

## **Distributed Leadership in Schools: Enhancing Diverse Leadership Qualities for Success**

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**ABSTRACT** There are ongoing debates about the growing practice of distributed leadership. Research shows that leadership is not only the sole prerogative of the school principal but also other stakeholders who play key roles in leading instructional innovation. This study investigates the extent to which distributed leadership could enhance diverse leadership qualities in schools. Data was collected from two primary and four secondary schools from the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Questionnaires were completed by 101 teachers and School Management Teams from the selected six schools. Frequencies were determined by means of spreadsheets engaging the “count if” function. Statistical data was depicted by means of a table and a bar graph to highlight frequencies as well as percentages. Findings reveal that more teachers put their hopes on distributed leadership to engage their leadership skills and eventually enable them to be self-empowered and capacitated.

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Spillane (2012) and Harris (2010), distributed leadership is normally regarded as a cure for all schools. Spillane (2012) regards people exercising distributed leadership as those who work together in such a way that they pool their initiative and expertise. Furthermore, Spillane (2012) explains that it is a way to generate insight into how leadership may be practiced more effectively. According to Botha and Triegaardt (2015: 207), in most progressive schools, “leadership functions are effectively implemented by the principal”. If granted an opportunity, teachers have the potential to contribute towards organizational development in schools together with school leadership (Botha 2015). It is for this reason that the idea of leadership distributed across various individuals and situations has been proven to be a more useful framework for understanding the realities of schools and how they could be improved (Botha 2014).

Masekoameng (2014) views distributed leadership as playing a crucial role in building team spirit among the staff, thus promoting learner achievement. With the concept of distributed

leadership that is emerging in schools, Mokoena (2011) asserts that the model of “a single heroic” leader standing atop a hierarchy, bending the school community to their purposes has been replaced by the new concept of distributed leadership. Mokoena (2011) posits that the emerging trend of distributed leadership is starting to experience support since in the past principals were the main decision-makers at the school level. It is against this background of the archaic principles of autocratic management that the advent of distributed leadership has been increasingly gaining momentum in the educational management and leadership realm. Msila (2014: 261) argues that there are various aspects that could indicate school effectiveness and these include, among others, collegiality and shared leadership, which is attributed as distributed leadership in this paper.

This research was guided by the eight criteria designed to evaluate the engagement of distributed leadership in schools as described by Masekoameng (2014), and how this approach could promote the smooth running of schools. It also encompassed literature based on the clarification of distributed leadership and how it could enhance team building and subsequently help improve school performance.

The researchers open this discussion by stating the study’s objective. This is followed by a theoretical framework around the concept of distributed leadership while basing the argument on South African (SA) and international

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literature. The merits of distributed leadership are highlighted and followed by current challenges in its implementation. The methodology that was employed to gather data from teachers and School Management Teams (SMT's) is discussed followed by a further discussion on findings. This paper is rounded up with recommendations based on findings from literature and a questionnaire, followed by the conclusion.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This paper seeks to investigate the pursuit of distributed leadership as a tool for team building, which could form a basis for learner achievement in South African schools. It is a review of the practical application of distributed leadership in schools and how it enhances participative management structures for maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

### **Theoretical Framework on Distributed Leadership**

Jones (2014) posits that distributed leadership emanated from the need to improve the primary and secondary school systems in the United States of America (USA). Although several researchers often use the concept distributed leadership interchangeably with such concepts as 'shared leadership', 'dispersed leadership', 'collaborative leadership' and 'democratic leadership', this paper is confined to the concept 'distributed leadership'. Gronn (2009) renamed distributed leadership as 'hybrid leadership' to show that it consists of various contexts and situations that characterize the diversity and uniqueness of modern organizations.

Botha and Triegaardt (2015) argue that principals may not be expected to run schools on their own because teachers are now expected to work more collaboratively and in teams. This revolution could only be attained through the devolution of power and through distributed leadership that incites stakeholders to address educational problems as one unit. Once problems are addressed by the unit then it is ready to share accomplishments while similarly sharing prospects of failure where distributed leadership is not yet accomplished. Marishane and Botha (2011: 7) regard distributed leadership as "a process of directing the behavior of others towards the accomplishment of goals."

