THE PROVISION OF HOLISTIC AND CO-ORDINATED SUPPORT IN AN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE IN THE WESTERN CAPE

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ABSTRACT

The central aim of this study was to examine the Western Cape Education Department's restructuring process, which entails changing the centralised support service to a more decentralized one through the newly constituted Education Management and Development Centres (EMDCs), in particular, the aim of the study was to explore how one Multi-Functional Team (MFT) in an EMDC structure is attempting to provide more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools.

Chapter 1 briefly discusses the South African context, providing a brief historical overview and description of education relevant policy challenges. This chapter also outlines and provides details of the decentralisation process, the challenges of developing an holistic and co-ordinated approach to support, and the research aims, questions and research methodology.

In Chapter 2 a literature review is undertaken in order to explore the concept of inter-sectoral collaboration in relation to education support. This includes an overview of the challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research approach, research design, data collection methods, data processing methods and an ethics statement.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis and interpretation of data obtained under the categories of analysis provided by the research questions.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings as well as recommendations for the improvement of inter-sectoral collaboration within the EMDCs. It also includes a reflection on the research process.

The study showed that there is a growing realisation in the EMDCs that services cannot be carried out in isolation and that collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination are necessary for more effective and holistic service delivery. Most of the participants in this study emphasized that services need to be better coordinated and that there was a need

for better communication and leadership within the MFT. When asking the question about the difficulties experienced in trying to co-ordinate support services, they said that there is little co-ordination and management within the MFT. Some of the participants said that there is no time for reporting, recording or planning, and most of the time all the role players are not available to attend meetings or discussions. The primary reason given for poor co-ordination was that there was a lack of overall co-ordination in planning projects being run in the EMDC.

This study should make a contribution to an understanding of how the EMDC can provide more coordinated and holistic support to schools. It should, among other things, give insight into the challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration and how to address these challenges.

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DECLARATION

I declare that *An investigation of how one Multi –Functional Team in an Education and Development Centre in the Western Cape is attempting to provide holistic and co-ordinated support to schools is* my own work, that it is not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Pauline Oliver   October 2003

Signed ....

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GLOSSARY

ABET -   Adult Basic Education and Training

CDS -   Curriculum Development and Support

DOE –   Department of Education

DST –   District Support Teams

ECD –   Early Child Development

ELSEN – Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs

ESS –   Education Support Services

EMDCs – Education Management and Development Centres

IMG -   Institutional Management and Governance

IMTEC – International Movement Towards Educational Change

MFT –   Multi-Functional Team

NCSNET – National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training

NCESS – National Committee on Education Support Services

NGO-   Non government Organisations

OBE –   Outcomes Based Education

QLP –   Quality Learning Programme

SASA –   South African Schools Act

SEED –   Systemic Enhancement for Education

SGB –   School Governing Body

SLES –   Specialised Learner and Educator Support

SMT –   School Management Team

STED –   Systemic Transformation for Education

TST –   Teachers Support Team

TIP –   Teachers In-service Project

WCED –   Western Cape Education Department.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This research examines the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) restructuring process, which entailed changing the centralised support service to a more de-centralized one, through the newly constituted Education Management and Development Centres (EMDCs). The specific aim of the study is to explore how one Multi-Functional Team (MFT) in an EMDC structure is attempting to provide more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools

According to the WCED draft theoretical framework document (1999), the support structure for schools has been historically characterised by fragmentation, making it difficult for schools to become learning organisations. Learning organisations are defined as schools that are independent, autonomous, reflective and critical of their practices (WCED, 1999). Senge (1990:20) defines a learning organisation as an organisation "where people continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together".

For schools to become learning organisations and to function more effectively, co-ordinated and holistic support is required. In response to this need, a new, more holistic and integrated approach to supporting schools is in the process of being developed in the Western Cape. This approach includes the provision of comprehensive learner and educator support by MFTs based at

EMDCs. These teams consist of a curriculum advisory service, learning support, listening and language support, early childhood development, psychological support and other forms of therapeutic support, management and governance support, social work support, information technology and education media technological support.

The first part of this chapter deals with policy challenges relating to the aims of the study. It then examines the de-centralisation process in the Western Cape. In conclusion, it outlines the framework of the research and research methodology.

1.2 SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

During the apartheid era, a discriminatory education system was in place. It was reflected in, inter alia, the difference in the per capita allocation to learners from the different race groups, and the different racially divided education departments. Apartheid education, with its lack of coherent support provided by a distant Head Office structure, led to poor conditions in schools which included: a lack of leadership; lack of planning; poor management; low teacher morale and a lack of confidence among teachers.

Since 1994, the South African education system has been undergoing dramatic changes, which clearly reflect the democratic nature of the new government, and its intention to redress inequalities and imbalances created and perpetuated during the apartheid era. To redress these imbalances, and satisfy the educational needs of all learners in an efficient and equitable manner, the entire fabric of the education system had to be reformed. According to Squelch & Steyn (1994), reforming education involves restructuring in such a way that, among other

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things, school governance, organisation and management are de-centralised, while at the same time empowering the people closest to the learners in the classroom.

In 1995 the integrated WCED came into being with the amalgamation of four separate departments. Its aim was to serve the needs of all stakeholders within education under one umbrella (see Fig. 1.1).

Fig. 1.1 Department of Education prior to 1994 in South Africa

Department of Education and Culture – Administration **(House of Delegates)**

Department of Education and Culture – Administration **(House of Representatives)**

ONE DEPARTMENT

WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

(WCED)

Department of Education and Training **(DET)**

Department of Education and Culture – Administration **(House of Assembly)**
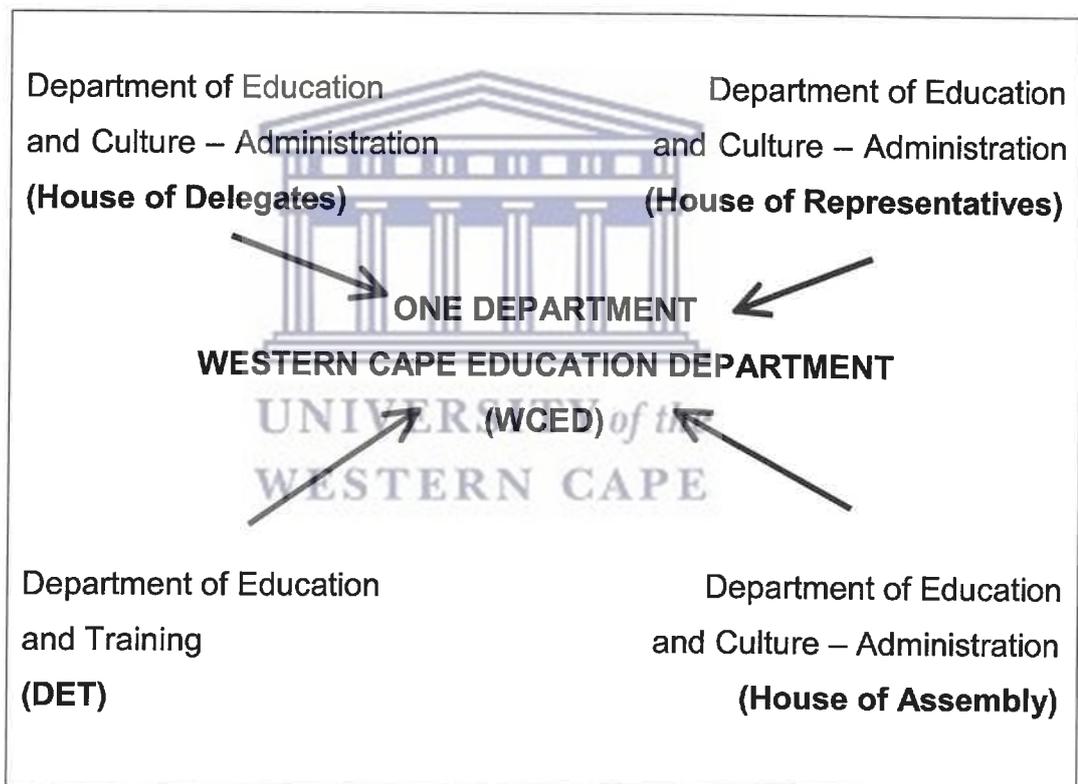
This move has been considered by many to be a fundamental solution to the educational problems and challenges facing the country in general and the Western Cape in particular. However, the merging of the education departments has not been a simple process. It has meant the loss of jobs for many people. It has meant

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bringing departments together where there have been different salary structures, a different ethos, different syllabi, different cultures, different pedagogical orientations and different budgets, without the necessary organisational mechanisms to address the often unanticipated emerging issues.

The demands of the new South Africa, with its emphasis on transformation, transparency, consultation, broader participation and ownership, compelled the WCED to take a tougher look at themselves and the needs of the communities they served. The challenge the WCED faced was to effect further structural changes which would improve service delivery.

A process of negotiation between the WCED and the public sector unions ensued, and the implementation of the transitional, de-centralised model was agreed upon.

This structure was then accepted, to take education in the Western Cape forward until a new structure for the Western Cape could be considered and developed in consultation with the stakeholders. At that time, in 1999 it was thought that the best mechanism to ensure the effective delivery of administrative and professional services would be to de-centralise the functions of the WCED Head Office. This would mean the redistribution of administrative functions to regional or area offices, which would be the nearest points of delivery to the schools.

Figure 1.2 below gives us an indication of the transitional de-centralised model of supporting schools, from Head Office down to school level.

Fig. 1. 2   Line function for Service Delivery

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┌─────────────────────┐
│     Head Office     │
└─────────────────────┘
           ↓
┌─────────────────────┐
│   Regional Office   │
└─────────────────────┘
           ↓
┌─────────────────────┐
│     Area Office     │
└─────────────────────┘
           ↓
┌─────────────────────┐
│       School        │
└─────────────────────┘
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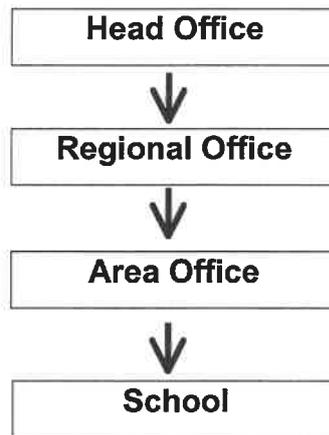
The first plan for de-centralisation was to have a three tier structure of Head Office, regional offices and area offices supporting the schools. The plan was to move administrative staff out of Head Office and closer to the schools. They would move to area offices so that they could be closer to the schools that they supported. Since then, the context of de-centralisation has changed in a number of important ways (see Fig. 1.2 for an overview of the restructuring of educational provision in the Western Cape after 1994). This has brought with it a number of new challenges as well as addressing certain policy challenges. We will now examine the policies that have had a major influence on the development of a new de-centralised support system.

1.3   POLICY CHALLENGES

The restructuring of the WCED has been influenced by the development of a number of new policies in education. The key ones are: The South African Schools Act (1996), Curriculum 2005 (1997), and for this study, School-based Management (1999) and Education White Paper 6 entitled or on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001).

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1.3.1 The South African Schools Act

The South African Schools Act (1996) has at its base the establishment of governing bodies and learner representation at schools as legal bodies responsible for the formulation of general school policy and decision making. This is a process of devolution of power to school level in order to enable schools to determine their own future by having new functions devolved to them, together with the necessary authority to become more autonomous than before.

In its preamble, the South African Schools Act (1996) states that the Republic of South Africa requires a new national system of schools which, among other things, "will uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools, in partnership with the state". This statement presents a great challenge to political leaders and educational planners at national, provincial and local level to ensure that education is properly managed, organised and governed to meet the demands of society. In South Africa the idea of de-centralising education was rooted in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), a programme for fundamental transformation initiated by the new government. According to the policy framework of the RDP, the education and training bureaucracy for a new South Africa needed to be reorganised at the national, sectoral and provincial level through the establishment of structures of institutional governance which would reflect the interest of all stakeholders and the broader community served (African National Congress, 1994).

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1.3.2 Curriculum 2005

Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 1997) has been introduced as a major curriculum innovation in South Africa. It calls on teachers to respond to classroom practices in radically different ways. The new curriculum demands that educators be trained in Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which requires a new understanding of teachers' roles and responsibilities. OBE should be driven by the outcomes displayed by the learner at the end of the educational experience or process. Based on the philosophy that all learners can learn, it also makes provision for the inclusion of learners with disabilities, out of school children and other children 'with special educational needs'. In this context the learner is at the centre of things, and the teacher is the facilitator, constantly using group work and teamwork to draw the most out of this new approach and to consolidate it. The learners are responsible for their learning and progress, constantly motivated by feedback and positive comment concerning the value of their efforts.

1.3.3 School-based Management

In 2000, the WCED committed itself to a school-based management approach. According to Davidoff & O'Connell (2000), school-based management means giving schools more power to decide how they want to govern themselves. This includes the WCED shifting from a large, unwieldy bureaucracy at WCED Head Office with the focus on control, to a more fluid and flexible, innovative organisation. The support system should ensure that every school is developed into a learning institution, capable of independent and responsible action in pursuit of the nation's educational goals. Functions attributed to schools by the South African School's Act (1996) ensure that schools have more control

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over their own curriculum, budgetary affairs, personnel, administration and provisioning matters. Essentially, this means that every school which has the capacity to manage itself should be allowed to do so. Schools which do not have this capacity will be supported by the WCED in order to develop the capacity to do so. The support schools need will be provided by the circuit managers, subject advisory service and auxilary services, which will have to be reorganised in order to provide a holistic support and development service to schools. To ensure equal opportunities for all schools, Head Office will continue to play a strong role in policy development for the broader WCED, and ensure accountability within the system. The WCED will therefore have two main functions:

- a strong policy role to ensure equality within the system; and
- a strong support role to ensure high quality support to schools.

According to Davidoff & O' Connell (2000) school-based management provides the base and opportunity for the school to become unique and vibrant, and to realise its own vision and mission.

A guiding principle for school-based management is that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level of authority. For example, principals should not be making decisions about particular classroom practices; teachers should be making these kinds of decisions. Good leadership is, therefore, also about delegation of responsibility, about knowing and trusting your staff enough to give them authority to participate in and manage the change process in such a way that they take ownership. This builds motivation and commitment.

1.3.4 White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System

In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS) to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of 'special needs and support services' in education and training in South Africa. A joint report on the findings was presented to the Minister in November 1997. According to White Paper 6 (2001:5), which emerged from the NCSNET/NCESS process, the central findings of their investigations were:

- that specialised education and support have predominantly been provided for a small percentage of learners with disabilities within special schools and classes;
- that where provided, specialised education and support were provided on a racial basis, with the best human, physical and material resources reserved for whites;
- that most of the learners with disabilities have either fallen outside the system or have been mainstreamed by default;
- that the curriculum and education system as a whole have generally failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in large number of drop-outs and failures;
- that while some attention has been given to the schooling phase with regard to 'special needs and support', the other bands of education have been seriously neglected.

The NCSNET and the NCESS recommended a policy aimed at education for all, fostering the development of an inclusive education and training system that would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process, so that they could

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develop their full potential and participate as equal members of society.

The principles guiding the broad strategies to achieve this vision of inclusive education included the acceptance of principles and values contained in the Constitution and the first White Paper on Education and Training (1995). These are: human rights and social justice for all learners; participation and social integration; equal access to a single education system; access to the curriculum, equity and redress; community responsiveness; and cost effectiveness (Department of Education, 2001:5).

The NCSNET/NCESS report (Department of Education, 2001:6) also suggested that the key strategies to achieve inclusive education included:
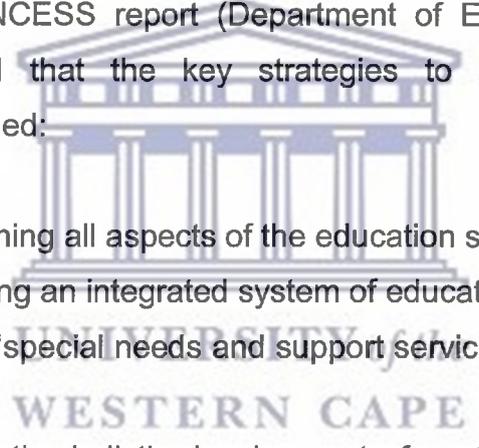
(i)   transforming all aspects of the education system;

(ii)   developing an integrated system of education;

(iii)   infusing 'special needs and support services' throughout the system;

(iv)   pursuing the holistic development of centres of learning to ensure a barrier-free physical environment and a supportive and inclusive psycho-social learning environment, and developing a flexible curriculum to ensure access to all learners;

(v)   promoting the rights and responsibilities of parents, educators, support personnel, and other relevant human resources;

(vi)   developing a community-based support system which includes a preventative and developmental approach to support, and

(vii)   developing funding strategies that ensure redress for historically disadvantaged communities and institutions, sustainability, and ultimately access to education for all learners.

In White Paper 6 (2001) the Ministry states that it believes that the key to reducing barriers to learning within all education and training lies in a strengthened education support service. This strengthened education support service will have, at its centre, new district-based support teams that will comprise staff from provincial district, regional and Head Office and from special schools. The primary function of these District Support Teams (DSTs) will be to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Through supporting teaching, learning and management, they will build the capacity of schools, early childhood and adult basic education and training centres, colleges and higher education institutions, to recognise and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs (Department of Education, 2001).

According to White Paper 6 (2001) the DSTs will first be established in 30 districts. The DSTs will help to improve the quality of teaching and be involved in converting special schools into resource centres. These special schools/ resource centres will have two primary responsibilities. Firstly, they will provide specialised services to the targeted mainstream schools. Secondly, they will be integrated into the DSTs so that the personnel from special schools can provide specialised professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to designated full-service and other neighbourhood schools.

