educative teaching in the leading task in that this task aims at the professional development and growth of teachers. More importantly in this research, leading offers opportunities to teachers to receive practical inservice training in management skills (cf. par. 3.3.3).
- The involvement of teachers in school management requires clear legal specifications with regard to the powers and competencies of each group of stakeholders in order to avoid conflicts of turf and to specify final decision making powers of the school (cf. par. 3.4.5).
- The utilisation of small semi autonomous teams in executing management tasks offers the greatest possibility of developing a culture of participation in the school (cf. par. 2.2.5.2; 2.2.6; 3.5.1.3).
- The general staff meeting forms an important central structure of participation but is often used inappropriately by principals (cf. par. 3.5.2.3).
- The involvement of teachers in an unfamiliar area of management points to a need for top level administrators, education experts and process specialists to facilitate participative processes in the school and to train functionaries on school management (cf. par. 3.3.3.1).
- The modelling of participation structures along formal education structures ensures that decisions taken at school level assume a legal status which will bind school members to comply with such decisions and also ensure that such decisions are accepted at higher levels (cf. par. 3.5.2.6).

7.3.3 Findings with regard to Aim 3: To determine empirically the nature, forms and extent of teacher participation in school management

The empirical investigation into the nature, forms and extent of participation yielded the following findings:

- Personal details of respondents indicate a population of teachers who are on post level one with most having no university degrees. The population was thus found to be academically less sophisticated and consequently showed signs of lacking knowledge of management (cf. par. 5.2.3; 5.3.10; Table 5.1).
- In spite of the fact that the size of the school and the size of teams within the school were optimal for participation, it surfaced that structures are not used effectively and fruitfully to achieve participation (cf. par. 5.2.6; 5.8; Table 5.1; Table 5.17).
- Actual and desired participation of teachers is greater in activities where teachers exercise authority vis-à-vis learners and is less in those activities requiring the exercise of authority over other teachers (cf. par. 5.6.1; 5.7.1; Table 5.15).
- A shared vision regarding the outcomes of participation exists in schools to serve as a basis for the implementation of participation (cf. par. 5.4.1.1; 5.9; Table 5.18).
- Various methods of arriving at decisions are used in schools but heavy emphasis is placed on consensus decision making (cf. par. 5.4.2.1).
- While the principal's authority is accepted by teachers in decision making, initiation of participation is equally shared between the principal and teachers (cf. par. 5.4.1.5).

- * The pure states of saturation and equilibrium do not exist in practice because teachers reported deprivation across all management activities (cf. par. 5.7.1; 5.7.2; Table 5.15; Table 5.16).
- * Principals tend to perceive greater actual and desired teacher participation than the teachers themselves (cf. par. 5.7.2; Table 5.16).
- * There is a statistically significant difference with a small to medium effect between the opinions of principals and teachers regarding the conduct of meetings in the school. Thus while principals think that the conduct of staff meetings is in order, teachers hold an opposing view (cf. par. 5.8; Table 5.17).

7.3.4 Findings with regard to Aim 4: To draw guidelines for implementation of participation

The findings regarding the above aim are as follows:

- * A developmental strategy capable of changing the entire orientation of school management is a fundamental aspect of implementing participation (cf. par. 6.3).
- * Participation should be managed and developed at all levels of the Education Department and thus existing structures and formal positions within the Education Department should be utilised (par. 6.5.1; 6.5.2).
- * The involvement of top level administrators, viz., District Director and Circuit Managers, in training principals and teachers forms an important part of implementation of participation (cf. par. 6.5.3).
- * The participation model forms an integral part of managing a school. Its components are consequently interwoven into complete subsystems consisting of a **management task, activities** to be performed, **processes** of participation and **structures** to perform the duties (cf. par. 6.6.1).

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the literature and empirical treatment of data, the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendation 1

Principals and teachers should study policy guidelines and legislation concerning teacher participation.

Motivation

Legislation forms the basis of implementing teacher participation. A study of legislation is essential for the specification of duties and competencies of teachers and principals to avoid conflicts over turf and to protect participants against litigation.

Recommendation 2

Policy guidelines and legislation for teacher participation should be based on teachers' needs.

