

RHODES UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP ROLE IN A
SUCCESSFUL RURAL SCHOOL IN NAMIBIA**

Submitted by

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Abstract

Rural schools generally find it hard to function effectively for a variety of reasons, and managing and leading these schools brings additional challenges. This study explored the role of the principal in an academically successful rural school in Namibia. It drew on leadership theory and findings from related studies to make sense of this particular case of leadership against the odds. Using the interpretive orientation, the research explored selected organisation members' perceptions of the principal's leadership through semi-structured interviews.

The study found that the actions and attitudes of the leader had a significant influence on the school's performance. The manner in which the principal conducted himself, the shared vision he encouraged and his insistence on associating with all stakeholders involved in education, were instrumental in the organization's positive achievements. The principal was shown as committed and a leader with good interpersonal working relationships. The study also revealed that this principal was both a person- and task-oriented leader, and closely resembled the ideals of transformational leadership.

This study further found that, through the principal's instructional leadership, teaching and learning are seen as the core of the school's activities. Finally, the principal's leadership role opens the school to the community and results in strong and mutually beneficial relationships between the school and its community.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This research looks at the role that the principal plays in running a successful rural school. Most research has identified that concerted school leadership, discipline and co-operation amongst the various stakeholders involved at school level can make a significant difference even in the poorest schools. Linked to good leadership there must also be a campaign to empower and encourage teachers to do what is necessary and to spend their time economically.

A growing body of research on effective schools and recent calls for school reform has identified the principal as the key person in the effort to improve the quality of a school (Blumberg & Greenfield cited in Kawana 2004, Christie 2001 and Nongauza 2004). The consistent performance of Grade 10 learners at Chotto Combined School attracted my attention. I believed that there must be something that this principal was and is doing right, which enables the school as a whole to overcome all the obstacles that face them. I did not speculate in this research and attribute certain skills to the principal which might contribute to this good performance, but I examined the role of leadership to see if it had any significant influence on their consistent good results. This research emanates from recommendations from the work of Nongauza (2004), Kantema (2001) and Villet (1998) and probes the perceptions of respondents on features of this school and that of the principal which have enabled them to continue functioning where others have failed.

Weldy (cited in Kitavi 2006: 1) captures the importance of the men and women who occupy the critical position of the principal by asserting that:

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school...It is his/her leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for the learning, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers and degree of concern for what students may or may not become... If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centred

place, it has a reputation for excellence ...if students are performing to the best of their ability, then one can always point to the principal's leadership as the key to that success.

This study is enriched by stories the principal and members of the school community tell.

1.2 Context

My study is located within a rural school environment and aims to highlight what it is that this principal does that results in academic gain for these rural students. This school became the top performing school in 2004 in the whole region and is currently still number one in the circuit; this deepened my interest in this little known school.

Christie (2001) and Nongauza's (2004) work on schools that have managed where others have collapsed, helped me to look at this rural school as an interesting area of study. The findings of Christie and Nongauza and their suggestions have guided me in my search for possible answers to Chotto Combined School's consistent performance.

There is a need for this study in the Caprivi educational region of Namibia in particular, where only a handful of schools are seen as academically successful, i.e. schools whose learners produce good examination results. The Caprivi region thus faces bigger challenges than elsewhere in the country. In general, the rural schools in this region are weaker academically than urban schools. Having identified a particularly successful rural school in Caprivi, it made me curious to investigate the role of the principal in this school's success.

To my knowledge, no research on this topic has been conducted in the region. Studies conducted in South Africa (Christie 2001, Nongauza 2004, Villet 1998) have found that actions of principals significantly influence a school's success, and that socio-economic disadvantages do not necessarily inhibit a school from performing beyond expectation. This is precisely what I wanted to verify in this particular study.

1.3 Research goals

The purpose of this research was to investigate the role of the principal in an academically successful rural school. I found it necessary to obtain the viewpoint of the people close to the school principal as they often observe this principal at work. My investigation identified structures within the school and outside the school that might aid in creating a successful story. I carefully looked at how and where these structures have been fully utilized by the principal.

My intention was to identify trends and behaviours that other schools could emulate and to uncover the facts about how this principal conducted himself at work and outside the school.

This investigation hopes to inform Regional Officials and School Inspectors' thinking with regards to the principalship in terms of the selection and appointment of principals and their support and development, and also possible ways that schools may improve their situations.

1.4 Research approach

This is a case study conducted in the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with the understanding of the subjective perceptions of the individuals (Cantrell in Mrazek 1993: 84). This approach was appropriate for my research because it enabled me to understand the subjective meaning and beliefs my respondents have about principalship, especially as the paradigm interprets daily occurrences and the meaning people give to the phenomena (Cantrell cited in Mrazek 1993: 83).

The sampling is purposive because qualitative research typically uses small, information- rich samples selected purposefully to allow the researcher to focus on the depth of issues important to the study (Kawana 2004: 4). Patton (1990: 279) states that "we cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We have to ask people questions about these things." I handpicked the respondents in line with these expectations.

Lincoln and Guba (1985: 200) suggest that when one needs to obtain information about an unusual case, purposive sampling becomes the ideal choice to make. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data as it allows respondents to talk freely and relate stories in their own time. These interviews were tape recorded with the participant's consent.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

In Chapter One I present the general overview of the research. The outline locates the research site, the purpose of the research and indicates the importance of the undertaking. This Chapter summarizes the work that becomes the essence of my research.

In Chapter Two I focus on the literature dealing with leadership. I look at leadership theories in general to show how the understanding of leadership has changed with time and also try and ascertain whether there may be a better leadership style that principals in our modern schools can adopt.

In Chapter Three I outline the research approach and design. The way in which my research is done is explained and justified. I show how data were gathered and analyzed; the ethical implications and the limitations of my research methodology are also highlighted.

Chapter Four deals with the presentation of the data. I present the data in sub-headings or categories. The respondents are introduced and their words are used to avoid distortion and to enable the reader to hear their voices.

In Chapter Five my main findings are linked to Chapter Four and are thoroughly examined and discussed using literature as a torch to shine on my work. The role of the principal is discussed with the school's effectiveness serving as a term of reference and

finally I establish whether my research goal has been addressed and research question answered.

Chapter Six provides a summary of my main findings, highlights the implications and limitations of this study and makes recommendations for future practice.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the role of the school principal in a successful rural school. The importance of the principal's role as leader in effective schools has been well researched in studies based in South Africa (Christie 2001 and Nongauza 2004).

Leadership cannot be looked at in isolation; leadership occurs within complex organisational and social contexts. Hence any study of leadership needs to take into account the culture of the organisation, in other words, the values, beliefs and attitudes that motivate and shape the members' practice. Furthermore, since the school I have selected is a rural school, I will need to take into account the special needs and challenges that characterize rural schooling (Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) 2005: 132) for example, students who cannot afford to pay the school development fund or buy books, shortage of school equipment, parents' illiteracy, students travelling long distances and many more. Hence this chapter is divided into five complementary sections. The first section presents an overview of literature on leadership in general, in order to provide a basis for investigating the phenomenon of leadership in the context of this study. Next I focus on leadership in education. The third section presents a discussion of how leaders operate within a given organizations' culture and specifically the role of the school principal as the key element of this research.

The fourth section looks at school effectiveness. The school where my study is focused has constantly performed well regionally as well as at circuit level in the past few years despite many challenges. The last section looks at the particular leadership challenges faced by leaders of rural schools.

I start by looking at how different authors define leadership before discussing different theories of leadership.

2.2 Leadership in general

Despite thousands of journal articles, books and theses that attempt to define the concept leadership, there is no consensus among researchers of leadership as to what is meant by the term. For example some researchers define leadership in terms of characteristics of the individual, yet others see it as a process or outcome. This opinion is reiterated by Hoy and Miskel (1996: 373) as they state that definitions of leadership are almost as numerous as the researchers engaged in its study and as a result, confusion and a lack of clarity exists (Van Der Mescht 1996: 3). This can cause frustration among researchers.

Leadership has increasingly been seen as a “group function: it occurs only when two or more people interact” (Owens 2004: 259) rather than the more traditional notion of leadership being a force that commands and control dependent on obedience and compliance. Gardener (in Fullan 2000: 3) sees leadership as the process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or some of his/her followers. Sergiovanni (1990: 23) has described this aspect of leadership as “bonding”; leaders and followers have a shared set of values and commitment “that bond them together in a common cause” in order to meet a common goal. Smith (1996: 207) similarly sees leadership as having a significant ‘followership’ component.

From this description one is able to see that a leader is a person who should have people skills – he/she should be intuitive, inspire trust and build consensus between people. He/she negotiates, persuades and communicates. Sergiovanni (1984: 13) further believes that the burdens of leadership will be lighter if leadership functions and roles are shared. The leader, who leads his/her team members by encouragement and appreciation of their efforts, rather than pushing them through threats of punishment, will have a far more motivated team. Good leaders “walk the talk”, take an interest in their people, empower them and respect others. They teach, coach, delegate and

facilitate work. They acknowledge results and effort, and give feedback. They may be charismatic as a result and are often seen as having a spirit of generosity.

Smyth (1989) adds that follower satisfaction and follower transformation are enhanced by the leader's ability to communicate understanding, develop a sense of community and reconstitute power relationships which get in the way of any successful process in organizations. Both approaches emphasize participatory leadership. Nongauza (2004: 14) refers to this act of leadership as an activity of relations.

I confine myself to the term 'leadership' in this research, although there is a tendency to use the terms 'management' and 'leadership' interchangeably, even though these terms essentially point to different practices.

This research is based on the opinion that leadership is people-oriented while management is task-oriented. Van der Mescht (1996: 5-6) says that leadership sounds more exciting than management, and that "to manage" means "to bring about, to accomplish, to take charge of or responsibility for, to conduct. Leading is influencing, guiding in direction, course, action, opinion". The distinction between leaders and managers and how they try to influence is one of the controversies that needs to be noted (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 374). The main point of divergence appears to be that managers emphasize stability and efficiency while leaders stress adaptive change and getting people to agree about what needs to be accomplished. My experience as a teacher by profession is that teachers do not care how much you know as a principal, until they know how much you care; you have to give loyalty down before you can receive loyalty up.

In this study the focus is on leadership of a rural school, to determine how the principal leads and how the process of relationships from within and from outside has enabled him to achieve his intended or planned goals. I now look at leadership theories before specifically focusing on leadership in education.

2.3 Leadership theory

Researchers have examined leadership skills from a variety of perspectives. Here I briefly review earlier approaches such as traits, situations, contingency and transformational theories that were used to study leadership and to understand what contributed to making leaders effective.

2.3.1 Early trait theory

This was the first generation of leadership theories. It considered leaders as individuals endowed with certain personality traits, which constituted their ability to lead. Trait thinking stems from Aristotle, who believed that from the hour of birth, some are marked for subjection, others for rule (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 37). He thought that individuals are born with characteristics that would make them leaders. Bass (1990) also observes that early in this century, leaders were generally regarded as superior individuals who, because of fortunate inheritance possessed qualities and abilities that differentiated them from people in general.

Stogdill (1948) identified six categories of personal factors associated with leadership: capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, status and situation, but concluded that such a narrow characterization of leadership traits was insufficient. “A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits” (Stogdill 1948: 64).

The attempts to isolate specific individual traits led to the conclusion that no single characteristic can distinguish leaders from non-leaders. Research based on traits lost its allure by the late 1940s, as no conclusion could be reached regarding the connection between a particular trait and leadership effectiveness (Wu 2003: 1).

Blumberg and Greenfield (cited in Kawana 2004: 10) suggest that we need to throw away the ‘great man approach’ in attempting to understand effective school leaders, and

examine the systems within which principals operate. If leadership is about relationships focusing on particular inborn traits is not likely to be very helpful.

Blackmore (cited in Ngcobo 1996: 10), however, strongly believes that trait thinking is by no means dead, as some people in positions of power such as selection committees who appoint teachers to promotion posts have continued to think in terms of the “great man” theory. This is necessary to justify the exclusion of women from leadership positions “on the basis that most women do not possess leadership qualities such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, rationality, forcefulness and independence”. This thinking is still prevalent in Namibia; however, gender is not a focus of this study and I do not plan to pursue this issue.

The criticism levelled against the trait theory was its inability to explain the environmental and situational factors that had a bearing on leadership and leadership styles (Nongauza 2004: 16). It is not clear whether these traits would “work” in all settings, for example in the hospital emergency room, the army or in the staff room (Kawana 2004); hence the need to examine the “situation” as the determinant of leadership abilities.

