Perspectives of Participation in Decentralised Public Schools

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ABSTRACT Decentralisation of public schools and the participation of stakeholders in decision making continue to be areas of significant concern in educational management research. Although the major objective of decentralisation is to facilitate greater participation of stakeholders, there has been no conceptual framework that can illustrate, in a simple manner, how different arguments for decentralisation result in different perspectives of participation, and how those perspectives complement each other in making schools efficient and effective. The author presents an analysis of various arguments for decentralisation of public schools from which effective participation of stakeholders can be conceived.

INTRODUCTION

The school reform referred to as restructuring or decentralisation is a global phenomenon. Different countries are decentralising the management of schools, and in some developed countries, the process has reached a stage of self-governance of public schools (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998). In less developed countries, different forms of decentralisation have made schools, districts and municipalities assume some of the responsibilities related to the governance and management of schools (Faustor, 1995). It is argued (Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett, 1994; Crump, 1997; Gamage, 1996) that the major objective of decentralisation is to facilitate greater participation in decision making. Based on the literature of decentralisation and the review of research findings from the decentralised schools, the author presents various perspectives of participation in decentralised schools. The focus will be on the major arguments for decentralisation namely: the liberal ideology of producer-customer relationships; professionalism and the community of professionals; the populist ideology of local school community partnership; and the collaborative school management. The strengths and weaknesses for each argument will be presented, and an eclectic approach in which elements from various stances complement each other in making participation in public schools a means of achieving efficiency and effectiveness is presented.

THE LIBERAL IDEOLOGY AND MARKET FORCES

The liberal ideology advocates organisational changes that will facilitate individual freedom and choice. As a consequence, the school system is required to provide a wide range of alternatives to allow individuals to advance according to capability.
and interest. Liberal values argue for freedom in educational provision, transmission and the advancement of knowledge as a precondition for greater personal autonomy and for social development (Lauglo, 1996).

An outstanding feature of liberal ideology is its emphasis on a well defined neutrality of the state with respect to particular religions, moral values and ways of life. “It is for individuals to determine how they should live, with the state ensuring that, subject to the harm condition, the views and preferences of none are privileged over those of others” (Jonathan, 1997, p. 183). The State might intervene but strictly on issues that prevent freedom of individuals. The moral content of liberalism is limited to procedural principles of impartiality, tolerance and respect for individual freedom (ibid.). It is from this perception that State control over education provision is not compatible with liberalism. Two aspects are emphasised by the liberal ideology, the quality of service provided and market forces as a means of maintaining quality.

Quality is an abstract concept and it expresses itself in different forms of constructs and indicators. Psacharopoulos (1995, p. 33) says that quality depends on one's perception of where to draw a line of excellence along the quality continuum, implying that educational quality should be determined by its consumers. While quality can be determined according to standards specified when making a contract, or by experts, it is the customer-driven quality which is "the heart of the quality revolution" that is "defined in terms of fitness for use" (p. 46). It is, therefore, the customer driven quality that schools should struggle to achieve. Customer-driven quality calls for a decentralised school system to enable the: “providers of service to be constantly inquiring as to the need of stakeholders" (Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993, p. 50).

An examination of the literature (Carnoy, 1993; Chubb and Moe, 1990; Lauglo, 1996; Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993) reveals that customer-driven quality is essentially market-oriented quality since the provider will constantly be improving a product in order to meet the customer’s ever changing expectations. And, since service provision is not the monopoly of one provider, efficiency and effectiveness will best be achieved through competition for customers. Schools become producers of education and parents, on behalf of their children, become consumers. According to competition in business, the producer will make the effort to reduce the cost of production and to produce the best quality and variety of services which will attract the clients. It is for this reason Beare (1995, p. 10) argues that schools should be different from each other, success-oriented and aggressively competitive. In this process the system becomes efficient and cost-effective.
There are a number of methods which can be used to make the public school system respond to market forces. One method is to allow families to choose the schools to educate their children. Parental choice is expected to reach a "point where each school is competing for customers among a diverse set of parental taste and incomes, and parents face a wide range of available schooling choice for their children" (Carnoy 1993, p. 164). Another method is the use of the voucher system in a way that publicly financed institutions will be forced to compete with each other and with the private sector. Decentralisation should go as far as allowing private providers to establish schools and compete with each other and with the public school system (Lauglo, 1996, p. 34). This will encourage schools to recruit students independently from their catchment area, as it is currently practised in England and Wales and in the State of Victoria (Rogers, 1992). The flow of resources to schools will depend on the number of students a school can attract.

However, effective schools will not accept losing students because they will lose resources too. They will use their initial advantage to become more effective. Less effective schools will lose resources and this will make them more vulnerable. Competition will be on an unequal basis. Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1994, p. 8) observed that:

Schools do not compete as equals. Some schools suffer from reputation, difficult location, financial limitations and other negative factors, whilst others are positively endowed. It is enormously difficult for a school with many or all negative characteristics to compete with schools enjoying the most positive advantage.

Under these conditions ineffective schools are likely to remain ineffective. Because of factors such as social economic status of some families, location of the school, rurality, and poor educational resources as is the case in many of the developing countries, market forces may invent a dual system of effective and ineffective schools (Glenn, 1996, p. 4; Mortimore, 1996, p. 13).

