

FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

**AN ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP STYLES  
FOR PRINCIPALS : A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOLS IN THE  
CAPE PENINSULA AND SURROUNDING AREAS**

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*Minor dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Education/Philosophy specialising in Educational Administration,  
Planning and Social Policy.*

**JANUARY 1995**

**Faculty of Education  
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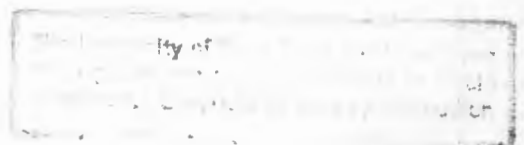
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## DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

*I, Clive Peter Prinsloo, hereby declare that the work contained in this minor dissertation is my own work that has not been submitted to any other institution before for assessment purposes and that all sources, references and peer, tutor and other assistance has been acknowledged.*

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## ABSTRACT

School effectiveness is a multi-faceted concept. One of the important factors leading to school effectiveness is the type of leadership provided by the principal. Through his/her leadership, the principal must create the conditions under which the staff can function optimally in pursuit of the educational goals of the institution. A very important means of creating these conditions is for the principal to try to match his/her leadership style with the expectations of his/her staff. Failure to do so may lead to frustration and consequently to conditions not conducive to education. The only way for this match to take place is to know what teachers perceive as appropriate leadership styles and under which conditions these will be appropriate.

Although much research has been done on effective leadership and leadership styles, they remain very complex issues. Research outside the sphere of educational management coupled with institutionally based research will provide us with a source of information rich enough to try to unravel the complexities of effective leadership. This survey must also be seen in that context.

The inability of some school principals to select appropriate leadership styles in managing a school, have led to strained principal - staff relations. For a leadership style to be appropriate, it needs to match the expectations of the staff. The main aim of this study was to help principals

to select appropriate leadership styles by providing information on teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles and also possible variables which might influence these perceptions.

The study was conducted within the framework of the situational theory of leadership. The research was done in primary schools in the Cape Peninsula and surrounding areas. Eight primary schools were selected, using a sampling method referred to as nonprobability sampling. Questionnaires were distributed amongst staff members at the various schools. These questionnaires were administered personally. The chi-square test was used to determine statistical significance and all calculations were done on SPSS/PC version 3.

The results of the survey suggested that there could be no one best leadership style applicable to all situations. The desire of teachers to participate in decisions varied according to the situation. The leadership style perceived by teachers as the most appropriate in the majority of cases was the participatory style where teachers and principal decided together. There were also some cases where the majority of teachers perceived the leadership style which allowed for the total decentralization of decision-making to the level of the teachers alone as the most appropriate leadership style. In some cases a large percentage of teachers also felt that they would follow the directive given by the principle without themselves having participated in the decisions. Identifying variables influencing teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership

styles was not easy. The results however suggested that an important variable might be the area of decision-making.

Based on the results, the implications for policy are:

- 1) aspirant principals should undergo formal training courses in educational management to help improve their diagnostic ability of situations at school and so be able to select appropriate leadership styles;
- 2) policy-making at schools should be as inclusive as possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

### **CHAPTER ONE**

INTRODUCTION	1
1. Background to problem	6
2. Theoretical framework of study	8
3. Aims of research	10
4. Guiding statements	10
5. Area of study	11
6. Methodology	12

### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

1. The school as a social system	14
2. Defining leadership	16
3. Theories of leadership	23
(a) Trait approach	
(b) Behavioral approach	
(c) Situational approach	
4. Determining situational appropriateness	33

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

1. Instrument	36
---------------	----

2. Sample	38
3. Analysis of data	39
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH DATA</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>56</b>
Implications for policy	63
Recommendations	66

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of leadership and attempts to find out what constitutes an effective leader, can be seen in the volumes that have been written on the subject. Despite all that has been written on effective leadership, it still remains an elusive concept.

Leadership has probably been written about, formally researched, and informally discussed more than any other single topic. Throughout history, it has been recognised that the difference between success and failure ..... can be largely attributed to leadership. Yet despite all the attention given to it and its recognised importance, leadership still remains pretty much of a 'black box' or unexplainable concept (Luthans, 1981: 412).

Given the different theories of leadership which exist, the notion of the elusiveness of effective leadership is probably still true today. Despite this fact, the abundance of literature which exists has helped understand the many complexities associated with leadership.

Despite the elusiveness of what constitutes an effective leader, the importance of effective leadership can however never be

overemphasised. "The successful organization has one major attribute that sets it apart from unsuccessful organizations: dynamic and effective leadership" (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982: 82). This also holds true for the school as an organization. Nwanko (1982) stated: " ..... a bad administrative leader may render ineffective even the best school program, the most adequate resources and the most motivated staff and students" (Uwazurike, 1991: 259).

Experience in the field of education has shown that the climate conducive to successfully pursuing the goals of an educational institution is one in which there is an acceptance by the staff of the extent to which the principal involves them in the process of managing the school. The extent of involvement will depend largely on the leadership style of the principal. In emphasizing the importance of a leadership style that is acceptable to all members of an institution, Denys (1983 : 8) wrote that:

The effectiveness of the organization and of all its members is likely to be enhanced when there is a clear understanding and agreement about the purpose of the organization and about the mode and style of leadership in the different parts of the organization. It is this mode or style that constitutes the 'climate' of an institution.

It is against this background of the importance of effective leadership in general and the desire to contribute to the understanding of how to select an appropriate leadership style that this research is conducted.

Due to the many perspectives of leadership and thus the lack of an all inclusive definition thereof, an appropriate definition of leadership which will encompass the whole spectrum of perspectives will not be developed. The following definition of leadership will however be used as a working definition in this research:

Leadership is a process in which an individual takes initiative to assist a group to move towards production goals that are acceptable, to maintain the group, and to dispose of those needs of individuals within the group that impelled them to join it (Boles and Davenport, 1975: 117).

The leadership process will thus be viewed in a group sense with constant interaction between leader and followers taking place. Leadership style can be viewed as the "behaviour a leader exhibits while guiding organization members in appropriate directions" (Certo, 1980 : 325). Where the central theme of leadership is to get things accomplished (Certo, 1980), leadership style refers to how these things are accomplished. Will it be accomplished by the principal alone, by

the principal and staff or by the staff alone? Leadership style can thus be interpreted as the behaviour of the principal which reflects the extent to which the staff will be involved in pursuing the goals of the institution.

The role of the staff in the effectiveness of the leadership process can never be overemphasised. Bartol and Martin (1991: 482) wrote that :

Subordinates can react to a leader's direction with commitment, compliance or resistance..... With resistance employees may appear to comply but actually do the absolute minimum, possibly even attempting to sabotage the attainment of organizational goals.

If the leadership style of the principal is not acceptable to the staff, the whole school program may be rendered ineffective. Webber (1979) also stressed the importance of the acceptance of a leadership style by the subordinates. It thus becomes of the utmost importance that the principal should be aware of what the expectations are that the staff has of his/her leadership style.

Subordinates' expectations are the expectations a managers subordinates have about the way the manager should behave. Although not always recognized , this alone has a tremendous influence on a

managers effectiveness and can be a major restraining force in change (Reddin, 1970: 90).

Research by Foa (Reddin, 1970: 90) has shown that where there was a conformity between leadership style and subordinate expectations, the more likely result would be to have satisfied workers. Referring specifically to schools, Denys (1983: 106) also stressed the importance of subordinates' expectations. Though a head may adopt more than one style, his choice should be predictable. When the members of a group cannot foretell how a problem is likely to be approached, the expectations of at least some will be frustrated and the result will be dissatisfaction and frustration.