According to the Practical Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2002) the key functions of the DST is to assist education institutions, including early childhood centres, schools, further education colleges, and adult learning centres. The team will also identify and address barriers to learning, to promote effective teaching and learning in local institutions. This support also includes both classroom and organisational support, and focuses on providing specialised learner and educator support. (a detailed outline on the primary and secondary targets for these guidelines is provided in Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

1.3.5 Conclusion

Some of the aspects that have changed through the adoption of new policies are outlined in the following table.

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Table 1.1 Policy changes and their implications

What has changed?	What are the implications of the change?
1. There are new laws, such as the South African Schools Act (1996)	1. Schools must manage them-selves with the assistance of parents and the community and the support of the Department of Education.
2. There is a new programme called Curriculum 2005	2. Teachers must teach in new and different ways.
3. There is a shift towards school-based management.	3. This means a shifting from a large, bureaucracy with the focus on control, to a more flexible organisation. Schools have more power over their own curriculum, budget and personnel.
4. The development of a new policy on inclusive education (White Paper 6)	4. Schools have to become inclusive: They have to respond to the diverse learning needs amongst learners and address barriers to learning and development. Support systems at district and institution levels need to be strengthened and developed.

The WCED is facing great challenges. Most importantly, the formation of a new organisation having to implement new national

policies and develop provincial policies and structures which will strengthen ongoing support to schools.

If schools are expected to become independent organisations, then the rest of the education system also needs to change and develop its capacity to help schools to do this. The WCED has therefore revised its organisational structure in order to provide an effective service in the future (Davidoff & O 'Connell, 2000).

1.4   THE DECENTRALISATION PROCESS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

1.4.1 The SEED and STEDS Project

The Systemic Enhancement for Education (SEED) Pilot programme was initiated late in 1997 when the WCED was on the verge of implementing what was called a "Transitional De-centralisation Model". As mentioned earlier, this model was developed after the amalgamation of the four departments in the province into a single WCED, and was intended to be the means of ensuring the effective delivery of administrative services to schools.

The SEED Programme was a partnership between the Teachers In-service Project (TIP), an NGO based in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape, and the International Movement Towards Educational Change (IMTEC), in collaboration with the WCED. In January 2000, when the WCED task-team took full ownership of the SEED programme, the SEED Programme was renamed the STEDS (Systemic Transformation for Education Development and Support Programme).

The broad aims of the SEED/STEDS programme in the WCED were to develop a bureaucracy that is: responsive to the need of its

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schools; fluid and creative; and recognises and supports schools as the locus of educational change (Robinson, Langhan, Lazarus & Moolla, 2001). These aims were informed by the following understanding of system change and de-centralisation. System de-centralisation represents an opportunity and challenge that should be far more profound than the simple reallocation of roles, reporting lines and redrafting of organograms. It represents a major change of thinking and action, from control to support, from telling to listening, from punishing failure to rewarding experimentation, from dependency and resistance to responsibility, interdependence and teamwork. It represents both a difficult challenge and a simple opportunity (Krafftt, 1998).

This process of transformation entailed philosophical, structural and practical changes to the education system. The anticipated result of this change was that there would ultimately be devolution of power down to school level where schools take responsibility for their everyday functioning to the extent that staff takes ownership of schools regarding operations, become critical practitioners, become reflective in their approach to education matters, and develop a sense of autonomy.

After extensive consultation within the top management of the WCED, it was agreed by all parties that a programme be developed to facilitate system change in the province. This meant change at all levels of the system in order to provide appropriate support for ongoing school improvement and development. TIP had been providing organisational development support to schools and other educational institutions in order to assist them in the process of building their capacity to become learning organisations. The SEED Programme was based on the understanding that the ongoing development of any school needs effective support and care from

the broader education system. The SEED Programme, therefore, worked at all levels of the schooling system: the classroom; the school; the District Office and the Head Office of the WCED. The IMTEC has been operating internationally for the past 30 years, and has also provided support at all levels of education systems in various countries. One of the strong beliefs held by IMTEC is that, if schools became learning organisations, then the structures that support them also need to develop this capacity.

Various options were considered by a group of top management members of the WCED who formed the Decentralisation Committee. The first option was to go back to centralisation, where all functions are centralised and would be housed at Head Office. The second option was to decentralise completely, which meant to de-centralise to District Office level. The third option was to decentralise partially, that is, to decentralise certain functions to district offices, and to retain other functions at Head Office. The fourth option was to decentralise to those schools which were able to perform such functions, while supporting schools which were not in a position to do so.

The Decentralisation Committee accepted the school-based management approach as the ultimate goal, and therefore adopted the fourth option referred to above. The majority of schools were incapable of school-based management at this stage, and required a process of capacity building. Even a vague understanding of school-based management must imply a reduction in the purely service function of the WCED. However, departmental decentralisation could also result in an increase in bureaucratic functioning, rather than a decrease. School-based management, as well as any implication arising from the South African Schools Act (1996), implies a change from control towards 'enablement'

(TIP 1998a).

To assist the WCED in its transformation process, the SEED/STEDS programme provided a systemic and training intervention which aimed to:

(i)   build the capacity of the WCED to provide effective support for schools, including attitudinal changes;
(ii)   facilitate cultural and structural changes;
(iii)   provide skills development facilitators at schools;
(iv)   reawaken the will to change;
(vi)   integrate and bring coherence to a fragmented system;
(vii)   assist the WCED and schools to become learning organisations;
(viii) breathe life into the system so that all aspects and levels are coherent;
(ix)   build understanding and management of the change processes at all levels (TIP, 1998a:34).

1.4.2 Education Management and Development Centres (EMDCs)

The WCED decentralised by establishing seven EMDCs. Four of the EMDCs are in the metropolitan region of Cape Town, and three are in the rural areas. Their distribution is as follows:

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Fig.1.3 Education Management and Development Centres in the Western Cape Education Department

URBAN AREAS	
Metropole Central (Mowbray)	Metropole East (Kuils River)
Metropole North (Bellville)	Metropole South (Mitchell's Plain)

RURAL AREAS		
Breë River/ Overberg (Worcester)	South Cape/ Karoo (George)	West Coast / Winelands (Paarl)
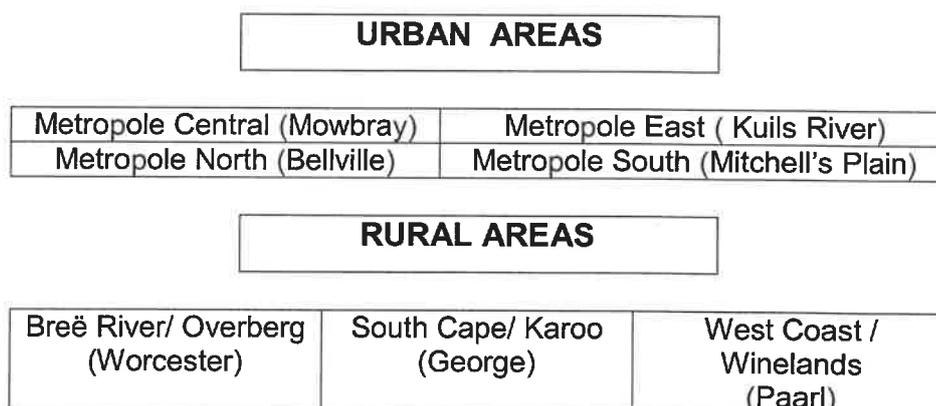
The new EMDC structures have replaced existing area offices, and are intended to facilitate communication between and coherence amongst school support services. It was envisaged that through their restructured organisation, EMDCs would offer more systemic, co-ordinated and holistic support services to schools, thereby breaking through what has often been a fragmented approach to supporting school development. In this regard, it was hoped that the EMDCs would contribute to schools building the capacity to manage their own developmental needs.
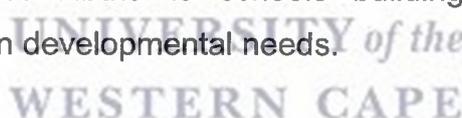
The WCED has developed a matrix management system which would enable the project leader to pool resources from any disciplines needed in the EMDC. In a specific project e.g. in a child abuse case, a social worker and psychologist would sourced from a pool of the sub-directorate for Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs (ELSEN).

The EMDCs are responsible and accountable for the provision of support to schools and other learning sites. They must support all ordinary public schools, ELSEN schools, technical colleges; Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centres and Early Childhood Development (ECD) Institutions.

The services they offer include:

- Curriculum development and support (CDS);
- Specialised learner and educator support (SLES);
- Institutional management and governance (IMG); and
- Administrative services, which includes labour relations assistance, internal administrative service and institutional development and support for schools defined under Section 20 and 21 of the South African Schools Act (1996). According to Section 20 schools can only control the funds they generate. The norms and standard for section 20 schools is allocated and retained by the Department and used to pay municipal and learning support material (LSP) expenditure of the school. This means that the school does not have control of all the functions regarding the governance of it. A Section 21 school is a school that has self-governance. This means that the school governs itself by taking control of all the funds that it receives. The norm and standard allocation that the school receives from the department is paid into the school bank account for it to apply as required.

The EMDC is responsible for the following support functions at the intermediate level, i.e. pertaining specifically to enablement, empowerment and support to schools:

- Curriculum Research, development, implementation, support, assessment and exams;
- Psycho-social support;
- Educational Resource material research, development, reproduction and distribution;
- Education technology;
- Education library and information services;
- Inclusive education;

- Institutional development, management co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation as well as staff support;
- Input into quality assurance processes;
- Input into the processes regarding the provision of buildings;

The main difference between the nine old area offices and the seven new EMDCs is that the former rendered unco-ordinated development and support, in an ad hoc manner that was not sustainable. Only circuit managers and some administrative personnel were part of the regional offices, whereas the EMDCs now have personnel who can render services across the educational support spectrum.

The emerging notion of the EMDC is that it can assist schools and teachers to address identified personal, professional and organisational needs. This is crucial as schools take on more and more responsibilities. In a situation where a school's development needs are shifting and changing, there is a great need for support. The EMDC also promotes parental involvement in schools through school governance, while local participation in the WCED injects policies such as the Safe Schools Project, and building a culture of teaching and learning in schools and local communities.

In the face of pressing needs to address barriers to learning, and recognizing that EMDC's cannot do it alone, educators and policy makers have called for a rebuilding of a connection between community partners in order to provide a close-knit web of services and resources. This has been demonstrated to make a positive difference for all at risk children and youth and those who needed support (Gronski & Pigg 2000).

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1.5. DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC AND CO-ORDINATED APPROACH TO SUPPORT: THE CHALLENGES OF INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

The report of the NCSNET/NCESS (Department of Education, 1997) throws some light on the notion of holistic and integrated support services. The report suggests that different government departments and other sectors need to work together to provide support to learners. Partnerships between relevant stakeholders should therefore be supported. The report also makes reference to the following practical implications of an inter-sectoral approach:

- Structures need to be developed at all levels of education governance to facilitate co-operative governance between relevant government departments and to bring relevant professionals and stakeholders together, at local level, for policy planning and practice. This would include inter-departmental committees and stakeholder forums;
- Clear lines of accountability and responsibility – in terms of planning, execution and funding – need to be developed. For example, with inter-departmental collaboration, the department with the major responsibility would become the 'lead' department in the team, employing core personnel and establishing and co-ordinating partnerships with other sectors;
- Clear procedures and processes need to be developed to facilitate optimal teamwork at all levels;
- Relevant Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) should be involved in a co-ordinated partnership with centres of learning, and other levels of the education system (Department of Education, 1997:23).

Definitions of inter-sectoral collaboration stress the principle of working together. Dettmer, Dyck & Thurston (1996:38) define

collaboration as "an interactive process which brings together that which is diverse to execute plans for common goals as well as generate solutions for complex problems". The (collaboration) process draws together different sectors, disciplines and professions that work within a common conceptual framework (Mostert, 1996). The players bring to the process resources, perspectives and knowledge (Lazarus, Moolla & Reddy 1996; Dettmer et al 1996; Gronski & Pigg, 2000) which together act as a catalyst for change and improvement (Dettmer et al 1996).

The Draft Theoretical Framework of the WCED (1999:25) argues that "inter-sectoral collaboration requires the transformation of bureaucratic relationships". The latter means a new sense of form and order, people having a different sense of themselves and the work they do, as well as the creation of interdependence even if people have different roles and functions within the educational management system. Inter-sectoral collaboration implies a process of grappling with this interdependence, recognising what the areas that need change are and finding ways to positively and effectively address the problem areas. It is a call to thinking and acting holistically and systematically.

With regard to interpersonal challenges and group dynamics, the issue of power in the context of inter-sectoral collaboration is a central concern in many writings (Brabeck & Walsh 1997; Dettmer et al 1996; Goren & Afable, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994). This includes questions about who is in control, and reflects concerns about territory or turf and job security in relation to this. Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Mostert (1996) explain that reaching consensus and compromise can be difficult, especially when, as Brabeck & Walsh (1997:42) put it, "there is a fear of losing professional identity or a lack of willingness to give away the 'expert

cloak". Tensions between interdependency and professional autonomy therefore do sometimes arise.

Potential problems can arise when people work collaboratively. Most often resulting from a lack of understanding about roles, battles for role equality (Dettmer et al, 1996 and Mostert, 1996), poor communication, and a reluctance to express opinions (Brabeck & Walsh 1997; Levin & Greene, 1994; Mostert, 1996). Goren & Afable (1994) have suggested that unless one's awareness is heightened, disrespect, misunderstanding and mistrust are likely to impact on service provision.

Although inter-sectoral collaboration is intended to celebrate difference, Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) argue that competition between value systems and differing perspectives can also emerge as a key challenge. The aim must therefore be to value difference (Dettmer et al 1996).

Intriligator (1994) provides a useful framework for understanding inter-sectoral collaboration. She refers to organisational structures that can be classified on a continuum that highlights three aspects in any kind of inter-sectoral work. These are co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation, all of which are crucial to the success of any efforts to work across boundaries, professions, disciplines or sectors. She distinguishes between these terms as follows: *Collaboration* emphasises working together and problem solving with a common goal. *Co-ordination* focuses on the management and organisation of activities, including the systematic pooling together of different individuals and aspects of an exercise. *Co-operation* draws on the important relationship dynamic, which essentially is about people talking to and understanding one another. She explains that the most effective way of working would

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incorporate all three facets, i.e. collaboration, co-ordination and co-operation.

According to Levin & Greene (1994), Mostert (1996), Robinson et al (2002), the literature is clear that inter-sectoral collaboration is not without its difficulties and challenges. The problems highlighted by various writers can be clustered into five core categories, namely; resources, organisational issues, group dynamics, differing perspectives and challenges that emerge out of inter-sectoral collaboration as a mode of working.

Intriligator (1994), Levin & Greene (1994) and Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) stress the importance of establishing procedures to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration since, in many organisational contexts, this approach remains 'untried'. This includes planning and reflection. Organisations need to ensure that these elements are developed and incorporated into their very being.

Changing people's ways of looking at the world is often difficult, and may be more easily facilitated if, at a systemic level, collaboration is set as a priority at all levels of government (Intriligator, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Robinson et al 2002). At an individual level, professional awareness, integrity and judgement need to be heightened (Mostert, 1996).

Collaboration is firmly rooted in the South African slogan *Tirisano* (working together) which the Minister of Education has put forward to give effect to his *Call to Action* (Department of Education, 2000). The Department of Education therefore recommends this plan to all South Africans, and calls upon us to join hands and work collaboratively with other government departments and with civil

society to achieve the goals and targets set out in the implementation plan for Tirisano.

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to examine how one MFT in a new EMDC, in one area of the Western Cape, is attempting to provide a more holistic and co-ordinated form of support to schools.

The questions that are addressed include:

- What is the MFT role-players' understanding of 'holistic and co-ordinated support'?
- How is the MFT, in this EMDC structure of education support, providing a more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools?
- How does the MFT work at present?
- How does the MFT work together?
- What is the nature of the MFT's collaboration with other government departments?
- How does the MFT collaborate with the community?
- How does the MFT collaborate with the schools /education institutions?
- How does co-ordination take place in a MFT?

The research was conducted within the framework of action research, which focuses on both processes and outcomes. The primary purpose of the research is therefore formative in that its emphasis is on identifying aspects of the EMDCs that are working well or that are problematic, so that modification or improvement can take place.

The qualitative method was used to obtain data from the selected

MFT. The purpose was to extract information about the support providers' perceptions and experiences of a MFT in the EMDC. Interviews were conducted with 20 members of personnel representing the various support services. The 20 interviews conducted included people from the four disciplines of Curriculum Development and Support, Specialized Learner and Educator Support, Institutional Management and Governance and the Administrative Service. The support providers were asked to reflect on the kind of collaboration that existed between various service providers and about their perceptions and experiences of service delivery after the EMDCs had been operational for at least a year and a half. The interview data was analysed through content analysis which is qualitative data analysis.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THESIS

In **Chapter 1,** the researcher examines the process through which the WCED has moved from a centralized to a more decentralized and co-ordinated support service by establishing EMDCs. The chapter also briefly discusses the South African context, providing a brief historical overview and description of relevant policy challenges. It also describes the decentralisation process followed in the Western Cape. Finally this chapter outlines and provides details of the research framework, aims, questions, and research methodology of the study.

In **Chapter 2** a literature review is undertaken to explore the concept of inter-sectoral collaboration in relation to education support. This includes an overview of the policy framework in South Africa, and an in-depth exploration of the challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration.

