

THE ADVENT OF SCHOOL BASED MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has witnessed management reforms in South Africa in the form of School Based-Management. School-Based-Management has become a widely preferred management style in schools because of the belief that it gives rise to increased production at school level. While the need for effective School-Based-Management is supported, there is much less certainty of what role and responsibility each and every stakeholder needs to play that is likely to yield the desired outcomes. Through this empirical but discussion paper in essence, we explore the nature and the rationale behind School Based Management. The views and the different roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder as well as the intervention strategies implemented by the department of education are explored. One on one interviews were conducted with purposefully selected 9 participants from three schools. The results show that the majority of stakeholders have held a positive assumption about School Based Management as the means towards transforming the management style in schools from bureaucratic to active participants in major decision making processes as required by School Based-Management that aims at ensuring effective teaching and learning at school level.

Keywords: education stakeholders, School-Based-Management, democracy, teamwork, bureaucracy.

INTRODUCTION

School Based Management (SBM) has been hailed in a number of studies as a management reform tool that has received an overwhelming audience throughout the world even in South Africa (Botha 2006: 3). The SBM approach, according to its proponents, requires different stakeholders such as parents, learners and the school staff, both academic and non-academic, to bring their respective strengths in a concerted manner to the joint task of ensuring school effectiveness.

For an example, according to Ng and Chan (2008:488), it is through the SBM system that principals, teachers, learners and parents have greater freedom and responsibility for school decision-making about budgets, personnel and the curriculum in that they can create more effective learning environments for learners. This paper looked at how principals, School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and other management staff undertake their functions since they have more control over the resources supplied to their schools. Restructuring and the trend towards SBM provides the context for the discussion to follow.

In the 1980's and 1990's, there appeared to be an international trend in many developed countries in the world to decentralize education systems. It was realized that large,

centralized bureaucracies were not quick enough to respond to the rapidly changing economic realities (Ng and Chan, 2008:487-488). It is also clear that since the late 1980's, the SBM movement had some important trends in many countries, and some scholars have done important theoretical and empirical work to build upon the link between SBM and school effectiveness in the past decade (Cheng and Mok, 2007: 522). A World Bank report (2007) indicated that developed countries such as New Zealand, Australia and Spain have experienced SBM reforms of the strongest type that helped them to achieve their goals. These countries have enjoyed, through the SBM system, an improvement in the quality provisioning of education in response to globalization and growth of the knowledge economy (Cheng and Mok, 2007:523).

South Africa cannot be seen as being left behind in the trend to decentralize its education system. According to Botha (2006:3), former Education Minister Naledi Pandor recently reassured the education fraternity of the government's commitment to the self-management and the self-governance of South African schools. Mloi (2007: 466) confirms what Minister Pandor mentioned that SBM is now operational and that the approach to strategic management in South African schools gave added impetus by the shift to greater self-management and in particular, the acquisition of Section 21 status schools (Republic of South Africa 1996b) which gives more autonomy to those schools obtaining this status.

The major problem about a power shift is that it is not an easy task especially in a country like South Africa where there is a demand for relevant education (Mabasa and Themane 2002: 107). It is therefore, through SBM, that the Department of Education can redress this culture of dependency by enabling SBM stakeholders to think and act strategically, involve them in planning and problem-solving techniques and ultimately reaching decisions under the guidance of departmental policy framework thereby ensuring that those who experience barriers to stakeholders' participation are not underplayed or overlooked.

If schools are to be effectively changed to meet the needs of all stakeholders, then there has to be restructuring and transformation at that level. Key to restructuring and transformation is the recognition of what such changes mean for that existing SBM structure and new members who will be entering the structure in that school. Recent studies acknowledge the shift and broadening of the intentions as well as the purpose of the SBM system as a more effective way to manage school interaction and to improve instruction. Nevertheless, there is limited empirical evidence of this strategic approach being adopted in practice and there is evidence that many schools in the North West province, Mafikeng area are still battling to work towards quality education as a goal set by the Department of Education. Based on the above-mentioned challenges of SBM, this paper investigated the effectiveness of School Based Management in the North West province. In order to achieve this, the following objectives had to be realized:

- to critically discuss to the strengths and weaknesses of SBM;
- to critically discuss the roles of SBM Stakeholders; and
- to determine the impact of strategies of empowering SBM stakeholders;

THEORETICAL REVIEW

In broad terms, educational management theories are either bureaucratic or collegial in nature. In bureaucratic or 'top-down' theories the emphasis is on the official and structural elements of organizations. There is also a focus on pursuing institutional objectives through rational approaches (Bush, 2008:29). In South Africa, principals and teachers have consistently been at the receiving end of top-down management structures. They have worked in a regulated environment and have become accustomed to receiving direct instructions from departmental officials. According to the report by the Department of Education (1996:19) circuits and lower level structures have tended to function as administrative units only and have been unable to respond to community needs.