In contrast to traditional notions of leadership, Gronn (2012: 423 in Botha 2015) argues that distributed leadership is "an emergent property of a group or network of individuals where group members pool their expertise to develop the school". Frost and Harris (2003: 479) assert that distributed leadership emphasizes collective responsibility and collaborative working among stakeholders. In this manner, structures are flattened and allow all stakeholders to acknowledge everyone's presence from the build-up to the implementation and finally the review stages. Linked to this is the essence of reduced stress levels for key leaders, which also makes this model attractive as a more robust and shared leadership system that does not unduly burden any single leader (Pearce 2007 in Kocolowski 2010: 27). It is important to reduce stress levels that come as a result of unshared responsibility either for success or failure as more people become accountable for the success or failure of a school.

Distributed leadership is a form of shared leadership that is distributed to key stakeholders throughout the organization (Duignam and Bezzina 2006: 3). It is important to note that the distribution is managed according to the competence of stakeholders. The stakeholders within the South African school system consist of the principal, the SMT, teachers, parents and learners in Grade 8 and higher. Stakeholders have the ability to share goals that were jointly formulated and agreed upon before implementation. To complement the above researchers, Wood and Lea (2012: 2) maintain that the focus is on groups rather than individuals. In school management, the most significant group that sees to the efficient management and operation of teaching and learning processes is the SMT, which serves as the management engine for the school. There are open boundaries with regard to the people included in leadership roles, thus ensuring that a variety of expertise is maintained within and across the group. According to Mokoena (2011), it seems that the devolution of decision-making powers from district offices to school level is currently an international trend, which South Africa, as a democracy, has embarked on since 1994.

Mokoena (2011) again argues that no stakeholder has had much experience of distributed leadership since in the past principals were generally regarded as the only authority with skills

to run and lead the school as they wished. This view emanated from the manner in which those principals were appointed without the participation of stakeholders. This has created a legacy of teachers that are passive because decisions that involve them are taken on a daily basis without their input. Carl (2005: 223) discovered that though teachers had always regarded themselves as experts in their learning areas, their voice was never considered when important decisions concerning their work were taken. Teachers, as implementers of education policies at the school level, ought to be involved in all processes that include them for the implementation of policies to be successful. The divisions among the stakeholders have to be eliminated and exchanged with distributed leadership principles in order to reduce or possibly eliminate tension at the school level.

Young (2013: 2) maintains that the distributed leadership style involves utilizing the expertise of a team rather than relying solely on the expertise of an individual. By reallocating leadership roles and responsibilities, principals and administrators will be less burdened and can devote more time to broader leadership responsibilities related to the overall conditions and performance of the school. This could be in the form of ensuring that the school culture remains positive and productive while showing an improvement in their teaching abilities (Education Writers Association 2014). Sharing the same sentiments, Masekoameng (2014) indicates that distributed leadership has moved from centers of autocratic leadership to where collaboration is becoming normal. Supported by the appropriate policies and procedures that are in place, the researchers articulate on the premise that the school has evolved into a new entity with the advent of distributed leadership.

Some writers such as Spillane (2012) contend that unity is promoted while cooperation in schools ultimately leads to learner achievement. This therefore entails broadly sharing power within a group rather than centralizing it in the hands of an individual who acts as a dominant superior (Pearce et al. 2009: 234). In school management terms, this individual is the principal who has to go through a process of stringent selection by the School Governing Body (SGB) before being appointed. Currently, the same process of shared responsibility has to be followed when appointing all school personnel for ac-