2.3.2 Situation theory

As the early researchers ran out of steam in their search for traits which fully explained leadership, they turned to the setting in which leadership was exercised, as in this theory. A person could be a follower or a leader depending upon circumstances; the situation would determine who emerged as a leader, leading to the view that leadership was “entirely situational in origin” (Bass 1990: 78). Researchers have collectively demonstrated that in many situations some leadership behaviours are irrelevant, for example, when the subordinates have ability, are experienced and knowledgeable and task-oriented leadership is not needed. Similarly, when the task is intrinsically satisfying, relationships or supportive leadership is less needed. Situational theory is relevant to this study because the circumstances in which school principals find themselves will determine how they react. The major implication of this approach is that anyone can lead effectively as long as the situation permits or the leader changes

his/her style to suit the situation (Doyle & Smith 1999: 6). Effective principals would however recognize shifts in the environment and guide his/her organization to be responsive to these situations. S/he would be aware of the realities of the environment and thus guide the organization to rethink the vision or the set goal of such an institution.

In terms of this theory, a school principal may be an effective leader of a school but may not be successful in leading the army (Kawana 2004: 11). However, Van der Mescht (1996: 9) maintains that although circumstances influence and shape leaders' behaviour, it is equally obvious that leaders are people who possess certain personal attributes and are not blank slates on which situations may write formulae for successful leadership and that their response to situations occurs within the framework of who they are as people.

Situational leadership revealed the complexity of leadership, and supported the contention that effective leaders are able to address both the 'task' and 'person' aspects of their organizations, but still proved to be inadequate because the theory could not predict which leadership skill would be more effective in certain situations. To restrict the study of leadership to either traits or situations is unduly counter productive (Hoy & Miskel 1987: 374). I now look at the contingency theory for a possible answer.

2.3.3 Contingency theory

The situational leadership theory contains an underlying assumption that a different situation requires different types of leadership, while the contingency approach attempts to "specify the conditions or situational variable that moderate the relationship between leader traits or behaviours and performance criteria" (Hoy & Miskel 1987: 274). The central idea in this approach is that effective leadership depends on a mix of factors such as leaders' style and the situation's favourableness.

In Fiedler's model, leadership effectiveness is the result of interaction between the style of the leader and the characteristics of the environment in which the leader works (Gray

& Starke 1988: 264). This means that the principal will be more effective if the environment in which he/she works is favourable.

In order to classify leadership style, Fiedler developed an index called the least-preferred co-worker (LPC) scale. The LPC scale asks a leader to think of all the persons with whom he/she has ever worked, and then to describe the one person with whom he or she worked the least well with. Fiedler believed that what a person says about others reveals more about them than about the person they are describing (Robbins & Decenzo 2001: 351). Fiedler argued that individuals who rate their least preferred co-worker in a relatively favourable light derive satisfaction out of interpersonal relationships, while those who rate the co-worker in a relatively unfavourable light get satisfaction out of successful task performance (Gray & Starke 1988: 264). This method reveals an individual's emotional reaction to people with whom he or she cannot work. It needs to be stressed however, that this is not an accurate measurement tool as the scale ignores other situational variables, such as training and experience that have an impact on a leader's effectiveness (Antoine 1988: 4) as well as the limited choices provided by the scale. Although Fiedler's work has problems and critics, it has very interesting suggestions on the appointment of leaders in organizations, one of them being that if a leader is being sought for a particular leadership position, a leader with the appropriate style should be chosen (task-orientated for very favourable or very unfavourable situations and relationship-orientated for intermediate favourableness). On the other hand if a leadership situation is being chosen for a particular candidate, a situation should be chosen which matches his/her style (very favourable or unfavourable for task-orientated leaders and intermediate favourableness for relationship-orientated leader) (Dunham 1984: 360).

Trait, situational and contingency theories are interesting attempts to reduce leadership to manageable and understandable variables but remain essentially limited by their pre-occupation with the technical elements of the phenomenon. The first major breakthrough in the field was Burns' (1978) articulation of transformational leadership to which I now turn.

2.3.4 Transformational leadership theory

Effective leadership, according to Burns (1978) involves the leader's ability to make group members become less interested in themselves and more interested in the group. To develop and build group members' commitment to common goals and purpose, transformational leaders through interpersonal relations appeal to followers' 'humanity' and their psychological needs. The literature on effective principals suggests that they are 'transformational', rather than 'transactional' (Burns 1978), 'invitational' rather than autocratic and empowering, rather than controlling (Blase & Anderson 1995). Effective principals are, in fact, critical thinkers who have developed an awareness of the assumptions under which they and others think and behave. They are sceptical of 'quick fix' solutions to problems (Day 2000: 124).

Burns (1978: 20) introduces the concept of transformational leadership, describing it as not a set of specific behaviours but rather a process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality". Burns believes that the essence of transformational leadership lies in the leader having a vision for the organization and sharing it with the followers. Burns (cited in Kawana 2004: 13) argues that transformational leaders are individuals who appeal to higher ideals and moral values, such as justice and equality, and that transformational leadership can be found at various levels of an organization. Rather than being 'strong' and decisive, effective leadership is intensely interpersonal, involving working with individuals and teams to transform teaching and learning. .

Burns' concept of transformational leadership - like trait theory - also emphasizes the qualities of the leader. What was new and different was the vision of a moral dimension to leadership. Burns argues that:

Leaders engage with followers, but from higher levels of morality; in the enhancing of goals and values both leaders and followers are raised to more principled levels of judgment (in Smyth 1989: 41).

Other researchers have described transformational leadership as going beyond individual needs, focusing on a common purpose, addressing intrinsic rewards and

higher psychological needs such as self-actualization, and developing commitment with and in the followers (Bennis & Nanus 1985 and Sergiovanni 1990). This kind of leader increases productivity by increasing followers' level of commitment, instead of rewarding them materially to increase performance. Group members' commitment, extra effort and motivation in their jobs and commitment to the organization all have been positively associated with the underlying processes of transformational leadership, namely, inspiration, consideration, and stimulation (Kane and Tremble 2000 & Kohl *et al.* 1995 cited in Griffith 2003: 334). The sentiments above are supported by Sergiovanni (1996: 88-89) who says that principals have their base in moral leadership and in commitment to building a "community of leaders, which involve maintaining, motivating, explaining, enabling, modeling and supervising".

According to Chirichello (cited in Bush 2003: 77) this approach can be criticized as being a vehicle for control over teachers and more likely to be accepted by the leader than the led, because of its strong, heroic and charismatic features. However Bush (2003) sees this model as comprehensive in the sense that it provides a normative approach to school leadership which focuses primarily on the process by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes.

Foster (1989: 29) states that leaders exist only because of the relationship attained with followers, and this relationship allows followers to assume a leadership role and the leader, in turn, to become a follower. The relationship between the leader and his followers is crucial. He/she must have an "our or us" attitude about common school problems. The principal as a leader should talk about "our school" and not "my school" or "my teachers". Recent work on transformational leadership by Avolio and Bass (2004: 26-27) emphasise its power to influence followers:

Transformational leadership is associated with motivating associates to do more than they originally thought possible. The original expectation for performance is linked to an initial level of confidence or efficacy in the associates' perceived ability and motivation. Thus, associates' perceptions of self efficacy or confidence, as well as their developmental potential, are enhanced through the transformational leadership process.

According to Avolio and Bass (*ibid.*) it is useful to characterise transformational leadership in terms of the 'four I's' Idealized influence (II), Inspirational motivation

(IM), Intellectual stimulation (IS), and Individualized consideration (IC). These dimensions provide a useful framework for identifying and understanding this phenomenon.

As is suggested by this framework, transformational leadership goes beyond simplistic traditional theories and begins to highlight the strongly human element of leadership. Leadership is seen as relational rather than transactional; hence the model becomes a powerful means of making sense of something as complex as leading a school.

2.4 Leadership in education

In this section I briefly explore leadership approaches that are appropriate to educational settings. In this study, leadership in education refers to the facilitation of learning, the capacity to enable, empower or help those in the school environment to take charge of their lives and “to identify problems and collectively understand and change the situation that caused these problems” (Codd in Smyth 1989: 159-190). This is in line with the national strategies adopted in South Africa, where the *Task Team Report* outlines a vision of school leadership that is based on the democratic principles of consultation and participation. It indicates that the principals’ administrative practices should not arise from manipulation and direction, but from “the facilitation of collaborative participatory decision-making” (1996: 27). It has been recognized that leaders need a sound understanding of human nature if they are to lead effectively (Dinham 2004: 340). This is particularly the case in education where so much of what happens depends on collaboration, commitment, trust and a common purpose.

Peter Senge notes that leaders in this new environment will succeed better when they work as designers, developing learning processes so that people throughout the school can deal productively with the significant problems which emerge; as stewards, seeking direction and overseeing the purposes of the school and as teachers, creating learning opportunities for everyone, helping people reach new understandings (cited in Fullan 1997: 13-14).

These views are supported by Ngcobo (1996) who feels that facilitative leadership is more suitable for the leadership of teachers. She supports her claim by stating that since teachers are increasingly becoming professionals and specialists in their fields, they will need principals who will provide suitable working conditions for them to carry out their tasks.

Research in schools seems to confirm the above assumptions. Conoley (1980: 39) for example, discovered that teachers prefer to work under a principal whose style is group-oriented and participatory and that “under most conditions educators prefer a leader who while injecting personal opinions also tries to ensure equal participation from all members”. These views are supported by Davies & Ellison (1994: 18) who believe that, when it comes to decision-making, the closer the decision is to the final client or customer the better and more appropriate the decision.

Nongauza (2004: 7) characterizes principals of effective schools as “inspiring the commitment, as raising the respect and admiration of the students, and as enlisting the trust and support of parents”. These leaders are key actors in school effectiveness and this characterization augurs well with what a transformational leader is able to achieve. Burke and Collins (2001: 245) view transformational leaders as leaders who develop positive relationships with subordinates in order to strengthen employee and organizational performance.

Bush (2003: 131) however concludes that although transformative and participatory forms of leadership are suitable and preferred by teachers, it is important to note that “it is rare for a single model to capture the reality of management in any particular school”. Lambert (1995: 2) also notes that there is no single appropriate type. She suggests a contingent model as it provides alternative contexts and has the advantage of adapting any leadership style to the particular situation, rather than adopting a ‘one size fits all’ approach (Bush 2003: 150).

There seems to be consensus that effective education leadership is essentially participative. In promoting team leadership Wing (2005) makes the point that leaders work with *human beings*:

Individuals on the team have a significant or less significant degree of need for human interaction and involvement. Understanding the team members and their needs for involvement, contribution and overall social interaction of the team is of critical importance (Wing 2005: 11).

Other contemporary interests include ‘servant’ leadership (Russell 2000), ‘authentic’ leadership (Gunter 2004), ‘distributed’ leadership (MacBeath 2005) and ‘moral’ leadership (Sergiovanni 1992). What lies at the heart of these conceptions is moral strength and the imperative to recognise others as key co-workers, providing the kind of moral direction that is best described in transformational leadership.

But leadership is a process, not a product, and the process inevitably leads to the shaping of an organisational culture.

2.5 Organizational culture and leadership

Leadership and its organizational context are inseparable and it is difficult to understand one without the other (Sergiovanni 1984: 115). Deal and Petersen (1999: 10) consider that the main role of the leader is the “creation, encouragement, and refinement of the symbols and symbolic activity that give meaning to the organization”. They believe that the principal should be the one who encourages the creation of the school culture and that he/she is responsible for preserving this culture. Principals, as a result of their interaction with school culture will ultimately lead in a certain way. Principals will affect the school culture as the school will affect them. Basically, organizational culture is the personality of the organization.

According to Schein (1992: 12) the concept refers to “basic assumptions that a group learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and integration.” These assumptions work well enough to be considered valid and therefore can be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems.

There are different categories of culture in organizations which are built upon the participation and sharing of individuals' cultures, which in this context would then give rise to cultures and subcultures in the school environment. The interaction of these various subcultures enables each school to have its own specificities and ways of doing things, which creates their own unique culture. These cultures are like personalities, which distinguish one school from another. Schein (*ibid.*) further notes that leaders shape culture in an organization by paying attention to some aspects of it and by ignoring others. In order to do this, it is important for a leader to understand the dynamics of culture, as he/she will be less likely to be puzzled, irritated and anxious when they encounter the unfamiliar behaviour of people in organizations.

The context in which schools operate also influences culture. Fullan (1993: 87) argues that schools cannot develop in isolation from their environments. He maintains that the best schools will always take account of the local and wider context in recognizing opportunities for development, but without losing sight of their fundamental beliefs and values, which are at the root of its culture. Cultures are not inherently good or bad because they are situational. It is important to remember however, that a strong culture can be either functional or dysfunctional, that is, it can promote or impede effectiveness. For instance, one knows how difficult it is for a novice teacher to adapt to or be accepted in a school with a deep-rooted culture.