As it is thus important that there should be conformity between subordinate expectations and principal leadership style, the appropriateness of a leadership style will refer to its acceptability by the majority of the staff. It is therefore also important that a principal should always be aware of what teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles are.

## **1. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM**

Some schools in the Cape Peninsula have been marked by strained principal-staff relations. In many cases these strained relations have led to an organizational climate at schools which has not been conducive to the creation of an atmosphere which facilitates effective education. Principals' authority has been undermined: in some cases they have been locked out of school premises by teachers, they have been asked to go on enforced leave of absence by employers and staff has become divided on the issue of supporting their principal. In many of these cases it was reported that a major contributing factor was the principal's inability to select appropriate leadership styles when managing the school.

In assessing these cases as they appeared in newspaper reports and through discussions with teachers, it became clear that a great measure of control was exercised by the principal in pursuing the school's goals. The result was that the principal was labelled too authoritarian. It was this perceived authoritarian leadership style of the principal which was a major contributing factor to the conflict at schools. The exercise of control over staff as a source of conflict in schools was commented on by Sergiovanni and Carver (1980: 33) when they wrote:

If school executives view control over people and their activities as necessary in order to regulate and obtain conformity to schools' goals, ..... the future holds promise of continued and accelerated conflict and unrest for school administration.

Over the years changes have taken place in the South African society which have had a direct bearing on schools. An important change on the political front was a move towards greater democratization in different spheres of society. As teachers became unionised, the move towards the democratization of educational institutions became more apparent. Teachers became aware of their "duty" to participate in determining and pursuing the goals of their respective schools. Although this move towards the democratization of educational institutions really gained impetus only after 1976, its importance was already commented on much earlier. "It is incumbent upon the principal always to recognise that teachers have an ethical right to discuss matters pertaining to their own affairs" (Baughman and Anderson, 1969: 4). Given the importance of the subordinates in assuring effective leadership (Webber 1979, 180 ; Bartol and Martin, 1991: 482), a more participatory leadership style in schools became apparent.

Given the drive towards the democratization of educational institutions, shared decision making and thus of a more participatory style of leadership cannot be denied. Kessler (1992: 36) in commenting on the success of shared decision making wrote: "Making the move to collegial decision making hasn't always been a smooth process....., but the positive results have reinforced the commitment of his staff'.

If the demand for a participatory leadership style is taken into account, the question arises: Is there an ideal style of leadership? If not, does a principal know how to select an appropriate leadership style?

As discussed earlier, the appropriateness of a principal's leadership style partly depends on its acceptance by the staff. It is thus important that a principal should be aware of his or her staff's perceptions of which leadership styles they perceive as appropriate under which conditions. It is against this background that the research question has been formulated: What are the perceptions of primary school teachers of the appropriate leadership styles that principals should follow when managing a school?

## **2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

The theoretical framework within which this study will be conducted, is referred to as the situational (contingency) theory of leadership.

According to Chung (1977), the main thrust of this approach is that instead of suggesting a particular leadership style for all situations, it forces the supervisor or leader to search for a proper leadership style best suited for a given situation. Much research outside the field of education has been done to help leaders match leadership styles to situational demands. Commenting on the absence of research in educational management, Nias (1986 : 255) suggested that " there may be a closer fit between the views of those who work in schools, hospitals, offices, and factories than sceptics have sometimes suggested".

Since there are many situational factors which may influence the leadership style of the leader, several contributions were made to the situational approach to leadership. "The propelling force in the transition to contingency theory has been Fred Fiedler" (Hanson, 1985: 193). Other contributions include Hersey and Blanchard (1977) and Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) and Vroom (1973).

Applying the situational approach to the school setting was not easy. Hanson argued that "developing a contingency theory of leadership that applies specifically to the educational organization is an important step yet to be taken" (Hanson, 1985: 206). Research conducted by Price and Reid (1988) on aspects of decision-making in primary

schools in one country area of South Wales, was however adapted and used as a basis for this study.

### **3. THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of the research is threefold:

1. To apply the situational theory of leadership to primary schools.
2. To investigate and analyse primary school teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles for principals.
3. To determine situational variables which may influence the selection of an appropriate leadership style.

### **4. GUIDING STATEMENTS**

The guiding statements for the research will be the following:

1. There is no one leadership style that is adequate to handle a variety of situations at school.
2. The appropriateness of a leadership style is dependent on its congruence with staff expectations.
3. There are situational variables which may influence the selection of an appropriate leadership style.

The guiding statements are founded upon both the theoretical framework within which the study was conducted as well as the way in which the research problem manifested itself in schools. The

contingency theory of leadership which forms the theoretical basis of this study acknowledges that there is no one leadership style appropriate to all situations. The effectiveness of a chosen leadership style is dependent upon the situation. It is therefore important for the leader to be able to identify the situational variables which may influence the selection of an appropriate leadership style.

The breakdown in credibility of principals at some schools could in many instances be traced back to their inability to select a leadership style consonant with staff expectations. The importance of "followers" as an important situational variable is also stressed in the literature.

## **5. AREA OF THE STUDY**

The unit of research was primary schools in the Cape Peninsula and surrounding areas. Primary schools were specifically selected for the following reasons:

1. The problem as set out in the background section had manifested itself in primary schools.
2. Accessibility - the author's occupation allowed for easier access to primary school teachers.
3. The author's occupation also involved the preparation of students mainly for the primary school sector. Included amongst these students

were principals upgrading qualifications as well as prospective principals. This research could be useful to them.

4. The instrument that was used in the research was used in primary schools, which allowed for comparing results. ?

## **6. METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires. The primary instrument used was an adaptation by Price and Reid (1988) of a questionnaire used by Grover (1977). The purpose of the study by Price and Reid was to consider the views of both headteachers and teachers on aspects of decision-making in primary schools in one country area of South Wales. (Price and Reid, 1988). The decision to use this particular instrument was based on the fact that different leadership styles were very often defined in terms of subordinates participation in decision-making. (Hodge and Johnson, 1970 ; Clifton Williams, 1978). The aspect of decision-making as an important part of analysing leadership style today could also be seen when Nias (1986: 258) wrote:

Early classification of leaders tended to follow Lewin's (1944) theoretical typology (democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire) and to focus upon the relative degree of influence each type exerts upon its group's decisions. Subsequent work by management theorist has

perpetuated this typology and advanced autocratic or participative decision-making as alternative institutional panaceas (Hicks and Gullet, 1976). Classical studies with children along these lines by Lippit and White (1943) and Anderson are still widely used in initial teacher education in Britain.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

**1. THE SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM**

Hoy and Miskel (1991: 17) defined a system "as a set of interdependent elements forming an organized whole". In organisations such as schools these interdependent elements comprise of people who are constantly in interaction striving to achieve the goals of the organization. Due to the social interaction taking place within schools they can be viewed as social systems "comprised of interacting personalities bound together in mutually interdependent relationships" (Hoy and Miskel ,1991 : 17).

Viewing the school from the perspective of the social system theorists will have important implications for supervision and leadership.

✓ According to Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983 : 48) "the social system theorists view administration and supervision as a social process that occurs within a social system". The act of leadership within the school can thus be viewed as a relationship or interaction between the principal and staff within the context of the school as a social system.

According to Hoy and Miskell (1991), the earliest attempts to explain behaviour within formal organizations were based only on forces inside the organization. Organizations were viewed as closed - systems. If one applies this view to schools as social systems, it will imply that schools function in isolation from<sup>that</sup> of their environment.