countability and transparency in terms of the Resolution 6 of the Employment of Educators' Act 84 of 1998. In short, it involves a team. Leadership is literally distributed among the team members, who are eventually empowered to manage the school accordingly. It has to be mentioned that despite sharing power to manage the school, the principal still bears the authority and responsibility of ensuring that policies are implemented in terms of policy guidelines. The principal also has to ensure that power is not abused or hoarded by stakeholders by calling for corrective action should it become necessary. The prevailing principle should be to ensure that sufficient training is provided for stakeholders before roles and responsibilities are allocated.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) promotes this type of leadership whereby it prefers leadership to be shared among stakeholders, a concept that was taboo during the apartheid era. SASA indicates that the democratization of education includes the idea that stakeholders such as parents, teachers and learners must participate in the activities of the school. Mokoena (2011: 127) posits that where once the principal was at the 'top of the tree and had all the power', now teachers are having a much greater say in what is happening in schools. The fact that in some schools this devolution of power has created tension between the principal and staff can be attributed to the fact that distributed leadership is a fresh concept in need of constant reviews.

Botha (2015) maintains that distributed leadership is a practice that typically enables managers to work collaboratively and in teams while some occupy formal leadership positions. Those with formal authority are officially appointed in their management positions while the informal authority emerges from the recommendations of teacher leaders by staff. Botha (2011) reckons that distributed leadership involves redirecting the behavior of other individuals for the accomplishment of common goals within an institution. Some routines such as monitoring and evaluating teaching practice involve fewer leaders who are usually the principal and deputy principal. In most cases, the supervision of new teachers is better managed by teacher mentors who are experienced and dedicated. This supervision is also concerned with routines such as teacher development in literacy, which often involves

the principal, curricular specialists, and teacher leaders.

Sweden et al. (2008: 2) concur with Spillane (2008) that the work of leading and managing schools involves multiple individuals, and individuals without formal designations. This shows that the differences between formal and informal authority seems to be non-existent where distributed leadership prevails. As schools engage in complex collaborative arrangements, distributed forms of leadership will be required to 'cross multiple types of boundaries and share ideas and insights' as espoused by Harris and Spillane (2008: 31). One may therefore surmise that the success of distributed leadership has had much to do with the readiness of the principal to share power and the ability to establish processes that make distributed leadership work (Mokoena 2011). As championed by Bush and Heystek (2003) this could help alleviate the tensions that are caused by principals who regard the devolution of power as a waste of time.

### **The Manner in Which Distributed Leadership Enhances Performance**

Larsen and Rieckhoff (2014) posit that the distributed leadership perspective presents a framework for thinking about and analyzing leadership. They also add that this implies effectively led schools require multiple leaders in formal and informal roles taking responsibility for leadership activities. Distributed leadership provides ample opportunities for teacher development and empowerment when stakeholders are effectively engaged and trained. This reform initiative rests on the assumption that the participation of teachers, learners and parents can enhance the achievement of the desired transformation (Mokoena (2011).

With empowerment, teachers are motivated to take risks and are committed to working on revealing surprising abilities as it cultivates teacher leadership with regard to the sharing of responsibilities and power. This extends beyond the classroom to others within and across schools, and further enhances teacher involvement in a collaborative process. According to Spillane (2005: 145), it is this process that promotes teacher learning to contribute widely towards teaching and learning. Together with certain structural reforms regarding shared decision-making, the South African government has also initiated curricu-

lum reform programs, and a general drive to improve the culture of teaching and learning in schools. Walke et al. (2008) in Kocolowski (2010: 25) identify the following vital team leadership indicators which enhance performance:

- ♦ The working team resolves differences to reach an agreement
- ♦ Work is distributed properly to take advantage of members' unique skills
- ♦ Information about the company and its strategy is shared
- ♦ Teamwork is promoted with the team itself
- ♦ The team works together to identify opportunities to improve productivity and efficiency

As Larsen and Rieckhoff (2014) enunciate, principals initiate ways to share leadership so that more stakeholders become engaged in the school's decision-making processes. This indicates that compassionate principals strive to develop teacher leadership capacity within their schools as a way of improving performance and encouraging advocacy for justice (Mullen and Jones 2008). Frost and Harris (2003: 480) share the same sentiments when they indicate that distributed leadership places an emphasis on maximizing intellectual and social capital. It implies that all stakeholders have the potential to contribute to leading organizational development and change in terms of Frost and Harris (2003: 480). According to Gronn (2012), all members within the organization can, in other words, practice leadership at some point. These views are shared in a study's findings by Mokoena (2011), which indicates that the greater involvement of teachers in leadership roles has been seen as leading to developing positive relationships, enhancing collegiality and ownership of decisions among teachers. These are ideals that have to be developed and embodied in leading schools by the principal who is able to rise above everyone in order to have a clearer vision for the school to succeed. It is for this reason that the principal should have a clearer vision for the school in order to appreciate the value of shared decision-making, without feeling vulnerable.