Whilst culture is a form of identity that permeates through the organization it must be able to accommodate change and be able to adapt to them, if the organization is to prosper (Boys 2000: 29). This is also true of schools, where principals have to lead.

Since this study looks the relationship between leadership and effective schooling I need to say a few words on the notion of an effective or successful school.

2.6 Effective schools and leadership

The question of how to characterize a 'good' school is a debatable one. Sergiovanni (2001: 163) finds school effectiveness to have a common meaning and a technical meaning. From a common understanding, he describes school effectiveness as an

“ability to produce a desired effect”. On the technical level he points out that school effectiveness refers to a school “whose students achieve well in basic skills or basic competency standards as measured by achievement tests”. Both of these meanings are relevant to my study. While it is common in African contexts to reduce effectiveness to ‘good’ results, I find it particularly important – in a rural school setting – to consider broader contextual issues as well since these are indicative of influences and forces that may lie outside the confines of the school as organisation. This notion is emphasised in the HMI Survey report (quoted in Preedy 1993: 19) which describes a ‘good school’ as one that can demonstrate “quality in its aims, in oversight of pupils, in curriculum design, in standards of teaching and academic achievements and *in its links with the local community*” [my emphasis]. However, research on ‘effective schools’ often focuses on internal conditions typical in schools that achieve higher levels of outcomes for their students. Ruther *et al.* (1979: 179), for example, describe ‘effective schools’ as characterized by factors “as varied as the degree of academic emphasis, teacher actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and rewards, good conditions for pupils and the extent to which children are able to take responsibility for their learning”.

Focusing on internal conditions only is not likely to reveal the distinct nature of leadership in schools. Research (Christie 2001, Nongauza 2004) has shown that one of the keys to successful leadership is to embrace the notion of schools as open systems, and for leaders to forge healthy relationships with the community, chiefly parents. On-going efforts to establish School Boards indicate the importance the Education Ministry’s places on parental involvement, and seeing education as a partnership. Recent research by Niitembu (2007) has drawn attention to the problems and challenges all role players experience in bringing about this partnership, but there the study also shows complete commitment to the ideal of community involvement.

For the purposes of this study I also draw on the characteristics outlined by the *National Standards and Performance Indicators for Schools in Namibia* (2006) since these will guide school improvement programmes in the near future. According to this document:

A good school knows:

- What it is aiming to do.

- How well it is achieving its aims.
- What aspects of the school need work to keep them at a good standard.
- What aspects of the school need to be improved.
- What action is planned.
- Whether action currently under way is succeeding (Ministry of Education 2006: 2).

Regardless of how one typifies ‘effectiveness, these features point to strong management and leadership. There needs to be planning of any action that is to be taken, based on knowledge of what is going on in the school. Planning is usually the responsibility of the school principal and his management team. They should be clear about what needs to be done and take steps to ensure that the work is done well in class and at school management level.

What seems to characterise good schools, then, is that they are well-managed. Speaking at the launch of the two ministerial policy document *Guidelines for School principals and National Standard and Performance Indicators for Schools in Namibia* in Windhoek, the Minister of Education, Nangolo Mbumba, said well-managed schools are the keys for providing quality education and for achieving the national goals of access, equity, efficiency and life-long educational opportunities for all Namibian learners (New Era Newspaper, Monday 10 April 2006: 9). The link between good management or leadership and effectiveness is by now well established. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997: 153-154), for example, argue that the ability of schools to transform themselves is to a great extent dependent on the quality of leadership in the school.

Christie’s (2001) study of resilient schools is persuasive. She too notes that the success of those resilient schools is grounded in good leadership and management. She also discovered that good teaching and learning were central to the success story of these schools, the same sentiments shared by Davidoff and Lazarus who see inspirational leadership as contagious, as it can rub off on others who will also take courage to contribute towards building a school community in which a culture of teaching and learning prevails

Interestingly Heneveld and Craig (1996: 11) observe that in terms of school effectiveness studies, the quality of the school appears to influence student achievement more in developing countries than in developed countries, where family background often overshadows the effects of the school. In developing countries cultural and social norms influence the school's functioning more than in industrial countries (*ibid.*). This is pertinent to my study as the case I have selected is a rural school in a developing community within a developing country.

Finally, I need to point up some of the key issues that make leadership of rural schools particularly challenging.

2.7 Leadership in rural schools

Inequalities inherited at independence persist, despite major efforts to eradicate them. They are evident in the distribution of access, learning outcomes, and resource inputs. Regrettably, efforts to eradicate inherited inequalities in the distribution of educational resources have not been sufficiently earnest (Human Development Sector Africa Region, the World Bank Report 2005: 7). Current regional inequalities in education are closely linked to the former racial divide. The Northern parts of the country, where the Black majority and the poor live, still have the least opportunities (*ibid.*), making leadership and teaching in these kinds of schools a daunting task.

Schools in the poorest Northern regions of Katima Mulilo, Rundu, Ondangwa West and Ondangwa East are least provided for (The World Bank Report 2005: 26). As a result the schools in Katima Mulilo in particular have the highest numbers of learners from Grade 4 up to Grade 6 who cannot read fluently in English nor do Mathematics, in the whole country and in the rest of Southern Africa (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) Report no.2). The region was ranked number 10 in National Junior Certificate (Grade 10) in 2005 out of 13 Regions and number 11 in Grade 12 International Cambridge Certificate. Results of some studies suggest that low achievement among students stem from less desirable work environments, school staff turn-over and less experienced staff who are found in

schools having proportionately more disadvantaged students. Schools in this region face bigger challenges than elsewhere in the country in terms of infrastructure and leadership, as many qualified teachers are not prepared to take up principal posts in remote areas.

2.8 Summary

In this chapter I have looked at leadership as it is defined by various authors and also briefly looked at how leadership is related to management, my study being more focused on leadership theory. Secondly, I presented a brief overview of leadership theories. These included earlier approaches like trait theory, situational theory, contingency and the more recent transformational approach most appreciated by organizations that want to inspire change of a moral dimension (Smyth 1989).

I also looked at leadership in education, to establish the particular types of leadership that educationists advocate as being the best in the different educational settings and to find out reasons for this advocacy.

I looked at organizational culture and leadership. I argued that leaders affect and are affected by the culture of their organization. The manner in which leaders deal with culture could mean the difference between success and failure (Sergiovanni 2001).

I have also looked at school effectiveness and leadership and have noted that various researchers like Gunter (2001), Preedy (1993) and Smith (1996) find good leadership to be the key determinant for good results in a school. Christie's (2001) idea of resilience provides a useful prompt for investigating why the school I have chosen has achieved position one in the Circuit for the past three years, while others have failed. It is not by chance that some principals are more effective than others, even when all are faced with the same demands and constraints. Effective principals have a better understanding of how the world of schooling and school leadership works (Sergiovanni 1995: 29).

Finally I looked briefly at the special challenges that face rural schools.

The next chapter looks at the methodological approach used for this study. I discuss the research orientation, the case study method, sampling, data collection and analysis, and also the limitations of this approach.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The major focus of this study was to investigate the role of the Principal in an academically successful rural school. Because there is no known research that has been carried out on school quality or effectiveness in the Caprivi region of the Republic of Namibia, the research was viewed as exploratory rather than conclusive. This Chapter covers the research approach used. It also looks at the research method, sampling procedure, data gathering technique, data analysis procedure used, as well as the ethical implications and the limitations of the research.

3.2 The interpretive paradigm

This study is conducted in the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive approach tries to “understand and interpret daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meaning people give to the phenomena” (Cantrell cited in Mrazek 1993: 83). The interpretive paradigm is further concerned with the understanding of the subjective world of human experience. According to Udjombala (2002: 32):

This paradigm has its origin in cultural anthropology and American sociology. According to this paradigm reality is subjective and multiple as seen by the participants in a study, because to them reality exists only in the context of the mental framework.

Erickson (cited in Best and Kahn 1993: 184) maintains that “a key feature of this family of approaches is that the researcher plays a central role in the education and interpretation of the behaviors observed”.

The interpretive approach criticizes the quantitative approach for assuming that there is a world out there to be controlled and measured. This study looks at human behaviour and its interpretation and therefore a quantitative approach would be inappropriate given the research question.

Dowding (1997: 29) believes that a qualitative approach allows researchers to examine a large number and range of behaviours and meanings amongst members of an organization to bring out details, which may be over-looked if a quantitative approach is used. I am investigating the role of the principal in a successful rural school hence the need for the opinions, views and experiences of the people in that rural community and the approach adopted.

The intention of this approach is to understand a particular social situation, in my case the leadership of the school. It entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, so that the researcher enters the world of the informant and through ongoing interaction, seeks the informant's perspective and meanings (Patton 1990, Best and Kahn 1993, Cohen and Manion 1994). This is important to avoid distortion of information. In the sections that follow, I briefly explain how I attempted to accomplish this, and at the same time describe the research design of my study.

3.3 Research method - the case study

This is a case study located in the interpretive paradigm. "The case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit - a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community" (Cohen and Manion 1994: 106). According to Patton (1990), case studies enable a researcher to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest. This is precisely what I set out to achieve in my investigation, as the intention of this study was not to arrive at generalizations, but rather "to gain the persuasive voices of the respondents [of a phenomenon] as it is studied in its natural setting" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 3).

Stake as cited in Mwingi (1999: 46) states that a case study is well suited for understanding human relations because it is able to appreciate the uniqueness and

complexities of the people to be studied. This is because people are interwoven within the context of the phenomenon to be studied. Chotto is a unique and academically successful rural school and my investigation allowed the respondents to describe through their own experience, the principal's way of leading which makes this institution successful.

Qualitative research typically uses a case study design, meaning that data analysis focuses on the one phenomenon which the researcher selects to understand in depth, regardless of the number of sites, participants or documents for a study (McMillan and Schumacher 1993: 375). It is in this sense that I refer to my study as a case study, focusing on the principalship of one successful rural school as the phenomenon I needed to understand.

3.4 Research site

The Caprivi region has a total number of 95 schools. 82% of these schools are rural schools. Chotto combined school is about 121 kilometres south of Katima Mulilo. The school was established in 1972 and has 14 teachers and 336 learners. It is in a remote area and there are 22 schools in this circuit. It takes close to two hours for one to reach the school from town, as the road to this district is not tarred.

Rurality highlights "isolation, vulnerability, lack of opportunity. It also represents everyday realities, language and activities of people living in rural communities" (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2005: 136). Rural areas are also vulnerable because they are "struggling from the combined effects of poverty, unemployment, poor health and welfare conditions as well as the overriding effects of apartheid" (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2005: 132). In rural communities like this, education continues to be undermined by lack of basic physical resources such as appropriate classrooms, teaching and learning materials, libraries, toilets, electricity and safe running water (*ibid.*).

Poverty is so pervasive in most rural communities in the Caprivi region that one cannot speak of schooling without understanding the context within which it takes place. The

scarcity of resources and the sheer poverty of rural communities limit the possibilities that might be achieved through education. The report by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices*, captures the importance of giving prominence and listening to the voices and experiences of rural communities. This is important because through recognizing these rural communities and gaining an understanding of rural life, any educational developments have the potential to shape a better future for these communities.

Another element my research questionnaire looked at, was to see whether there was a mutual working relationship between the school and the parents, as parents in rural areas often have a lower level of education and may attach a lower value to schooling (*ibid.*). Even where parents place a value on schooling, they may be less able to help their children to study. Many rural households are also dependent on their children for help at busy times of the agricultural year such as harvest time (ADEA 2006: 4) and education is given second place.

Furthermore, homes in rural areas are often ill equipped to meet the needs of children to study and often lack facilities like electricity (Taylor & Mulhall cited in ADEA 2006). On the supply side, Government finds it more difficult to supply quality education services in rural areas. Three factors combine to weaken the quality of teaching in rural areas. Firstly, in many African countries, teachers prefer to teach in urban areas; as a result, rural schools may be left with vacant posts, or have longer delays in filling posts. “Even if posts are filled, rural schools may have fewer qualified teachers” (ADEA 2005: 5) as these qualified teachers are marketable and have a greater choice of jobs. Sometimes the rural schools attract less experienced teachers, as the more experienced teachers find ways to move to the more desired schools. Secondly, teachers in rural schools may teach less than their counterparts in urban areas. Any trip away from the school to visit a Doctor, to collect pay, to engage in the in-service training or to visit family may involve a long journey and necessitate missed school days.

As transport difficulties often make supervision visits from Inspectors less frequent in isolated schools, there is little to prevent a gradual erosion of the school’s activities as the year progresses.