This view of schools as closed systems will also have implications for leadership in schools. It implies that changes that might happen in society will not impact on the school system. It must however be remembered that the interacting personalities which constitute the school as a social system also form part of the community which the school serves. They will inevitably bring into the system values and beliefs which may have an influence on the internal environment. It is therefore to be expected that the drive towards democracy in South African society will also manifest itself in the school as an organization. In terms of leadership in schools one expects teachers to drive towards a more participatory style of leadership in schools. This will be a reflection of what is already beginning to happen in the broader South African community.

A change from a close-system to an open-system perspective thus recognizing the influence of external factors on the school as a social system, began to take place in the early sixties. This shift led Hoy and

Miskel (1991 : 17) to conclude that "today, few contemporary organizational theorists and researchers accept the premise that organizations can be completely understood in isolation from events occurring externally". It is therefore important for principals to be aware of not only internal but also external factors which may influence their choice of leadership style.

The external factors which may impact on the school as a social system are situated in the environment. Hoy and Miskel (1991 : 29) defined environment "as anything outside the boundaries of the unit of analysis ....". Teacher organizations, parent bodies, political organizations, provincial and national education policies and representatives are some of the objects which form part of the environment. The importance of the environment can however not be denied. "The interdependence of the organization and its environment is critical" (Hoy and Miskel ,1991 : 22). The impact that environmental factors can have on the school can be seen in the drive towards the democratization of educational institutions especially after teachers became unionized.

## **2. DEFINING LEADERSHIP**

The complexity of defining the term leadership is reflected by

the numerous definitions in textbooks. These definitions are the result of the fact that " researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspective and the aspect of the phenomenon of most interest to them" (Yukl, 1981 : 2). According to Spotts (1974), some perspectives interpreted leadership as a property of the individual while others saw it as a characteristic of the group. Some defined leadership as anyone who performed leadership acts ; others often defined it in terms of prestige, status, or ability to influence others (Lassey and Fernandez, 1976 : 45). These different definitions have led Stodgill (1974) to conclude that "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the the concept" (Yukl,1981:2). There are estimates that more than one hundred definitions of the term leadership have already been coined (Napier and Gershenfeld, 1989). Taylor (1962) attributed the elusiveness of leadership to the fact that it involves people and we don't know much about people (Boles and Davenport, 1975 : 117).

Although there are so many different definitions of leadership, it does not mean that common areas cannot be identified. Yukl (1981 : 2) gave the following examples of representative definitions of leadership:

1. Leadership is " the behaviour of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal" (Hemphill and Coons, 1957 : 7).

2. Leadership is "interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (Tannenbaum, Weshler & Massarik ,1961 : 24).

3. Leadership is " the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction" (Stodgill, 1974 : 411).

4. Leadership is " an interaction between persons in which one presents information of a sort and in such a manner that the other becomes convinced that his outcomes (benefits/costs ratio) will be improved if he behaves in the manner suggested or desired" (Jacobs, 1970 : 232).

5. Leadership is a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behaviour patterns for the former regarding his activity as a group member" (Janda ,1960 : 358).

6. Leadership is " an influence process whereby O's actions change P's behaviour and P views the influence attempt as being legitimate and the change as being consistent with P's goals"(Kochan, Schmidt & DeCotiis ,1975 : 285).

7. Leadership is "the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization" (Katz & Kahn, 1978 : 528).

✓ Although the definitions mentioned above may differ in many respects, common areas can be identified. A common denominator in the definitions of leadership identified by Janda (1960) is that it takes place within group context where interaction between two or more persons takes place (Yukl, 1981 : 3).

In categorizing the vast multitude of definitions of leadership, Stogdill (1974) also included the group phenomenon and interaction as two important headings but also included goal achievement as one of his ten headings (Hanson, 1985 : 180). These common areas are important because in the case of educational leadership the principal also acts within a group context. Although the principal may opt under certain conditions to act without involving the staff, the result of those actions may impact upon the staff. Leadership as a group phenomenon

also implies a process of interaction where the principal needs to relate to the staff in order to effectively pursue and achieve the goals of the institution. Boles and Davenport (1975) also stressed the importance of interaction within a group of persons (two or more) if the process of leadership was to occur.

The lack of an all-inclusive definition of leadership should not stop us from trying to understand what constitutes effective leadership and try to implement what we already know about the concept. Taylor (1962) wrote:

... it also becomes evident that just as we do not require a perfect definition of gravity to be able effectively to slide things down a chute - or of love to be concerned for our children; or of magnetism to build a compass that works; or of memory to recollect - we need not wait for The Compleat Explanation of Leadership to put to practical use that which we do know that is useful (Boles and Davenport, 1975 : 117).

Due to the many perspectives on leadership, the writer feels that for the purpose of the study, it will not be feasible to develop an appropriate definition of leadership which will encompass the whole spectrum of

perspectives. Boles and Davenport (1975) however suggest a definition which will be used as a working definition for the research.

Leadership is a process in which an individual takes initiative to assist a group to move toward production goals that are acceptable, to maintain the group, and to dispose of those needs of individuals within the group that impelled them to join it (Boles and Davenport, 1975 : 117).

The principal who will have formal authority by virtue of his/her appointment is expected to take initiative in pursuing the educational goals and maintaining the group. Through effective leadership the principal must ensure that his /her authority is accepted by the followers.

✓ According to Yukl (1981), a controversy exists over the issue of leadership as a distinct phenomenon. Some theorists viewed leadership as a "collective process shared among members ", while the opposing view saw "role specialization" with regard to leadership as important (Yukl, 1981 : 4). In the case of the latter a distinction was drawn between "leadership" and "followership". In using the above-mentioned definition, leadership will not be viewed as a collective process shared among the members. In the case of educational

leadership, the principal will assume leadership because of the formal authority vested in him/her through appointment. Responsibility for any leadership act lies with the principal of the institution. Although the staff will assume the role of "followers", the leadership process must be interpreted in a group sense where constant interaction takes place. Leadership cannot be seen in isolation. "If you want to know whether you are a leader, see if there is someone following you" (Fiedler and Chemers, 1974 : 4). Decisions taken by the principal, with or without consulting the staff, will have an impact on the staff. It is important that the leader-follower relationship be established and that the authority vested in the principal is legitimized by the followers. "A leader who does not recognize that his authority flows from the consent of subordinates is doomed to an unhappy if not short-lived leadership experience" (Fiedler and Chemers, 1974 : 10). The establishment of the leader-follower relationship and the acceptance of the authority of the principal will largely depend on effective leadership by the principal. "Leadership is not domination or coercion but the promotion of followership" (Morphet, et al., 1982 : 99).

A leader can neither function in isolation nor in a vacuum. According to Boles and Davenport (1975) leaders would always function in situations. The leadership process can thus be interpreted as an function of leader, follower and the situation :  $L = f(l, f, s)$  where  $L =$

leadership, f = function, l = leader, f<sub>i</sub> = follower and s = situation (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982 : 83).

### **3. THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP**

Many studies have been done to determine what constitutes effective leadership. The result was that different leadership theories were postulated. According to Yukl (1981), these theories usually reflected the researcher's conception of leadership and methodological preferences. Three main approaches to the the study of leadership are:

- a) trait approach
- b) behavior approach
- c) situational approach.

#### **a) Trait approach**

According to Luthans (1981), the earliest trait theories could be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Spotts (1974) argued that parallels could be drawn between the philosophical arguments during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the great man theme and the leadership research that has been done on the trait theory in recent years.

The trait approach to leadership concentrated on leaders themselves and the main thrust was that leaders were genetically determined. This theory became generally known as the "great man" theory. The result was that researchers tried to identify personal traits which would distinguish successful from unsuccessful leaders. According to Landers and Myers (1980), these studies were based on two assumptions : a) all human beings could be divided into two groups: leaders and followers ; b) leaders possessed certain qualities and traits that followers did not. (Bush et al., 1980 : 146).