Studies that show high performing schools with high learner achievement and few discipline dilemmas often have teachers who share decision-making and leadership responsibilities (James and Leech 2006: 9) (supported by Botha

2014). It is for this reason that this development should be undertaken in rural communities where authoritative practices are still prevalent, especially in communities that still hold onto traditional values. Steyn (2003: 252) argues that increased stakeholder participation also includes the possibility of stimulating increased enthusiasm, interest, commitment and effectiveness among stakeholders, as also enunciated by Larsen and Rieckhoff (2014).

On the other hand, teachers have reported increased feelings of self-efficacy by knowing they have accomplished something they deem important (James and Leech 2006). Pate et al. (2006) purport that when teachers are empowered, they tend to have higher morale and enhanced cooperation, which leads to school success. Moos (2007: 584) contends that there is a sense that the principal cannot be sufficiently informed to make all decisions in a school, nor can the principal be present in all places and situations where decisions need to be made. It is therefore necessary to acquire a form of leadership that ensures continuity of teaching and learning programs. This notion has already been shared earlier in this paper by researchers such as Mokoena (2011) who continue to assert that “the days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over”. Society no longer believes that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other teachers. This rings true especially for the SMT members who hold formal authority to make certain decisions in collaboration with other team members under the guardianship and support of the principal.

The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped, according to DeFlaminis (2014). Where people work together in such a way that they pool their initiative and expertise, Botha (2013) posits that the outcome is a product or energy, which is greater than the sum of their individual actions. The advantage is that when teachers at an institution are involved in organizational development, the principal’s responsibilities become less demanding. One can become more effective in more pressing management and wider leadership roles, which allow the principal to freely engage with stakeholders for the improvement of the school.

With regard to the involvement of teachers in organizational development for the inculcation of distributed leadership, Steyn (2003: 256) elucidates what is called key changes in the way “new” schools in South Africa are organized.

- ♦ *Principals should lead rather than instruct.*

Principals need to rely on the support of staff. Their status will depend on the ability to lead and motivate their team of educators.

- ♦ *The decision-making hierarchy becomes flatter.*

To reduce problems in a hierarchical system, flatter, more open and more participative structures should be created. This will enhance the flow of information and create an atmosphere where all members experience a sense of “ownership”.

- ♦ *Responsibility should be shared.*

With the development of teams, responsibility should be shared. Where teams operate the principal cannot be blamed since the team works together to solve problems.

- ♦ *Leadership is about empowering participants.*

People in senior management positions should see their role as empowering others to make decisions about the operation of the school, rather than controlling them.

- ♦ *Develop instead of delivering expertise.*

Schools should create processes and structures that develop expertise.

The values purported by Steyn (2003) demonstrate a new route that schools should adapt before they can be considered as engaging in distributed leadership.

The following section presents a discussion on this paper’s data collection strategy in order to identify the stakeholders’ views and perceptions on the effects of distributed leadership in their schools.

## METHODOLOGY

This study involved six schools, four of which were secondary schools and two primary schools from the Capricorn District, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Data was collected by distributing questionnaires to teachers in the six schools. The entire process of collecting data took place in 2014. The biographical data indicated that out of 132 expected questionnaires, 101 (76.5%) were returned. This sample consisted of 22 (21.8%) School Management

Team (SMT) members. Of the 101 participants, 63 (62.4%) were female and 38 (37.6%) were male. The teaching experience of most of the teachers in their current posts was thought provoking. Only about 10.9 percent of the teachers had less than five years of teaching experience in their current posts. 12.9 percent had between 6 to 10 years of teaching experience and 5.9 percent had 11 to 15 years' teaching experience, while 14.9 percent had 16 to 20 years teaching experience. A high 55.4 percent had 21 or more years teaching experience in the post they were occupying. With 55.4 percent of teachers having 21 or more years of teaching experience, it was clear that there were more teachers with more than 40 years' experience (Table 1).