Thirdly, the quality of the teachers' work may be lower, as rural teachers often have less access to support services than their urban counterparts (Kitavi 2006: 6) and fewer opportunities to attend in-service courses. In some cases they also have difficulty in accessing books and materials. In addition, because the parents tend, in general, to be less educated they are less likely to monitor the quality of teaching or to take action if the teaching is of a poor quality. These conditions in my opinion, impact negatively on the teaching and general administration of the school. However, in an environment where neighbouring schools have ceased to operate, Chotto Combined School managed to scoop position one in 2004 in the region in Grade 10 junior secondary certificate (JSC) and in 2005 dropped to position 3, while maintaining the overall lead in the entire circuit for the past three years. It was these amazing results produced by this school, despite all the difficulties, that caught my attention.

As there was no comparative study done with other schools in the region, my study was not based on an in-depth analysis. Most of the schools in the region struggle with the same problems in their environment. Hartshorne notes that the constant demands for urban renewal and improvement continue to overshadow "the need of these rural communities" (Hartshorne 1992: 140), the depth and difficulties of which still need to be fully acknowledged.

3.5 Selection of the respondents

My research was a small-scale interpretive study, involving one Inspector, a school principal, Chairperson of the School Board, a HOD and one teacher from Chotto Combined School. This was done after consulting the examination section and the Regional Director. I purposively selected respondents whom I regarded as relevant to my study, to provide the kind of information I needed for this research. They all work in close association with the principal and some offer subjects to the Grade 10's at this school. I wanted to establish from the respondents what they regarded as being the important elements in the leadership role that have led to the school's success. I was not concerned about the small number of the respondents, as this is typical of the interpretive research paradigm. Patton (1990) and Lincoln and Guba, cited in Cantrell (1993) emphasize that the interpretive researcher uses small samples or even single

cases, selected purposefully to allow the researcher to focus in-depth on issues that are important to the study. In the following section I discuss the data-gathering tool I used.

3.6 Data gathering

This research was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews, which I applied to all of my respondents. Prior to this, one interview was initially conducted with one acting Senior Inspector as a pilot study, to help me refine my tools or procedures for recording responses.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interview

According to Bell (1993: 94) semi-structured interviews allow the respondents a considerable degree of latitude. Although certain questions are asked, the respondents are given the freedom to talk about the topic and give their views in their own time, unlike structured interviews where the respondent is limited to a range of responses previously developed by the researcher. Kawana (2004: 29) sees the semi-structured interview as an effective technique as it allows the respondents to talk freely about their experiences and feelings without the researcher losing track. The interviews were tape recorded, with the permission of all interviewees and I also took notes to supplement the recording. Interviews were later transcribed verbatim.

3.7 Data analysis

Patton says that there is no one correct method of data analysis; there are only guidelines. “There are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study” (Patton 1990: 372).

Bogdan and Biklen (cited in Hoepfl 1997 on line) define data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and deciding what you will tell others”.

The definition above is supported by Jorgensen (1989: 107) when he explains in more detail that analysis is:

Breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or unit. With facts broken down into manageable pieces the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, process, patterns or wholes.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 479) point out that most of these categories and patterns emerge from the data, rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection. In order to identify patterns and organize my data into categories, I followed the suggestions of Jorgensen (1989) during the analysis process. I read and re-read the interview data before listening to the tapes again, until a comprehensive picture of the interview could emerge in my mind. This process helped me to get a sense of the interview as a whole.

Guided by my research question (the role of the principal in a rural successful school) I identified similar points, and these points were grouped together to form categories. These categories assisted in the emergence of themes, which were used to identify some important features of the principal’s role in this successful rural school.

Direct quotations of respondents’ views were used to illustrate the findings and to enhance the credibility and authenticity of findings. The themes identified provided the basis for Chapter 4, data presentation.

3.8 Ethical aspects of research

Ethics refer to a set of moral principles which offer rules and behavioural expectations about the ideal conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (De Vos *et al.* 1998: 24). In a

qualitative research approach like this one, it is important that I do my research in an ethically responsible way. This aspect is of particular importance and described by Cavan (cited in Cohen & Manion 1994: 359) as:

A matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

3.8.1 Negotiating access

Permission to conduct this research was granted to me in writing by the Acting Regional Director of the Caprivi education region (Appendix D) after officially requesting his approval for me to conduct such a study. Permission was granted to me on the condition that I did not interfere with the normal daily teaching and learning routine at that school. A letter explaining the purpose of the research signed by the Acting Director was sent to each respondent, to ensure that they knew what was expected of them before deciding whether to participate or not. Consent was obtained verbally after informing participants objectively and honestly about the purpose, nature and importance of the research. Informed consent is crucial when conducting research, as people are more willing to support and participate in research that they understand (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 183, Cohen and Manion 1994: 350).

3.8.2 Openness and honesty towards subjects or respondents

According to Strydom (in De Vos *et al.* 1998: 27) no form of deception should ever be practiced on respondents. In other words, withholding information or offering incorrect information to ensure participation of subjects is unethical. On the other hand, McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 194) state that:

deception should be used only in cases where (1) the significance of potential results is greater than the detrimental effects of lying, (2) deception is the only way to carry out the study, (3) appropriate

debriefing, in which the researcher informs the participants of the nature of and the reason for the deception following the completion of the study, is used.

However, the issue of deception is a sensitive issue and never justified in this kind of research.

3.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 195) state that information on subjects should be regarded as confidential unless otherwise agreed on through informed consent. Only the researcher has access to names and data. A researcher has a moral obligation to uphold confidentiality of data, which includes keeping information confidential from others in the field. This is ensured in the following ways:

- Collecting data anonymously.
- Using a system to link names to data that may be destroyed once research is completed.
- Asking subjects to use aliases (false names) or numbers.

It is because of this that I assured my respondents that the data collected would be kept confidential and not shared with anyone, apart from my research supervisor.

3.8.4 Inconvenience to the participants

This was avoided at all costs. For example, the issue of when the interviews were to be conducted was left in the hands of the participants, so as not to interfere with their work. I visited the school premises twice a week for two weeks, as it was necessary for me to look at documents which were available, as one of my data collection tools. Interviews which were conducted at the school were done after official school hours and conducted at the circuit office.

3.9 Limitations of my research

This study presents an account of a study of a rural school that has managed to survive in a harsh environment. I had some pre-conceptions of how successful school principals lead their schools, therefore my thinking and experience in middle management in the education sector might have biased my data gathering and analysis. As an Education Officer in Caprivi educational region, my position of power could be considered as threatening to some respondents for they might think that I wanted to evaluate their school and their performance. As a result, they might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear while doing the opposite. It is difficult to see how this (bias) can be avoided completely as a middle manager in education (Gravron cited in Bell 1993: 95). However I was aware of the problem and informed my respondents on every occasion that I visited their school that I was there as a student and not as a representative of the regional office. I also stuck to the confidentiality agreement.

The sample that I used in my research was not a representative sample. I might have discovered more about this school if I could have involved other schools in the neighbourhood. Instead, I used a purposefully selected sample that could give in depth-information necessary to the study (Cohen & Manion 1994: 89), as it is a case study.

The topic under research was of a sensitive nature as it focused on a principal of one rural school. This might have prevented some respondents from airing their true feelings as this could be seen as offending their immediate supervisor. To overcome this I assured the respondents that they would remain anonymous and that the information obtained from them would be confidential. It was also mentioned to them that this study was vital and that it could benefit more people if information was forthcoming and honest.

In this kind of research there is no generalization and the possibility according to Winegardner (2001: 12) is that the findings could be exaggerated or oversimplified. This could lead to distortion about the actual situation. Direct quotations of respondents' views were used to enhance the credibility and authenticity of findings.

Interviews are subject to some degree of fabrication. People often say they have done things when they have not and might even in the situation mentioned, do quite the opposite (Taylor & Bogdan 1998: 91). Tape-recording might also have affected my data collection, as some respondents thought that their identity could be revealed to the principal of the school, which could jeopardize their chances for future promotion. I gently probed respondents as much as I could, so that they would feel free to tell me what they really thought was happening in their school. This had a positive bearing on the results.

I visited the school twice a week for two weeks and this in my opinion was not enough to enable me to understand the school in context and to objectively interpret it. Overall, the time in which this study was conducted was ideally not sufficient. Studies of this nature and magnitude naturally demand more time to enable the necessary consultations. However, I tried during my visits to gather as much information as I could and to utilize the study vacation the Ministry accorded me.

My interviewing and data analyzing skills might have had an effect on the type of data collected and how they were interpreted. However the interviews managed to produce valuable data, which I present in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Data presentation and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the data collected through interviews of key organisation members of the school.

I first present the profiles of the respondents used in this study, and then present their ideas, views and perceptions as they emerged from the semi-structured interviews I conducted. In order to comply with ethical issues I have used respondents' titles (Circuit Inspector, Chairperson of School Board and school teacher) as pseudonyms. In the case of the school I used a pseudonym, Chotto Combined School.

Qualitative studies like this one should contain "thick description" in narrative form interspersed with quotations representing the participant's language (Patton 1980: 375). With this in mind I present data using the actual statements of respondents. I have created categories that have emerged from the interviews and used direct quotations liberally as words are powerful conveyors of meaning, perhaps more powerful than statistics (Kawana 2004: 36). Using direct quotations from the data makes the research more meaningful and significant to the reader. Cohen *et al.* (2000: 28) argues that "in data processing and analysis there is great tension between maintaining a sense of the holism of the interview and the tendency for analysis to atomize and fragment the data". I have tried to maintain this sense of 'holism' by using direct quotations, but some element of analysis is inevitable because the data are reported in categories found later in this Chapter.

The great challenge for me was to gain the respondents' views on the principal's leadership role and how they associated his role with the overall performance of this rural school. To address this challenge, I designed semi-structured interviews for

different respondents. The questions were open-ended, which resulted in new issues emerging in each case. Interview schedules for all respondents are appended (Appendices A-C).

Where appropriate I also analyse and discuss the data in terms of literature reported in Chapter Two. This helps to make sense of the data and hopefully adds to the academic value of what I have discovered.

4.2 Profiles of the respondents

4.2.1 Circuit Inspector

The Circuit Inspector is a long serving employee in the Ministry of Education. He joined the Ministry in January 1983 as an ordinary teacher. In 1989 he continued his studies and in 1994 after successfully completing his professional studies he resumed work as an English teacher at the same school where he was before. He served as an HOD in 1995 and became principal in 1996. He was finally appointed as an Inspector of Education in 2003. It is apparent from his term of office that he is an experienced educator and leader. He is married with children and has 23 years of experience.

4.2.2 School principal

The school principal has been with this school for the past 25 years. He started his teaching career in 1977 and came to Chotto Combined School as a principal in 1981. He has an M+4 qualification. He registered for further studies in 1993 and came back in 1996 to resume his responsibility as a school principal at the same school. His home area is in this Circuit. He resides at the school with his teachers and he is married with children and has 29 years of experience. He is a cluster centre principal.¹

¹ The cluster system in Namibia was introduced to enable the sharing of human and material resources among inequitably resourced schools, as well as to encourage decentralised management. Each cluster consists of between 5 and 8 schools, one of which serves as the cluster centre.

4.2.3 School Board chairperson

The Chairperson of the School Board has been linked to the school since its inception 34 years ago. He is a retired employee of that school and has been in the area since birth. He has been the Chairperson since 2003. He now has free time and is able to visit the school any time of the day to offer assistance whenever it is needed. He is semi-literate and can read in the local language (Lozi) and is able to manage the financial position of the school.

4.2.4 School teacher

He arrived at the school in 2003. He is a newly appointed teacher from Caprivi College of Education, specializing in Mathematics and Science Grade 8-10. He is currently the Grade 10 Mathematics and Physical Science teacher. He is a strong figure in the school and is involved in many school activities. He intends to enroll for an Honours Degree specializing in Mathematics and Science. He is recently married with one child.

4.3 Data presentation and discussion

This research sought to explore the role of the principal in a successful rural school. I was guided by this goal in my development of data categories. I present the data in categories which emerged as issues during the interview process. I was guided by the Tellis' comments in Terre Blanche *et al.* (1999) which encourage researchers to ensure that only relevant evidence is used and that the researcher's knowledge and experience is not totally divorced but used to maximum advantage throughout the study.

The categories are arranged and presented in order of significance; that is, issues that seemed key to findings answers to the research question are presented first, and other, sometimes peripheral issues are presented later. In this way I try to make the key issues 'lead' the discussion and provide a framework for what follows. This will hopefully also ensure clarity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 506). The use of categories shows that this presentation is not devoid from the analysis process, because these in my

opinion occur simultaneously. Patton (1980: 375) argues that the presentation of data is the first step in the discussion and analysis follows as huge amounts of information is reduced into smaller units.