Motivation

Teachers express deprivation across all management activities with great effect being recorded in all but a few of these activities. However, policy guidelines and legislation should aim at increasing participation in planning activities where the teachers expressed the highest deprivation. In the controlling task, however, teacher participation should be minimised especially with regard to teacher evaluations.

Recommendation 3

Principals should examine and explore carefully the extent to which structures and processes of participation are being effectively utilised.

Motivation

Inappropriate use of activities relating to the conduct of general staff meetings surfaced during this research. While principals believed that the conduct of staff meetings was in order, teachers held an opposing view. Principals should take care that agenda items are made available in advance of the meeting, regular meetings are held and that the principle of rotation of chairpersons is upheld.

Recommendation 4

Staff development programmes should focus on developing the management skills of principals and teachers.

Motivation

Participation is a specialised type of management requiring thorough knowledge and experience in school management. A staff development strategy should therefore focus on developing management skills of principals due to their tendency towards crisis and reactive management stemming from the recent turmoil in school education. Teachers in this study showed signs of a lack of knowledge of management activities.

Recommendation 5

Staff development programmes should also focus on developing participation skills.

Motivation

Both teachers and principals have no experience in participation having been subjected to authoritarian management practices of the past and having had no share in participating in the education system except as agents carrying out decisions "from above".

Recommendation 6

Adequate time and resources should be placed at the disposal of principals and teachers to enable them to implement participation.

Motivation

Time and resources have been indicated in this research as critical in the implementation of participation especially in the light of the fact that the basic work of teachers is teaching. Resources should also be made available for schools to call in experts to conduct the necessary training courses.

Recommendation 7

Representatives of teachers should give feedback to their constituencies.

Motivation

Success of participation hinges on representatives giving feedback to other teachers otherwise teachers may not be aware that their peers are in fact participating. To this end, the principal should ensure that regular staff meetings are held where reports on progress and minutes of teams are read, and teacher representatives should call meetings to give feedback to their colleagues.

Recommendation 8

Clear accountability procedures should be established.

Motivation

Participation may lead to diffused accountability because individuals and not groups are fired. Contractual obligations should be considered by the Education Department to prevent teachers from withdrawing from participation as they wish or defaulting on performance of their duties. Teachers must understand that participation is part of their job description

Recommendation 9

Participation efforts should focus on outcomes of participation with regard to school improvement.

Motivation

Participation is a slow, difficult and time consuming exercise with the result that teachers and principals may lose interest along the way. Focusing participation efforts on improvement of academic results and professional development of teachers will serve as benchmarks to propel the whole process forward and make participation more meaningful.

Recommendation 10

Participation should be a proactive, empathic and synergistic teamwork of principals and teachers

Motivation

Teamwork is one of the basic ingredients of participatory management. Both principals and teachers must be committed to the teamwork ethic and a strong sense of sharing common values and norms. An increased sense of responsibility, enthusiasm for work, collegial relationship and concern for each other and trust are hallmarks of effective teams.

7.5 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In acknowledgement of possible limitations of the present research, the following are recommended for further research:

- * The empirical research used the questionnaire as the instrument for gathering data. This may have limited responses to the minimum specified by the question items. Further research may therefore be conducted using alternative methods of collecting data such as interviews, longitudinal studies and observations in the field.

- The dearth of measuring instruments with regard to participation in the RSA makes it imperative to develop and validate instruments which are suitable to the system of education in the RSA.
- Use of qualitative approaches may be used in further research to illuminate relationships among variables. Experimental procedures to determine cause-effect with regard to factors influencing participation may also be undertaken.
- A further recommendation is that replica studies using wider areas and larger samples may throw light on the findings of this research. A school to school comparison may assist in unravelling differences between principals and their staff.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The research proved that efforts by community organisations and especially teachers to gain access to decision making structures in the school need not follow distributive bargaining only. The study also showed that participation is a multifaceted activity which requires careful implementation if it is to succeed without causing undue stress on the stakeholders and school managers.

In this way, it may be said that the research problem was solved by the proposal of a model aimed at orderly implementation of participation in schools. It must be admitted, however, that proposals are easy to make but the real test lies in the usefulness of proposals in achieving intended aims. A model is, therefore, vindicated by practice.