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Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research approach, research design, data collection methods, data processing methods and an ethics statement.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis and interpretation of the data obtained under the categories of analysis provided by the research questions.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings as well as recommendations for the improvement of inter-sectoral collaboration within EMDCs.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC AND CO-ORDINATED SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS: THE CHALLENGES OF INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

2.1   INTRODUCTION

According to Robinson et al (2002) inter-sectoral collaboration is an interactive process, which brings together that which is diverse, to execute plans for common goals as well as generate solutions for complex problems. The process draws together different sectors, disciplines and professions that work together in order to cross boundaries (Dettmer et al, 1996), share mutual aspirations, and work within a common conceptual framework (Mostert, 1996).

Inter-sectoral collaboration refers to various forms of partnerships across particular traditional boundaries: inter-ministerial; inter-departmental; inter-disciplinary; inter-professional, and inter-sectoral (e.g. parents, teachers and learners). Inter-sectoral collaboration also refers to the inclusion of perspectives, interests, skills and knowledge of the key stakeholders or role-players in education: teachers; administrators; students; parents and community experts (including non-government organisations) in the process of conceptualizing and addressing problems and development needs. Such collaboration is not only necessary from a democratic point of view, but also with the aim of ensuring that needs are more fully understood and addressed.

The aim of Education Management Development Centres (EMDC) is to offer a new organisational model for supporting school development. In the Western Cape, EMDCs are developing Multi-

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Functional Teams (MFTs) consisting of circuit managers, curriculum advisors, specialised learner and education support (SLES) advisors and administrative staff and in some cases also, non-government organisations (NGOs). Through the MFTs it is believed that the EMDCs will offer more systemic, co-ordinated and holistic support services to schools, thereby transforming through what has been a fragmented approach to supporting school development. It is hoped that the EMDC's will contribute to schools building their own capacity to manage their developmental needs.

This chapter will examine relevant literature on inter-sectoral collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination, within a framework of a holistic and co-ordinated support system to schools.

This chapter is organized as follows:

- Policy framework
- Development of MFTs in the EMDC
- Challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration
- Framework for this research

2.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

According to the Implementation Plan for Tirisano, (Department of Education, 2000) collaboration is captured in the slogan 'Tirisano' which means 'Working Together'. The Minister of Education has put forward his Call to Action: "As we prepare for the new century, we have to work collaboratively in a multi-functional fashion, in pursuing the goals that derived from our concurrent mandate for education delivery, as outlined in the Constitution" (Department of Education, 2000:3).

The White Paper 6 on Building an Inclusive Education and Training

System (Department of Education, 2001) commits itself to the development of a "holistic and integrative concept of Education Support Service (ESS)" (Department of Education, 2001:29), which encompasses "all education relating to health, social work, vocational and general guidance and counseling, and other psychological programmes and services, and services to learners with special education needs (LSEN) in mainstream schools" (Department of Education, 2000:47). The commitment to a 'holistic and integrative'approach incorporates the principle of service integration identified as a basic principle of education support services by Lazarus & Donald (1994). The principle of service integration relates primarily to inter-sectoral collaboration required to understand and address all aspects of development. A holistic approach to development requires the insights and skills of various disciplines, professions, and education sectors. This principle of service integration is also mentioned in the first White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995).

The White Paper 6 on Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001) commits itself to establishing District Support Teams (DSTs) as a central part of the overall strengthening of education support services in South Africa. DSTs refer to an integrated support service, provided at district level, by support providers employed by the Department of Education, drawing from the expertise of further and higher education and local communities, special schools and specialized settings in the area. The DST will form a social network of different kinds of relationships, among team members and schools as they go about their work, in the interest of the learners.

The key functions of these DSTs according to the Practical Guidelines for the implementation of Inclusive Education

(Department of Education, 2002) include rendering classroom and organisational support, focusing on providing specialised learner and educator support, as well as curriculum and institutional development and administrative support to all educational institutions. The latter refers to pre-school centres, primary and secondary schools, special schools, further education and training colleges and adult learning centres.

According to the Practical Guidelines referred to above (Department of Education, 2001), these guidelines should lead to a practical framework and some strategies to assist in the establishment and strengthening of these DSTs in a comprehensive way. These guidelines focus particularly on how the historically fragmented support provided to schools, colleges, early childhood and adult learning centres can be better co-ordinated so that a more holistic and integrated approach to support can be realized.

The key challenges for the development of DSTs, according to the Practical Guidelines (Department of Education, 2002:96) include:
- Establishing new, District-Support Teams where they do not currently exist;
- Further development of existing District-Support Teams;
- Integrating the special schools into these teams, and drawing the growing expertise from full-service institutions into a support provision network;
- Creating a pool of resource people to serve at local sites of learning;
- Drawing on a broad range of 'community resources' and other learning sites to provide the support;
- Developing the capacity of members, of district and institutional-level support teams, as well as the special schools/resource centres, to identify barriers to learning, and to develop effective

strategies to address these challenges, for the purpose of promoting effective teaching and learning. This includes moving away from seeing and responding to problems that focus on the learner only, towards an approach that tries to understand and respond to problems from a broader 'systems' view, which acknowledges that problems and solutions can be located at different points in a system;

- Developing the capacity of all support service providers, to provide a holistic and comprehensive support service, including the ability to 'work together' in co-ordinated and collaborative ways. This involves moving from the currently fragmented, unco-ordinated approach to an integrated approach that brings together the different role players, to understand and address barriers to learning.

These guidelines are relevant to all involved in providing support to schools, colleges, early childhood and adult learning centres. In addition to those providing support, the guidelines are also relevant to those receiving the support. These are schools, colleges, early childhood and adult learning centres, and their governing bodies and institutional-level support teams in particular.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS IN EDUCATION AND MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE'S IN THE WESTERN CAPE

In the District Development Strategy Plan of Quality Learning Programme (QLP) EMDC officials and Management of School Training Project (MSTP, 2001:2), the Metropole East EMDC states their vision and mission as follows: "To empower learning organisations to give learners the opportunity to develop

optimally". The mission statement confirms the aim which is to provide relevant, integrated support services and to build the capacity of learning organisations to take responsibility for improving their learners' performance.

2.3.1 The role of the Education Management and Development Centre

As outlined in Chapter 1, the SEED/ STEDS Project aimed to assist the WCED in the process of transforming itself into an organisation better equipped to support schools within the framework of a number of new policies, including the South African Schools Act (1996).

The STEDS process led to the formation of the EMDCs, a new organisational model for supporting school development in a more systematic and co-ordinated way. Co-ordinated by EMDC directors, these structures contain and co-ordinate multi-disciplinary teams, consisting of departmental personnel, school clinic personnel, and administrators, together with other appropriate government and community service providers and NGOs (see Chapter 1 for a full history of EMDCs). This is in line with the new policy and guidelines for the establishment and development of DSTs (Department of Education, 2002).

2.3.2 Multi-Functional Teams within the context of inter-sectoral collaboration

Inter-sectoral collaboration within a MFT provides an important opportunity for a more integrated, holistic view of local needs and resources. The term 'Multi-Functional Team' refers to the different disciplines working collaboratively in small teams within

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the EMDC. The MFT consists of personnel from the four pillars within the EMDC, i.e. Curriculum Development and Support (CDS), Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES). Institutional Management and Governance (IMG), and the Administrative personnel. The MFTs are currently structured in different ways in the different EMDCs. Different activities bring different sectors together, to provide an important space for sharing ideas and networking, across the traditional sectoral boundaries.

The MFT brings different resources, perspectives and skills to the process. The MFT works across disciplinary and professional boundaries, as a way of pooling and integrating the kind of support they are able to offer schools. The team takes joint responsibility for support. One of the principles of the MFT within the EMDC is to work collaboratively to identify the elements of quality, and the standards and means for achieving quality, in the development of schools.

Working effectively with other professionals in a MFT structure requires good communication (Goren & Afable, 1994; Grotski & Pigg, 2000), social awareness, and goal-orientated professional behaviour. Teams need to include individuals from different professional backgrounds and with different types of experience (Girouard & Igoe, 1994), thereby increasing the potential for considering a wide range of intervention options and blending complementary, individual strengths, as well as tempering extreme positions. The team shares the success or failure of any proposed decision for intervention. Mostert (1996) highlights that educational problems are complex and involve several specialty areas addressing the problem collectively. This increases the chances of successful solutions being

identified, implemented, and evaluated. For a MFT to be effective co-ordination is crucial. According to Intriligator (1994) and Ward (1994) time for planning and reflection are important, as well, as development, and evaluation.

Teams must have a shared vision of their aim. Vision provides important direction and also motivation to reach the aspired goal. A multi-disciplinary team's vision is usually linked to its mission, which is indicative of the reasons for its existence (Smith, 1997). Cultivating a culture of shared decision-making at work requires the team to actively involve all stakeholders in decision-making processes. Collaborators must talk to one another and develop experiences and understanding that is common to all, creating a shared language and meaning.

Motivation is the spark plug of team performance – it inspires commitment, innovation, and teamwork. But motivation cannot be taken for granted. Team leaders and members need to be aware of the factors affecting motivation and the techniques they can use to enhance and maintain motivation levels. Effective teamwork requires being sensitive to the needs of others in the group. This includes being aware of the fact that we all need to be needed and valued, and that we all have fears that can interfere with our ability to make an optimal contribution. We must respect the resources others bring to the table to solve a problem and see all the members of the team as equal partners.

Communication is the essence of successful teamwork. Effective communication is the starting point for understanding, interpretation, and action. On the other hand, ineffective team communication can lead to misunderstanding, misinterpretation,

and either inaction or inappropriate action. Effective team communication involves two sets of responsibilities; that of the sender of the message, and that of the receiver. Techniques include paraphrasing, reflecting on the implications of the message, inviting contributions, and reflecting on the underlying feelings. These techniques contribute to closing the communication loop, ensuring that team members not only hear each other, but also confirm their understanding, and as a result, take appropriate actions (Smith, 1997).

Team growth is a gradual process. According to Smith (1997) one simple and effective way of looking at team development is to see it in four stages: forming; storming; norming and performing. In the forming stage, the team members need to explore and define acceptable group behaviour. Storming is probably the most difficult stage for the team. Some members can become testy, blaming others in the team for small errors, others may become more assertive and over zealous. In the norming stage, team members find that they can accept the other team members, conflicts reduce and the development of ground rules are seen as important and realistic. At the performing stage, the team has really settled down to the task. They have discovered the strengths and the weaknesses of the team, and the roles that each can play productively.

Teamwork means sharing power. This necessitates determining what the team will be responsible for, their authority, and what management's role will be. Teamwork typically creates leader and follower roles.

It is necessary that the team constantly transforms itself to create a better future, to empower those who are

disempowered. This involves devolving power where it matters most on the ground to 'subordinates'. Devolution of power can only be achieved through shared power (Pokras, 1995) which, unfortunately, often assumes a political meaning. Notwithstanding, empowerment is regarded as a productive strategy to get the best from all in a team.

Chang (1994) confirms that conflict is inevitable, but that teams can go a long way toward managing conflict by taking steps to minimize its occurrence. If team members have a consistent approach, or model for dealing with it, conflict can be used as a cue for new ideas, or to bring problems to the surface.

According to Pokras (1995) it is important to develop a tailored set of team ground rules, which are statements of basic values that a team establishes to serve as behavioural guidelines so that individual team members know how to interact and support one another. You can use them to standardize procedure, for time management, work assignments, logistics procedure, discussion, creativity, reporting, respect courtesy and problem solving.

It is important that professionals take every opportunity to promote and model the positive effects of inter-professional collaboration. Diverse backgrounds and levels of experience are a distinct advantage for both novice and expert professionals.

If a team wants to succeed in promoting a collective culture, they should acquire interpersonal skills that will assist them in getting actively engaged in collaborative efforts. Such a requirement is a necessity in a professional relationship as a

foundation is created when two or more people work together. This leads to a growing understanding of other people, their motives or abilities, as well as their trustworthiness (Pokras, 1995).

2.4   CHALLENGES OF INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

2.4.1   Definitions of collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination

The literature on inter-sectoral collaboration is rife with buzzwords such as collaboration, integration, co-ordination, coalition, consortia, and co-operation.

In this chapter, I am specifically concerned with the terms co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration and how they relate to the efforts of the various agencies that are working together to better serve schools. In order to be effective within an inter-sectoral collaborative context, people, especially those formulating guidelines for working collaboratively, must understand these terms.

Intriligator (1994) provides a useful framework for understanding inter-sectoral collaboration. She refers to organisational structures that can be classified on a continuum that highlights three aspects in any kind of inter-sectoral work. These are co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation, all of which are crucial to the success of any efforts to work across boundaries, professions, disciplines or sectors.

She differentiates between them in the following way. Collaboration emphasizes working together on problem-solving with a common goal. Co-ordination focuses on the management

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and organisation of activities, the systematic pulling together of different individuals and aspects of an exercise. Co-operation draws in the important relationship dynamic, which essentially is about people talking to and understanding each other.

Intriligator (1994) explains that although the most effective way of working would be to incorporate all three facets, essentially collaboration includes co-operation but may not necessarily be well co-ordinated. Co-ordination on the other hand may not include collaboration since it is strictly focused on management and organisation.

West (1990) defines educational collaboration as an interactive planning or problem solving process involving two or more team members. Team interactions throughout the process are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and open communication, consideration of each issue or problem from an ecological perspective, consensual decision-making, pooling of personal resources and expertise, and joint ownership of the issue or problem being addressed. Fried & Cook (1992) also conceptualise collaboration as sharing resources to reach a common goal. Sharing is a basic and important component, reflecting organisational variables generally overlooked in attempts to understand and practice collaboration.

Service integration in education relates primarily to an understanding of inter-sectoral collaboration in the interest of all aspects of development. This holistic approach to development requires insight into various disciplines, professions, and educator sectors. Education support services need to be co-ordinated, to ensure that all the respective professional areas complement, rather than work against, one another. Health

workers, psychologists, social workers, learning support advisors, specialized education specialists and teachers, guidance counsellors and teachers all need to find ways to consolidate their resources around their common goals. This does not mean a blurring of boundaries to the detriment of specific knowledge and skills that each of these areas bring to the process, but rather draws together these resources in a rational and focused way (Intriligator, 1994; Ward, 1994).

Mostert (1996) highlights the increasing complexity of education service delivery. Not only are the resources scarce (Intriligator, 1994; Walsh, Howard & Buckley 1999), but as Brabeck & Walsh (1997), Levin & Green (1994), Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Ward (1994) argue, current and previous methods are insufficient for the level and extent of demand, if we begin to seriously acknowledge new needs. The education system alone has neither the ability nor the political clout to address the full range of children's problems (Jehl & Kirst, 1992 cited in Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994). There is a need for co-ordination (Intriligator, 1994) to minimize duplication and take serious account of the needs, abilities and limitations of all participants (Brabeck & Walsh; 1997, Levin & Green, 1994; Mostert, 1996).

Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Walsh & Ward (1994) state emphatically that schools cannot make enough of a difference on their own, so support is imperative, and whatever content and methodology is adopted, inter-sectoral collaboration needs to be the facilitating mode of action.

In summary, inter-sectoral collaboration refers to different sectors, disciplines and professions working together. The mission of the EMDC should therefore be to get people to work

together, in order to conceptualise holistically and address issues comprehensively. They need to realise that they need each other for the purposes of pooling various resources, perspectives, skills and knowledge. They need each other to be well-informed, to avoid confusion, and to support the schools in a more effective way. This means that the pre and in-service education and training of the professionals concerned should include training in inter-sectoral collaboration, preparing them to work optimally within a team context.

2.4.2 Benefits and strengths of an inter-sectoral approach

As mentioned above the concept of inter-sectoral collaboration refers to the working together of persons or groups representing various formal or informal constituencies. Within education support this includes the professional areas of: school health; physio- and occupational therapy; speech and listening and language teachers; school social workers; specialized education; general and vocational guidance and counselling; and other psychological services. It also includes other education sectors such as parents, teachers, students, youth and other community resources.

Inter-sectoral collaboration has not been the primary approach to support provision in South Africa in the past (Lazarus et al 1996). So if change is necessary, the question may be asked, why this route? Why work in an inter-sectoral way?

There are various reasons why different sectors should work together. It includes the need to develop a comprehensive understanding of issues, as well as multiple-level strategies for addressing issues. Where a common goal is evident across

particular sectors, collective planning and action needs to be facilitated (Lazarus & Reddy, 1995).

Intriligator (1994:74) cites the following reasons why inter-sectoral collaboration is necessary:

- Working inter-sectorally will eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services;
- It enables the acknowledgment of diverse client backgrounds;
- Resources are efficiently utilized;
- An integrated and holistic understanding of issues is promoted;
- A comprehensive approach within the context of education support services includes different ministerial responsibilities, particularly Education and Health, which need to be pulled together for the purpose of achieving common aims. This includes the infusion of comprehensive school health concerns in the general curriculum. This necessitates collaboration in terms of planning, development and evaluation of programmes;
- There is a need to bring policy-makers and influencers together to determine how support and health are being addressed at policy level;
- Inter-disciplinary research is needed to develop a comprehensive understanding and approach. In particular, inter-disciplinary research is needed to understand determinants of health and education and to work around issues in an integrative way.

The pooling of knowledge, skills, and resources from a range of professionals with diverse experiences, allows for a broader

conceptualization of problems. The questions asked and solutions generated are broadened and multiplied. Because more facets of an issue can be explored, collaboration can provide an increased understanding of the complexities of a situation (Phillips & McCullough, 1990). Collaboration extends beyond brainstorming ideas and allocating resources, to monitoring, evaluating, and refining educational programmes and services. All members of the education service are therefore accountable for ensuring more quality educational services for all the schools.