The schools were selected because of their proximity to the residence of one of the researchers. The schools were also within the same buffer zone, with a maximum distance of approximately five kilometers from each other. It was convenient to move from one school to the other while conducting the survey. Questionnaires were distributed to the six schools during the third term and more time was allocated so that teachers could not fill them haphazardly. At the same time, the researchers ensured that teach-

ing time was not disturbed when conducting the survey. This is the reason why the survey was conducted after schooling hours.

The spreadsheet program with the "Count If" function was engaged in determining frequencies. Statistical data was depicted by means of a table and a bar graph to highlight frequencies as well as percentages. The questionnaire engaged the following eight criteria to investigate the prevalence of shared leadership in the six schools:

- Distributed leadership is promoted at the school;
- Teachers feel cared for and valued in important decision-making of the school;
- There are few conflicts among staff members due to shared decision-making;
- Sharing responsibilities enhances performance;
- All teachers have the potential to contribute to school development;
- Distributed leadership embraces leadership by teams;
- All teachers have an interest in the success of the school;
- Leadership is exercised by everybody at the school.

**Table 1: Questionnaire data collected at the six schools**

	<i>Criteria</i>		<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
33	Distributed leadership is promoted at our school	F %	22 21.8	34 33.7	14 13.9	22 21.8	8 7.9
34	Teachers feel cared for and valued in important decision making of the school	F %	13 12.9	40 39.6	14 13.9	25 24.8	9 8.9
35	There are few conflicts among staff members due to shared decision making	F %	15 14.9	46 45.5	18 17.8	17 16.8	5 4.9
36	Sharing responsibilities enhances performance	F %	18 17.8	66 65.3	5 4.9	9 8.9	3 2.97
37	All teachers have the potential to contribute to school development	F %	21 20.8	49 48.5	11 10.9	16 15.8	4 3.96
38	Distributed leadership embraces leadership by teams	F %	16 15.8	51 50.5	14 13.9	17 16.8	3 2.97
39	All teachers have an interest in the success of the school	F %	17 16.8	44 43.6	24 23.8	14 13.9	2 1.98
40	Leadership is exercised by everybody in the school	F %	11 10.9	42 41.6	10 9.9	23 22.8	15 14.9

### Analysis of Statistical Data from Questionnaires

In all the eight criteria, more than fifty percent, in each criterion, agreed and strongly agreed with the idea of distributed leadership. The teachers in this area supported the idea of engaging in some form of distributed leadership and valued the significance of this type of leadership in their schools.

(i) *Distributed leadership is promoted at the school:* In this criterion 21.8 percent strongly agreed and 33.7 percent agreed, which gave a total of 55.5 percent. This was quite remarkable, considering the fact that 21.8 percent did not agree while only 7.9 percent strongly disagreed. However, the fact that about 29.7 percent of the participants had disagreed with the notion that distributed leadership was promoted at their school, it was a clear indication that there were pockets of a lack of democracy still prevailing in these schools. It was possible that the participants were having a feeling of not being consulted when it came to important decision-making processes in the school. This was a real cause for concern. The researchers found that 13.9 percent of the participants were not sure about the prevalence of distributed leadership at their school. However, it was not easy to differentiate between 'not sure' and 'not interested'. Considering the majority that agreed it is safe to make deductions from the shown statistical findings. 55.5 percent is not a strong characteristic in this category.