The following issues emerged as significant and are used here as themes:

- Challenges faced by the school
- The principal's leadership approach: towards transformational leadership
 - "Balanced" leadership
 - Strategic and creative leadership
 - Leading by example
 - Instructional leadership
- Internal support structures
- Leadership beyond the organisation: the education environment

4.3.1 Challenges and problems faced by the school

Before presenting data pertaining to the principal's leadership it is necessary to sketch the context in which the school operates. As discussed earlier, no school operates in a vacuum but needs constantly to respond to outside challenges and circumstances.

Chotto Combined School as described by all respondents is in a deplorable state. It is clear that many of the problems cited are hardly of the school's making; this is evident in the following statement made by the Chairperson of the school:

Our hands are tied up [*sic*]; we have been writing letters to various stakeholders for possible assistance and for the supply of electricity to our school but up to now no clear answers are forthcoming. This is while the school is expected by the whole nation to perform like those schools in urban areas having all the teaching-learning facilities.

Due to this problem, the catchment area supplying this school with children is ill-equipped to meet the students' study needs as they cannot learn after dark. The school principal indicated that during parent meetings some parents report that they are embarrassed to discuss school topics with their children because of their own lack of knowledge. Furthermore, some children attending this school are considered more difficult to educate as they have little parental encouragement to attend school and have

alternative demands on their time, for example, helping with agricultural tasks such as looking after animals and ploughing. The schoolteacher remarked that:

When these learners attend school they might find the curriculum irrelevant to their lives and find little support for their learning from their home environment.

Chotto, like any other rural school under pressure, is trapped in the examination results driven ethos of the education system, and this obviously takes its toll on teachers' ability to be innovative in terms of curriculum. According to the school principal:

In a school like this one, the most challenging thing is the results of the learners. Anything that you do in the course of the year, at the end of it, they [the stakeholders] want to see how the school performs.

Facilities are a problem. The schoolteacher was of the opinion that much could be achieved in this school if there was a laboratory, a library and audio-visual equipment, sports fields and a school hall, so that the school can begin to be a place of social and individual development for the community and their children. He explains:

Lack of equipment sometimes draws people back; if we could have things like access to computers so that we can make some copies and produce effective tests [test papers that meet standards], and powerful and visible, tangible teaching aids, that would actually be a positive contributing factor.

On the supply side as mentioned in Chapter 3, the Government finds it difficult to supply quality educational services to rural schools like Chotto since subsidies are linked to enrolment figures. At Chotto the enrolment of learners is dwindling due to the high death rate caused by HIV & AIDS, which is in turn associated with poverty. Another factor is urban migration, resulting in most of the schools being downgraded in Katima Mulilo. Despite national efforts HIV/AIDS prevalence remains high; the region has a 42.6% HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, the highest in the whole country according to Ministry of Health 2004 estimates. The delivery of quality services is further impacted by the staffing norm, which prescribes that at primary level the ratio in the region

should be 1:35, and at secondary level 1:30. This norm negatively affects rural schools in the region as in some cases it is not properly understood and implemented.

In many developing countries including Namibia there are qualified teachers in urban areas that are unemployed, while there are unfilled posts in rural areas such as where my study was based. This pattern of simultaneous surplus and shortage is strong evidence that the problem of teachers for schools like Chotto will not be solved simply by providing more teachers (ADEA 2006: 5). Fortunately most of the teachers at this school have M+3 qualifications except for the principal who has a M4+ qualification and one teacher who is busy studying further. Although most of these teachers meet the academic requirements, there is a serious need for one more teacher and subject specialist teachers at this school.

In this sense Chotto is like most rural schools and faces the same challenges.

I now present the data that directly answered my research question.

4.3.2 The principal's leadership approach: towards transformational leadership

The strongest finding to emerge from the data is the extent to which the principal resembles the ideals contained in transformational leadership theory and this is the theme I focus on. I do not, however, restrict myself to the *four I's* discussed in Chapter Two simply because any manifestation of leadership will be unique and reflect trends and characteristics that are not neatly captured in any theory.

4.3.2.1 Balanced leadership

“Balanced” leadership here refers to the fact that the principal is perceived as a leader who is both task- and person-oriented. Task-orientation is usually not highlighted in transformational thinking, but it emerged strongly here. I deal with each in turn.

The data show that the principal is perceived to be a caring and supportive leader. Much of what he does as a principal demonstrates his person-orientation and his real concern is for the well being of teachers and learners at the school.

Two of the respondents agreed that a good principal should be person who loves and cares for the people he works with. The schoolteacher described the Chotto principal as follows:

So far I will say in general that he is actually good; there is a healthy friendship between the principal and his staff.

The principal has been shown to be caring toward others, especially when his staff may need assistance. The schoolteachers have reciprocated by giving him the respect he deserves.

If a teacher does not do his/her work properly, the principal acts as follows:

Usually I call him to my office, and explain to him how he can better his teaching...if I find that he cannot catch up easily, I make some kind of a workshop to help such a teacher.

There is a strong belief from some respondents that the success of Chotto Combined School depends to a large extent on the good working relationship that the principal helps to cultivate among school community members. The Inspector confirmed this when he said:

I think one of the things I should highlight is that there is a clear relationship, in fact a very good working relationship between the principal, his teachers and the School Board.

The School Board Chairperson noted, “The school is doing well together with its teachers ... he [the principal] strives to unite the parents and teachers.” According to the principal, “living with the community in harmony” is a good thing as misunderstanding results in sour relations and backbiting. He furthermore said: “Whenever I meet them [the community] we are friends ...even with my teachers I am free to talk to them and really enjoy it”.

Parents and teachers according to the principal are free and happy to mix with him. He believes that “it might be that they have confidence and trust in me or that I am not

doing wrong things that they don't want." He is aware that if he were less approachable both parents and teachers would avoid him but because he is person-oriented and adopts a participative approach, teachers and parents feel much more empowered. The schoolteacher confirmed this when he said: "Through briefings each teacher is given the opportunity to suggest anything as a contribution to the administration of the school." Teachers thus feel a sense of belonging, which can lead to a positive contribution.

The Inspector expressed the same thought when he said: "This is a person who is human, a person who is willing to discuss things before they are implemented so that everyone feels included in the decision." The principal lives up to the teachers' expectation that for a school to run effectively the management and the administration needs to include all teachers, parents and learners.

All the three respondents also acknowledged that the school principal was accommodative and in that way created an environment conducive to teaching and learning. The Inspector described this principal as: "A person who is approachable and willing to consult with others".

According to the principal:

One should be open in order to be trusted, because if you are not open enough, some people won't come to your office, they won't approach you; you will see that some of them just whisper outside without coming to you, because they don't trust you.

This is how he understands the concept of flexibility:

Flexibility works in this way. Say you have got some policies, educational or school-basedsometimes upon implementing them you find that these rules are somewhat difficult for the people they were meant for; this is the time when you should change these types of rules to suite your clients.

However, it appears that the principal in some cases acts autocratically and lives by rules. This is evident in the following remarks he made:

The culture or the climate of the school is based on its rules, in other words whatever the School Board and the management plans, it is what we stick to when we are dealing with the operation of the school.

He further said: “Everything that we do, we have to follow what is set down in the ministerial or school rules”. These comments suggest that the school principal can appear to be rigid and bureaucratic, as can be seen in the following remarks the Inspector had to make:

When I became an Inspector in 2003, he [the principal] informed me that he had two HODs, but that he was worried because one of the HODs was very subversive ...he told me that if this HOD could be transferred, the school situation would change.

It is today commonly accepted that autocratic/bureaucratic leadership is not favoured; yet this principal is not afraid to show authority when it is needed. So, while being seen as a pastoral leader who has the interest of his people at heart he is also a leader who wants the work to be done. He does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. During the interviews he related an incident where he dismissed a teacher from an assembly because the teacher was laughing inappropriately.

This apparent contradiction finds support in literature. Love (1994: 38) argues that both of these orientations will be valuable when the principal and staff work together towards attaining the visions of their school. The ideal leader according to Love (*ibid.* 1994: 38) is the one who emphasizes both people and productivity. In organizations like schools, different orientations can occur in the personalities of various members of the management team, who can then together form a strong group. As recommended in Blake and Mouton's *Managerial Grid* (Reece & Brandt 1996: 317) it is generally regarded as desirable that leaders achieve a balance between these orientations, an ideal style combining a concern for the task and for the people involved. A recent study conducted in Namibia (Tjivikua 2007) found a similar contradictory pattern in the principal's leadership.

It would not be fair to label the principal as autocratic though. Autocratic leaders make demands on their subordinates on the grounds of their position as leaders and they

frequently use fear, threats and force as a power base. This was not the case with the Chotto principal. Although he sometimes behaved in an autocratic manner he encouraged participative decision-making and had good human relations. He is in line with Hoy & Miskel's (1996: 136) suggestions of staying close to students; striving for academic excellence; demanding high, but realistic performances; being open in behaviour; trusting your colleagues and being professional. Shaw as cited in Bass (1990: 481) notes some positive features emanating from autocratic leadership. He found that speed and accuracy of a group's performance were sufficiently higher under the autocratic leader than would be the case with the democratic one. He strongly argues that productivity in the short term may be enhanced more in an autocratic environment.

Udjombala (2002: 9) also found that leaders have to be tough, competitive and autocratic if they hope to deal with and manage change. This principal, although not visibly doing this, was perhaps convinced that with such an attitude, decisions could be implemented quickly without wasting time. Christie (2001: 48) in a study of resilient schools concluded that the major feature for school success even in extreme conditions was a "strong manager and leader".

The principal of Chotto realized that creating a collaborative management culture requires that those in senior management positions learn to see their leadership role as one of empowering others in the organization rather than controlling them.

Ramparsad (2001: 31) writes the following in this regard:

Therefore it becomes important for schools to move away from an autocratic 'top-down' to a participative and collaborative style of management. More flatter, more open and participative structures are essential if the organization is to succeed.

Conger cited in Sergiovanni (2001: 137) also says, "The leader must build exceptional trust among subordinates".

The ideal leader has to be able and willing to listen to his/her team members carefully and to understand each person's personal problems, hopes, desires and shortcomings. This is precisely what the Chotto principal was and is trying to do according to the

schoolteacher. This principal supports team effort, develops the skills that groups and individuals need, and provides the necessary human and material resources to realize the school vision. Principals should also ensure that there is communication and a positive relationship between themselves and the parents of their learners. These relationships are important in promoting, guiding and monitoring the child's progress at school and for the smooth flow of information between both parties. Whitaker (1993: 88) says that effective teamwork is the hallmark of most successful organizations.

Furthermore, it is clear from data that this principal is a 'person-oriented' leader as he repeatedly stated in his interviews that the key to any organization's success is its human resources. He believes that if you get the human resource section right, the rest is easy. He therefore sees management's main job as hiring, training, developing and appraising the people who 'are' the organizations' greatest resource and distinguishing factor (Smith 2003: 1). Building people's values and attitudes and empowering them, lies at the heart of all his management efforts. Drath and Palus (cited in Horner 1997: 279) emphasize that "people working together in an organization need to develop socially understood interpretations so that they can be effective as a group". The co-operative spirit that the principal engenders among the different stakeholders' supports the above statement. It is very clear that my respondents favoured a school leader who was person-oriented.

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Recent research has shown that rather than being strong and decisive, effective leadership is intensely interpersonal, involving working with individuals and teams to transform teaching and learning. It has been recognized that leaders need a sound understanding of human nature if they are to lead effectively (Dinham 2004: 340). Christie (2001) reminds us that principals should be aware of the importance of their own positions and actions, in the successful management of their schools.

From my experience as a senior education officer, effective principals generally attach importance to empowering teachers by allowing more flexibility and giving them more discretion, distributing more power and responsibility throughout the school, and establishing an organizational structure that encourages collaborative work among teachers and other stakeholders.

Through this teamwork the Chotto principal believes that even if he is not there the school can run smoothly because everyone knows what to do and does not depend on the principal's constant supervision to carry out tasks allocated to him/ her.

4.3.2.2 Strategic and creative leadership

The principal's understanding of the importance of strategic leadership is one of the key features of his transformational leadership style. The principal believes that leadership requires vision and the leader should be somebody who envisages the future and plans accordingly. He insisted: "I have to draw up a programme of activities ... I call it the 'school map' of activities. It indicates what the school wants to accomplish in that year."

He is also committed to monitoring progress: "I need to manage and control the progress, so that I am assured that things are up to date ...it is also a way of checking that every activity that I have planned is carried out."

The respondents felt that the school was doing well as there was a good administration system. This was possible as the principal had a programme to follow and was therefore able to control both teaching and learning in the school. The schoolteacher felt that because of this and other factors such as commitment from both teachers and learners, the school was able to carry out its objectives without much difficulty.