The collegial or so called 'bottom up' theories can on the other hand be seen as those theories which emphasize that power decision-making should be shared among some or all members of the organization. Collegial theories assume that organizations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus (Bush, 2008:52). At the spectrum of the policy and legislative initiative, as stated in the Task Team on Educational Management (Department of Education 1996: 29), the emphasis is also seen as a process of decentralizing decision making and the correct allocation of resources to school level. Therefore, democratization in the ways in which school are governed and managed in South Africa remains crucial. This point of view is of critical importance for research on SBM. The researchers therefore based their decision for selecting a collegial-theoretical point of departure on the fact that self-management must be accompanied by an internal devolution of power within the school and within transformational leadership. This implies that a move towards self-management of schools is based on the understanding that decisions should be made by those who best understand the needs of learners and the local community. Studies have also shown that self-management can lead to improved school effectiveness (Bush, 2008:29).

Conceptualization of SBM through its advantages and disadvantages

There are a number of sound arguments to support the introduction of SBM. According to De Grauwe (2000:274), SBM promotes a participatory school environment and thereby allowing teachers and parents to make democratic decisions on educational matters. This in turn, fosters collaboration and collegiality among staff members because they have team spirit, cooperate openly, and share responsibility which in turn should enhance learning. The school has become a primary means of stimulating and sustaining improvement (Mncube, 2009:84). Through SBM, teachers may decide to develop professionally on an ongoing basis with the aim to improve themselves as individuals. Professional development has a positive bearing towards school goals as it empowers those closest to the learners and the teachers who in turn empower the learners and ultimately the community at large.

The preceding statement is supported by Cheng and Mok (2007:520)'s assertion that with SBM, the key role of the school is to develop its learners, teachers, parents and the school itself. According to Davies (2002:258) teachers who work with parents in a particular community, understand their learners better, generate unique rather than routine solutions to classroom problems and are able to reach a shared understanding with parents and learners. The role of parents therefore involves partnerships and supporters, and they actively cooperate with the school.

In terms of disadvantages, Mncube (2009:85) maintains that unlike in developed countries, some board members in developing countries are deprived of exercising their power as they do not participate fully to perform the duties assigned to them due to lack of necessary skills. In such situations the principal continues to perform the functions supposed to be the responsibility of the SGB members and their role becomes that of rubber stamping decisions taken by the principal and a few SGB members (Mncube, 2009:85). Unfortunately, the intention by the government to allow schools to manage themselves is hindered by the lack of knowledge and skills by parents who form the majority of governing members. The challenge is that SGB's in many South African schools have not been prepared for SBM reforms and even if preparation has been there, it has proven to be insufficient for new SGB members to effectively discharge their duties.

One other concern related to SBM and presented by Sayed (2002:36) deals with both the allocation and distribution of resources which involves education professionals and lay people who have their own views on school management and the way in which it should be organized. According to Li (2010:4), the interests of stakeholders are not always consistent at school level and power struggles may ensue among parents and between parents and staff. Disagreements may ensue as a result of not having a common understanding with regard to issues of appointing staff, language policy and decisions on school fees within the school community. Sayed (2002:45) argues that changing policy intention does not immediately translate into changed practice. Democracy in school governance within the context of the policy of educational decentralization not only takes more time, but requires more proactive action to support and capacitate the School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders such as parents, staff and learners to become vehicles of democracy.

The role and responsibilities of different Stakeholders in School Based Management

The Principal

At school level, the principal is perceived as the key figure in fostering power regarding decentralization. Principals have been confronted with an enormous responsibility of exercising leadership that promotes participation by all stakeholders of the school in order to promote democracy, which is one of the goals of education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2007).

Principals also have to deal with competing demands for both human management and governance of schools. Principals have to manage schools in a process of shared, collaborative educational thinking and leadership (Grogan & Andrews 2002:246) in order for staff members to feel valued, respected and empowered (Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett 2005:60). This implies changing from the past autocratic tendency of unilateral decision making to more democratic tendencies that are encouraged by active participation.