Sharing of ideas (Intriligator 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994) and opportunities for mentoring (Mostert, 1996) are some of the benefits of the inter-sectoral approach, as these enhance knowledge and professional stimulation. One is able, according to Mostert (1996) and Gronski & Pigg (2000), to develop problem-solving capabilities beyond one's own discipline. Gronski & Pigg (2000), Mostert (1996) and Walsh et al (1999) argue that inter-sectoral collaboration creates and strengthens relationships, because with increased communication comes collective responsibility, decreased chances of misunder-standings and greater trust. All contributions are valued and respected (Walsh et al, 1999) so that one's work provides a means of confirming one's personal worth, and professional self-esteem (Mostert, 1996).

Gronski & Pigg (2000), Intriligator (1994), Mostert (1996), Walsh et al (1999) and Ward (1994) explain that inter-sectoral collaboration allows for multiple problems to be addressed through multiple-level solutions, by means of a comprehensive understanding of issues that includes prevention and promotion. Inter-sectoral collaboration is encouraged as an

approach because it recognises the inter-connectedness of the person and the environment in which they interact (Walsh & Brabeck, 1997; Levin & Greene, 1994) have suggested that inter-sectoral collaboration may even enhance development, since the development of a child is understood as inextricably linked to home, school and the socio-cultural environment.

The provision of services is enhanced through inter-sectoral collaboration because it facilitates the implementation of system-wide change that is significant and lasting (Walsh et al, 1999; Levin & Greene, 1994). As Intriligator (1994) and Walsh et al (1999) explain, it is through inter-sectoral collaboration that efforts are co-ordinated and fragmentation eliminated through the integration of diverse systems of care. Such systemic change allows each stakeholder a voice in the design and implementation of programmes (Levin & Greene, 1994). Inter-sectoral collaboration taps into knowledge bases, experiences and perspectives of various individuals, weaving in multiple viewpoints and insights (Brabeck & Walsh, 1997; Levin & Greene, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Mostert, 1996, Robinson et al, 2002).

As Levin & Greene (1994), Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994), Mostert (1996), Walsh et al (1999) and Ward (1994) state, interventions are comprehensive and therefore more effective. Programmes are well-tuned to needs because they acknowledge the diverse backgrounds of clients. Goren & Afable (1994), Intriligator (1994), Levin & Greene (1994), Mostert (1996) and DeGraw (1994) recognize the inter-connectedness of various facets of clients' lives and address the needs of the whole person. Inter-sectoral collaboration facilitates better access to service (Intriligator, 1994; Ward,

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1994), resulting in, according to Levin & Greene (1994) and Walsh et al (1994), a greater number of needs being addressed.

Lazarus et al (1996), Mostert (1996) and Walsh et al (1999) identify the pooling of resources, particularly the ability to reach beyond the school for resources, to meet personal and social needs, as the primary organisational gain made through inter-sectoral collaboration. Through decreased duplication of services, finances can be used more efficiently (Ward, 1994), as various components support and sustain one another (DeGraw, 1994).

2.4.3 Challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration

The literature is clear that inter-sectoral collaboration is not without difficulties and challenges. The problems highlighted by various writers can be clustered into five core categories, namely resources, organisational issues, group dynamics, differing perspectives, and other challenges that emerge out of inter-sectoral collaboration as a mode of working (Robinson et al, 2002).

2.4.3.1 Resources

Resources which have been mentioned by various authors are time (Levin & Greene, 1994; Mostert, 1996), finances (Levin & Greene, 1994; Ward, 1994) and human resources (Gronski & Pigg, 2000). Inter-sectoral collaboration can be labour intensive and therefore warrants more human resources. Co-ordination is crucial if inter-sectoral collaboration is to be successful and needs finances. Two activities which are central to inter-sectoral

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collaboration are, time for planning and reflection.

2.4.3.2   Organisational dynamics

Various elements of the organisation require development if inter-sectoral collaboration is to be effectively implemented. Good management policies (DeGraw, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Intriligator, 1994; Dettmer et al, 1996; Lunt, Evans, Norwich & Wedell 1994; Robinson et al, 2002) and policies that promote co-ordination and integration (DeGraw, 1994; Intriligator, 1994) are crucial.

Intriligator (1994), Levin & Greene (1994), Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Robinson et al, (2002) stress the importance of establishing procedures to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration since in many organisational contexts, this inter-sectoral approach remains 'untried'. Levin & Greene (1994) and Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) warn of the 'red tape' which is often created, bringing with it the potential for administrative tensions and difficulties. Organisations need to ensure that these elements are developed and incorporated into their very being.

2.4.3.3   Group dynamics

With regard to group dynamics, the issue of power features dominantly in many writings (Brabeck & Walsh, 1997; Dettmer et al, 1996; Goren & Afable, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Ward, 1994). This includes questions about who is in control and concerns about territory or turf and job security. The dynamics relating to power relations that are raised when different sectors attempt to work together is a challenge that

has to be managed within the team context. Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Mostert (1996) explain that reaching consensus and compromise can be difficult, especially when, as Brabeck & Walsh (1997) put it, there is a fear of losing professional identity, and a lack of willingness to give away the 'expert cloak'. Tensions between inter-dependency and professional autonomy therefore do sometimes arise. Potential problems can arise when people work collaboratively, specifically as a consequence of a lack of understanding about roles, battles for equality (Dettmer et al, 1996 & Mostert, 1996), poor communication and reluctance to express opinions (Brabeck & Walsh, 1997; Levin & Greene, 1994; Mostert, 1996). Mostert & Afable (1994) suggest that unless one's awareness is heightened, disrespect, misunderstanding and mistrust are likely to impact on the service provision.

2.4.3.4   Different perspectives

As inter-sectoral collaboration draws together different perspectives, it is crucial to work on ensuring the compatibility of various approaches (Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994). Specialist bodies of knowledge, while necessary, do create barriers to inter-sectoral collaboration – particularly given the different discourses of the various disciplines. This is an issue which must be addressed if inter-sectoral collaboration is to be successful. Attempts have to be made to communicate across disciplinary terminology and varied sectoral experience (Lazarus et al 1996). Valuing differences and simultaneously highlighting what is common, achieves a good balance. Things like:

- a common definition of the client (Girouard & Igoe, 1994);
- common professional language (Brabeck & Walsh,1997);

- developing a common vision and setting common goals and objectives.

In essence this means that all the relevant stakeholders have an agreed upon understanding of what is meant by the client, that the terminology within the domain of practice is understood by all, and that the mission and aims of the collaboration are the same.

Although inter-sectoral collaboration is intended to celebrate differences, Manley-Casimir& Hall (1994) and Robinson et al (2002) argue that competition between value systems and differing perspectives can emerge as a key challenge. According to Dettmer et al (1996) the aim must be to value differences.

2.4.4 Addressing the challenges: Guidelines for collaboration

Collaboration has as its basis the belief that participants will be trusting, respectful, and share decisions. Collaboration does not take place without conflict. Thus ongoing problem solving has to take place (Levin & Greene, 1994). As Intriligator (1994) and Walsh et al (1999) explain, it is through inter-sectoral collaboration that efforts are co-ordinated and fragmentation eliminated through the integration of diverse systems of care.

Such systemic change allows each stakeholder a voice in the design and implementation of programmes (Levi & Greene, 1994). It taps into the knowledge bases, experiences and perspectives of various individuals, weaving together multiple viewpoints and insights (Brabeck & Walsh, 1997; Levin & Greene, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Mostert, 1996).

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Although the challenges highlighted by various writers may not be easy to address, the literature contains ideas about how to overcome the challenges that may emerge in inter-sectoral collaborative work. These are briefly addressed below.

2.4.4.1 Resources

Since co-ordination is crucial if inter-sectoral collaboration is to be successful, public expenditure needs to be allocated towards this function, an expense which may not have been designated in the past. For example, two activities central to inter-sectoral collaboration are planning and reflection, activities for which time must be allocated, time which previously may not have been budgeted for or managed.

Dettmer et al (1996), Intriligator (1994), Lazarus et al (1996), Lunt et al (1994) and Robinson et al (2002) stress the importance of agreed upon procedures for procuring and sharing adequate resources. This includes time, facilities, funding and human resources to support collaboration. Inter-sectoral collaboration can be labour intensive and therefore warrants more human resources.

2.4.4.2 Organisational dynamics

Putting policy in place is a first step. The structures and mechanisms to support this are, however, just as important (DeGraw, 1994; Goren & Afable 1994; Intriligator, 1994; Walsh et al, 1999). Other structures and procedures noted as crucial include those focusing on communication and decision making (Lunt et al, 1994), administration (Dettmer et al, 1996; Intriligator, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002), monitoring, reflection

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and evaluation (Intriligator, 1994; Lunt et al, 1994; Mostert, 1996; Robinson et al, 2002), and establishing and maintaining accountability (Intriligator, 1994; Ward, 1994). Much of this is better facilitated if supported by those in leadership positions (DeGraw, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Lunt et al, 1994). These need to be individuals with the vision and energy to communicate and mediate a common understanding of organisational structure for all players (Intriligator, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002).

2.4.4.3 Group Dynamics

Facing those challenges that emerge as consequences of group dynamics, involves relationship building as a key goal. Setting ground rules and norms is a first step identified by Gronski & Pigg (1994). Smylie, Crowson, & Chou (1994) highlight the need to clarify roles and appropriate role expectations by delineating tasks and defining boundaries (Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Intriligator, 1994; Dettmer et al, 1996). Also important is the resolution of tensions that may arise in cross-profession interactions (Intriligator, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994). Opportunities need to be created for various dynamics to develop. These include mutual trust (Gronski & Pigg, 2000; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Mostert 1996), communication skills (Goren & Afable, 1994; Gronski & Pigg, 2000; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Mostert, 1996), commitment (DeGraw, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Intriligator, 1994) and participatory decision making (Intriligator, 1994). Once this foundation is laid, credibility and visibility is shared, information is disseminated rather than withheld (Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Intriligator, 1994), and people begin to validate and respect each other and negotiate and resolve

differences (Goren & Afable, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994).

According to Pokras (1995) a key to addressing the group dynamics within inter-sectoral collaboration is through building effective teams. A team is a group of willing and trained individuals who are united around a common goal, depending on each other to achieve it, and share responsibility for their task. An effective team may be defined as one that achieves its aim in the most efficient way and is then ready to take on more challenging tasks.

Inter-sectoral collaboration in education works when teams:

- Identify what is needed, who should be involved to address these needs and who is available to respond to the needs;
- Identify who should provide the 'lead', co-coordinating role in the team, on the basis of whoever has the major responsibility;
- Understand and pursue the political and bureaucratic process that needs to be followed to draw in the appropriate people;
- Ensure that the EMDC recognizes and appreciates inter-sectoral work (Robinson et al, 2002: 54).

Chang (1994:26) argues that the following needs to be in place for a team to be effective:

- Working collaboratively to identify the elements of quality, and the standards and means for achieving quality, in the development of schools;
- Setting of team ground rules, which are statements of basic values that a team establishes to serve as behavioural

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guidelines, so that individual team members know how to interact and support one another;

- Teams dealing with a collective culture requiring interpersonal skills that will assist them in becoming actively involved in collaborative efforts;

Understanding is the essence of successful teamwork. Effective communication is the starting point for understanding, interpretation, and action. This means that:

- There needs to be opportunities for teams to draw on each person's strengths and uniqueness and to learn from each other;
- Team members have to recognize their uniqueness from one another and accept them for what they are, and try to adapt accordingly, and accept on what they cannot change;
- Motivation is the spark plug of team performance - it inspires commitment, innovation, and teamwork (Chang, 1994:35).

A team is a group of willing and trained individuals who are:

- United around a common goal;
- Depending on each other to achieve it;
- Structured to work together;
- Sharing responsibility for their task;
- Empowered to implement decisions (Pokras, 1995:15).

Teams should include individuals from different experiences, thereby increasing the potential for considering a wide range of intervention options and blending complementary individual strengths, as well as tempering extreme positions (Goren & Afable, 1994; Gronski & Pigg, 2000; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994).

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2.4.4.4   Different perspectives

As inter-sectoral collaboration draws together different perspectives, it is crucial to work on ensuring the compatibility of various approaches (Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994). Team members must learn to speak the language of other disciplines to function in a collaborative model. There is, therefore, a need for inter-disciplinary collaborative training for professionals providing support to schools.

Valuing differences and simultaneously highlighting what is common achieves a good balance. The latter includes a common definition of the recipient school, common professional language, a common vision, and common goals and objectives (Brabeck & Walsh, 1997; DeGraw, 1994; Lazarus et al, 1996; Robinson et al, 2002). Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Robinson et al (2002) stress the need to understand and respect each other's expertise, something which is only possible if you become aware of others' talents. DeGraw (1994), Mostert (1996) and Robinson et al (2002) describe the important role played by those in leadership who need to help people to see beyond their individual disciplines, and to understand the complementary value of their respective roles. One way of structuring and managing this aspect of the collaborative effort, is to establish guidelines within the organisation about what to expect and report (Smylie et al, 1994).

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2.5   FRAMEWORK FOR THIS RESEARCH

In this research, account is given of interviews that were conducted with support providers in one MFT and one EMDC within the WCED, exploring their experiences, perceptions and reflections of support provision. This includes what their understanding of 'holistic and co-ordinated' support is and what the purpose of this support is.

The second section of the research focuses on how the MFT is working at present. Specific questions include: Do they have a shared vision and common goals?; Who is involved?; and what types of service do they provide?

The third section of the research involves gathering information from service providers on their experiences and perceptions of how MFTs 'work together' within the EMDC, as well as with government departments, communities and educational institutions. Questions include: What works well at the moment?; What are the difficulties they experience in trying to work together?; and how they are going to address these challenges?

The last section of the research focuses on service providers' perceptions about how the EMDC or MFT currently co-ordinates and manages the support service. This includes questions about: What works well at the moment?; What are the difficulties they experience?; and how they can address these challenges?

All of the above relates to and was guided by the key issues highlighted in the literature on inter-sectoral collaboration in

education presented in this chapter.

2.6   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Inter-sectoral collaboration as a specific approach to support provision presents many challenges. The guidelines presented in the literature to help prevent and overcome these challenges include training in collaboration at pre - and in - service levels, including ongoing supervision of practitioners. Methods for collaboration need to be clarified, formal structures and procedures for communication set up, participation that assigns responsibilities ensured, and problems of control and risk shared.

Changing peoples' way of looking at the world is often difficult, and may be more easily facilitated at a systemic level, if collaboration is set as a priority at all levels of government.

The next chapter will outline the research approach adopted in this study, including the research design, data collection and data processing methods, as well as an ethics statement.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review in Chapter 2 dealt with the challenges and possibilities of inter-sectoral collaboration within education. That Chapter provided a detailed discussion of inter-sectoral collaboration, particularly within a Multi-Functional Team (MFT) within the context of the Education Management and Development Centre (EMDC). In particular, it focused on the benefits and challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration, and how to address these challenges.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the research methodology used in this study. One emphasis will be on the explanation of the qualitative approach and methods of data collection used. There will also be a detailed discussion on the use of the interview schedule as a method of data collection.

The overall aim of the study was to explore how one MFT in an EMDC structure is attempting to provide more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools.

The questions used to ensure that the aim of the research was reached, included the following:

- What is the MFT role –players' understanding of 'holistic and co-ordinated support'?

- How is the MFT in this EMDC structure of education providing a more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools?

- How does the MFT work at present?

- How does the MFT "work together"?

- What is the nature of the MFT's collaboration with other government departments?

- How does the MFT collaborate with the community?

- How does the MFT collaborate with schools/ educational institutions?

- How does co-ordination take place in a MFT?

3.2 FINDINGS OF A BASELINE STUDY

In November 2000, research was conducted into service providers' perceptions of support provision to schools (Robinson et al, 2002). This project was conducted by the University of the Western Cape (Robinson et al, 2002) and provided baseline information from service providers before the EMDC's were established. These same researchers then conducted a baseline study with schools in 2001 to establish how schools experienced the support they received from support providers (Robinson et al, 2002).

The purpose of the baseline study was to gather data from district support providers concerning their perceptions and experiences of support prior to the full implementation of EMDCs. It was decided to use a sample of schools, rather than all schools. The EMDC directors from the West

Coast/Winelands, Breede River/Overberg and Metropole South were then asked to select a sample of ten schools to participate in interviews. During the interviews the teachers were asked about their perceptions and experiences of support provision. There were fifteen questions, divided into four categories.

The categories were:

- forms of support;

- the relationship between the provider and the school;

- the nature of existing support provision;

- support provision in the future.

When talking about their perceptions of support, the research participants identified a number of strategies that related to support provision that should be in place. The key strategies highlighted are summarised below (in order of frequency, from most often to the least) (Robinson et al, 2002: 52).
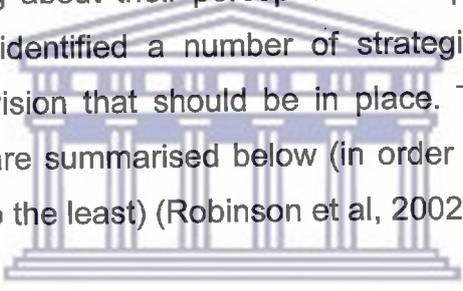
- The first strategy related to educator and administrative support staff, training and development. Specific areas of focus identified in this regard included personal development, conflict/stress/discipline management, diversity management, appraisal, incentives, career mobilisation and counselling.

- Leadership, management and governance training/capacity building was a second strategy that was identified. Specific issues here included information technology, financial management, time management and policy management.