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It is clear that much store is placed in sound administration and management, and the principal felt these provided for a stable environment:

Proper management can enable the school to have better results, because through strong management you will find that nearly every staff member will feel free to contribute to the smooth running of the school, learners will also be open and free to study because they are not interrupted all the time; but if there is chaos somewhere in management, chaos will spread to the learners and it will confuse them or disturb their studies.

To ensure the smooth running of the school which can increase its performance, the principal sees his role as follows: "I have to make sure that I guide, in order to enable

the school to follow its programmes, because if I do not guide something might be omitted.”

The principal’s encouragement of parents to undergo literacy training (discussed below) is also part of his strategic thinking. The Inspector similarly believed that “all parents, even those whose children are not attending school should by all means register with the National Literacy Programme.” He said that when parents join adult classes this would in turn encourage their children to learn, as they will emulate their parents and then a supportive ‘studying’ environment will exist at home.

My participants felt that it was very important that a leader should know exactly what is required in carrying out the task he/she expects his/her team members to perform. They perceived this principal as a person who is able to identify a vision and convey this vision to others; a person who can draw up programmes and was also able to monitor the implementation of such programmes. This is in line with notions of transformational and strategic leadership which includes the leader’s ability to articulate the vision to others as it is, a force that provides meaning and purpose to the work of an organization. The principal should according to Hoy & Miskel (1996) make his or her attitudes and expectations clear to all stakeholders and maintain definite standards of performance.

According to the Circuit Inspector, vision is not to be seen as a ‘solution’ to problems, but rather a driving force for the process of co-creation. Without vision to challenge followers with, there is no possibility of a principal being a leader. Manasse (1995: 150-151) supports this when she says that vision includes the “development, transmission, and implementation of an image of a desirable future”. She states that the sharing of a leader’s vision may differentiate true leaders from mere managers. School leaders have not only a vision but also the skills to communicate that vision to others. Whitaker (1993: 70) likewise sees vision as a central element of the leader’s work, relentless and never ending. It involves constant attention to three key questions: What does the future we are seeking to create look like? Why are we pursuing this particular vision? And how do we behave to be consistent with the vision we have created (*ibid.*)?

The school principal needs vision and purpose in order to muster the energy to focus on getting where he or she wants to be. Christie also discovered that the resilient schools

had an educational vision, which served as their road map (2001: 46). Vision is a motivating force to enable one to reach the set goal, as a manager and his team will need to discipline themselves along the way to be able to realize the vision (Trotter 1993: 13). Vision is not a theoretical dream however, but is supposed to be the future in practice. Denton (2001: 311) says, “A vision should not be unrealistic. It must address issues one could face in future, otherwise it would become little more than a piece of paper”.

A good vision and mission statement in my opinion ought to address and adhere to the following criteria recommended by Nicol (1995: 57):

- The school’s reason for existing.
- The school’s management philosophy.
- Answering the needs of the school’s clients and interest groups.
- The product or service the school renders.
- The school’s orientation towards its image as a business, its survival and growth.

The future perspective, namely the vision, can motivate people (everybody involved in the school) to make their dreams a reality and put them into practice.

Martin and Henderson (2001: 73) stress that:

One of the most prized aspects of leadership at all levels of an organization is the ability to develop with others a vision that enables everyone to make a commitment to achieving it. This has been recognized as a feature of successful leadership for a long time.

This is important because if the school community is not a part of the process it may not abandon negative ideas and attitudes about the school; if the whole community is not involved, one will not get the benefit of everyone’s creative input in the process (Kawana 2004: 58). A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to, because it reflects their own personal vision (Senge 1990: 206).

According to literature there is a link between visionary leadership and transformational leadership. As indicated in Chapter 2 transformational leaders achieve results by

persuading employees to believe in the mission and its attainability. Any school which looks to the principal as the single source of direction and inspiration, would be severely constrained. The *Task Team Report* (South Africa 1996: 14) confirms this when it says:

Managers can no longer simply wait for instructions from Government... they must be capable of providing leadership for teams, and be able to interact with communities and stakeholders both inside and outside the system... to be able to promote efficiency and support democratic governance.

It is interesting to note that all the respondents agreed that without proper guidance from the school principal, this school could not have managed to produce the results it had up to date; hence vision and guidance are necessary for success. A shared vision, which is essential for success, must evolve through the dynamic interaction of organizational members and leaders. Organizations intent on building shared visions continually encourage members to develop their own personal vision. If people do not have their own vision, all they can do is 'sign up' for someone else's.

As Senge (1990: 211) explains below:

The result is compliance, never commitment; on the other hand, people with a strong sense of personal direction can join together to create a powerful synergy toward what I/we truly want.

Strategic leadership and creativity go hand in hand, and this principal was also seen to be creative as testified to by the School Board Chairperson. His implementation of early morning studies (discussed below) is an example of his creative thinking. The school principal and his teachers have encouraged the building of informal hostels for learners who stay far from the school and those with parents who cannot provide an environment conducive for learning. Apart from this the principal says:

Teachers have developed guardianships whereby every teacher has a group of vulnerable learners to support.

Under the principal's leadership the teachers also show initiative. According to the school teacher:

We have a lot of things we lack at this school. We have tried in the past to write a lot of letters to get some private people involved to donate something that will help to uplift the situation in the school.

In an attempt to secure facilities for the school the principal said:

I usually invite some parents and tell them what the schools needs are ... for example, in the case of electricity, we (as a group) applied to the Ministry of Mines some time back and we received some solar panels.

He added:

When the batteries for the solar panels are exhausted, parents are called in to ask for money, so that we can fill gas bottles to use for studying... failing that, learners use candles.

When the school has water problems the principal says: “I report it directly to the Director ... the two of us will approach a sister Ministry or service provider to assist us in that regard.” These examples show that this principal is aware of other support systems that exist outside the Ministry and uses them creatively.

The Inspector also commented on the school’s far-sightedness in terms of finances:

I was impressed to learn that the School Board and the management have put aside a fund for academic development. When there is a serious problem such as a shortage of teachers, they would go out of their way and pay temporary teachers in their place.

4.3.2.3 Leading by example

This principal was seen as setting a very good example by not just concentrating on management matters, but also on teaching, by encouraging his teachers to be serious about their profession as well as by doing things to keep in touch with the teaching and learning going on at his school. His leadership is also seen as commendable in the way he deals with people and in his own conduct.

The School Chairperson described his principal as:

A person who is always at the school on time and someone who is always doing the right thing... He has foresight and has brought so many things to this school.

The school principal had strong feelings regarding the part he plays: “First of all I must rectify all of my problems and shortcomings [before] I can point a finger at someone else.”

He went on to say:

The most challenging thing for me is how to win the interest of the learners, that of the parents and teachers as a whole because these people are the most difficult ones ... if you do not win their interest and support then you will not manage the school properly. People should understand you and they should perceive what you are looking for.

The way to achieve this is to lead by example, because:

Some (teachers, learners and parents) like to dodge, but if they realize that you are not of that nature they will copy you as a school principal, but if you are a person who likes dodging, they will also begin using excuses, plenty of them.

The well-known phrase expressed by the schoolteacher: “It is better to practise what you preach, for people will emulate your steps easily” sits well with this principal who not only talks about teaching, but is active in the classroom while managing effectively.

The respondents thus felt that the principal acted as an example: he regularly teaches, leads assemblies and works long hours for the school. He was further seen as setting high expectations for self, the children and staff. He shows his continuous involvement and concern with the many aspects of the school as an organization, by touring the premises before, during and after school and by visiting staff in their classroom and other work places. By doing this he can perceive the school from different perspectives; monitor, listen and manage by observation and at the same time represent the formal education process in the community. In this sense the principal embodies *idealised*

influence, one of the key dimensions of transformational leadership identified by Avolio and Bass (2004). The fact that he is seen to be exemplary exercises a form of motivation or encouragement to others to do the same.

Badenhorst (1997: 343) similarly sees the principal as the most important and influential individual in the school. This decisive position encompasses a wide spectrum of complex functions pertaining to leadership. In this capacity the principal sets the tone of the school for teachers, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or not become. The principal is responsible for the practical operation of the school; as a leader he/she evokes innovation and change, encourages, and inspires.

The data show that the outcome of this principal's experience and his actions at Chotto have always resulted in high standards of performance when compared to those schools in the region that have more resources. According to Whitaker (1993: 76) leadership *is* example and it is not only what leaders do that affects the others in an organization, but also how they do it. Team members generally look to their leader for guidance; hence it is important that the leader sets a good example for his/her team at all times. He needs to practice self-evaluation because, as one respondent said, "You need to practise what you preach".

Another character trait which was associated with this leader is love of his job. Of fundamental importance in a successful school is the capacity of those in leadership and management positions to care for and foster the development of their set goals. One of the respondents saw the love of the job as cardinal as he believed that this attitude would motivate a person to work harder and a leader who was not determined or inspired will never be able to encourage his team successfully.

4.3.2.4 Instructional leadership

The principal stressed that the core business of the school was teaching and learning:

The most important thing that we look at in our school, is the educational level of a learner ...we have to make sure that learners are

getting something from us, through our teaching and by doing all the activities that are necessary in the life style of the child.

The Chairperson concurred with this by saying that everyone has a role to play in the school: “More needs to be done, managers must manage, teachers must teach and learners learn and take their studies seriously.” If everyone takes responsibility and focuses on the task assigned to them, then the spotlight can remain on the teaching and learning.

To this principal, a school is not the buildings but a place where teachers, parents and learners purposefully meet to share knowledge in the area of teaching and learning. His own love of teaching is evident:

I enjoy teaching most ...when I am teaching I feel like I am talking to my own kids at home. I don't feel tired when I am in the class, because I know what I want to develop in these learners...as these are people who are still preparing for their careers and are leaders of tomorrow.

Teachers were also encouraged by the principal to conduct extra classes. The principal explained how this is achieved:

We come together and discuss the problems of not completing the syllabi in time, and we have realized that according to the allocation of subjects the third term does not receive enough attention as it is shorter. The longest time that we have is from January to August, which is why we decided to teach in the afternoon, on weekends and sometimes early hours of the morning from 04h: 00 to 05h: 00 when we are not busy, to catch up with the work.

The commitment to the hard work demanded by teaching at this school is evident in the words of the schoolteacher:

Teaching is not easy, it needs hard work and understanding, and being a teacher, it needs some sort of seriousness ...teaching is something that is actually demanding.

Teaching and learning are equally important to the Inspector:

If there is good teaching in the classroom and the teachers are doing enough exercises to prepare them for what is coming at the end of the year ...then the learners will have the correct mental state to attempt all the questions that will come.

The role of the principal as instructional leader is crucial for the success of the school and this research has revealed that the school principal's leadership was aimed at improving classroom teaching and learning. This is in line with the findings of Christie (2001) which discovered teaching and learning as a core business in these resilient schools. Since the school principal not only managed the school, but also taught in the classroom, he was keenly aware of the responsibilities of the teachers and the attitudes of the learners in his school. This enabled him to place the proper emphasis on both teaching and learning.

According to Greenfield (1987: 56-60) instructional leadership refers to actions undertaken with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and desirable learning conditions and outcomes for children. This was what the school principal was doing, as he used his initiative to make sure that the school environment was conducive for learning. The definition of an instructional leader, according to Blase & Blase (1998: 132), is someone who advances the cause of leadership a step further as he continues to build on a repertoire of flexible alternatives. The school principal sourced for teaching aids from other schools; when there was no electricity his school would use candles during study times in the evening and in the early morning for learners to study. By just these few practical steps that the school principal took, he showed his willingness to go the extra mile to find alternatives to difficult situations.

At this stage in the Caprivi Region there are many policy changes that directly affect the teaching and learning situation in classrooms and it is expected that school principals act as instructional leaders in their schools in order to understand and be in a position to facilitate all the desired changes. I found that the principal was conscious of trying to create opportunities to make it possible for learners to learn, by encouraging home-to-home (informal hostels) service at his school.

The principal can supply leadership directly, by evaluating teachers, organizing teamwork and by supplying the human and material resources necessary for the school to perform. Little and Bird in Greenfield (1987: 120-121) says:

The principal can organize and train the staff to provide leadership for each other, for instance by training Heads of Departments as leaders, organizing peer coaching among teachers and letting staff report back on staff development program.

The principal for Chotto Combined School had the courage to continue with his worthwhile journey to fulfill his mission in life as a leader of learners and of teachers who are destined to help shape the future with them. This principal cares about learning because he believes that true learning can liberate youngsters to lead a life of significance. Educational leaders believe that people are what they have learned, and therefore the right things must be learnt in the right way. They are builders of a culture of teaching and learning in their schools as is the case with the principal of Chotto.