According to Luthans (1981), the "great man" theory was later replaced by a more realistic trait approach to leadership. Leadership traits were no longer seen as completely inborn but learning and experience could also play a role. The focus of research shifted from the search for inborn characteristics to universal traits possessed by leaders. Certo (1980) however concluded that the findings of these trait studies generally tended to be inconsistent. Napier and Gershenfeld (1989), also came to the conclusion that results of the trait approach were disappointing and they cited numerous studies (Bird, 1940; Mann, 1959 and Stogdill, 1948; 1974) to substantiate their conclusion. This inconsistency regarding the results of the trait theory has led Luthans (1981) to conclude that the trait approach to leadership has little analytic or predictive value. Analyses done by Stogdill (1981) revealed

a number of characteristics which were consistently found with effective leaders but they were not helpful to leaders in the school setting. (Beare et al., 1989: 103). There had in any case been little research done applying the great man approach to educational settings. (Lipham and Hoeh, 1974 :177).

Hall and Williams (1971) suggested that research is still being done " to somehow find the magical attributes that will transform us to ✓esteemed positions as leaders" (Napier and Gershenfeld, 1989: 236).

According to Napier and Gershenfeld (1989), an important reason why ✓research continued on the trait approach to leadership was that the idea provided security to many.

#### **b) Behavioral approach**

The inability of the trait approach to provide consistent characteristics which could be used to generalize about effective leaders, has resulted in a new approach to understanding leadership. According to Bartol and Martin (1991), there was a shift from the traits leaders possess to the things leaders do. Mitchell (1983) also suggested that the behavioural approach resulted from dissatisfaction with the trait approach.

Different studies have been done to identify important behavior that will make some leaders more effective than others. According to Luthans (1981), one such study which had a major impact, was conducted at the University of Iowa in the late 1930's under the general direction of Kurt Lewin. Three basic leadership styles - autocratic, laissez-faire and democratic - were identified (Rue and Lloyd, 1980) and their effect on social climates in a group was determined. The basic difference among these styles is the amount of involvement of the subordinates in the decision-making process. Although some of the results were not clear-cut (Luthans, 1981) and subsequent work by other researchers produced more mixed results (Bartol and Martin, 1991), the historical importance of these studies cannot be overestimated.

The values of the studies were that they were the first to analyse leadership from the standpoint of scientific methodology and more important, they showed that different styles of leadership can produce different, complex reactions from the same or similar groups (Luthans, 1981 : 415).

Another important study was conducted in the late 1940's at the Ohio State University trying to identify leadership behaviour which is important for the attainment of group and organizational goals (Yukl, 1981). Two important leader behaviour which stood out were initiating

structure and consideration. According to Jackson and Keaveny (1980 : 72), initiating structure "refers to the extent to which a leader organizes and defines activities for subordinates" and consideration "includes behaviour indicating a mutual trust, respect and rapport between a superior and his or her work group". In summarizing the results of the Ohio State University, (Chung, 1977) stated that consideration highly correlated with lower grievance rate whereas a high degree of initiating was associated with a high grievance rate.

At more or less the same time as the Ohio State Leadership Studies, reasearch was conducted at the University of Michigan which focused on the relationships among leader behaviour, group processes and measures of group performances (Yukl, 1981). Two types of leader behaviour, namely employee-centered and job-centered, were identified and according to Chung (1977) these studies have shown that employee-centered leadership style related well to good production records whereas the job-centered approach related to the low-producing records. An important difference between the Ohio and Michigan studies was the way they viewed the leadership behaviour. The Michigan studies had a unidimensional view of leadership behaviour with employee-centered and job-centered as the two extreme ends on a single continuum. The Ohio studies had a two-

dimensional view of leadership behaviour implying that initiating structure and consideration operated on two separate continuums.

The value of the Ohio studies lies in its recognition of the two-dimensional view of leadership behaviour (Luthans, 1981) but according to Chung (1977) the behavioral theorists have failed to come up with leader behaviour that consistently worked well in every situation.

### **c) Situational approach**

The situational approach to leadership was a reaction against the inability of the behavioral approach to predict leader effectiveness applicable to different situations. The result was that attention began to shift to the development of theories of leadership that took into account important situational factors (Bartol and Martin, 1991). Although the behavioral approaches were very impressive, they lacked strong theoretical foundations (Hoy and Miskel, 1991).

Contemporary theories of leadership are called situational theories because of the importance placed on the situation in which leaders may find themselves. Some writers also refer to these theories as Contingency theories "because they hold that appropriate leader traits

or behaviours are contingent, or dependent, on relevant situational characteristics" (Bartol and Martin, 1991 : 490). According to Chung (1977), the main thrust of the contingency or situational approach to leadership is that, there is no one best leadership style for all situations, but the supervisor is forced to search for a proper leadership style best suited to a given situation.

Due to the fact that there are different situational demands that can be made upon a leader, different situational approaches to leadership were developed. According to Schein (1980) one of the oldest and most controversial situational theories was Fiedler's (1967, 1971) leader-match theory. The importance of this theory can be seen in the fact that it helped destroy the old myths that one best leadership style exist and that leaders are born, not made (Certo, 1980).

In explaining his theory, Fiedler (1967) started off by carefully distinguishing between "leadership behaviour" and "leadership style". He defined leadership behaviour as "the particular acts in which a leader engages in the course of directing and coordinating the work of his group members" and leadership style "as the underlying need-structure of the individual which motivates his behavior in various leadership situations" (Fiedler, 1967 : 36). According to Hoy and Miskel (1991), leadership style as defined by Fiedler is a personality

characteristic which does not describe a consistent type of leader behaviour. This distinction between leadership behaviour and leadership style is important as "important leadership behaviors of the same individual differ from situation to situation, while the need structure which motivates these behaviors may be seen as constant" (Fiedler, 1967 : 36).

There are three factors within Fiedler's model which determine situational favorableness : position power of the leader, task structure and leader-member relations (Hoy and Miskel, 1991). Position power is "the degree to which the position itself enables the leader to get his group members to comply with and accept his direction and leadership" (Fiedler, 1967 : 22). Task structure "is the extent to which the task has clearly specified goals, methods and standards of performance" (Hoy and Miskel, 1991: 277). The nature of the task is thus also important. Leader-member relations refer to "his affective relations with group members, the acceptance which he can obtain, and the loyalty which he can engender ....." (Fiedler, 1967 : 29). Acceptance and trust by group members are also very important.

According to Fiedler and Garcia (1987) the relative importance of the three factors has been shown to be a 4:2:1 ratio with leader-member-relations as the most important followed by task structure and position

power (Hoy and Miskel, 1991 : 277). Depending on the favorableness of the situation, determined by the three situational variables, the leader will then either have a relations or a task-oriented leadership style.

Another important situational approach to leadership is the theory developed by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard (1977). Although they do not underestimate the importance of all situational variables (job demands, time etc.), they put the emphasis on the behaviour of a leader in relation to followers. "Followers in any situation are vital , not only because individually they accept or reject the leader, but because as a group they actually determine whatever personal power the leader may have" (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982 : 150). According to Hersey and Blanchard (1982), the basic concept of their theory is that the best leadership style is the one that matches the maturity level of followers. Maturity is thus the only situational variable analysed by this approach. Maturity is defined "as the ability and willingness of people to take responsibility for directing their own behaviour" (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982 : 151). According to Hersey and Blanchard (1977) the guiding principle of matching is the following:

As the level of maturity of their followers continues to increase in terms of accomplishing a specific task, leaders should begin to reduce their task behaviour and

increase relationship behaviour until the individual or group reaches a moderate level of maturity. As the individual or group begins to move into an above average level of maturity, it becomes appropriate for leaders to decrease not only task behavior but also relationship behaviour (Hoy and Miskel, 1991 : 294).