- Other important strategies for support provision included counselling support to all role players, including educators, support staff, parents and learners. Provision of resources;

materials development; monitoring, evaluation and assessment of learners and educators; curriculum development and management; and direct support to learners.

The above mentioned list of strategies reflect the purpose of support services as mainly providing 'indirect' support to learners through building the capacity of people and structures that provide the environment for learning. This is congruent with the previously mentioned NCSNET/NCESS report (Department of Education, 1997) which emphasised that support provision should be targeted at supporting transformation of the curriculum and education institutions, as well as providing additional support to learners and other role players where and when needed.
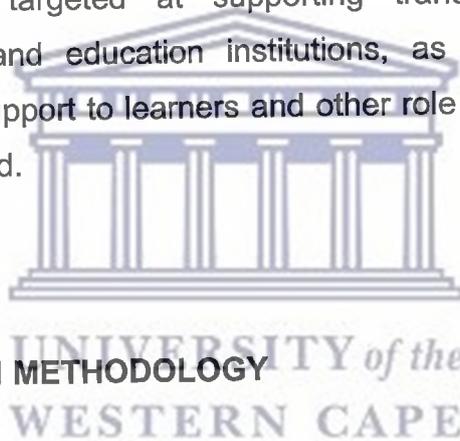
3. 3   **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

I adopted a qualitative approach in this study. The qualitative researcher is concerned with human beings, interpersonal relationships, personal values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1988 cited in Mertens, 1998). As a researcher I was concerned with the changing or dynamic nature of one EMDC within its new restructuring process and new policy framework. Will the EMDC deliver a better service? Will the human resources adapt to their new way of working?

Qualitative research focuses on process, meaning and understanding, and the product of a qualitative study is richly

descriptive. Sample selection in qualitative research is usually non-random, purposeful and small, as opposed to the larger, more random sampling of quantitative research. Qualitative research is designed to inductively build, rather than to test concepts, hypotheses, and theories. Qualitative research can become an adventure full of promise for discovery and productive experience (Stainback & Stainback, 1988 cited in Mertens, 1998).

According to Stainback & Stainback (1998 in Mertens, 1998) qualitative research is believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrumental utility. This approach gives you a holistic view of what is being studied. As the study progresses, the researcher can add to or change the types and sources of data gathered. The qualitative researcher focuses on subjective data that exists within the minds of individuals and is typically expressed or reported through language.

The strength of qualitative research is that it is the researcher who is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data is mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer. Respondents can honestly and freely respond to the items and express their feelings (Leedy, 1993).

Limitations to this approach relate to authenticity and accuracy. It is also difficult to observe and make sense of complex behaviours. It is time-consuming, and it is also difficult to make enough observations of a sufficiently large sample of individuals, to provide reliable data (Leedy, 1993).

In qualitative research, the researcher must also be sensitive to biases inherent in this type of research. As Le Compte & Preissle (1993 cited in Merriam 1998:92) observe, qualitative research "is distinguished partly by its admission of the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into this research frame". Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective.

Bias is any influence that may distort the randomness by which the choice of a sample population is selected. The weaknesses of qualitative research are that there is always the danger of bias creeping into interviews. Many factors can influence responses, including *eagerness* of the respondent to please the interviewer, a vague antagonism that sometimes arises between interviewer and respondent, or the tendency of the interviewer to seek out the answers that supports his or her preconceived notions (Leedy, 1993:213).

This study was specifically aimed at deepening knowledge about the functioning of the MFT in the EMDC and included providing knowledge about similar or comparable initiatives and experiences elsewhere. The knowledge gained through the research will provide the Department of Education with feedback on actual progress made within a local initiative. This knowledge offers a basis for reflection so that the MFTs at the EMDCs can be modified and improved. It is intended, through this process, that the research insights generated by both participants and researchers will have direct relevance and value for all involved.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to MacMillan & Schumacher (1993) a sample consists of subjects or individuals that are selected from a population, in this case from the EMDC. The results obtained from the sample are then regarded as representative of the population from which the sample is drawn.

In this study, the service providers interviewed were all working in a MFT in the EMDC. These service providers were a vital source of information since they have first-hand experience about how they support schools and how they work in a MFT.

A selective sampling of twenty participants from each of the four pillars, from one EMDC in the Western Cape was used. The four pillars were:

- Curriculum Development and Support;
- Specialised Learner and Education Support;
- Institutional Management and Governance;
- Administrative Service personnel.

Curriculum Development and Support

In the Curriculum Development and Support group, interviews were conducted with a Chief Education Specialist, someone from the Learning Areas of Human and Social Sciences and Technology, an Assessment Co-ordinator, and someone from the Language Literacy and Communication Learning Area.

Specialised Learner and Education Support

In the Specialised Learner and Education Support group, interviews were conducted with a Chief Education Specialist, the Deputy Chief Education Specialist (Special Schools), the Deputy Chief Education Specialist (Psychologist), a Learning Support Advisor, and a Senior Social Worker.

Institutional Management and Governance

With reference to Institutional Management and Governance, the researcher interviewed five Circuit Managers.

Administration

Regarding Administration, a Deputy Director, a Senior Labour Relations Officer, a Chief Clerk Administrator, a School Based Management Officer, and a Senior Administrative Officer, were interviewed.

I drew up a time-table and made appointments with the participants. I informed them that the interview schedule would include twenty-six questions. I conducted the interviews over a period of six weeks, between 24 May 2002 and 30 June 2002. The majority of the participants were keen to participate in the research, although some of them felt unsure about whether they would be able to answer the questions.

At the onset of the interview, I apologised to participants for the lack of eye contact during the interviews as I would be making notes of their responses. I also assured them of the confidential nature of the research. I then asked their permission to record the interview as a backup to my notes. The interviews took

approximately thirty minutes each.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

I collected the data through a literature review focusing on inter-sectoral collaboration and through semi-structured interviews, which included field- notes.

Literature review

I conducted a literature review focusing on inter-sectoral collaboration as support for school development. This also included the examination of documents on the SEED/STEDS process which provided information about the establishment of the EMDCs, their values, principles, intentions and vision. Further documentation consulted included:

- Organisational Redesign, final report of the EMDC Task Team 9 (WCED Workgroup 1: 29 May - 31 May 2000 and Workgroup 2: 1 June – 2 June 2000);
- The origins and early development of the Education Management and Development Centres in the Western Cape Education Department (Robinson et al, 2002).

Interviews

With the use of interviews, the questions asked were designed to obtain the perceptions of the different support disciplines about what kind of collaboration exists between the various providers. Each question was formulated in such a way that the respondents were able to indicate what they understood by 'support to schools' and how they attempted to provide holistic and co-ordinated support to their schools.

I conducted the semi-structured interviews, person to person. The person to person interview can be defined as a conversation, but a "conversation with a purpose" (Dexter, 1970:136). The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The semi-structured interview falls halfway between the highly structured interview and the unstructured interview.

In this study the interview was selected as an appropriate instrument for collecting data, on the following grounds:

- Firstly, it has a high response rate, particularly since only a few respondents are involved;

- Secondly, because of the face to face nature of the communication between the interviewer and the informant, both verbal and non-verbal behaviour can be observed;

- Thirdly, a major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. An interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1993:420).

During the interview you quickly learn which questions are confusing and need rephrasing, which questions yield useless data, and which questions, suggested by your respondents, you should have included in the first place. Ideal questions include both information and opinion. These can be used with virtually any phenomenon being studied.

According to Dunn (1995 cited in Merriam, 1998:75) interviews

have the advantage of providing "unique expert information, eye witness accounts and the kind of authenticity which is not really available from the print, and that interviews bring human contact into what is often a solitary occupation". Interviews are a flexible tool for research and are adaptable to individual situations (Merriam, 1998). This implies that, through interviews, one can obtain a great deal of varied information from the respondents. One has the opportunity to see live reactions shown by the respondent and to rephrase questions during the interview (Leedy, 1993).

Casley & Kumar (1989 cited in Mertens, 1998) note three limitations of using interviews. Firstly, interviews do not generate quantitative data that can be summarised to provide valid general estimates. Secondly, it is rare for interviews to be used with probability samples. Thirdly, the findings are susceptible to biases which arise from the inaccurate or distorted judgments of the interviews that result from their shortcomings in cognitive processing.

One of the weaknesses of interviewing is that you cannot observe behaviour that took place at some previous point in time. You also cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. Furthermore, you cannot observe how people organise the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world (Patton, 1997). Finally the fact that I am part of an EMDC could be a weakness, because I always wonder whether people are more likely to reveal information to insiders or outsiders. We may define bias as "any influence, condition, or set of conditions that singly or together distorts the data, from what may have been obtained under the conditions

of pure chance" (Leedy, 1993:213). Being aware of this, I avoided leading questions, since it may have revealed my bias and assumptions I may have made. I took a non-judgmental, sensitive and respectful stance towards the participants and their responses. I knew that I held strong views about some aspects of the research and so was particularly sensitive about how I stated questions.

With any type of measurement, two considerations are very important, namely validity and reliability. Validity, is concerned with the "soundness and the effectiveness of the measuring instrument" (Leedy, 1993:38). Validity looks to the end result of measurement. "The principal question that validity asks is: can the conclusions drawn from a sample be generalized to other cases?" (Leedy, 1993:40). Reliability, deals with accuracy. It poses questions about the accuracy of the measurement instrument. With what accuracy does it measure what it is intended to measure? (Leedy, 1993).

In the study, I made use of an interview schedule (refer to Appendix A). Working from an interview schedule allows the researcher to gain the experience and confidence needed to conduct open-ended questions. Asking good questions is the key to getting meaningful data.

The interview schedule that I used covered the following:

- What is the MFT role-players' understanding of 'holistic and co-ordinated support'?

- How is the MFT, in this EMDC structure of education support, providing a more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools?
- How does the MFT work at present?
- How does the MFT work together?
- What is the nature of the MFT's collaboration with other government departments?
- How does the MFT collaborate with the community?
- How does the MFT collaborate with the schools/ educational institutions?
- How does co-ordination take place in a MFT?

I formulated, and posed these questions because I wanted to elicit responses that would assist in answering the research problem.

3. 6   DATA PROCESSING

In this study, a content analysis of the interviews was conducted. Processing such data is commonly known as data reduction (Patton, 1997). This process involves the editing and coding of the data in preparation for analysis. Qualitative research is holistic, inductive, context-based and narrative because it uses small samples that are studied in great depth. Qualitative research is also narrative rather than numerical. Data is not summarised as a 'percentage of respondents', but rather as themes which occur, insights which emerge, ideas which may explain why someone feels at risk or why he or she may deny a personal risk (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The framework used to analyse the data was drawn from the literature review and the baseline study discussed briefly in Section 3.1 (Robinson et al, 2002). The research questions created the pre-determined categories for analysis. Emerging themes under these were then noted during the analysis.

The researcher used a tape recorder as a back up system to recheck the wording in case there was a need to quote someone and to check that the research was accurate. The researcher also made use of a short-hand system of codes while interviewees spoke. The notes were written up immediately after each interview.

3.7 ETHICS STATEMENT

The standard data collection techniques of interviewing and observation in qualitative research present their own ethical dilemmas. Interviewing – whether it is highly structured with pre-determined questions or semi-structured and open-ended – carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Stake 1994, observes: "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private space of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (cited in Merriam 1998:60).

Respondents may feel that their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, and they may say things that they had never intended to reveal. Names were not noted to protect the participants in this study and to ensure confidentiality.

However, an interview may improve the condition of respondents when, for example, they are asked to review their successes or are stimulated to act positively on their own behalf. Most people who agree to be interviewed enjoy sharing their knowledge, opinions, or experiences. Some gain valuable self–knowledge, while for others the interview may be therapeutic – which brings up the issue of the researcher's stance. Patton (1997:254) points out that the interviewer's task "is first and foremost to gather data, not change people".

The principle of ethical propriety, lying at the base of most of these guidelines, resolved into simple consideration of fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods, the ends for which the research is executed, a respect for the integrity of the individual, the obligation of the researcher to guarantee unequivocally individual privacy, and an informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntarily in the research activity (Leedy, 1993).

Finally, all the EMDCs that are in the WCED will benefit from the feedback and suggestions that were contributed by the participants in this study.

3.8   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the design and methodology of an empirical study into inter-sectoral collaboration was presented. The sample of interviewees was drawn from a population of one EMDC in the Western Cape. The data obtained from the sample was collected by means of an interview schedule. The interview schedule was used to explore how one MFT in an

EMDC structure is attempting to provide more holistic and co-ordinated support to schools. The schedule focused particularly on the role of a MFT and the dynamics of inter-sectoral collaboration.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research findings from the study.

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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4. 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will cover the presentation and discussion of findings, serving as a link between the literature study in Chapter 2, and the fieldwork conducted in this study and explained in the previous chapter.

The key findings, presented under sub-headings, will deal with the providers' perceptions of holistic and co-ordinated support, the functioning of the Multi- Functional Team (MFTs), the benefits of the MFT, difficulties experienced in a MFT, addressing the challenges of the MFT, collaboration with other government departments, collaboration with the community, collaboration with the school/educational institution, and co-ordination and management of the support service.

4.2 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 Providers' perceptions of holistic and co-ordinated support

Most of the responses to the questions, relating to perceptions of support, referred to particular types of support that are provided to schools. Some forms of support mentioned included the provider's perception of holistic and co-ordinated support.

Participants in all four pillars generally felt that the different pillars still operate in silos and that there is currently very little co-ordination of support services. Working in silos means that

the different pillars do not collaborate. However, it became clear in the interviews that although there is little experience of co-ordination of support services as a whole, there are attempts to link structures and management at particular levels. Service providers realise that they need to work collectively with the various role players in other pillars in order to build an effective support structure.

With regard to principles guiding support provision, it was evident that participants seemed to share a common vision of integrated and holistic support. "We need to work collectively with the different disciplines so that we can achieve one goal, i.e. for schools to become self-managed" said one interviewee. The key elements were seeing support as working towards empowerment of teachers and better service provision at schools. Capacity building was seen as a means of providing in-service training to address all challenges. The need to work as a team and to involve all the stakeholders was emphasised. One service provider mentioned that a holistic approach to him meant to support the school or learners intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically and that this outcome could only be achieved if all the stakeholders were involved.

Participants felt that support should be directed to both the teachers and organisational structures for the purpose of providing a holistic and co-ordinated support service: "We must work towards capacity building and uplifting of schools so that the teachers and learners can benefit from the type of support they receive".

In exploring the providers' perception of *co-ordinated* support, many concerns were raised about a lack of proper co-

ordination. This included concerns relating to the compartmentalisation of services and too many projects or workshops happening at the same time. Approximately half of the participants in all the pillars said that they did not experience any form of co-ordination in a team. "Services need to be co-ordinated through the pillar heads" said one interviewee. There is a need for a more effective internal communication system between the four pillars, so that the duplication of service delivery does not occur, and that the different types of support rendered do not clash. A need was also expressed for leadership within the co-ordination function. The participants wanted a leader to manage and organise the workshops and projects taking place in the EMDC. The purpose of the EMDC, it was said, was to offer a more systemic, co-ordinated and holistic support service to schools, thereby breaking through what has often been a fragmented approach to supporting school development. In this regard the participants said that they hoped that in future the EMDC would be able to function in a similar fashion.

Multi-functionality was identified as the primary aim and outcome of holistic support. The three primary conduits for holistic support according to Dettmer et al (1996) and Gronski & Pigg (2000) are: (i) a 'multi-functional team' approach; (ii) empowerment of educators; and (iii) the co-ordination of the support. The 'multi- functional team' approach draws together different sectors, disciplines and professions that work together in order to cross boundaries (Dettmer et al, 1996). This means that support is or should be targeted at the development or capacity building of teachers, to promote quality education for all.

There is a strong sense that relationships between the providers and the recipients of their services have changed for the better over the past eighteen months in the EMDC. The providers play a dual role by providing support and empowerment to schools. The concept of 'support' within the service provider community in this research study is congruent with national and international trends. According to literature the commitment to a 'holistic and integrative' approach incorporates the principle of 'service integration'. This is identified as a basic principle of education support services by Lazarus & Donald (1994).

4. 2. 2   The functioning of the Multi-Functional Team

The participants were asked to comment on who the members of a MFT were at the moment. Their responses are captured in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Membership of the Multi-Functional Team

- Institutional Management and Governance (IMG)
- Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES)
- Curriculum Development and support
- Administration

The participants therefore only considered the four formal pillars to be involved in a MFT to provide services to schools. Quite a number of other important role players were not mentioned. It does appear that in practice there has not been any recognition of the important role that community resources could or should play in a MFT. Communities have a variety of structures and

people that can play a vital role in support provision. The emphasis on the importance of community resources is congruent with the findings of the joint report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee for Education Support Service (NCESS) (Department of Education, 1997), the Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) and Practical Guidelines for Implementation of Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2001).

When participants were then asked to describe who they felt should be part of a MFT a number of other people and organisations were mentioned. Their responses to this question are listed in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2   Who should be involved in a Multi-Functional Team?
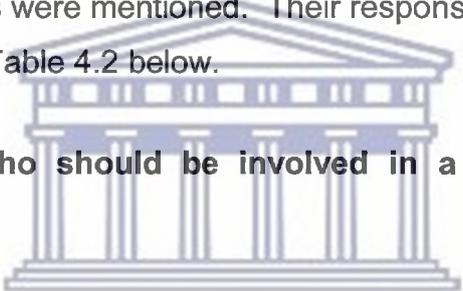
- Health Department
- Social Services
- South African Police
- Governing bodies
- Senior Management Team
- NGO's Community organisations
- Welfare organisations
- Religious organisations
- Nutrition schemes
- Library services
- Therapists
- Special Schools

The participants considered the above list as a full range of potential support providers to the schools. There was, therefore, a clear recognition of the important role other community resources *could* and *should* play in the provision of support to schools. The participants also recognised the importance of other government departments in the collaborative delivery of the support services, particularly the special schools who, in line with the provisions of White Paper 6 (2001), will become resource centres to support the mainstream schools.