I am of the opinion that for principals to play the role of instructional leaders they have to spend much of their time in the classroom giving feedback to teachers and learners, as well as developing, conducting or arranging for professional staff development. This is aimed at helping teachers to grow professionally, ensuring that teaching content was covered and holding teachers accountable for student performance. Villet's (1998) findings referred to earlier were confirmed by this study. I found that this principal was monitoring and evaluating the performance of teachers and learners by means of the continuous checking of assessments of all learners at this school and through class visits.

In the study it was found that the principal used assessments to measure both students and teachers' performance, the following statement by the principal confirms the above:

It is important because you will be able to know whether these learners are doing their homework or that the amount of work they have been given is sufficient enough. If you do not check their assessment books, you will think that your teachers are teaching while you are not sure whether they are teaching.

The bottom line of schooling, after all, is student learning and the absence of strong leadership at school level could undermine education reform, as the school needs leadership from principals who focus on advancing students and staff learning. The Chotto principal was seen as a servant to his vision of success for all students. He conveyed his vision to teachers, students and parents through his actions.

4.3.2.5 Internal support structures

In as much as organisations need leadership of the kind described above, it is equally true that they cannot function without sound organisational structures. Managing and leading these structures may be described as a ‘management’ function (rather than leadership, but the fact is that neither can exist without the other as argued in Chapter Two. It is the structure that provides the stability that leadership requires. In this section I briefly report on some of the school structures that were seen to support or enable the principal’s leadership.

It emerged from the data that internal structures such as the position of section heads, the HOD, Committees, the school development plan and the Learner Representative Council (LRC) played a significant role in the advancement of the daily academic activities in the school.

According to the Circuit Inspector:

There is a section head for lower primary, upper primary and junior secondary. These three people fall under the HOD. They are easily approachable. There is open communication in this school at all levels, which results in a positive atmosphere. It is these section heads that make a big job lighter, as many problems are handled by these people resulting in little *[sic]* concerns reaching the top management of the school.

The notion of delegation emerges here, where middle managers create a ‘buffer’ between day-to-day problems and the principal. The school has one HOD over both the

primary and junior secondary phase and stands in for the principal when he is not around, but purely with regards to academic progress in the school. The Inspector notes:

When the section heads have problems, they come to the Head of Department and discuss them with her. There are times when the HOD calls meetings as a platform to listen to problems and discuss progress made by each section.

The fact that meetings are called by middle managers indicates a high level of delegation, perhaps approaching notions of distributed leadership.

There are also several functioning Committees in this school. For example there is a Committee responsible for a composite time-table, for sport and culture where the School Board and learners are represented, and a Study Committee headed by the Chairperson of the LRC. All these Committees contribute to the smooth running of the school.

According to the school principal:

Each and every staff member at this school has got areas where he or she is delegated to do something or lead... meaning, instead of me managing sport, the teacher in charge is fully responsible; he only reports to me if there is anything he needs.

He further said:

Delegation is good because it allows me to do office work; sometimes when others are doing things outside, I concentrate on my work, but later I do follow-ups.

As reported earlier the school has a development plan in place. Two of the respondents emphasized the need for a development plan in each organization. These respondents regard this plan as a very important yardstick, which helps the principal to evaluate his success or failure because without it deadlines are missed, personal agendas begin to surface and production falls. The Inspector remarked: "I have a belief that any office cannot be run without a vision of what to do in the next five years or so." This he

strongly believes contributes to this school's success, as their development plan has activities with a time-line that guides the school in their aims to achieve. It clearly shows when the activities for each academic year start and when they are expected to end. Having a good plan for the future which one adheres to strictly was seen as a very important way of achieving success.

Despite all the challenges referred to above (in 4.3.1) the school has a vibrant Learner Representative Council (LRC). Members of this Council serve the interests of the staff at heart as they form a link between the school and the learners. They represent learners in various Committees and the management of the school speaks through them to the student group. This is a body which is capable of addressing learners' problems and any major problems this body is not able to solve, is passed on to be handled by the management of the school. According to the principal: "If learners need something at the school, they speak through the LRC and then the LRC communicates with the teachers responsible."

The factors discussed above are supportive structural elements which undergird the principal's leadership. These elements also point to a level of delegation and democratisation of the system that seems to reflect both policy and theoretical trends. It is tempting, when discussing leadership of a transformational nature, to overlook the fact that no leadership is likely to occur without the presence of sound organisational structures. And perhaps no effective leadership can occur without the input of external structures. In this sense the principal embodies the ideal of networking as captured in the *Task Team Report* (South Africa 1996).

4.3.2.5 Leadership beyond the organisation: the education environment

An interesting aspect of the principal's role that emerged from the data is the fact that his leadership extends beyond the confines of the school as organisation. The notion of a school being an 'open' system, sensitive to and influenced by its environment was explored in Chapter Two as an element of organisation culture. Certainly this study has confirmed this broader notion of 'school' and hence a broader notion of leadership. The Chotto principal's leadership embraced various stakeholders that operate either in close

proximity to the organisation (such as parents) or at some distance from the organisation (such as literacy programmes). I focus on these now in order to broaden the understanding of this principal's leadership.

4.3.2.5.1 Involving the community

Education should be a partnership...

According to the principal:

Parents are involved whenever we have got things to do at the school. Last time when we attended the HIV/AIDS workshop, one of the School Board members was also invited to attend and to witness what learners are doing in schools.

He is committed to constant learning and development:

We have to educate each other, because if parents and teachers are both involved, we are all going to cope and there is going to be co-operation among us.

The community plays a significant role in the life of this school. According to the Inspector:

In 2003, teachers did not have houses but I had a meeting with parents and informed them of the teachers who were the light of the community and willing to stay at school, but did not have accommodation. Parents responded positively to my plea and now there are new thatched houses built for the teachers. All that I am saying is that education should be a partnership, it should not be only in the class, but the parents must also get involved. In that way if a school is a unit it will strive forward.

The principal values his role as member of the community, which gives him special insight and access to information:

Without joining the community I would never get the information about the truancy of their children ...they would hide this information from me. But when parents are involved and when invited to the meetings they will be free to tell me who is truant and who is sick; they will give me all the information because they are used to me.

This principal believes in the paradigm shift that is occurring in many schools in the world, reflected in the wisdom of this old African proverb: 'It takes a whole village to raise a single child' (Horine, Hailey & Rudach 1993: 31-33). The essence of the proverb is reflected in the growing number of educators (like the principal of Chotto) who are adopting a systems perspective for using and improving on the collaborative efforts of students, parents, teachers and others who hold a stake in the success of the school. This according to the principal is necessary as it enables people to learn from each other.

The data show that the principal tries to foster good relations with all the stakeholders. His aim by doing this was to ensure that learners enjoyed schooling, as this would in turn motivate them to be committed to their work and their school. Three of the respondents saw this principal as accommodative as he involved all the stakeholders in his quest for co-operation. He was seen by them as someone who teachers, parents and learners could turn to for advice and who was also understanding of others problems. According to the principal:

A principal should be a person who is open to all customers who come to the school, he should show interest in those people...the other point is that he should be flexible and be able to change and find the right way of how to do things.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the involvement of the community of parents is key feature of effective leadership. There is strong drive in Namibia to institutionalize and promote parental involvement, chiefly through School Boards (Niitembu 2007). Niitembu's study highlights the difficulties clearly, as do Christie (2001) and Nongauza (2004). The fact that this principal prioritises parents' involvement and goes out of his way to secure help from the broader community is no doubt one of the reasons for his success.

4.3.2.5.2 Other environmental relationships

Respondents in this study acknowledged factors such as in-service training, the cluster system, the School Board and the presence of the National Literacy Programme at this school as opportunities that enable their school principal to perform at the current rate.

On in-service training the principal argued that "... things are changing day and night ... things you knew long ago could have changed. Then we have to be up-dated time and again." The principal further said "Inspectors have in-service courses in order to train me how to lead or manage others."

The Circuit Inspector argued that the existence of the cluster system in his circuit contributes to the performance of this school, as resources - human or material - are shared evenly among the cluster schools. The fact that the cluster centre head needs to be a strong and competent manager with a vision that can extend beyond his or her school to the needs of the cluster as a whole, means that principals of weaker schools are properly assisted via this structure. Furthermore the Inspector said:

Teachers get together to discuss and interpret syllabi and to draw up common schemes of work. This raises standards by encouraging teachers to keep in step with other schools in the group.

The principal in this study is in fact a cluster centre principal, thus elevating his stature and influence within the educational community.

As reported above, the presence of a supportive School Board is also seen as a blessing to this principal as he explains:

I cannot control ... [even] the teachers, they cannot control learners alone without the help of the School Board and parents, because we have only limited time with learners, while parents and School Board members are with their children at home most of the time.

The respondents all agreed that community involvement in the school activities was crucial and that a good principal should strive to unite parents, teachers and learners. They collectively believe that other peoples' opinions should be considered so that they can feel a sense of belonging and be part of the outcome. This will also enable the principal to understand other people's roles in education.

The teacher appraisal system was also seen as a structure that promotes staff development. The School Chairperson believes that performing teachers should be recognised by means of appraisal or awarding them with certificates. The Inspector supports this, “As I am speaking to you, I have a facilitator for Physical Science and for Mathematics who has gone through this process.” While the appraisal system is not currently functional in Namibia, most of the teachers who are producing good results are unofficially recognised and become facilitators in such subjects. The Inspector further said:

I encourage the junior and secondary teachers to always apply as Examiners with the Department of National Examination and Assessment because that is where they pick up experience ... they will know that some examination questions require different kinds of answers and they will have a good understanding when it comes to counselling of their learners.

The National Literacy Programme attended by some of the school going children's parents is another important external factor. The Inspector explained:

As children continue learning from their parents who are adult learners after school, learning becomes fun. Parents likewise learn from their children around the fire in the evening, as is a norm in the African culture.

Studies of rural schools in more recent years suggest that the environment may have improved from early 1960s and 1970s, in that they reflect “less competitiveness among students while remaining adaptively cohesive” (Potterfield & Pace 1992: 40 – 42). Lately rural schools have been characterized as the social centres of small communities where parents, as well as other members of the surrounding community, are active in the functioning of a school. Thus, the cohesiveness of rural schools may be a reflection of a greater sense of cohesiveness that extends from the community that surrounds the school.

I found that my participants saw the positive achievement of this school as an outcome of the support the school was enjoying from the entire community. There were also fewer problems [compared to other schools] from the community to keep the principal

busy and distracted. This means that he could concentrate more on the running of the school. Hoy & Miskel (1996: 154) refer to schools like this as “a healthy school, protected from unreasonable community and parental pressure”. This principal was seen by all as leading a “healthy school”. The principal’s fostering of good community relations also contributed to his success. Hayden and Thompson (2000: 3) believe that maintenance of good working relationships lend themselves to school effectiveness that foster good expectations, positive reinforcement and the maintenance of a cohesive atmosphere between the school and homes of learners. It is far easier to overcome problems when everyone is working together. From *Emerging Voices* (NMF 2004) it is evident that in order for rural schools to become responsive to the realities of community life, schools and communities must know each other better. This is a form of teamwork that extends beyond the organisation, and is potentially a powerful agent for change and development. “Teaming” according to Smith (2003: 13) is “a building block, which leads to an organization’s life being effective and satisfying.”

Donaldson and Sanderson (1996: 3-5) argue that there are direct benefits for children and educators in working together in teams and that teamwork is essential in building a professional culture in schools. As adults share information about the learners and their roles as parents and teachers, they become more effective and professional educators, and the quality of their work with one another and the children is enhanced. The best weapon teachers have against uncertainty and change in education in my opinion is working together as a team. In successful schools the school community shares values and goals, teachers are given time to reflect and work together and people are taught to focus on issues regarding the curriculum and methods of instruction. Successful schools ensure ample opportunity for collegial contact; this is exactly what the principal has been trying to accomplish, as he knows that this will make a difference in the learners’ achievements.

The factors discussed above all seem to make significant contribution to the school environment and culture. As argued in Chapter Two, Fullan (1993: 87) argues that schools cannot develop in isolation from their environments. The best schools will always take account of the local and wider context in recognizing opportunities for development, but without losing sight of their fundamental beliefs and values. Sergiovanni (1984: 143) similarly says that schools as organizations in general are best

understood in context, as they are different from other organizations and even among themselves. The 'external' factors discussed above clearly fall under the ambit of the principal's leadership and improved the school's performance in general. The school also had its share of threats and weaknesses, which the principal with the aid of the prevailing opportunities reduced to the minimum for the school to realize its mandate of educating the country's future leaders. It is by recognizing and incorporating the strengths of other opportunities that learning and development can occur. Smith (2003: 9) makes it clear that "an organization at odds with its environment or that disregards its environment will likely be strangled and die".