Teachers

Schools need to have a minimum of resources and competent teachers in order to assist them to implement SBM systems successfully and ultimately compete in the global arena. Some aspects of school culture, such as shared vision and values, strong collaboration and teamwork, and student-centered style are, according to Li (2010:11), conducive to the effective implementation of SBM.

Teacher teams have emerged as a popular school improvement strategy for developed states (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson and Myers 2007). This practice of collaboration for the

purpose of making educational decisions embraces the realignment of roles and relationships of school community members. Scribner et al (2007) further argue that where teachers work in self-managing teams to develop goals, curricular, instructional strategies, budgets and staff development programmes, learners often achieve at higher levels. Advocates of distributed leadership which is in line with SBM suggest that many instances of collaboration have become structural mechanisms of control through which the efforts of teachers are more tightly coupled to standardized performance expectations.

The role of an SBM teacher has changed from a narrow perspective of managing the classroom to a wider and a broader outside-the-classroom involvement in assisting to work with other colleagues and external stakeholders towards the attainment of the school's vision and mission. Through the implementation of SBM, teachers are asked to assume leadership roles in staff development, mentoring and curriculum development, and to become key partners in school and staff supervision including evaluation.

School Governing Body

According to Sayed (2002: 40), the increasing demand for democratic transformation in education and in the society at large coupled with the demands of SBM prescripts through the functions of the School Governing Body have further envisaged a key role for parents in the schooling activities of their children. Middlewood and Lumby (2007:122) argue that governors are accountable to parents through their annual reports and meetings with parents, providing reports of schools' physical resources and academic performance of their school including comments on the work of the governing body.

Through the introduction of SBM the role of parental involvement has been receiving greater interest in schools (Li, 2010:3). Mncube (2009:84) argues that parental involvement has been associated with a variety of positive academic outcomes including higher grade points averages, lower dropout rates, less retention, special education placements and an increased achievement in reading. Parents are now participating in school matters more than in the past because they want their children to have access to quality education. Becoming involved in their children's school activities, as required by the SBM system, parents are likely to ensure that the values, the direction and the character of the community are established and maintained. This requires parents to be involved in their children's homework, meeting with teachers and attending school functions and activities. Therefore, they became more aware of the benefits that can be gained from education and wanting to have a say on what learning experiences schools should offer to their children. It is therefore evident that their involvement has advantages in maximizing the school's scope and developing a school culture of learning and teaching.

The intervention: The development of SGB members in SBM skills

According to Marishane (2003:12) the state, as obliged by the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996a), has an important role to play in capacity building for efficient resource utilization in the school. In South Africa, the government recognized that many SGBs, especially those in the rural and less advantaged urban areas, do not have the required skills and experience to exercise their new powers and may have difficulty fulfilling their functions.

Many principals have been appointed at a stage that the demands of the roles were different and they might find themselves in trouble because of the role change. Relevant training may assist them somewhat, although there is no guarantee that it might benefit all of them to such an extent that they feel sufficiently empowered. To deal with this issue, SASA (RSA 1996, Section 19), which represents a sophisticated form of SBM, obliges provincial governments to provide training for governing bodies. According to Botha (2006), the training of members on SBM structures can also be regarded as an important capacity building responsibility of the state. In responding to this call, the state, as obliged by SASA (RSA, 1996a), in conjunction with professional institutions, established training programmes to empower principals. One of the well-known programmes is the ACE (Advance Certificate in Education) in School Leadership. This programme is aimed at empowering school leaders to lead and manage schools effectively in a time of rapid change (Department of Education, 2007: iv).

SASA (RSA, 1996a) holds the state accountable for the implementation of and success of the government's policy in developing the capacity of SGBs to govern. The principals' strategic and long-term leadership roles are also reflected in terms of the attention given in an ongoing manner to the training, development and empowerment of educators. According Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (2006:94) it is logical that if members of staff are not properly trained to fulfill their new roles, they should not be entrusted to do SBM tasks. Empowerment of staff implies that once trained and developed to a level of competency, they are provided an opportunity to make a contribution towards the vision of the school by implementing their new competencies to the advantage of the school.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the qualitative research method which was selected because of its originality and naturalistic display. Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2007), is based on the ontological assumption that the nature of reality is diverse and that reality has multiple facets. The researcher's choice of the qualitative research approach was also influenced by the following explanations as indicated by Creswell (2007):

That research:

- needs a complex, detailed understanding of the issue (referring to the topic under investigation) and talking directly to people, going to their homes or places of work;
- empowers individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants;
- wants to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address problems or issues;
- can differentiate what people say from the context in which they say it – whether this context is their home, family or work; and
- helps explain the mechanism or linkages in causal theories or models by providing a general picture of trends, association, and relationships, but they do not tell us (researchers) why people respond as they do, the context in which they respond, their deeper thoughts and behaviours that governed their responses (p40).