Those interviewed also felt that the same people need not be part of every team, but rather that needs should determine who should be involved. One participant said that, after the need had been identified, the professionals with the expertise to address the problems needed to go in and address the problem. As the problem unfolds, knowledge, skills and resources could be pooled from a range of professionals. These players bring to the process resources, perspectives, skills and knowledge which melt together to act as a catalyst for change and improvement (Lazarus, Moolla & Reddy, 1996).

During the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the services offered by the MFT and on how they currently worked in a MFT. Approximately half of the participants in each of the pillars said that they did not experience any difference in the kind of services offered to schools. In other words, the service they rendered previously does not differ from what they are doing now.

The analysis revealed that the service providers continue to work in independent groups in most areas and around most issues. It seems that currently, they only work together around

the establishment of Teacher Support Teams (TST), needs analyses and audits of the school. During these processes they have realised that they can learn from one another and that capacity building takes place while working in a MFT.

The people interviewed identified the types of support the schools needed, for example, around classroom management and learner and educator support. This type of support refers to help relating to teaching and learning, specifically with regard to the implementation of the new curriculum and assessment processes. This support focused on the classroom, reaching the learner and teacher directly. They saw administrative support as part of organisational support, financial management and training of governing bodies.

When responding to the question about what type of service they will be providing in future, members of the MFT indicated that they wanted to work in a more collaborative way so that a better level of service can be delivered. A number of strengths of an inter-sectoral approach were identified, including improved communication between pillars, greater co-ordination, better sharing of resources and less duplication of workshops and support.

The majority of suggestions for improved support provision revolved around structural issues, with particular emphasis on co-ordination, planning and collaboration between providers.

4.2.3   Collaboration within the Multi-Functional Team

In response to a question about what the benefits of working in a MFT are and what works well the following major points were

mentioned. The responses to these questions are listed in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Benefits of a Multi–Functional Team
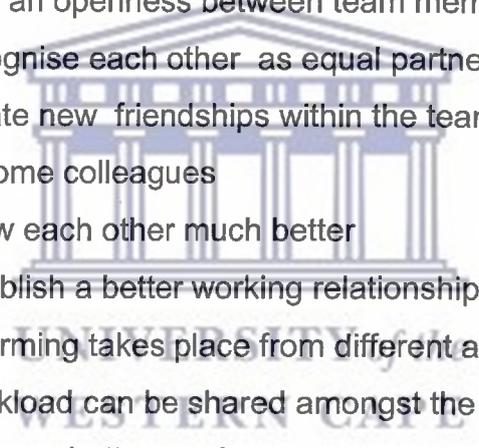
- The team makes a difference
- We learn about others' work
- We share knowledge and ideas
- We become multi-skilled
- It provides a more holistic view of support
- It is easy to identify the problem in a MFT
- There is an openness between team members
- We recognise each other as equal partners
- We create new friendships within the team
- We become colleagues
- We know each other much better
- We establish a better working relationship
- Brainstorming takes place from different angles
- The workload can be shared amongst the team
- We deliver a better service
- We achieve our goal quicker
- We discover the needs and loopholes where nobody has worked before
- There is unity and strength within the team

Most of the participants felt that a 'multi-functional team' approach could be of great benefit to the service providers themselves. They could, for example, share skills and learn from each other, and gain new ideas on how to approach their own work. They can also develop a deeper understanding of

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and appreciation for the perspectives and work of others.

Benefits in terms of relationship dynamics that were highlighted include the opportunity to share ideas (Intriligator, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002). They became equal partners where all contributions were valued and respected (Walsh et al, 1999, Robinson et al, 2002). However, very few participants said that this team work was evident in schools where they rendered a service.

Where TST have been established, service providers have discovered that most of the learners experience tremendous reading problems. A reading programme was introduced in these schools where the teachers acknowledged the problem and came up with a 'reading across the curriculum' programme. All the teachers in the school took responsibility for the reading programme, not only the language teachers. All the teachers in the school therefore equipped themselves according to their need to deal with the reading problems in the school. Programmes are now better tuned to needs because they acknowledge the diverse backgrounds of the learners. Lazarus et al (1996), Mostert (1996) and Walsh et al (1999) have identified that the pooling of resources, and the ability to reach beyond the school for resources, is a way of meeting personal and social needs.

The study shows that the interviewees became equal partners through working in a MFT and openness and trust was established between the different pillars. "We could sit around a table and discuss the challenges facing us, post level two's up to five's. Each member's input in the MFT is respected and appreciated. Post levels, and other forms of professional

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hierarchy does not seem to play a role in the MFT. The participants have learnt about the work of others, shared their knowledge and ideas with each other, and respected each other's contributions. Providers felt that working in a MFT made a substantial difference to schools because the members of the MFT become multi-skilled. When problems arose, they could do some brain storming, view the issues from different angles and solve problems much quicker. From this, shared visions and goals emerged, with an understanding of shared responsibility and a sense of accountability and interdependency.

At an interpersonal level, the communication between providers improved. This in turn contributed to the following positive results: greater team effort and stronger feelings of trust; better relationships; encouragement toward greater transparency; and learning to listen to one another. One of the interviewees said that he had learned such a lot about the work of the other disciplines that in future he knows where to go for help. He was, however, not sure about what important role the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES) could play in assisting him with his schools.

Some of the participants felt that a sense of urgency arises through team effort. Members encourage one another and everybody in the team is committed to succeeding and to achieving the outcome quicker. They all wanted to succeed and accepted joint responsibility. They shared the workload and achieved their goals much quicker. Unity developed between the members of the MFT as they visited the different schools. As a team they also discovered areas where none of the service providers had worked before. The participants

became multi-skilled and were informed and enlightened about the work of their colleagues.

Participants felt strongly that there was collaboration between circuit managers, curriculum advisors and special education specialists. The administration staff, however, felt that there was not much collaboration between them and the other three pillars. Generally, providers felt that the kind of collaboration that existed between providers and schools was good, since support providers were always responding to the needs that had been expressed by the school. As a team they worked well and acknowledged each other's strengths and complemented each other. A much more effective working relationship was established.

A major change took place with regards to the sharing of resources especially with regards to transportation and accommodation. "We need to plan collectively as a MFT so that we can travel together when visiting a school" said one interviewee.

When talking about what works well or makes things work in a MFT team, the following also came to the fore.

Most of the participants acknowledged that working in a MFT is the best and only way to address problems at schools. Most of the participants said that through observation within a MFT, it is easy to identify the real problem and to come up with a solution. They also acknowledged that everyone in a MFT can contribute toward the solving of problems, resulting in greater support for each other. Until now, inter-sectoral collaboration has not been the primary approach to support provision, particularly in South

Africa (Lazarus et al, 1996). One of the people interviewed commented that" it is the first time in the history of the WCED that the need exists to work in a MFT."

It seems that a paradigm shift has taken place amongst the personnel working at the EMDC. They now share the workload and each one has a significant role to play in delivering effective support. It was felt that there was now openness and a willingness to listen to one another and to respect the roles of others. At an inter-personal level it was felt that communication between the service providers had improved greatly. They seem more willing to speak up about the problems they experience at schools, and the approaches they are going to follow in solving these problems as an MFT. The one aspect that they seemed to appreciate about the MFT approach was that there are no 'bosses', only equal partners. The circuit managers are on post level four, whilst most of the curriculum advisors and other support personnel are on post level three and two. However, despite these differences between the occupational levels of the service providers, everyone's contribution is respected.

When the MFT established a TST at the school, they involved the teachers in conducting an analysis of the challenges at the school, and how they were going to address these identified challenges. Interviewers explained that by including the staff, collaboration between the MFT and the school was much better from the perspective of the school. The schools also appeared to accept support from the EMDC much more readily. Another important outcome has been that schools have started taking ownership of their problems.

The interviews revealed that the interactions between the teams from the EMDC and the schools were characterized by: mutual respect; trust; open communication; consideration of each issue or problem from an ecological perspective; decision making; pooling of personal resources; and expertise. One interviewee said that the schools appreciate it when the MFT negotiates a date with them to visit the school. The psychologist can provide support around psychological issues. Learning support personnel can address barriers to learning. The curriculum advisor can render support in delivering the curriculum and circuit managers can play a vital role in the management of the school, assisting the principal, deputy principal and head of departments including School Governing Body (SGB) in joint ownership of the issues or problems being addressed.

Fried & Cook (1992) conceptualise collaboration as sharing resources to reach a common goal. Sharing is considered a basic, but essential component. Phillips & McCullough (1990) have suggested that for inter-sectoral collaboration to take place four essential factors must exist. There must be a willingness to collaborate, a need to collaborate, a need for expertise, and a need for adaptive efficiency.

An important point that was made in an interview is that a MFT does not imply a model of service delivery where everyone must do something and where all stakeholders are involved in every project. It was felt that service providers should be consulted only as needed and that different stakeholders brought in where relevant and appropriate to the issue.

4.2.4. Difficulties and challenges of working in a Multi-Functional Team

When talking about the difficulties that they experienced in trying to work together, participants highlighted the issues listed in the table below

Table 4.4 Difficulties experienced while working in a Multi Functional Team
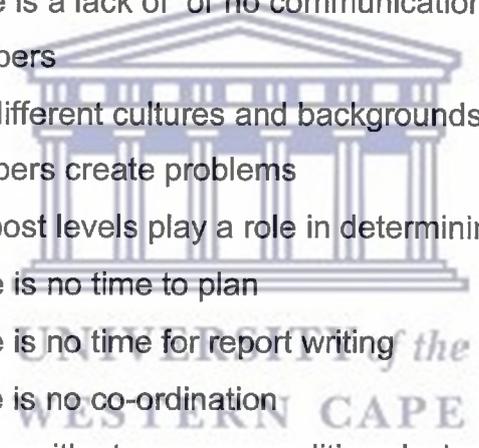
• There is no record kept of who is leaving the building
• There is a lack of or no communication between MFT members
• The different cultures and backgrounds of the MFT members create problems
• The post levels play a role in determining who is in control
• There is no time to plan
• There is no time for report writing
• There is no co-ordination
• People with strong personalities clash
• Most of the time all the role players are not available
• Each pillar has its own programme
• Sometimes demands from Head Office over-rule EMDC plans
• Some of the co-ordinators of the MFT are not equipped to co-ordinate
• There is no time to evaluate and monitor progress

The literature is clear that inter-sectoral collaboration is not without its difficulties and challenges. The problems highlighted by the service providers in the study can be grouped into four

categories. These are: resources; organisational issues; group dynamics; and discourse or 'language' issues (Robinson et al, 2002).

Resources

Resources are a challenge to the effective functioning of the MFT. Examples given were a lack of time to plan, and to reflect. One participant said that all the role players are never available at the same time.

A further challenge mentioned was the lack of human resources for the effective functioning of multi-disciplinary teams. There is also a lack of availability on the part of most of the role players. Most of the pillars have their own programmes and are therefore involved in their own programmes.

The resource which was mentioned many times was that of time (Levin & Greene, 1994; Mostert, 1996; Robinson et al, 2002). This includes two activities which are crucial to inter-sectoral collaboration, i.e. planning and reflection - activities for which time must be allocated.

Organisational issues

At an organisational level it was noted that a multi-disciplinary approach is a lot of work to co-ordinate and manage. There is a need for strong leadership with the skills to ensure proper planning and co-ordination.

An example of such an organisational issue raised in the study was that service providers did not inform the switchboard when

they were leaving the building to visit schools. This reflected badly on the co-ordination of the EMDC because whenever a principal or teacher called for support, nobody knew who was available to assist them. This points to a lack of communication in the organisation. Intriligator (1994), Levin & Greene (1994), Mostert (1996), Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Robinson et al (2002) stress the importance of establishing procedures to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration since in many organisational contexts this approach remains 'untried'.

Another clear problem is that the WCED seems to disregard local initiatives by EMDCs. It seems to the participants that there is a lack of planning and co-ordination at Head Office which has a ripple effect and filters through to the entire system. Interviewees felt that as long as co-ordination and collaboration is not institutionalised throughout the system, it will be difficult to achieve many goals. There is definitely a need for strong leadership, proper planning and monitoring of the process. The issue of co-ordination and collaboration, therefore, needs to be addressed at many levels.

Group dynamics

With regard to group dynamics, the issue of power features dominantly in many writings (Brabeck & Walsh, 1997; Dettmer et el, 1996; Goren & Afable, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Ward, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002). One of the participants said that in the past, post levels in the WCED played a vital role in determining who was in control and people with strong personalities sometimes wanted to control the team.

Challenges of language and culture

Language, one aspect of culture, was highlighted as a potential problem area. It is also recognized that language and culture are linked. One participant said that the interpretation of letters, not in the recipient's mother tongue, created tremendous problems. In this study it was also felt that we need to learn more about each other's cultures, and to have a better understanding of and tolerance towards each other in order to build better relationships. Although inter-sectoral collaboration is intended to celebrate differences, Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) and Robinson et al (2002) argue that competition between value systems and differing perspectives can emerge as a key challenge. The aim of this entire process must therefore be to value differences (Dettmer et al, 1996; Robinson et al, 2002).

4.2.5   Addressing the challenge of working in a Multi-Functional Team

The interviewees were also asked to suggest ways that the challenges described above could be addressed. The table below lists the suggestions made.

Table 4.5 Addressing the challenges of working in a Multi-Functional Team

- Notify those in charge when you leave the building
- Install a board at the entrance saying 'IN / OUT'
- Try to understand different cultures
- Post levels do not give you a higher status in a MFT
- Planning must be done in advance
- There must be a plan right at the beginning of the year
- There must be planning sessions to share information
- A specific time must be set to have planning meetings
- The MFT must be a priority of the EMDC
- The MFT must give regular feedback to all those involved
- Few can be excused from meetings
- Dates must be set up ahead of time
- If the team cannot get along , it must be disbanded
- Co-ordinators should be replaced if they are not equipped to co-ordinate the team

Resources

Most of the participants felt that EMDCs should set aside time for planning. A set time-table must be drawn up indicating when the MFT will meet and have their regular meetings. Dettmer et al (1996), Intriligator (1994), Lazarus et al (1996) and Lunt et al (1994) stress the importance of agreeing on procedures for procuring and sharing adequate resources, including time, facilities, funding and human resources to support collaboration.

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Most of the participants felt that planning must be done in advance, a data base of the schools should be available to everyone, and planning for the MFT must be the priority of the EMDC. Appointments must be scheduled ahead of time so that all the service providers can be present when meetings take place. They also felt that feedback must be given to all stake holders as part of an ongoing process.

Organisational issues

Service providers in the EMDC should inform the switchboard when leaving the building. "We need to inform one another when we leave the building" said one interviewee. One of the interviewees felt that a better way of communication would be to install an instrument at the entrance where everyone could indicate whether they were 'in' or 'out '. This would be better facilitated if supported by the leadership of the EMDC (DeGraw, 1994; Lunt et al, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002). The leaders need to be individuals with the vision and energy to communicate and mediate for all players a common understanding of organisational structure (Intriligator, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994).

"We need in-service training so that MFT's and inter-sectoral collaboration can be properly implemented" said one interviewee. Various elements of the organisation require development if inter-sectoral collaboration is to be effectively implemented. One of the participants said that nothing is properly or effectively implemented. They simply talk about things or it is just on paper. Good management policy (DeGraw, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Intriligator, 1994;

Dettmer et al, 1996; Lunt, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002) and policies that promote co-ordination and integration (DeGraw, 1994; Intriligator, 1994) are crucial. Putting policy in place is a first step, the structures and mechanisms to support this are, however, just as important. DeGraw (1994), Goren & Afable (1994), Intriligator (1994), Walsh et al (1999), and Robinson et al (2002) argue that co-ordination mechanisms should be institutionalised. The leaders of the pillars needed to be more involved in and supportive of the MFT said one of the participants. According to literature reviewed much of the organisational issues are better facilitated if supported by those in leadership positions (DeGraw, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Lunt et al, 1994).

Group dynamics and Discourse Challenges

Although inter-sectoral collaboration is intended to celebrate difference, Manley- Casimir & Hall (1994) argue that competition between value systems and differing perspectives can emerge as key challenges. The aim must therefore still be to value differences (Dettmer et al, 1996). One interviewee said that, the service providers in the EMDC should work closer together, with each other and with the schools, to have a better understanding of the cultural differences. Once this is established, credibility and visibility is shared, information is disseminated rather than withheld (Girouard & Igoe; 1994; Intriligator, 1994), and people begin to validate and respect each other and negotiate and want differences (Goren & Afable, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002). Linked to managing differences within the group is the issue of power and status among members. "We need to change our minds about post levels and status if we want to work

collaboratively" said one interviewee. A paradigm shift will also be needed with some of the service providers, to emphasize that an inter-sectoral collaboration approach requires that status should not interfere with the task of working as equal partners.

4.2.6   Collaboration with other government departments

In this study, in response to the question on how the MFT is or could be involved with other government departments in support provision, the responses from all was that "none existed". One of the interviewees said that they refer matters that should go to the government social workers to outside (private) social workers due to the shortage of human resources within government service within the EMDC.