In illustrating the situational nature of leadership, Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) proposed a continuum of leadership varying from boss-centered leadership to subordinate - centered leadership with different variations in between. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1981: 105 -107) identified forces within the leader, the subordinates and the situation itself which might effect the leadership style chosen. Forces in the leader include: his value system, confidence in his subordinates, his own leadership inclinations and his feelings of insecurity in an uncertain situation. Forces in the subordinates include their needs for independence, their readiness to assume responsibility, their tolerance for ambiguity, their interest in the problem, do they identify with the goals of the organization, their knowledge and experience to deal with problems and their expectations regarding to decision making. Forces in the situation include the traditional approach to leadership in the organization, the nature of the problem and the time available to solve the problem.

Another important contingency leadership theory is Victor's Vroom theory of leadership. According to Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983: 94), the emphasis in this theory is the degree of participation of subordinates in decision-making.

This is a contingency approach in the sense that no one decision-making process is best under all circumstances and the effectiveness of one's choice is dependent upon properties of the situation at hand (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1983 : 94).

In examining the different contingency theories of leadership, it is thus clear that the main thrust is that there can be no one best style of leadership for all situations. The effectiveness of leadership style will be determined by its appropriateness to the situation.

#### **4. DETERMINING SITUATIONAL APPROPRIATENESS**

A leadership style will be viewed as appropriate to a certain situation if it is accepted by the majority of the staff. An important concept to determine the appropriateness of a leadership style is what Simon (1957) in (Hoy and Miskel, 1991 : 265) referred to as the zone of

**acceptance** of teachers. Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983 : 93) referred to a similar concept as the **zone of indifference** of teachers.

Hoy and Miskel (1991 : 265) defined zone of acceptance as " the range of behaviour within which subordinates are ready to accept the decisions made by their superiors". If decisions fall within the zone of acceptance of teachers, they will perceive a more authoritarian leadership style as the more appropriate leadership style. If decisions fall outside the zone of acceptance of teachers, they will perceive a participatory leadership style as the more appropriate leadership style. For the principal to match his/her leadership style with staff expectations, it is important to be able to identify characteristics of decisions which will either place them within or outside the zone of acceptance of teachers. Bridges (1967) in (Hoy and Miskel, 1991 : 328) proposed two such characteristics : i) the test of relevance and ii) the test of expertise.

Sergiovanni and Elliot (1975) in (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1983 : 93) saw decisions that fell within the zone of indifference of teachers as those decisions teachers were not likely to be interested in. They would expect the principal to follow a more authoritarian rather than a participatory leadership style. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1983 : 93 - 94) named importance of decisions to teachers and competence of

teachers as important factors determining the place of decisions inside or outside the zone of indifference of teachers. They concluded that teachers will want to be involved "as the substance of decision making moves closer to the classroom activities....." (Sergiovanni and Starrat, 1983 : 94). The act of teaching and what goes on inside the classroom can thus be seen as falling outside the zone of indifference of teachers.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 1. INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire used in the research was an adaptation by Price and Reid (1988) of an questionnaire used by Grover (1972). Grover asked respondents to indicate the following with regard to a range of curriculum decisions: (i) the **real** situation i.e. who the real decision-maker in the school was; (ii) the **ideal** situation i.e who they thought should be the main decision-maker. (Price and Reid, 1988: 84). Of the eleven choices of decision-maker offered by Grover (1972), Price and Reid (1988), selected the following three options :

1. Teachers acting alone
2. Headteachers and Teachers acting together
3. Headteacher acting alone.

For this research, it was decided not to adopt the real/ideal concept used by Price and Reid (1988), but rather to concentrate just on the ideal situation. The main reason for this decision was the difficulty in finding easy accessible primary schools with principals with long experience at that specific schools. The reason for this was that a large majority of principals have opted for retirement through the financial package which became available. Having opted for the ideal concept

as the form of the questionnaire, it was then necessary to decide on the range of decisions areas and decisions to which teachers had to respond to. The following list of decision areas, not in any order of importance, were offered by Price and Reid:

1. Finance
2. Curriculum content
3. Teaching method
4. Parents
5. Teachers
6. Discipline
7. Communication
8. Evaluation
9. Resources.

Due to the centralized nature of the South African educational system and thus the lack of choice with regard to curriculum content, it was decided to replace the decision area "Curriculum content" with "Adult problems". The decision area "Adult problems" was used as a replacement because of the inclusion of staff grievances and problems with administrative services in the questionnaire used by Conway (1978) when researching power and participatory decision-making in selected English schools. (Conway, 1986: 215-216).

Due to the fact that decision-making areas could be interpreted in different ways by different respondents, three particular examples of the kinds of decisions that commonly arise in each of the main areas would be offered to respondents. (Price and Reid, 1988). Although the majority of decisions used by Price and Reid were retained for this research, some minor changes were made to suit local conditions. It was decided to keep any changes to a minimum to make comparison with previous research possible.

## **2. SAMPLE**

The sample of primary schools used was "deliberate rather than random". These were terms used by Conway (1986 : 225) in selecting his sample in his research on power and participatory decision-making in selected English schools. Downie and Heath (1974 : 153) referred to this type of sampling as nonprobability sampling. Of this kind of sampling Rose and Sullivan (1993 : 165) wrote that this type of sampling "include those in which cases are selected for their 'typicalness' or availability, and is not clear how results can be generalized to a wider population".

Due to the relatively low rate of return of questionnaires, the main criterion used to select the schools was accessibility. The main reason for this was so that questionnaires could be administered personally.

Another important consideration was that the respondents should at least reflect the biographical and personal information needed on the questionnaire.

Eight schools were approached of which seven granted permission for the questionnaire to be administered. As the purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles, all teachers up to departmental post level were included in the survey. Teachers in higher post levels (deputy principal and principal) were not included because i) the purpose of the survey was not to compare the perceptions of teachers with that of principals; ii) the number of teachers would far outweigh the number of deputy principals and principals.

One hundred and ninety eight questionnaires were handed out of which eleven were either spoilt or not returned. It was arranged with the principals of the different schools to allow time for the teachers to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered personally.

### **3. ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Based on previous research, it seemed reasonable to assume that there would be significant differences in the responses. These

differences would most probably be attributable to identifiable biographical and personal factors in the respondents. Analysis of the data was undertaken to determine whether statistical significance could be found which was due to the following variables:

1. Gender
2. Marital status
3. Professional title. The categories used were assistant teacher and departmental head.
4. Length of time of holding professional title
5. Difference in the respondents length of teaching experience. Differentiation was made between total number of years experience in teaching and number of years experience at that specific school.
6. Affiliation to a teacher organization.

The technique used to determine statistical significance between the different variables was the chi- square test. To make comparison with previous research possible, any level of significance between the variables greater than 0,05 was interpreted as not significant. This specific test was used because the "responses were categorised". (Price and Reid, 1988 : 39). All calculations were done on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS/PC) version 3.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH DATA

The research was undertaken to obtain information regarding -

- (i) primary school teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles for principals
- (ii) situational variables which may influence primary school teachers in the selection of an appropriate leadership style.

Appendix 1 shows the distribution (in percentages) of the leadership styles chosen by teachers in areas of leadership in the primary school.