Interviews

In terms of the form of qualitative research methodology employed, individual interviews with nine participants were conducted. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen (2006: 480) put it as a direct method of collecting information in a one-on-one situation as well as an interchanging of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. It was important to include the teachers because they are at the heart and receiving end of the delivery of all education policies for curriculum delivery. The interchange was between an experienced SBM participant and the researcher who has to obtain insight in order to provide findings to a research question. Furthermore, the interview is a flexible tool for data collection because it allows the interviewer to make adjustments as the situation requires. It enables the interviewer and interviewees to discuss their interpretations of the worldview and how they regard the situation from their respective point of view.

Sample

In terms of sampling, the researchers employed purposeful sampling to select schools. According to Ary et al. (2006:472) purposeful sampling, unlike probabilistic sampling, “seeks to select information-rich cases which can be studied in depth”. The sample size of the investigation was limited to schools that function in the Mafikeng Area Office in the North West province. The North West province was chosen because not much research has been done locally on the effectiveness of SBM and therefore the study aimed to provide insight into the status-quo of SBM in the area. Three SBM participants per school were interviewed from each school. The participants consisted of some parents within the SGB, principals and teaching staff members. In total nine participants were selected. They are referred to as Participant A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H and I because of the respect to privacy of participants and the research ethical code of conduct. The co researcher remained in the background during interviews to provide whatever support that would be necessary during interviews.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In presenting the findings, *italics* in certain sentences or sections in a sentence have been used to denote the direct responses of participants. To enhance this study, the researchers began by reflecting on the following questions:

- What is the nature of and rationale for SBM?
- What are the roles of the different stakeholders in SBM?
- Do the SBM stakeholders have the capacity to perform their duties effectively?

1. What is the nature of and rationale for SBM?

In relation to the question on the nature of and rationale of SBM, two distinguishable but interconnected themes were identified, namely, explaining SBM within the school set up and the justification of SBM. As part of explaining SBM within the school setting, Participants were required to provide examples of related activities that manifest the functionality of SBM in schools. With regard to the justification of SBM, Participants had to indicate whether SBM was related and applicable to particular aspects of school life.

Many of the participants were in agreement that SBM could be seen as guidelines that indicate how stakeholders should manage the school. The direction-giving aspect of SBM

practice was explained by participant A when she stated, “... and it is through such meetings that schools set clear stakeholder-focused strategic directions and develops action plans to support its directions”. Participant C commented that “decisions are based on the belief that giving stakeholders authority would mean holding them directly accountable for their actions and such accountability is expected to act as a tool for greater effectiveness”.

The participants further provided an example of how the decision making process could assist stakeholders to control the school more effectively. The example relates to a situation in which a conflict arises between a teacher and a learner. Participant d explained that in this case, “the SBM system, through its functions in a school, should provide a platform for finding a representative decision”.

In replying to the theme on the role of SBM stakeholders in so far as decision making processes were concerned, the data revealed that most participants had raised conflicting views in terms of their interests at school level. It goes without saying that SBM requires the parents to have a say on the school finances. Participant G from the professional staff said the following to show his frustration, “My plan of a school trip has failed because the principal presented it to the parents who disapproved it as they felt that it was just a waste of money regardless of how much effort was made to explain the importance of it to them”. Another area of concern with regard to the relationship between stakeholders and human resources as it had an adverse impact on the collegial relationships necessary for a quality school. Participant E had the following to say about the situation in their school, “The principal still shows favoritism as he together with the SGB recommended one of the teachers who has less experience in teaching to head our department”. These two examples clearly show that decision-making authority possessed by other SBM stakeholders could turn out to be the main source of tension underlying school governance behaviour. The situation above is in contrast to what the SBM stands for which is a practice that encourages collaboration.