(ii) *Teachers feel cared for and valued in important decision-making of the school:* This criterion had 39.6 percent agreeing and 12.9 percent who strongly agreed (total=52.5%), which was a positive move towards shared leadership. If the majority of teachers felt valued regarding important decisions taken in their schools, it is an indication of real transformation. However, about 19.8 percent (16.8%+2.97%) did not agree. The implication was that at each and every school there were some teachers who were not satisfied with the leadership and they felt not valued when it came to decision-making. Again in this category, 52.5 percent did not reflect an overwhelming response for feelings of being valued and cared for.

(iii) *There are few conflicts among staff members due to shared decision-making:* In this criterion, 60.4 percent (45.5% + 14.9%) agreed

that shared decision-making at their respective schools was generating quite a few conflicts. This was commendable as in a study conducted by Hulpia and Devos (2010) in Menon (n.d.) where they found that teachers were more prone to conflicts within the school while school leaders were highly accessible and encouraged for their participation in decision-making. In this case, more than sixty percent of the participants were conscious of the few conflicts that prevailed in their schools. It is suggested that schools should do something about the remaining forty percent who either did not agree or were not sure about the conditions, as the data did not show their orientation in this regard.

(iv) *Sharing responsibilities enhances performance:* Most teachers agreed with this notion. 65.3 percent agreed while 17.8 percent strongly agreed, which was a considerably large total of 83.1 percent. It was encouraging to learn how teachers could be positive about sharing responsibilities at their schools. Only 11.8 percent did not agree (8.9% +2.8%). This response showed consensus in terms of the participants' attitudes towards taking charge and sharing responsibilities.

(v) *All teachers have the potential to contribute to school development:* Bennet et al. (2003) support this assertion when they indicate that in distributed leadership initiatives could be inaugurated by those with relevant skills in a particular context, but others would then adopt, adapt and improve them within a mutually trusting and supportive culture. A considerable number of teachers were positive with regards to this notion. Findings showed that 48.5 percent agreed and 20.8 percent strongly agreed, which brought the total to 69.3 percent. About 19.8 percent did not agree (15.8% +3.9%). This is a fair indication showing the teachers' potential to contribute.

(vi) *Distributed leadership embraces leadership by teams:* Most teachers agreed with this notion. It was a sign that they understood this new model of leadership and how it operated. 66.3 percent agreed (50.8% and 15.8% strongly agreed). 19.8 percent did not agree (16.8% did not agree and 2.9% strongly disagreed). This could be another indication that stakeholders are aware of the values of distributed leadership.

(vii) *All teachers have an interest in the success of the school:* Another positive move emerged in this criterion. With 60.4 percent in

total of those who agreed (16.8% strongly agreed and 43.6% agreed) there was a sign of commitment. However, it was unsettling to learn that 23.8 percent were unsure about this assertion. Only 15.8 percent did not agree (13.9 did not agree and 2% percent strongly disagreed). The 60.4 percent shows the presence of hope and belief that more teachers have the school's success at heart.

(viii) *Leadership is exercised by everybody in the school*: This is the distributed leadership part, which had been agreed upon by just over half of the participants, that is 52.5 percent (10.9% strongly agreed and 41.7% agreed). It showed some form of uncertainty in about 47.5 percent of educators. This included the 9.9 percent who were not sure, 22.8 percent who did not agree and 14.9 percent who strongly disagreed. The implication was that more work still needs to be done in schools in luring teachers to leadership positions. This category showed that there was still no overall consensus on the impact of distributed leadership towards the development of leadership. Below is a discussion based on findings in conjunction with the conceptual framework formulated earlier in this paper.

### DISCUSSION

This study managed to reveal the stance of the teachers in selected schools regarding the application of distributed leadership. The results demonstrated a fair but not significant amount of inclination towards distributed leadership by the manner of responses from the questionnaires. This positive move is suggestive of the prevalence of organizational development in schools that participated in the study, as this was one of the criterion used by researchers when selecting them. It signifies that distributed leadership may not be easy to implement given the history and nature of rural schools and the leadership structures within the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which is largely bureaucratic.