4.5 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis and discussion of the data obtained from my respondents. The picture that emerged presents the principal as a transformational leader who leads by example, is visionary, creative and strategic. He is committed to participative leadership but also conscious of rules and capable of autocratic behaviour. He works hard to involve the community in the running of the school. The chapter has also revealed the importance of supportive structures, both within and outside the school, without which leadership is likely not likely to be effective.

The next chapter concludes the study.

Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

This study focused on the role of the principal in an academically successful rural school. In this last chapter, I present a summary of my main findings, highlight the potential value as well as the limitations of the study and finally make recommendations arising from my findings.

5.2 Summary of critical issues

It transpired that there are important factors which have a bearing on the role of the principal. A significant finding of this study is that the principal is heavily dependent on factors that lie outside his immediate personal influence. Indeed, leadership in this study is portrayed as a relationship rather than an attribute or phenomenon, which echoes to some extent the ideals of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership falls short in acknowledging the role played by environmental elements though. It is clear that while the principal has considerable leadership qualities he would not be able to lead effectively without the supporting and enabling structures that exist both within and outside the school. Thus, while he sees principalship as a challenging undertaking, he also believes it is not a position one can enjoy without the aid of people and the surrounding environment.

It emerged that the principal is a leader who stimulates *vision development* and the implementation thereof *in collaboration* with other members of the organization, including parents. It is through the principal's ability to visualize the future that changes in Chotto Combined School have been possible. *Creativity* is required to visualize the future direction and destination of the school, taking into account the present contextual realities. Principalship was thus seen as competitive, requiring someone with creativity

and perseverance. *Commitment and dedication* are required to carry this vision through, and the School principal was seen as the most important *communicator* of the vision. To this principal vision meant *being clear* about the direction in which he was going and *translating his beliefs into actions*. He was a strategic thinker and a person who could *improvise* where need be.

This principal was seen as a leader who is *understanding* and one who *acknowledges* the needs and contribution of others. Although faced with challenges in a difficult rural setting, the principal *understood* the personnel he worked with.

The principal worked *collaboratively* with parents, teachers and learners. He encouraged them to work hard and their response was encouraging. *Teaching and learning* was seen as the core business of the school and he has worked hard to retain this focus.

As a Headmaster, he kept an overall view of what was happening in the school. He *monitored* progress and *maintained* a check on things. This meant that at times he might have seemed *autocratic* because of his strong drive for excellence, while he is in reality strongly *person-oriented*. To him everyone needs to be valued, as he believes that if all have a sense of their own self-worth they will do their best. He was aware that the impact of the general atmosphere of the school-working environment depends on the quality of interactional relationships and the leadership style adopted.

The principal was also a *teacher* and a *manager* at the same time. In this way he leads by example. He serves as a *role model* for teachers and learners who look to him for guidance and inspiration, as a person who applies the principle of self-leadership, in other words, a person who can apply self-discipline and has a positive attitude. He also constantly *reviewed and evaluated* his own actions.

This study has provided insight into how a principal may lead his school effectively, even under the most challenging circumstances.

5.3 Implications of this study

This study revealed that schools are inseparable from the communities they serve. Policy makers in the Ministry of Education need to take into account the importance of fostering meaningful school-community relations, as both groups need a better understanding of each other. Thorough planning, resourcing and ongoing research are necessary and unavoidable if schools and communities in Namibia are to be drawn closer together. The study has shown that even exemplary leadership qualities need a supportive context in order to be effective.

This study found that schools managed by instructional leaders would most definitely perform better, suggesting that principals should also remain as teachers, while the understanding that they are only employed to do administration work be done away with. Instructional leaders know what is happening in the classroom and are therefore better able and willing to provide resources and materials that support their teachers' instructional efforts.

The study emphasized the need for collaboration with regards to any decision-making. This means that both regional officials and School principals need to practice the open-door policy if they want their plans or decisions to be accepted by the communities they serve. An effective school leader has clear and well-articulated goals; delegates tasks to others; encourages staff to participate in decision-making; incorporates others in problem-solving; treats staff fairly and equitably and provides staff support in difficult situations.

The study found the uniform implementation of ministerial policies such as staffing norms and allocation of resources as a contributing factor to the low performance of learners in rural schools; hence the need for policy implementers like Circuit Inspectors, advisory teachers and principals, who need to be flexible when implementing these policies in rural schools like Chotto, which are faced with numerous problems such as HIV/AIDS and urban migration.

For Namibia, where the cluster system is a fairly recent innovation, this study provides encouraging findings on how this system enhances leadership and enables professional development and learning.

Pre-service training of principals is not seen as an issue in Namibia. While studies show that there are some inadequacies in the pre-service preparation of School principals, the importance of theory in leadership cannot be ignored. Practice without theory to guide it is blind. Therefore, universities, colleges and other educational institutions that provide in-service education should be required to offer courses which enable principals to develop school development plans and assist them to be strategic thinkers.

The study's contribution to theory lies in its finding that transformational leadership, while highly desired and effective, may not be enough to explain the complex nature of education leadership. Theories that emphasise the role of the environment and stress leadership as relationship are more likely to be helpful. The notion of the school as an open system begins to point the way.

It is my hope that this study will enhance informed public discussion, debate and any important planning on issues relating to successful rural schools in the region. Further, I hope that it will be used as a thought-provoking device to encourage further studies in rural education in Namibia.

5.4 Limitations of this study

The sample used in this study was small which makes it impossible to claim that the situation is the same in other schools that are emerging in other circuits. A bigger sample may have made more confident generalization possible. However, it needs to be remembered that a case study is by nature not generalisable. What may be learned from case studies is that which is true of that case at that time, and this in itself may have important lessons for readers.

Although the school's success was shown in this study as a collective effort of all stakeholders, I tried to confine myself to the leadership of the principal; a richer picture

would have surfaced if other players were given opportunities to tell how they were contributing to the success of Chotto Combined School. Naturally, though, this would have been beyond the scope of a small study.

The study draws attention to the sheer scale and depth of poverty of rural life and how it impacts on children's participation in schooling, but because I remained focused on leadership this reality was not explored in this case.

This was a case study and it might have suffered from the weaknesses that interpretive studies are prone to, which is the subjective nature of interpretive research. My subjectivity could have influenced the way I interpreted the data. It is my belief as a novice researcher that this has been avoided through the reflection I have been doing throughout the study process.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

- My study looked at the principal's role in an academically successful rural school and did not investigate the role of other stakeholders in the positive performance of Chotto. It would be important to examine the role other stakeholders played which could have bearing on the principal's actions and the school's success.
- In some rural communities', education continues to be undermined by lack of basic physical resources such as appropriate classrooms, teaching and learning materials, libraries, toilets, electricity and safe running water. It would be helpful to conduct similar studies on a number of schools in the region that are seen as performing, so as to understand how these other schools continue to perform where many have faltered. This would help to paint a broader and richer picture of leadership in rural schools.
- The National Literacy Programme is shown as having played a role at this school. It would be encouraging to explore how this programme could be used and adapted to benefit schools in the region.
- It has been recognized in this study that leaders need a sound understanding of human nature if they are to lead effectively. Leadership programmes need to focus

on this dimension – people-orientation – of leadership to encourage and develop this capacity in School principals. Research into how this dimension might be built into leadership programmes would be useful.

- What has emerged as equally important is a sound structural base on which organisational leadership can function. Research into this interface – structure and leadership – would help to clarify this relationship.

5.6 Recommendations

Too often and without consideration principals in developing countries like Namibia are tossed into the job without pre-service training, without guarantee of in-service training and without support from their employers. Principals find however, that their effectiveness and performance are judged according to academic results and nothing more as indicated by the principal in this study. What is arguably lacking in the meagre preparation principals receive is the importance of seeing the school as a community of learning, one in which principals are aware of the values, beliefs and norms of the communities where they are serving. Furthermore it is imperative that they have a vision and share the Ministry of Education's aims and goals. Effective educational systems provide the guidance, socialization, professional and technical support that can help principals adjust and succeed (Kitavi 2006: 11).

It is against this background that I would like to make the following recommendations:

- Open up the school to the community, aimed at involving all stakeholders in the life of the school and adapting curricula to respond to local needs. Incorporating local knowledge should be a priority to all principals if they are to change rural schooling for the better.
- For schools to be managed effectively, principals should provide balanced leadership and spend significant time in direct supervision of instruction and staff development. Teaching and learning must remain as the focus of the school's core business.

- I therefore agree with an earlier Namibian study (Kantema 2001) that there is a need to establish an Institute for the professional development of School principals in Namibia and that parents' perception of education should be enhanced through activities creating awareness. However, it is clear that much of the solution lies in the supply-side, that is, in ensuring adequate numbers of appropriately trained, motivated and engaged principals in rural schools, as strong and competent leadership is needed for a school to succeed.
- Government and private organizations need to pool their resources to help improve rural schools.
- In responding to the challenge of rural schooling, policy makers need to elicit the voices and participation of rural communities to understand their experiences better, as we cannot speak of schooling without understanding the context within which schooling takes place and how rural communities like those of Chotto, experience education.

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Appendix A

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

1. How would you describe the climate/culture of your school? What are the core values of the school? What is your role in establishing these?
2. Which personal qualities should a principal possess? Why are they necessary?
3. What are the special challenges in managing a rural school – how do you deal with them?
4. How do you involve teachers in your administration of this school?
5. What role do learners play in your administration of this school?
6. What role do parents play in your administration of this school?
7. What are the challenges in involving teachers, learners and parents in school governance?
8. How is the Regional Director, Circuit Inspectors, Teacher Advisors and Regional school counsellors involved in the management of this school?
9. What do you do to assist a teacher who neglects his/her teaching responsibilities or teaches poorly?
10. Most learners come from homes that lack environment conducive for learning. What do you do to assist a learner who neglects doing his or her homework, comes late to school, or misses school quite frequently?

11. In your view, what is the most challenging thing to be a principal at a school such as (name withheld) combined school?
12. In spite of all the challenges mentioned, what do you enjoy most because of being the principal of a school such as this?
13. This school has a reputation of being an effective school. To what do you attribute this school's success?
14. In conclusion, what would you suggest could be done to improve on examination results of a school such as (name withheld) combined school?

Appendix B

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRPERSON, AND THE SCHOOLTEACHER

1. Briefly describe some of the qualities you would expect a principal to possess.
2. How is (name withheld) Combined School in your opinion doing in terms of grade 10 results in the circuit? What contributes to this performance?
3. How are you involved in the administration of this School? ...Is it effective? Could more be done?
4. What challenges is your School faced with? And what do you usually do to address the situation?
5. This school has a reputation of being an effective school. To what do you attribute this school's success?
6. In conclusion, what would you suggest could be done to improve on the examination results of your School?

Appendix C

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE CIRCUIT INSPECTOR

1. Briefly describe some of the qualities you would expect a principal to possess.
2. Is there any principal you would single out as the most successful leader in your circuit? What has this person done to be successful? What are his/her qualities?
3. What measures are in place to ensure that principals provide good support to teachers in terms of their classroom teaching? (Examples ... how does it work ... is it effective? Could more be done?)
4. What do you usually do to motivate your principal and teachers? (Examples ... how ... specific incident ... tell the story).
5. This school has a reputation of being an effective school. To what do you attribute this school's success?
6. In conclusion, what would you suggest could be done to improve on the examination results of a school such as this?

Appendix D

24 March 2006

The Acting Regional Director
Ministry of Education
Private Bag 5006
Caprivi Region

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT MALENGA – LENGA COMBINED SCHOOL

I am a student at Rhodes University. At present, I am registered for a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and Management.

To fulfil the requirements for the course, I have to do research in one area of educational leadership and management, which will require your assistance regarding gaining access to this school.

I would like to conduct my research by interviewing the Inspector of Cincimane Circuit, the School Principal, the School Board Chairperson, an HOD and two teachers of this school. I would be most prepared, if you would like me, to give you feedback on my research which I will submit.

Thank you very much for helping me to conduct this research.

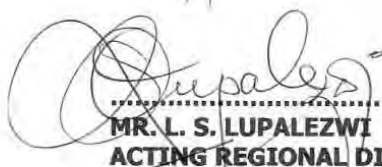
You are most welcome to contact my course co-ordinator Prof Hennie Van Der Mescht at (046) 6038383, should you need more information.

Yours Faithfully


.....
JOSEPH JOST KAWANA
STUDENT NO: 05k0045

RECOMMENDATIONS


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MR. L. S. LUPALEZWI
ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR

- CC: 1. THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**
2. CINCIMANE CIRCUIT INSPECTOR