Numbers 1 to 27 represent the questions relating to the different areas of leadership. Numbers 1 to 4 represent the leadership styles:

- 1 = Teachers alone;
- 2 = Principal and teachers together;
- 3 = Principal alone
- 4 = Not applicable or Not known.

From the data it is apparent that the leadership style perceived by the teachers as the one which is the most appropriate under most of the different areas of leadership, is leadership style 2 (principal and teachers together). There were twenty two cases where teachers perceived leadership style 2 as the most appropriate leadership style.

(Appendix 1). In six of the twenty two cases where teachers perceived leadership style 2 as the most appropriate style, the percentage was more than 80%. In three of the twenty two cases the percentage was lower than 50%. In only five of the twenty seven cases the percentages for leadership style 2 were less than the other leadership styles.

The data indicate that there were five cases where teachers perceived leadership style 1 (teachers alone) as the most appropriate leadership style.(See Appendix 1). On three occasions the percentage was higher than 50%.

There were no cases where teachers perceived leadership style 3 (principal alone) as the most appropriate leadership style. There were however two cases where there were a small difference in percentage (less than 10%) between leadership style 2 and leadership style 3. These two cases were decision numbers 23 and 24.

The responses to leadership style 4 (not applicable or not Known) were generally very low with only three occasions where the percentage exceeded 10%

Statistical significance with regard to the biographical and professional details of the respondents.

The distribution of teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles in primary schools by gender (SEX), marital status (MAR), professional title (TITLE), how long professional title was held (TIME), teaching experience (EXP), teaching experience at that specific school (DIFEX), affiliation to a teacher's organization (TEACOR) and name of teacher's organization (ORGAN) is shown by Appendix 2.

## **GENDER**

Analysis of the data by gender (SEX) was done by categorising the respondents into male and female teachers.

Appendix 2 shows that there were only three cases where a statistical significance was found between male and female respondents. These were questions 16, 20 and 26. If the data were further broken down into 2 x 2 chi-square tables differences, the following were revealed. There were four occasions when a statistical significance were found when

those male and female teachers who responded T or P/T, or T or P were analysed according to gender. (See table below).

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
5	Who should decide the criteria for allocating children to classes?	teaching method	0,05
16	Who should decide how often childrens' work is to be marked in the classroom?	evaluation	0,01
20	Who should decide what information should pass between schools when a pupil moves from one school to another?	communication	0,05
26	Who should decide how resources are allocated to classes?	resources	0.05

On all four occasions a statistical significance were found when the responses of male and female teachers were analysed according to leadership styles T or P/T. On one of the four occasions (number 20) was a statistical significance found when the responses were analysed according to leadership styles T or P.

### **MARITAL STATUS**

Analysis of the data by marital status (MAR) was done by categorising the respondents into single and married teachers.

Appendix 2 shows that there were only two occasions where a statistical significance was found between single and married teachers.

These were questions 10 and 11. The 2 x 2 chi- square tables revealed the following. There were two occasions when a statistical significance were found when single and married teachers who responded T or P/T, T or P or P/T or P were analysed according to marital status. (See table below)

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
11	Who should decide which in-service education courses teachers should attend during school	teachers	0,05/0.01

	time?		
26	Who should decide how resources are allocated to classes?	resources	0.05

On one occasion (number 26) a statistical significance was found when the responses of single and married teachers were analysed according to leadership styles T or P/T. On the other occasion (number 11) a statistical significance (0,05) was found when the responses were analysed according to leadership styles T or P and a statistical significance (0.01) when the responses were analysed according to leadership styles P/T or P.

#### **PROFESSIONAL TITLE**

No cases of statistical significance were found when the data were analysed according to professional title (Title). Analysis of the data by professional title was done by categorizing respondents into assistant teachers and departemental heads.

#### **HOW LONG PROFESSIONAL TITLE WAS HELD.**

Although no statistical significance was found when the data were analysed according to professional title(TITLE), it is interesting to note that there were occasions when statistical significance was found

when the data were analysed according to the number of years that respondents had held their professional title (TIME). Analysing the data according to TIME was done by categorizing respondents into those who held their professional title for less than eleven years and those more than eleven years.

Appendix 2 shows that there were four cases where statistical significance was found when the data was analysed according to TIME. These were questions 13, 15, 20 and 26. The 2 x 2 chi-square tables revealed the following. There were five occasions when a statistical significance was found when teachers holding their professional title for less than eleven years and those more than eleven years who responded T or P/T, P/T or P or T or P were analysed according to TIME. (See table below).

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
13	Who should decide what action should be taken with regard to pupils who misbehave in a minor way in class?	discipline	0.05
15	Who should decide what	discipline	0.01

- action should be taken  
with regard to pupils  
who misbehave at a  
athletic meeting?
- 20 Who should decide what communication 0.05  
information should pass  
between schools when a  
pupil moves from one  
school to another?
- 24 Who should decide on the adult 0.05  
action that should be problems  
taken if a teacher at  
your school is not  
performing his or her  
duty as expected?
- 26 Who should decide how resources 0.05  
resources are allocated  
to classes?

On four of the five occasions (numbers 13, 15, 24 and 26) a statistical significance were found when TIME was analysed according to leadership styles P/T or P. On two occasions (numbers 13 and 20) were statistical significance found when TIME was analysed according

to leadership styles T or P/T. On one occasion (number 26) was statistical significance found when TIME was analysed according to leadership styles T or P.

#### **NUMBER OF YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE.**

Analysis of the data by number of years teaching experience (EXP) was done by categorising the respondents into those with less and those with more than 11 years teaching experience.

Appendix 2 shows that there was only one occasion where statistical significance was found between respondents with more and respondents with less than 11 years experience. This was question 7. The 2 x 2 chi-square tables revealed the following. There were four occasions when a statistical significance was found when teachers with less and teachers with more than eleven years experience who responded T or P/T, or P/T or P were analysed according to their length of teaching experience. (See table below).

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
1	Who should decide if the school is to run a tuck-shop for pupils?	finance	0,05
7	Who should decide if childrens' work should be available to parents for inspection?	parents	0,05
20	Who should decide what information should pass between schools when a pupil moves from one school to another.	communication	0,05
24	Who should decide on the action that should be taken if a teacher at your school is not performing his or her duty as expected?	adult problems	0.01

On three (numbers 1, 7 and 20) of the four occasions a statistical significance was found when the responses were analysed according

to leadership styles T or P/T. On one occasion (number 24) was a statistical significance found when the responses were analysed according to P/T or P.

**LENGTH OF TIME AT PRESENT SCHOOL.**

Analysis of the data by number of years at present school (DIFEX) was done by categorizing the respondents into less than and more than eleven years.

Appendix 2 shows that in none of the twenty seven questions was a statistical significance found when the data were analysed according to DIFEX. Analysis of the 2 x 2 chi-square tables revealed that there were two occasions when a statistical significance was found when teachers with less than eleven years and teachers with more than eleven years at their present school who responded P/T or P were analysed according to DIFEX. (See table below).

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
20	Who should decide what information should pass between schools when a pupil moves from one	communication	0,05

	school to another?		
24	Who should decide on the action that should be taken if a teacher at your school is not performing his or her duty as expected.	adult problems	0,01

On both occasions a statistical significance was found when the respondents were analysed according to leadership styles P/T or P.

#### **AFFILIATION TO A TEACHERS' ORGANIZATION**

Analysis of the data by teachers affiliation to a teachers' organization (TEACOR) was done by categorising the respondents into those teachers who belong to a teachers' organization and those who do not belong to one.