Participants were asked who they think should be involved in collaboration with government departments and their responses are listed in table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 Collaboration with government departments

• Social Services
• Safety and Security
• Child Protection Unit
• Labour Relations
• South African Police
• Government Garage
• Department of Agriculture
• Health service

In this study in response to the question on how the MFT was involved with other government departments and the community in support provision, the responses from all were that it was non existent. It became clear that collaboration between service providers and other government departments and the community is currently very poor. One of the interviewers said that they refer matters that should go to the government social workers to outside (private) social workers due to the shortage of human resources within government services. In the EMDC there are only two social workers and they cannot cope with the work load.

The role of other government departments in the collaborative delivery of support services to the EMDC is, however, clearly recognised. This point to the need for all concerned to address the challenges of working within a team, or within an inter-sectoral framework, since inter-sectoral collaboration facilitates access to services more effectively. The participants felt that, for example, the police could play a vital role in supporting the EMDC and schools in overcoming gangsterism, drug abuse, and issues pertaining to weapons and other forms of crime. Some participants also felt that the Department of Agriculture could assist the schools with things such as starting a vegetable garden. The Department of Health could in turn provide support with HIV/AIDS training in the community and look after the nutrition, medical and dental care of the underfed learners. The Department of Welfare could assist in the allocation of social grants. The participants felt that the Department of Welfare and NGOs should be utilized to lighten the workload of the service providers in the EMDC.

When talking about what worked well when working with other

government departments, the following points were made. Currently it is only private (outside the EMDC) social workers that liaise with social workers in the EMDC. What apparently has worked well has been when participants of the EMDC also obtained the co-operation of the Safety and Security Child Protection Unit. This study revealed that social workers do not work with statutory cases as they do not go to court because of the shortage of human resources. This is where the private social workers deliver a service.

In response to the question about what difficulties were experienced in trying to work together with other government departments, interviewees stated the following. One of the participants explained that members of the South African Police Service were not allowed to make information available regarding abused learners where the teacher was the perpetrator while the matter was still sub judice. This means that the file of the learner was with the police and not with the labour relations officer of the EMDC. However it is the responsibility of the labour relations officer to investigate the case from the side of the Department of Education. The labour relations officer only has access to information regarding an abused child, from the psychologist who is part of the EMDC and not from the police files. The Department of Education has not as yet developed a working partnership with the South African Police on such sensitive issues, at the moment, therefore, the education department works on the same case without communicating with the police on the matter.

There should also be clear guidelines concerning cases of misconduct, especially where a teacher has abused a learner. The participants felt that there must be a stronger collaboration

between the South African Police and the education authorities. They need to work hand in hand on cases of misconduct. All the role players should share ideas of how they could work together more effectively with one another. Regular meetings should be set up with all the relevant government departments in attendance.

Availability of personnel from other government departments also becomes a problem as they too cannot provide the needed support when required. "We need to strategize on how to get hold of other government departments when we require their support. One of them could be on standby if needed" said one interviewee. This situation is due to the fact that they have their own programmes to see to, and time schedules do not always suit all the role players.

The evidence from this study suggests that most government departments still work independently from one another. If the benefits of inter-sectoral collaboration are recognized, then this lack of collaboration is likely to be to the detriment of the people that these departments serve. The majority of the participants felt that they were uninformed about the role other government departments could play within the EMDC. Some of the participants felt that the EMDC needed to make sure that there is interaction between government departments. Workshops could be conducted to inform the other government departments about how they can get involved in the EMDC and what help they could offer the education system.

Lines of communication should be improved between providers and other government departments. Some interviewees suggested that it is important to have workshops with other

government departments so that they can understand how the EMDC functions. It was felt that the management of the EMDC should make contact with all the other government departments to inform them about the EMDC and how it functions, and to inform them about what support is needed from them. It was also felt that regular meetings with the management of other government departments needed to take place, to determine how we can work together more effectively.

4.2.7 Collaboration with the community

The information collected in this section of the interviews only revealed the involvement of the SGB in areas relating to governance and the implementation of the South African Schools Act (1996). The service providers said that they made use of the SGB to mobilize the leaders and parents in the community to be involved in school activities.

Some interviewees suggested that they needed to identify key people in the community with whom they could work. An example of this was the workshop on 'Abuse No More' which could focus on involving working parents. "We need to work collaboratively with the community to involve them" said one interviewee. There was an emphasis on the importance of capacity building and empowerment of working parents, by conducting workshops and accommodating them during their lunch breaks at their places of employment.

It was felt, with regard to what does work well, that certain communities and SGBs are well equipped in understanding and interpreting government circulars. They seem to know what their responsibilities as SGBs are towards their schools, and what role they could and should fulfil. The respondents felt that

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in the more advantaged communities, parental involvement is at a much higher level, and parents tend to show an interest in the schools that their children attend. Most of the members of the SGBs are more available to assist the school.

The SGB of the schools was able to identify certain people in the community with whom they could work as well as community leaders who played a vital role in the life of the school. It was felt that there is a willingness on the part of some people to form partnerships with NGO's. There is also a willingness on the part of departmental officials to liaise with NGO's outside school hours, to address inclusiveness in mainstream schools.

When discussing difficulties in co-operating with communities, most participants felt that language was a major barrier in the disadvantaged communities, when it came to the proper understanding of circulars.

In trying to find solutions to these challenges expressed, many of the participants felt that the EMDC personnel must be empowered to speak a third language, in order to make the necessary connection with a large part of many communities. It was felt that interaction needs to take place from the side of the EMDC to facilitate interaction with communities in their mother tongue. They also felt that EMDC officials should respect one another and that they should try to build trust relationships with the schools and communities. To assist with this process, the idea was expressed that the EMDC could run awareness programmes about the services that the EMDC has to offer schools and communities. The EMDC could also inform the communities of its function or its purpose within the educational

context by involving the media or holding imbizos (community meetings). Another idea offered was that the EMDC could make use of unemployed parents and to empower them around issues such as child abuse and HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the EMDC personnel could make use of the services of the NGO's to provide training, aimed at the upliftment of communities.

A number of participants in the research also felt that in the areas where they could not deal with issues, key role players and leaders within the community could assist them. However, some said that most of the disadvantaged parents were working and that there was no real opportunity available to work with them. The EMDC could, therefore, get permission from employers to have workshops facilitated during lunch breaks. One interviewee said that if this suggestion was not practical to implement, an alternative could be to develop a system whereby parents were granted leave to attend SGB meetings or in-service training at the EMDC. Respondents also stated that the EMDC should make use of the existing structures in churches to empower the parents.

4.2.8   Collaboration with the school/educational institution

All the participants felt strongly that the collaboration between the EMDC and the staff members of the schools was good. Most of the participants worked directly with the principals, whilst others worked with the entire staff, for example to establish reading programmes, TSTs or to facilitate HIV/AIDS workshops. Some of the participants also played a supportive role in resolving disputes at the schools. Many schools are also being assisted by respondents in moving from Section 20 schools to becoming Section 21 schools (i.e. managing their

own budgets). The participants also mentioned that they gave advice and guidance to the schools to help solve many of their problems. Some schools were being helped with a programme of swapping furniture, that is, from those who have an excess to those with the need.

When we focussed on what worked well within schools, most participants stated that the direct communication between schools and the EMDC worked very well. Schools are getting to know with whom they are dealing at the EMDC and call such people directly. Some of the participants in the EMDC approach matters pro-actively by running workshops, dealing with forthcoming issues or possible changes to be introduced. There was a willingness and openness on the part of schools to accept the support offered by the EMDC. One participant expressed strong support for the idea of twinning schools to break down the barriers of the past. The idea of twinning is to put two schools from quite different backgrounds in contact with one another to form an informal partnership. This partnership may result in teachers visiting between schools, children attending classes in the other school, pen-friends being formed between the schools, and so on. This strategy would enable schools to get to know each other better and to learn to share valuable information with one another.

What has also worked well are the different control and management styles of the EMDC personnel, for example, first notifying the schools before visiting them. This includes being as transparent as possible about why EMDC personnel are coming to supervise, and when they are coming to visit the school. This was especially apparent in the practices concerning the audits performed at schools. The visitation

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notice would be communicated to the school telephonically or by fax. The schools expressed appreciation for this professional approach on the part of the EMDC, i.e. the EMDC moved away from the old way of doing inspections without giving any notice of their intended visit. Schools have a checklist beforehand, for example portfolios of the learners, the macro-planning of the different learning areas, assessment sheet, minutes of SGB meetings, intervention programmes for learners who need extra support.

On the matter of difficulties experienced in working together, participants gave many different responses. The key responses are recorded below.

The different teachers' organisations often had different understandings of what constituted an agreement or resolution, e.g. some Section 20 schools did not want a record system. Some teachers did not want to be accountable or attend workshops as they considered this to be extra work.

Some interviewees felt that the teachers are overwhelmed by the changes suggested by the new curriculum as well as the extra demands of attending workshops.

Most respondents said that it was difficult to run a workshop effectively when all the schools were not on the same level. An example of this was where some of them were still thinking of the 'medical model' whilst others have moved to the 'rights model' with regard to addressing the needs of learners with disabilities. The medical model means that they only see the impairment within the child and not within the system. ELSEN advisors have moved from a medical model to a rights model.

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This means to recognise and respect the differences among all learners. The problem is not within the child, but it lies within the system, and the system needs to change.

A few of the participants said that some people did not trust the WCED, especially when the EMDC personnel conduct investigations in cases where money has been stolen. It was felt that whenever the EMDC personnel sets a date to investigate the matter, somebody will always be absent or take leave. This implies that the cases can never be concluded satisfactorily.

Time always appears to be an issue since some teachers do not want to stay after school for workshops.

The participants revealed the following examples of how to address the challenges.

Some of the participants felt strongly that the EMDC must have multi-lateral integration, and involve the different teachers' unions and organisations in monthly meetings. Added to this, it was suggested that when vacancies arose, the most suitable candidates should be nominated and not only people whom the members of the union favoured.

The schools must be developed and equipped to become Section 21 or self-managed schools. SGBs must also be trained to use the training manual on how to manage the school and how to deal with the school's income. Teachers need to make a paradigm shift i.e. to change their attitudes regarding attending workshops and working after school. Organised in-service training must be given to the needy schools, in order to

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bring them onto the same level as the others. These schools must then be monitored and evaluated to see if they have benefited from these workshops. Schools must learn to plan in advance and the EMDC should support them in their planning. A relationship of trust must be built from both sides. Finally, social issues impacting on the schools, such as poor nutrition of learners, drug usage, gangsterism and HIV orphans, must be taken seriously and prioritised by the WCED.

4.2.9 Co-ordination and management of the support service

Participants were asked to respond to the question on how support is currently co-ordinated and managed within the EMDC in a MFT. The majority of the responses indicated that there was little co-ordination between the members of the MFT's, while a small group stated that there was good co-ordination between them. The administration pillar is not always in a MFT, but this is how the administration personnel co-ordinate their services within their pillar. In the administration pillar they established a network to collect their mail from one school. They deliver all the mail for the schools in Khayelitsha to one school. This school then sets the network in motion. School number two must call school number three and so on. In this system the last school who receives the call, must call the first school, so that they know that all the schools received the message. The study revealed that although there was little experience of co-ordination of support service as a MFT, there were, in fact, attempts to co-ordinate support.

All interviewees felt that procedures on how to manage and co-ordinate projects must be institutionalised throughout the EMDC, otherwise it will be difficult to achieve its goals. Specific

time must be put aside to co-ordinate and monitor what the service provider's offer to schools. The EMDC staff must monitor and co-ordinate to see that the school implements what the service providers offer them.

On the question of what works well at the moment, the following responses were given.

One of the interviewees said that communication lines are open and clear and boundaries have been crossed between the different pillars.

Some interviewees said that consultation processes take place and people are listened to. Where staff is available, they can be co-opted into a facilitation team.

All interviewees agreed that the regular meetings of MFT have delivered a much better service with all the participants present. People can sit around a table and discuss how they are going to solve a problem. During the discussion members of the team recognise the strengths that some of the members have, as well as their weaknesses. One of the participants said the boundaries have been broken. If there is a problem you call in the team and discuss it. A consultation process takes place whereas in the past, only one person made a decision on how to solve the problem.

Some interviewees said that the clustering of schools for delivery purposes works well with the added bonus that the administrative staffs save on their budgets. They cluster their schools for mail delivery purposes and to establish information chains. This team also forwards all the information through the

computer, to make it accessible to everyone.

Some of the interviewees said that the MFTs put all the schools that are close to each other in one cluster, to introduce the schools to the concept of TSTs. Instead of running three workshops, they cluster their schools into one workshop, to be able to cope with their workload.

When asked about the difficulties experienced in trying to co-ordinate support services, the following challenges were raised as obstacles to co-ordination and management of support. The literature is clear that inter-sectoral collaboration is not without its difficulties and challenges.
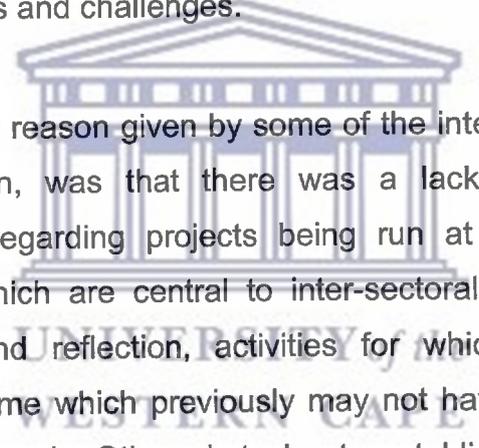
The primary reason given by some of the interviewees for poor co-ordination, was that there was a lack of planning co-ordination regarding projects being run at the EMDC. Two activities which are central to inter-sectoral collaboration are planning and reflection, activities for which time must be allocated, time which previously may not have been budgeted for or managed. Other obstacles to establishing effective co-ordinating mechanisms mentioned included a lack of communication, support often not being sustained, lack of support structures, lack of commitment and responsibility, and lack of skills needed to co-ordinate. According to the literature, Intriligator (1994), Levin & Greene (1994), Mostert (1996) and Manley-Casimir & Hall (1994) stress the importance of establishing procedures to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration. In many organizations this approach remains untried.

Further challenges mentioned included the lack of time,

problems of transport finances, and a lack of personnel power. It was felt that some personnel are uncertain about people's particular roles and functions in an inter-sectoral arrangement, and that people could have different perceptions about how the system should function. There was a need for strong leadership, to give proper guidance and planning.

It was felt that there was a risk of this becoming yet another form of bureaucracy unless an inter-sectoral approach existed at all levels of the EMDC. One of the biggest problems was finding a suitable date for all the role players to have a planning meeting. Communication remains a big problem. Poor communication makes change difficult. Some people do not work together well because of personality clashes or power struggles.

Support is often not being sustained. There is a lack of monitoring and evaluation. Various elements of the organisation require development if inter-sectoral collaboration is to be effectively implemented. Good management policy (DeGraw, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994; Intriligator, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002) is crucial.

Structures and procedures noted as crucial include those focusing on communication and decision making (Lunt et al; 1994), monitoring, reflection and evaluation (Intriligator, 1994; Lunt et al, 1994; Mostert, 1996 and Robinson et al, 2002) and establishing and maintaining accountability (Intriligator, 1994; Girouard & Igoe, 1994).

The interviewees made reference to fragmentation, poor organisation, and poor leadership. It is interesting to note that

providers in the EMDC did indeed experience communication and co-ordination as serious problems. It will be the task of the EMDC directors to ascertain whether and how these problems are addressed in the new structure. It will be crucial to see that the EMDCs do in fact fulfil this function of co-ordination in the best interest of service delivery.

Putting policy in place is a first step, the structures and mechanisms to support this are, however, important. DeGraw (1994), Gronski & Pigg (1994) Intriligator (1994), Walsh et al (1999), Robinson et al (2002) highlight this point. DeGraw (1994) argues that co-ordination mechanisms should be institutionalised, i.e. accepted by the constitution.

4.3   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The literature review on co-ordination and collaboration emphasises the importance of the human dimension of teamwork. What emerges as an interesting phenomenon is the way in which individuals and organisational change are linked. For example, an individual's personal commitment to working within a team, contributes significantly to the success of team work within an organisation.

Changing people's way of looking at the world (Intriligator, 1994; Manley-Casimir & Hall, 1994; Smylie et al, 1994; Robinson et al, 2002) is often difficult, and may be more easily facilitated if, at a systemic level, collaboration is set as a priority at all levels of government, and at an individual level, professional awareness, integrity and judgment is heightened (Mostert, 1996).

What emerges from this research is a call for better

collaboration and co-ordination of support services. Attempts at improving both of these are, however, evident. As the literature suggests, there is a need for systemic change in this regard and such change must be supported and facilitated or managed continuously so that it can be sustained.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings and recommendations emerging from these findings. The chapter, in conclusion, reflects on the research process undertaken and suggests, within the framework of the action research approach, the possibilities for taking these recommendations forward.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the interviews with twenty participants of the East Metropole Education Management and Development Centre in the Western Cape. The purpose of the research was to identify providers' perceptions and experiences of holistic and co-ordinated support provision to schools, through a multi-functional approach, after the establishment and mobilisation of the EMDCs. The EMDCs have been specifically established to offer a more systemic, co-ordinated and holistic support service to schools, in an attempt to improve communication between providers and schools.

The research focused on the following issues:

- Providers' perceptions of holistic and co-ordinated support to schools
- Current functioning of the MFT
- Collaboration within the MFT
- Collaboration with other government departments
- Collaboration with the community
- Collaboration with the school/educational institutions
- Co-ordination within the EMDC

This chapter summarises the findings, recommendations on the findings, and provides a reflection on the research process.

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5.2   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The key findings of the research are summarised below.