During an interview conducted by Botha (2014) on the teachers' impressions about distributed leadership, they labeled it as mock participation because the principal always has the last word. These findings were similar to some of this study's responses. It is therefore still premature to expect school management teams to efficiently implement decisions while

struggling to operate on distributed leadership processes. Most of the managers in rural schools were teachers before the advent of democracy in South Africa and still have to unlearn the full principles and implications of distributed leadership before this concept is shared with other stakeholders such as teachers, especially the new entrants to the profession. Mokoena (2011) refers to instances where all decisions regarding educational leadership were vested with the principal only before the advent of a democratically constituted Department of Basic Education (DBE).

SMTs and teachers alike have to be familiar with the concept of distributed leadership and appreciate it as an empowerment exercise if it is to work. The situation in the selected schools is related to what Harris and Spillane (2008: 33) asserted that distributed leadership is not a panacea or a blueprint or a recipe. In their view, distributed leadership is a way of getting under the skin of leadership practice, of seeing leadership practice differently and illuminating the possibilities for organizational transformation (Harris and Spillane 2008). During data collection, it emerged that the participants were still not quite convinced about this type of leadership since in some of the categories, respondents were more negative towards the effects of distributed leadership. For distributed leadership to flourish there should be an element of trust among the stakeholders, starting from the principal as the leader, as espoused by Botha (2014).

The majority of participants placed their hopes on distributed leadership for engaging their leadership skills and eventually becoming empowered and capacitated. More than half of them believed in distributed leadership and that is why in criterion 39 (All teachers have an interest in the success of the school) they demonstrated interest in the success of the school. In the same breath, this percentage is not convincing enough that schools are ready for this kind of leadership due to the developmental processes, training and readiness of school leaders to implement this style of leadership. The argument raised by Botha (2015) and Spillane (2012) confirms the findings that some principals discouraged the participation of stakeholders in decision-making. That is why Botha (2014) states that teachers labeled distributed leadership as fake during interviews.

According to most of the participants, shared decision-making was viewed as contributing towards fewer conflicts at their respective schools and this seemed to enhance work performance as indicated in the research findings from Mokoena's (2011) study. School leaders need to pay attention to the percentage of the population that still sees conflict by determining if such individuals are skeptics or resisters. If they are skeptics, the leader within the organization has to provide training for the staff. Should the affected members be resisters, the mindset should be altered by showing the disadvantages of sole decision-making. The idea here is that if teachers are involved in important decision-making processes within an organization, they automatically develop a love for the school and the success of learners in terms of Dasborough et al. (2015) when discussing strategies on change management.

There were some teachers in the selected schools who have the opinion that their voices were not heard. Dasborough et al. (2015) point out that this raises some level of uncertainty and leads to feelings of being vulnerable. Once there are some pockets of dissatisfaction among the teachers, the performance of the school is in one way or another compromised. Botha and Triegaardt (2015) contend that teachers are supposed to work in an environment, which is conducive to teaching and learning by becoming part of the decision-making process within the school. This could be viewed to be in line with Mokoena (2011: 127) who states that where once the principal was at the "top of the tree and had all the power, the decisions that are jointly taken by stakeholders now prevail". Marishane and Botha (2014) posit that the principal has to provide other stakeholders with the required support and listen to their views and problems while valuing their effort, support and contribution. Of more importance is the removal of uncertainty and an element of mistrust by the principal when decisions are to be taken as earlier supported by Dasborough et al. (2015). In this regard, Harris (2015) contends that exemplary principals go beyond involving teachers in decision-making processes, as they also co-create the conditions for a supportive environment that encourages teachers to examine their teaching and school practices.

It is a matter of concern that under the category on whether leadership was exercised by

everybody in the school, there was still a minimal conviction by the participants as Mokoena (2011) states that some teachers are still skeptics when it comes to change. Marishane and Botha (2011) have called for more training by the principal with the support of the district office in the acquisition of leadership skills and sharing the merits with stakeholders. Taking from the findings and discussions above, Msila (2014) attests it is apparent that the over 20 years of democratic rule in South Africa is still not sufficient to alter the ravaging damage caused by almost five centuries of autocratic rule. On a positive stride, the researchers contend that the emerging signs of appreciation by those that have already started implementing distributed leadership bring hope that more schools will move away from autocratic leadership. Based on the findings in this paper, it is imperative to identify some challenges that make the implementation of distributed leadership a foreign concept to some leaders.