Appendix 2 shows that there was only one occasion (number 12) where statistical significance was found between those respondents who belong to a teachers organization and those who do not belong to one. Further analysis showed that there were two occasions when a statistical significance was found

when those teachers who belong to a teachers' organization and those who do not who responded P/T or P, or T or P/T were analysed according to TEACOR. (See table below).

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
12	Who should decide on staff appointments at your school?	teachers	0.05
21	Who should decide what information should be to parents about their children on their school reports?	communication	0.05

On one occasion (number 12) a statistical significance was found when the TEACOR variable was analysed according to leadership styles P/T or P. On the other occasion (number 21) a statistical significance was found when the TEACOR variable was analysed according to leadership styles T or T/P.

## NAME OF TEACHERS' ORGANIZATION

Analysis of the data by the name of the organization to which teachers belong (ORGAN) was undertaken according to whether they belong to Cape Teachers Professional Association (CTPA) or South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU).

Appendix 2 shows that there was not one occasion where statistical significance was found between respondents who belong to CTPA and those belonging to SADTU. The 2 x 2 chi-square tables however revealed the following. There were four occasions when a statistical significance was found when CTPA and SADTU members who responded P/T or P were analysed according to ORGAN. (See table below).

Decision number	Decision	Area	Level of significance
17	Who should decide the content of the principal's evaluation report of the teacher?	evaluation	0,05
19	Who should decide what should be on the agenda	communication	0,01

	of staff meetings?		
22	Who should decide on the action that should be taken if a colleague at your school acted unprofessionally at a school function?	adult problems	0.05
24	Who should decide on the action that should be taken if a teacher at your school is not performing his or duty?	adult problems	0.01

On all four occasions a statistical significance was found when the responses of CTPA and SADTU teachers who answered leadership styles P/T or T were analysed according to ORGAN.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained from the study support the theoretical framework within which the study was conducted. The perceptions of the teachers surveyed suggested that there could be no one best leadership style for all situations. On some occasions the teachers perceived themselves as the ideal decision-makers implying that there should be a total decentralization of decisionmaking to the level of the teacher. On other occasions the teachers perceived themselves acting with the principal as the ideal decision-makers. Although the percentages were not in the majority, there were two occasions where a large percentage of the teachers perceived the principal deciding alone as the most appropriate leadership style under those conditions. These results are in line with Belasco and Alutto (1975) in Nias (1986 : 267) who stated that " the desire to participate (in decision-making) is differentially distributed among various groups of teachers". The results also support Price and Reid (1988) who suggested that no one decision-maker is best for all decisions.

The leadership style perceived by the teachers as the most appropriate in the majority of the questions asked, was the participatory leadership style. The participatory leadership style could either be the

teachers acting alone or the teachers and principal acting together. In the majority of cases (twenty two out of twenty seven) the ideal leadership style was the principal and teachers acting together. This supports the view of Price and Reid (1988). As the school was seen as a social system open to influences from the external environment, this result was to be expected. It can be seen as a reflection of what is happening in the broader South African society. The drive towards democracy and joint decision-making are also reflected in the schools. In the other five cases, the teachers perceived the total decentralization of decision-making as the most appropriate style to follow. The relatively small number of occasions where teachers perceived a leadership style where the principal was excluded as the most appropriate style, seems to give weight to the research of Price and Reid (1988) who concluded that "where teachers wish to be involved in decision-making practices it would appear that, in general they desire joint processes rather than teacher independence" (Price and Reid, 1988: 98).

Although the percentages were not in the majority, there were two cases where a very small difference existed between the leadership styles where principals acted alone and teachers and principal acted together. Although the low number of cases did not necessarily give weight to the research by Price and Reid (1988) or allow for

generalizations, at least it showed that there were teachers who preferred an autocratic leadership style under certain conditions. This is an indication of the fact that not all issues affect teachers equally. In their summary of the research and theoretical literature on teacher participation in decision making, Hoy and Miskel (1991 : 327) wrote that "teachers neither expect nor want to be involved in every decision". This idea was also mentioned by Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983) who noted that the desire to participate in the decision-making at school was not the same amongst all teachers.

It is important for principals to be aware of the importance teachers attach to participatory leadership styles. By becoming too dictatorial or relying too heavily on an authoritarian leadership style, can have a negative influence on the organizational climate at the school. In summarizing the research and theoretical literature on teacher participation in decision making, Hoy and Miskel (1991: 327) stated "the opportunity to share in formulating policies is an important factor in the morale of teachers and in their enthusiasm for the school organization". Nias (1986: 255) also commented that teachers could be alienated by dictatorial leadership.

Given the fact that the desire of teachers regarding their degree of participation in decision-making differ and the importance of matching

teachers' expectations with a chosen leadership style, the identification of situational variables which may influence teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles, become important. From the results it is clear that to use the area of decision-making as a situational variable influencing teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles in joint decision-making, is going to be very difficult. The areas which teachers perceive as appropriate for a leadership style allowing them to share in the decision-making process, nearly include all the questions. This state of affairs led Price and Reid (1988: 97) to conclude that "perhaps the easiest approach is to state that any decision which does not meet the criteria for the teacher taking the decisions alone or the headteacher taking the decision alone should be taken by the headteacher and teachers acting together". This leaves us with the question if there are any such criteria which can be identified which will influence teachers' perceptions of leadership styles which will allow independent decision-making either by the teachers or principal. If these criteria can be identified, it will help the principal in matching his/her chosen leadership style with the expectations of his/her staff.

Looking at those questions (4, 13, 16, 21 and 25 in APPENDIX 1) which most teachers perceived as requiring a leadership style which would allow for total independent decision-making by them, certain characteristics could be identified. In his research on power and

participatory decision-making in selected English schools, Conway (1986: 223) referred to similar questions "as those directly related to the process or act of teaching". Those are the type of decisions which are concerned with " what goes on inside the classroom...." (Price and Reid, 1988 : 97). Before choosing an appropriate leadership style it is important for the principal to be aware of which decisions his/her staff perceives as having a direct influencing on the process of teaching within their classrooms. In those cases the staff perceived a leadership style which allow themselves the freedom to decide alone as the most appropriate leadership style.

To see if area of decision-making can be viewed as a possible situational variable influencing teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership style, it is interesting to look at decisions 23 and 24. (See APPENDIX 1). Those were the two decisions where a large percentage of teachers (although not the majority percentage) perceived the principal acting alone as the most appropriate leadership style. Both of these decisions fell under the heading Adult Problems. It is interesting to note that Conway (1986) also found that teachers in his survey did not wish to be highly involved in that decision area. He concluded that :

An examination of these decision areas shows them all to be associated with adult problems, indirectly affecting the teaching-learning process and apparently areas that teachers would prefer to remain the domain of the administration or to have staff participate only as necessary or as invited to do so (Conway, 1986 : 223).

From the survey and other reviewed literature it seems as if adult problems fall within the zone of acceptance of the staff. When decisions fall within the zone of acceptance of the staff, they are usually ready to accept these decisions even though they were not part of the decision-making process (Hoy and Miskel, 1991). Before generalizations can be made however, it must be remembered that only two decisions on the questionnaire fell into this category. It is important for principals to be aware of decisions which may fall outside the zone of acceptance of teachers before a leadership style is selected. From the survey it seemed that a common characteristic of both decisions was the fact that they had no direct bearing on the act of teaching.

Due to the large number of decisions (twenty two out of twenty seven) which teachers perceived as requiring a leadership style which allow for teachers and principal deciding together, it was very difficult to use

decision-making area as a situational variable. In the case of the other two leadership styles, decision-making as a situational variable can however not be ignored. With a more refined instrument, the suggestion made by Price and Reid (1988 : 97) " that any decision which does not meet the criteria for the teacher taking the decision alone or the headteacher taking the decision alone should be taken by the headteacher and teacher acting together" needs more research.