2. What are the roles of the different SBM Stakeholders in schools?

In responding to the question relating to identifying stakeholders and then establish their role within the school in terms of SBM practice, this is how participants responded:

A: “Principals guide members of the SGB to act according to the Act and encourage them to conduct meetings properly”. Participant B: “The principal is a link between all stakeholders of the school, and he further said, he (the principal) is in charge of the day-to-day management of the school and the implementation of policy and curriculum, it is therefore imperative that he reports on these matters and has a say in decisions taken in the SGB meeting”. These two quotes clearly support what other researchers have found in the literature review which is that since the introduction of the SBM, principals are experiencing a role that is increasing in complexity. It is further clear that at the school level, the principal plays a crucial role in decision making and that the principal in particular acts as a custodian of such decisions taken on behalf of the school.

In terms of the role of parents within the SGB, it became clear that participants had different perceptions of the roles of parents in SBM. Participant C stated that “the role of parents has changed from being passive to that of being active participants in the educational well-being of their children”. The participant further said “parents as SGB members play a role of support and monitoring and they can hold the principal accountable for poor performance of the school”. Participant F seemed to have a problem with the understanding of the operation of the parents in school when he said: “In most cases, I only see parents in

our school when we invite them, apart from that; they seem to be remotely placed far away from the school". Participant F again had the following to say, *"Parents as SGB members are the eyes of the community, they are responsible to ensure that the school's finances and human resources are adequately utilized"*. Surely parents are fully involved in a number of school activities as required by law.

With regard to the role of the staff, the majority of participants indicated that the SBM created a school environment in which teachers were fully involved in decision making processes that enable effective learning and teaching in the school. This is how participant D responded: *"teachers are now directly involved in deciding the direction that the school wants to take. Remember, the teachers are the cornerstone of this school because whatever decisions are taken, they are the first people to see to it that those decisions are converted into real practical terms. Their involvement is indispensable in so far as the implementation process is concerned and even beyond that"*. The preceding comment clearly shows how the role of teachers has changed with this new system of education. The involvement of teachers in decision making processes is of critical importance to the school and it is mainly motivated on the basis of the so called idea of ownership.

One significant aspect of the study dealt with identifying and addressing shortcomings on how stakeholders conducted their activities at school. The study revealed that stakeholders seemed to have a problem with the understanding of operational plans within the school. This raises the question of who should participate in decision-making and how. The problem according to participant A was that *"some decisions are left to the professional staff and some to parents"* citing lack of academic knowledge on the side of parents. Sometimes decisions on crucial aspects of the school such as deciding *"on issues of disciplinary action to be taken against a learner"* get a lot of influence from the staff and the situation as it presents itself, leaves parents with no option but to become spectators because of *"their inability to scrutinize and interpret documents dealing with discipline accurately"* according to Participant A. This is clearly in contrast to equal participation of stakeholders as one group wants to have a dominant voice over the other. Another revelation from one of the participants is the reluctance on the side of stakeholders to work as a team. Participant C had the following to say, *"Division and factionalism are a problem..."* and its cause was related to *"favoritism from the School Management Team"* which include the principal. Once again, this is against what SBM stands for, which is fostering collaboration and collegiality among staff members. SBM also means sharing in the responsibility of running the school. According to participant C, their principal is faced with *"a mammoth task of running the school alone" instead of practicing what he called distributed leadership*". The situation as reflected above shows that the school does not promote a participatory school environment in which a platform is created for everyone to grow.

3. Do the SBM Stakeholders have the capacity to perform their duties?

In as far as the improvement of SBM stakeholders participation is concerned, a sound programme for parents, teachers and principals is critical to ensure the successful implementation of SBM. The principal's role demands that focused attention be given in an ongoing manner to the training and development of other stakeholders since participant B put it, *"training and development is an investment for tomorrow"*. No principal can manage strategically and implement strategies to attain the vision of the school without the assistance of other stakeholders.

The study also revealed that most participants were of the view that training and development assisted parents to deal with their plight of not being able to participate optimally in the affairs of the school. Participant D said, “... *I think there can be a much better performance of all stakeholders if we are taken for training*”. participant D further added, “*I am new in the SGB and still need time to familiarize myself with the language that is used in meetings*”. Surely the situation as explained above calls for a need for preparation of new SGB members in the form of training. As Participant D put it, SGBs can function well “*if only each and every one of us knows what he is doing*”.