5.2.1   Providers' perceptions of holistic and co-ordinated support to schools

Key elements here were, seeing support as working towards empowerment and capacity building, being needs-driven, being co-ordinated and accessible, and working towards the development of a quality service. The majority of suggestions for improved support provision involved structural issues, with co-ordination, planning and monitoring receiving the most attention.

With regard to principles guiding support provision to schools, it was evident that participants seemed to share a common vision of integrated and holistic support. The key elements here were, seeing support as working towards empowerment of teachers and better service delivery to schools. Capacity building was seen as a means of providing in-service training to address all challenges. Multi-functionality was identified as the primary aim and outcome of holistic support. This is often referred to as (i) the MFT approach, (ii) empowerment of teachers and (iii) the co-ordination of the support. The emphasis was placed on the need to work as a team and to involve all stake holders.

The concept of support, within the service provider community in this research is congruent with national and international trends. This includes the recognition that support should be directed at both teachers and organisational structures.

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5.2.2 Current functioning of the Multi-Functional Team

The participants indicated that currently only the four pillars e.g. Institutional Management and Governance, Specialised Learner and Education Support, Curriculum Development and Support and Administration are involved in a MFT. There was, however, recognition for the important role that the community and government resources could play, so that more holistic social services can be provided to schools. The needs of the school should determine who should be there.

Half of the participants in each pillar said that they did not experience any difference in service delivery. In other words, the service they currently render does not differ from the past. They still work in silos, where each pillar is only involved in its own programmes.

A number of benefits of an inter-sectoral approach were identified, including improved communication, better co-ordination, sharing of resources and less overload on schools. During the process of working in a MFT, participants realised that they could learn from one another and that capacity building took place while using a 'multi- functional team approach. In future, members of the MFT want to work in a more collaborative way so that a better service can be delivered. It was noted that there is a very big pool of potential support providers that can be drawn on in all areas.

Most of the suggestions for improved support provision revolved around structural issues, with a particular emphasis on co-ordination, planning and collaboration between providers.

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5.2.3   Collaboration within the Multi-Functional Team

The participants felt that working within a MFT could be of great benefit to service providers themselves. They acknowledged that working in a MFT was the best way to address problems at schools. If there is a problem, brainstorming can take place from different perspectives and multiple problems can be solved quicker through a comprehensive understanding of issues. Interviewees acknowledged that everyone in the MFT can contribute towards problem solving and that they can receive support from one other when working in a MFT. It is encouraging that participants seemed to share a common vision of the importance of integrated and holistic support. They felt that they shared skills and learned from each other, and gained new ideas on how to approach their own work. They have developed a deeper understanding of and appreciation for others' perspectives and work.

Teamwork is evident in schools where they render services as a team.   Shared visions and goals emerge, with a shared responsibility and sense of accountability and interdependency. Programmes are geared toward needs because they acknowledge the diverse background of clients.

The MFT has made it possible for EMDC staff to become equal partners and openness and trust has been established between the different pillars.   They want to succeed and accept the responsibilities.

Interviewees acknowledged that a great deal of expertise in the EMDC was not being utilised properly.   Weaknesses were identified in four categories: namely, resources, organisational

issues, group dynamics and discourse challenges. A lack of time was identified as one of the biggest problems. At organisational level it was noted that a multi-disciplinary approach required a great deal of co-ordination and management, and that there was a potential blurring of professional boundaries. One of the biggest challenges was the diversity of cultures and languages. It was noted that the interviewees needed to learn more about each other's culture, and obtain a better understanding of and tolerance towards each other to build better relationships.

Generally, the study has shown that there is good collaboration between circuit managers, curriculum advisors and special education specialists. However, the administrative staff felt strongly that there was little collaboration with them and the other three pillars.

5.2.4 Collaboration with other government departments

Collaboration between other government departments is currently minimal. Availability of other government departments seems to be a problem, as the latter cannot provide support immediately. At the moment only the social workers liaise with social workers from other government departments.

The role of other government departments in the collaborative delivery of support service to the EMDC is, however, clearly recognised. This clearly points to the need for all concerned to address the challenges of working within a team or inter-sectoral framework. Inter-sectoral collaboration facilitates access to service.

Weaknesses highlighted are that the education department has not yet formed partnerships with other government departments. Providers felt that they were uninformed about other departments and what role they could play within the EMDC. The services of the Welfare and NGOs, in particular, can be utilized better, to ease the workload of the service providers in the EMDC.

5.2.5   Collaboration within the community

There was an emphasis on the importance of capacity building and empowerment of community members, particularly the parents who are working. Key elements here were seeing support as working towards empowerment and capacity building, being needs-driven, being co-ordinated and accessible, and as working towards the development of a quality service.

Parental involvement was good in the advantaged communities whilst in the disadvantaged communities the parents were not as involved.

In the advantaged communities the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) seemed to know what their roles and responsibilities were, but in the disadvantaged communities they were not quite sure about their roles and responsibilities. Language is a major problem in the disadvantaged communities. Many times the School Management Teams (SMTs) misinterpret the circulars because these are not available in their mother tongue. This leads to misunderstanding and chaos in the schools.

Good relationships with schools are forged because of the

positive attitude of the departmental officials. Parents realise the importance of the support providers in the process of school development.

Certain people in the communities were identified as those whom the EMDC and the schools could work with. A willingness was expressed to form partnerships with the Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), even after hours.

5.2.6 Collaboration with the school/education institution

There were mixed feelings about the extent to which support provision had become more co-ordinated and collaborative during the early establishment of the EMDC. For some, there was now a greater awareness of what collaborative work involved, and a greater respect for one another's skills and expertise.

Good collaboration has been established between the EMDC and the schools. Service providers have played a supportive role in resolving disputes at schools. Furthermore, Section 20 schools were supported by the service providers to become Section 21 schools.

The direct communication between schools and the EMDC has worked quite well. Schools have gotten to know the people with whom they were dealing in the EMDC and called for support when they needed it. Schools are willing and open to accept the support offered by the EMDC. Collaboration has also taken place between schools, as they have started to share valuable information with each other.

The different management and control style of the EMDC members has worked well. For example, the EMDC informs the schools when an audit is to be carried out. EMDC staff do not visit schools without prior notification, and schools appreciate this kind of collaboration.

Differing interpretations of policy by teacher unions often lead to disputes and raise a number of tensions, with service providers indicating that they experience different lines of accountability. Some teachers do not want to be accountable for or attend workshops as they consider it extra work. Power struggles, poor leadership and the mismanagement of funds have also created challenges.

There is an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction amongst teachers concerning the attendance of workshops and the demands of the new curriculum. Schools are not all at the same level and some teachers do not want to stay after school for workshops.

There is still some mistrust between certain schools and the Education Department, especially when cases of theft are investigated.

5.2.7   **Co-ordination and management of support services**

Many concerns were raised about a lack of co-ordination in the support system. This included concerns relating to the compartmentalisation of services, too many projects, and workshops happening at the same time. Approximately half of the providers felt that they did not experience any form of co-ordination in a team. There was a need for better

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communication internally, between the four pillars, so that duplication of service delivery does not take place. A great need was expressed for leadership in relation to co-ordination and management in the support services system.

All interviewees expressed concern about the lack of co-ordination of services, and the resultant inefficiency and fragmentation. Although some examples of good co-ordination and collaboration were noted in the different areas, it was generally felt that services were not well co-ordinated and that there was little collaboration between providers. As long as co-ordination is not institutionalised throughout the EMDC, it will be difficult to achieve specific goals. Although there was little experience of co-ordination of support services as a MFT, there were, in fact, attempts to link structures and manage particular teams, e.g. establishing Teachers Support Teams (TSTs).

Although the interviewees said that co-ordination was poor, they also said that co-ordination was good, referring to some of the MFTs clustering their schools that are in close proximity to each other in order to get across the concept of a TST. In the administration section, there was good co-ordination between the departmental officials and the schools. The mail delivery service is co-ordinated. Clustering of schools for workshops works quite well.

Obstacles to establishing effective co-ordination with the EMDC included a lack of communication and leadership, support often not being sustained, and a lack of monitoring and evaluation. Management of service was poor and reference was made to fragmentation and poor leadership. There was no monitoring and evaluation mechanism built into projects. A lack of

communication and co-ordination was experienced as a serious problem.

Other challenges mentioned were a lack of time; transport problems; finances and a lack of human resources. Uncertainty about roles, particularly in an inter-sectoral arrangement, and different perceptions about how the collaborative system could focus, were some of the problems experienced. One of the biggest problems was finding a suitable date for all the role players to have a planning meeting.

There is a need for strong leadership and for proper guidance and planning. An inter-sectoral approach should exist at all levels of the EMDC. There was a strongly expressed need for better co-ordination of services, and better internal and external communication (with schools).

5.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion the findings of this study suggest a number of recommendations. Drawing from the suggestions made by the interviewees, and the researcher's own experiences, the following recommendations are offered.

- Inter-sectoral collaboration, as a specific approach to support provision, presents many challenges.
- Strategic planning needs to be done by the EMDC.

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5.3.1 Organisational issues

- A time-table indicating when the MFT will meet and have their regular meetings must be adhered to.

- The MFT should be the priority of the EMDC where problems are collectively solved.

- Feedback must also be given to all the stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

- To improve communication within the EMDC, creative communication mechanisms could be developed. For example, a board can be installed at the entrance of the EMDC where you indicate in or out when leaving or coming into the building.

- There is a need to develop the capacity of the EMDC members and to provide appropriate leadership within a collaborative framework.

5.3.2 Group dynamics and managing differences

- Ensure that competition between value systems and different perspectives can emerge as key challenges, but the aim must be to value the differences.
- Differences must therefore be valued by working more closely together.
- Ensuring that members of the EMDC can learn to have a better understanding of their different cultures.

5.3.3 **Collaboration with other government departments, the community, and schools**

- Managing collaboration with *other* government departments can be of great value to the EMDC.
- The director and pillar heads need to make sure that there is interaction with other government departments.
- Workshops can be conducted in order to inform the other government departments about how they can get involved in the EMDC and what help they can offer the education system and vice versa.
- All the role players could share ideas on how they could work more effectively with all government departments.
- Regular meetings must be set up where all the relevant government departments are represented.

The following challenges can be addressed with regard to dealing more effectively with the community.

- Service providers should be equipped to speak a third language in order to make the necessary connection with the community.

- The EMDC could run an awareness programme about the service the EMDC can offer to schools and the community, e.g. how to manage your school budget, how to raise funds, how to create a safe learning environment, etc.

- Managing the existing structures (e.g. churches) that could be used in the community to deal with child abuse, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, etc.

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- The EMDC can get permission from the employers/owners of factories to run workshops during lunch breaks to inform the workers about child abuse, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, etc. An alternative would be to develop a type of form that parents could present at work certifying that they were attending an important meeting or in-service training.

- To be able to communicate effectively with the *schools,* a meeting can be organised with all the teacher unions in order to clarify crucial issues, so that all concerned can have a common understanding of these issues. As far as teachers' commitment towards attending workshops is concerned, a code of conduct can be drawn up, with the SMT, SGB and the rest of the staff indicating what rules and regulations should be applied if teachers do not attend workshops. The staff will then takes responsibility for and be accountable for attendance at workshops.

5.3.4   **Co-ordination**

In the strategic plan of the EMDC, the following should be considered:
- Teachers can only attend workshops once a month;
- Cluster the schools that are more or less on the same economic or educational level;
- Take the service closer to schools. Instead of eighty teachers travelling to the EMDC, officials can travel in one government car to the most central school hall.

To have proper co-ordination the following could be done:
- In-service leadership training;

- The development of the MFT on how to work collaboratively and how to co-ordinate and manage their time effectively;
- Proper planning;
- Service providers could make use of various communication systems, e.g. e-mails, telephones;
- Have a proper help-line in place to support the following: queries; curriculum implementation, barriers to learning, psychological management and governance support ;
- Monitoring and evaluation could take place on a regular basis;
- Have a project manager at the EMDC co-ordinating the workshop dates;
- Have a Gann chart reflecting all the events taking place in the EMDC;
- MFT could meet ion a weekly basis in the beginning to give feedback on progress at schools.

5.4 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Strengths

The strength of qualitative research is that it deals with human beings, interpersonal relationships, personal value, meaning, beliefs and thoughts. It offers a firsthand account of the participants' perceptions and views. Data is mediated through this human instrument, the researcher. The main purpose of the interview is to obtain specific kinds of information. The researcher is the primary instrument for collecting the data. This approach gives you a holistic view of what is being studied. The qualitative researcher focuses on subjective data that exists within the minds of individuals.

The strength of my study is that being in the EMDC, I gained first hand information about how the different pillars operate, what their focus areas are, where the strengths and weakness are within the EMDC, and where they need a lot of support. I also discovered that all those working in the EMDC acknowledge that working in a MFT is the best way to address problems at schools. In the light of my research I discovered that there is a good collaboration between the four pillars. Culture is still a big issue and we as a team in the EMDC need to learn more about each other's language and culture. The participants in the EMDC also developed a deeper understanding of and appreciation for each other's work.

Weaknesses
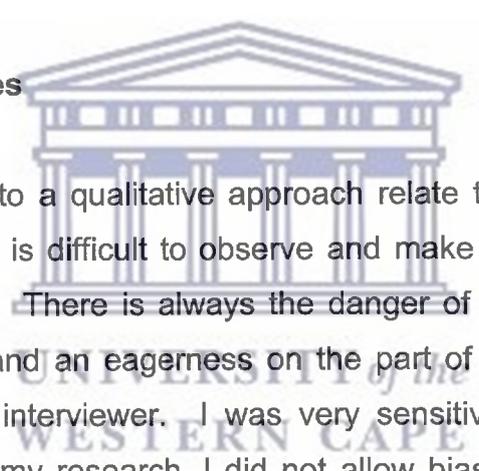
Limitations to a qualitative approach relate to authenticity and accuracy. It is difficult to observe and make sense of complex behaviours. There is always the danger of bias creeping into interviews and an eagerness on the part of the respondent to please the interviewer. I was very sensitive to biases while conducting my research. I did not allow bias to creep into the interviews. I told the interviewees that they must not try to please me. I did not seek out the quotes or answers that support my preconceived notions.

Another weakness of this study relates to the fact that the EMDC has not been in existence for long and participants were, therefore, not fully informed and equipped to work within a MFT.

Areas of research that should be followed up

The following areas of research need to be followed up:

- Building effective collaboration within the MFT, government departments, and the community.
- Effective co-ordination within the MFT.
- Investigating and monitoring whether the EMDC has improved on co-ordination and collaboration within the EMDC and with other government departments.
- Follow-up research that focuses on the progress of collaboration within a MFT within the EMDCs.

My intention as a researcher was to link the overall findings of the research to international literature, thus providing a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of the issues. This will allow the EMDC to learn from the experiences and challenges of those involved in similar initiatives in other countries. It will be most useful if the issues raised here can be followed up over a period of time, in order to see whether the EMDC structure does indeed make a difference to the issues raised. Longitudinal research is therefore recommended.

This research was conducted within an action research framework, with the research findings feeding directly and meaningfully into practice.

The study showed that the EMDC personnel are not fully aware of the proper functioning of a MFT. However, there is a growing realisation that services cannot be carried out in isolation, and that collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination are necessary for more effective and holistic service delivery. Most of the participants in this study emphasized that services needed to be

better co-ordinated and that there was a need for better communication and leadership within MFTs.

This study could make a contribution to an understanding of how the EMDC can provide more co-ordinated and holistic support to schools. It could, among other things, give insight into the challenges of inter-sectoral collaboration, and how to address these challenges.

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APPENDIX A

Interview schedule

A. UNDERSTANDING OF HOLISTIC AND CO-ORDINATED SUPPORT

1. What is your understanding of holistic and co-ordinated support?

2. What is the purpose of the support?

3. Does the MFT have a shared vision and a common goal with regard to support to schools?

B. HOW DOES THE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL TEAM WORK AT THE MOMENT?

4a. Who is involved in providing support in the MFT?

4b. Who should be involved?

5. How do you currently work together? (Description)

6. What kind of service do you provide at the moment and for the future?

C.1 COLLABORATION: HOW DOES THE MFT WORK TOGETHER

7. What are the benefits of working as a team?

8. What works well (is making it work) at the moment?

9. What are the difficulties experienced in trying to work together?

10. How can we address these challenges?

C.2 COLLABORATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

11. How do you involve other government departments in support provision?

12. What works well at the moment?

13. What are the difficulties experienced in trying to work together?

14. How can we address these challenges?

C.3 COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNNITY.
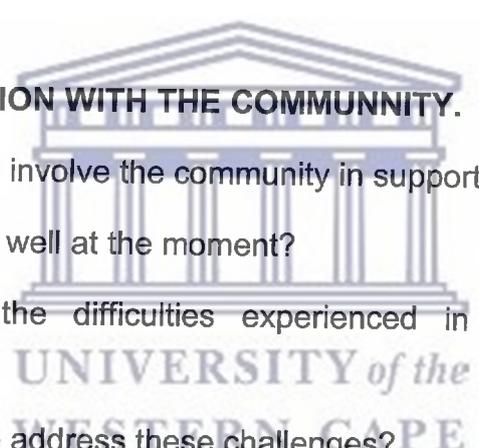
15. How do you involve the community in support provision?

16. What works well at the moment?

17. What are the difficulties experienced in trying to work together?

18. How can we address these challenges?

C.4 COLLABORATION WITH THE SCHOOLS/ EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

19. How do you work in partnership with the schools?

20. What works well at the moment?

21. What are the difficulties experienced in trying to work together?

22. How can we address these challenges?

D. CO-ORDINATION

23. How does the EMDC currently co-ordinate and manage the support service?

24. What works well at the moment?

25. What are the difficulties/ challenges?

26. How can we address these challenges?