The aim of the study was also to see if there were any personal or biographical factors which might influence teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles. APPENDIX 2 shows that for the teachers surveyed, personal and biographical factors were relatively unimportant. This does not imply that these factors should be totally ignored by principals. When the data was broken down into 2 x 2 chi-squared tables, statistical significance was found between some personal and biographical variables and the different decisions. In all cases the number where statistical significance was found was very small - five or less cases. Belasco and Alutto (1975) in Nias (1986 : 268) suggested that age, sex, marital status, SES, type of school were all variables influencing the teachers' desire to participate in decision-making. A possible reason why this study did not support the results of Belasco and Alutto (1975) might be because the sample was not randomly but rather deliberately selected.

The results of the questionnaire thus seem to suggest that although teachers perceive a participatory leadership style as the most appropriate leadership style to follow, there are some conditions which ask for independent decision-making either by the teachers or principal. The challenge for the principal is to identify these conditions and selecting his leadership style accordingly. An important situational variable seem to be the area of decision-making, although personal and biographical factors may also play a role. More research is however needed before generalizations can be made regarding teachers' perceptions of appropriate leadership styles.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

The results of the study seem to suggest that selecting an appropriate leadership style as part of effective leadership in schools, can be learned. This is so because if a principal can identify the situational variables which may influence appropriate leadership styles, he or she will be able to select a leadership style which may minimize conflict. The study also seems to suggest that with more research and a more refined measuring instrument these situational variables can be identified.

The implication for policy of the above is that teachers should receive formal training in the area of management and leadership before they can qualify to be appointed as principals. Those principals already appointed should also undergo formal training. Part of this training course should include educational management in general and leadership specifically.

The study has shown that the teachers surveyed perceived a participatory leadership style as the style they preferred in most cases. Formal training in educational management as a possible situational variable was not included in the questionnaire because it was not commonly found amongst primary school teachers. Based on the research done by Price and Reid (1988) it seems that respondents with formal training are more receptive to allow a participatory leadership style although there is also a movement away from totally leaving decision-making in the hands of teachers alone. Much more research needs to be done to support this finding. That is why Price and Reid (1988 : 97) suggested that the following two general questions regarding training needed to be looked at. These questions are : (i) "does formal training affect attitudes to decision-making?" (ii) "does formal training make a head feel secure enough to share his responsibilities?" (Gray , 1974 in Price and Reid ,1988). Although the research by Price and Reid (1988) did not always confirm the second

question mentioned above, they feel that the answer to both questions appear to be "yes". Training of principals and aspirant principals can make a difference.

At institutional level it is also important that there should be broad guidelines on decision-making procedure. It can help if a policy can be established outlining the type of decisions which can be taken jointly and those which are the prerogative of either the principal or teachers. For this to be implemented much research still needs to be done especially at institutional level. As a consistent selection of an inappropriate leadership style may lead to conflict at schools, it may also help to establish a committee to try to mediate when conflict does occur.

The survey also seem to suggest that the school as a social system is open to influences from outside the boundaries of the school. As the South African society is being transformed to a more democratic society, these transformations seem to be reflected in the schools. A top-down approach to school management in general and leadership in particular, may lead not only to resistance from teachers but also from the community at large. It is important that the formulation of general policy at schools should have a broad base including both teachers and parents and should not be seen as the prerogative of the principal.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Formal training in educational management should be a prerequisite for aspirant principals. The responsibility should rest with the principal to obtain a qualification in educational management before he/she wishes to apply for a vacancy as principal at a school. It should be the duty of the Education Department to state in advertisements for principalship at any school that formal training in educational management be a prerequisite.

2. Due to the changing nature of knowledge, ongoing in-service workshops in educational management should be arranged by the Education Department. Principals should be compelled to attend these workshops to improve their skills in educational management. These workshops could also address the problem of principals without the necessary qualifications who are already acting as principals.

3. Based on the research results it is also recommended that these formal training courses and in-service workshops in educational management should include components on leadership and leadership styles. These formal training courses can either form part of a degree course or a diploma course at any tertiary institution. The length of the

course will be determined by the institution where the diploma or degree was obtained. The problem of uniform standards of the qualification can be adressed in the ongoing in service workshops.

4. The last recommendation which also flows directly from the research results is that policy making at schools should be as broad-based as possible. Policy formulation should include the staff. A policy committee could be established at a particular school consisting of representatives of staff. This committee can draft policy options in areas where policy formulation is needed. These options can be discussed by the staff after which policy can be formulated.

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## APPENDIX 1

**Distribution (in percentages) of leadership styles chosen by primary school teachers in areas of leadership**

<i>Leadership style</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Decision</i>				
1	08,0	87,7	01,1	03,2
2	05,3	90,9	02,1	01,6
3	05,3	88,2	03,7	02,7
4	69,0	27,3	01,6	02,1
5	29,4	56,1	03,2	11,2
6	28,3	58,3	02,7	10,7
7	21,9	71,1	05,3	01,6
8	05,3	84,0	02,7	08,0
9	06,4	79,7	08,6	05,3
10	17,1	67,4	11,8	03,7
11	20,9	63,1	12,8	03,2
12	08,6	53,5	30,5	07,5
13	44,9	40,1	13,9	01,1
14	02,7	83,4	10,7	03,2
15	08,0	66,3	23,0	02,7
16	65,2	26,7	07,5	00,5
17	08,0	50,8	28,3	12,8
18	08,6	52,9	33,7	04,8
19	04,3	70,1	24,1	01,6
20	17,6	47,6	28,3	06,4
21	48,1	45,5	03,7	02,7
22	03,2	56,7	43,2	05,9
23	03,7	48,7	41,7	05,9
24	03,2	48,7	46,5	01,6
25	56,7	37,4	04,3	01,6
26	39,0	51,3	08,6	01,1
27	07,0	80,2	10,2	02,7

## APPENDIX 2

**Distribution of some primary school teachers' perception of appropriate leadership styles by biographical and professional data.**

DECISION	SEX	MAR	TITLE	TIME	EXP	DIFEX	TEACOR	ORGAN
1	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
2	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
3	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
4	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
5	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
6	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
7	NS	NS	NS	NS	0,05	NS	NS	NS
8	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
9	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
10	NS	0,05	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
11	NS	0,05	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
12	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	0,05	NS
13	NS	NS	NS	0,05	NS	NS	NS	NS
14	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
15	NS	NS	NS	0,01	NS	NS	NS	NS
16	0,01	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
17	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
18	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
19	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
20	0,05	NS	NS	0,05	NS	NS	NS	NS
21	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
22	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
23	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
24	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
25	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
26	0,05	NS	NS	0,05	NS	NS	NS	NS
27	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

*NS = greater than the 0,05 level of significance*







**COMMUNICATION**

19. Who decides what should be on the agenda of staff meetings?

20. Who decides what information should pass between schools when a pupil moves from one school to another?

21. Who decides what information should be given to parents about their children on their school reports?

**ADULT PROBLEMS**

22. Who decides on the action that should be taken if a colleague at your school acted unprofessionally at a school function?

23. Who decides on the action that should be taken if the caretaker or secretary at your school is not performing his or her duty as expected?

24. Who decides on the action that should be taken if a teacher at your school is not performing his or her duty as expected?

**RESOURCES**

25. Who decides which resources (e.g. overhead projectors, maps etc.) are appropriate to use in the teaching of the different subjects on the timetable?

26. Who decides how resources are allocated to classes?

27. Who decides resource priorities in the spending of school funds?

**I THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**