In terms of teachers, data revealed that most of the participants held an idea that teachers were to be empowered through teamwork. This sentiment is shared by proponents of SBM as they hint that the benefits of teamwork should be familiar to anyone interested in SBM related concepts such as cooperation, empowerment, collaboration and consultation. Two participants, participants B and D emphasized the importance of consultation. As Participant B put it, “*I’ve got an idea I have to sell it so that it can be supported in the SGB meeting*”. Participant D warned that unless you consulted, “*you will be seen as a dictator...you will lose support*”.

Another dimension of team work is reflected through the distribution of the leadership role. Participant E told of how he used delegation tasks to “*build on teacher’s strength*”. For Participant C, distributing leadership assisted to prepare teachers when they “*apply for higher positions*” in her own words. For what is mentioned by Participant E, I and C to happen, the principal must create an environment for the empowerment of SBM stakeholders and it has to begin with him.

While still on the question of capacitation or improvement, participants agreed that information was significant in the sense that it was a prolific source of power for people and marked the importance of informed decision making to schools operating in a decentralized manner. This is how participant I put this, “*sometimes we, as parents, have no knowledge of what is needed of us and as a result we are not afforded opportunities to take informed decisions on school matters*”. No matter how good decisions taken are, it will not make a difference if people cannot understand them. During the interviews with stakeholders, the researchers realized that schools were very dependent on departmental circulars and documents for correct information which were distributed to all stakeholders then before discussions at school level. The following section discusses brings the recommendations for the effective implementation of SBM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings discussed earlier, this study proposes the following recommendations:

- As it has been established, the current educational dispensation requires stakeholders to lead the process of decentralization of decision making power. Some of the stakeholders, especially the parent SGB members are not adequately familiar with the legislation that guides operations at school level. It is therefore imperative for SBM stakeholders to make efforts to study the legislative documents that contain the current thinking and practices. SBM stakeholders should acquaint themselves with such legal documents in order to establish and maintain well informed decisions within the school.

- The department of education officials from the various offices must be deployed throughout the country and North West province in particular where the study was undertaken to enforce compliance with the prescripts and practices of SBM.
- Since it was established that the introduction of SBM system creates a conducive learning and teaching environment. Again, knowledge of each and every stakeholder is essential to the realization of this conducive environment in schools. Stakeholders are therefore expected to be alert at all times of anything that impedes learning and teaching in schools and to take appropriate actions as required.
- The study also revealed that participants were of the opinion that funding played a crucial role in terms of improvements. Successful training of SGBs, based on the needs of their members, is believed to be a prerequisite for effective, decentralized and cooperative school based governance. Since some parents who are new in the SGB are unlikely to be used to the task of acquiring goods and services or to keeping accounts, they need to receive training to ensure their accountability for the school funds that they are managing. Knowledge of administering funds could be of benefit to stakeholders as they know proper decision making channels to acquire specialist services that will assist them in the empowerment of other stakeholders. After all, all members of the SGB must be taken to meetings for induction purposes before they resume their duties
- In terms of findings, all stakeholders must participate in the operational activities of the school as required by SBM since this can assist them in taking ownership of the school. It is therefore important that the role of the principal as an overseer becomes vigilant and be found to be a coordinator to optimally involve all key stakeholders in a process of decision making and implementation.

CONCLUSION

Accounts from participants in this study reflect a picture that School Based Management (SBM) performs a pivotal role in the life of a school. With the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, an awareness of the need by SBM stakeholders to actively participate in each and every aspect of schooling has become prominent. SBM as a system has become a microcosm of a democratic system at school level. Not only has SBM ushered in a new sense of ownership to stakeholders but it has also dispelled the myth that decision making processes work effectively when they are detached from their real practical environment. According to this research, SBM considers those closest to the action as indispensable aspects to a healthy life of the school. It is concurred that learning and teaching take place effectively and efficiently under decentralized forms of power at schools. Stakeholders in education consider SBM as enabling the creation and maintenance of a conflict-free, normal teaching and learning atmosphere through which decisions are taken and implemented by all stakeholders. The accommodation of each and every stakeholder's input is therefore vital and should be part of an educational planning that amounts to SBM effectiveness at school level.

The study also acknowledges that reforms in the education system might have posed more challenges for SBM stakeholders in that they required change in the knowledge base and practice. This situation calls for a need for stakeholders to receive constant guidance and training on governance issues, leadership and team effectiveness. On the basis of the preceding statements, it is therefore proper to call for a much more comprehensive study that

will address detailed planning strategies that can enhance the interest of stakeholders in introducing and implementing new education leadership systems at schools.

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