### Challenges Facing Distributed Leadership

McKenzie and Locke (2014) assert that there is limited research on challenges facing distributed leadership. Though the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) points out to the need for active and vibrant involvement of all stakeholders at all levels, there are still challenges to the emergence of distributed leadership. Citing research findings, Bush and Heystek (2003) and Van Wyk (2004) point out that some principals allow little or no subordinate participation in school decision-making processes because such involvement is perceived as unproductive and time wasting.

This conduct by some South African principals could be expected in rural areas since these are the last ones to adapt to modern ways of school management. This could be due to the fact that there is a migration of highly qualified teachers to urban areas while lowly qualified teachers who are less innovative in improving their qualifications tend to remain in rural schools. The lack of facilities such as libraries that have modern literature on innovative ways to manage schools during the era of democracy seems to be a challenge. Some of the schools in rural areas are under the control of chiefs and missionaries who prescribe how the schools should be managed. This is so because these authorities fund some of these schools.

An increase in the workload of the school principal naturally results in a number of responsibilities that the principal has and as a result, the principal may end up doing everything alone instead of sharing responsibilities with other stakeholders. It has become clear that the principal's workload has become more difficult to manage as enunciated by Botha (2004: 239). This could be due to the current practice where district offices run the schools by means of circulars with policies that have to be implemented without questioning since they are agreed upon by stakeholders at the Education Labor Relations Council (ELRC) (Zengele 2011).

While it is true that the ELRC policies cannot be debated, the implementation of policies has to be deliberated at the school level in accordance with the prevailing conditions since no two schools are alike. Some district managers still expect principals to implement decisions by themselves, while the blame falls on the principal's shoulders when the implementation of policies fails. The existing state of affairs could impact the principals' view of teacher involvement in distributed leadership since the latter management style could be regarded as "a lot more time-consuming than the more familiar autocratic style of management", as Cassie (2008), Bush and Heystek (2003) and Van Wyk (2004) state. This view, shared by the above researchers, indicates another threat to distributed leadership in schools.

The altercation and tussle for power at schools between unions and school management has partly led to teacher attrition in some provinces as reported in a study by Diko and Letseka (2009). While conducting interviews on shared and distributed leadership, Botha (2004) referred to what one teacher who labeled distributed leadership as "fake participation", explaining this as decisions that are taken by the principal who then expects the teachers to simply endorse them. These are challenges that are currently debated among stakeholders in education and they need collaboration in order to be changed into strengths by referring to literature that is in support of distributed leadership.

### CONCLUSION

If distributed leadership is embraced by principals, School Management Teams (SMTs) and teachers in schools as evident in this paper, it

could reduce conflicts and confrontations among the staff. Distributed leadership bears the potential to unite staff members as one unit with shared responsibilities as they feel highly valued and important in the school. Research findings in this paper have also shown that in schools where leadership is distributed among staff members, there is more than what stakeholders can offer as individuals. This would likely bring about more teachers in favour of distributed leadership. Teachers are in need of acceptance and appreciation by management that includes district and head of office personnel.

The success of distributed leadership lies in the ability of school leaders to pay attention to the concerns of teachers that still do not realize to their value. The implications of this paper signify the need for future research on the reasons why some teachers still do not embrace the concept of distributed leadership. The researchers conclude this paper with recommendations to introduce positive change in educational leadership.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

School leaders should apply democratic leadership skills by determining if teachers are skeptics or resisters first before implementing distributed leadership in schools. If teachers are skeptics, the leader within the organization has to provide training for the staff. Should the affected teachers be resisters, the mindset should be altered by showing the disadvantages of sole decision-making. The idea is that if teachers are involved in important decision-making processes within an organization, they automatically develop love for the school and the success of learners. It is expected that once all teachers recognize the value and importance of distributed leadership, schools will become centers of excellence.

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