In addition, research findings show that distinctiveness seems to disappear and competition results in some schools imitating aspects of other schools that seem to attract parents (Docking, 1996; Glenn, 1996; Pannell and West, 1995). In Victoria for example, primary schools seem to establish similar curriculum enrichment programs while selecting one of their priorities from specialist Key Learning Areas of Physical Education, Arts or Music.

Market mechanisms in education embody a number of risks. Some parents are not well informed about the type of education most appropriate for their children (Carnoy, 1998). This problem of ignorance on the part of parents might result in unnecessary competition between certain schools. Rogers (1992, p. 77) argues that parents "do not feel confident that they know enough about exactly what is 'a good education'..." Thus, the assumption that all parents will choose schools that
are more effective may not be achieved. Another risk is that schools may start competing for the most able students and become discouraged from enrolling low achievers.

There is no conclusive evidence that market forces and parental choice will improve education quality or diversity in public schools (Brighouse, 1995, Docking, 1996; Jackson, 1996; Mortimore, 1996; Smith and Noble, 1995). Moreover, parental choice may be determined by factors other than effectiveness and distinctiveness. Factors like safety, location, distance, availability of opportunities for choice and parents' socio-economic status might determine choice of parents rather than the aspect of school performance (Ball, 1991; Hirsch, 1995).

Organisational Participation

Organisational participation is a product of management and organisational theories and practices in industries and business where production entirely depends on market forces (Keith, 1996). Organisational participation requires structures that will allow ideas from different people in the organisation to be heard, tested and implemented. Such organisations are described by Argyris and Schön, (1978; 1996) as learning organisations. The motive behind organisational participation is mobilisation and maximum utilisation of human resources to enhance productivity.

Organisational values that favour participation rest on two assumptions: the condition of disorder and the condition of knowledge (Brown, 1990, pp. 32-34). While organisation means bringing about order, realisation of organisational objectives require some sort of disorder embedded in creativity. Creativity involves a random combination of the known to create the unknown and the flow of mixed ideas which are translated into activity and into tangibles.

The second assumption is the condition of knowledge. Mintzberg (1979) argues that higher level personnel in an organisation are overloaded by information to the extent of not being able to transform that information into relevant knowledge. Furthermore, it is possible for the upper level personnel to misinterpret information caused by their distance from the source of information. However, the lower level personnel are closer to the source, and sometimes are themselves the source of information, required to attain the organisational objectives. The lower level personnel can respond quickly and appropriately to changes (flexibility), be held accountable for the outcomes of its action (accountability), and use efficiently and cost-effectively the resources they are provided (productivity) (Brown, 1990; Drucker, 1993). In such a way, schools will become efficient and effective in an active, dynamic, co-operative and innovative way (Caldwell, 1995).

However, there are two problems associated with organizational participation. Firstly, organisational participation depends on transformational leaders
(Hargreaves, 1994). The characteristics of transformational leadership are more inclined to charismatic philosophy, i.e., individuals who can command loyalty and allegiance. If this is the case, participation may disappear with transformational leaders. This will result in a problem of locating charismatic leaders who are capable of empowering their subordinates (Sarason, 1990). Secondly, organisational participation ignores the difference between organizations that produce commodities and schools which help students to develop their mental, physical and attitudinal skills. Johnson and Short (1998, p. 148) argue that "schools operate from a moral and political mandate to educate all children [but] business operates from an economic mandate to make a profit". These authors caution that restructuring efforts motivated and guided by business experiences may result in unsuccessful outcomes when the "characteristics of the educational environment are ignored" (ibid.). Schools are differentiated from business organisations since teaching and learning are not the same as selling and buying, but a professional undertaking which involves facilitation and acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude. However, the competitive culture enhances quality and diversity to cater for different educational needs of students. Since one of the objectives for participation is to improve the quality of service, the mechanism to make schools competitive is an important element of an effective school.

**Professionalism and the Community of Professionals**

Professionalism connotes autonomy which is legitimated by specialised expertise. According to Ginsburg (1997, p. 6), professionalism means performing an essential service, engaging in mental work that involve a high level of expertise and judgment, functioning based on an ideal service, operating with autonomy in the work place, and having colleagues in control of selection. In essence, professionalism is usually construed to mean an esoteric body of knowledge and skills, with universal norms of expertise and morality irrespective of the demands of particular work environments. Therefore, professionalism is based on morality, influence and power, and against authority and accountability to lay people (Kogan, 1986, p. 32).

Furthermore, when teaching is examined from the practical side, we could say that the teaching process in uncertain. Teachers are not quite sure how students will behave in the next lesson and what might happen tomorrow. To be effective, teachers need to be active in identifying changes that might take place among their students. In such conditions no one can direct in advance what teachers should do in the teaching-learning environment. That is why the professional model assumes that teachers are decision-makers, creatively adapting knowledge to unique and varied problem situations. In doing so they expand skills, refine professional judgment and initiative (Conley, 1991). The same arguments are raised by Murphy (1991) as follows:
The redesign of teachers’ work is based on a number of important premises: One is that teaching is a moral activity and as such should be subject to the control of teachers themselves. A second is that teachers are intellectuals and should, therefore, take the lead role in discussions about the nature and purposes of schooling. . . Third, teaching is a profession and as such should be guided by the professional canons rather than bureaucratic rules and regulations (p. 28)

Schools should be communities of their own in which teachers will work closely in accomplishing their work goals (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995); where schools will be caring communities and where teachers in collaborative teams will be committed to their work (Little and McLauglin, 1993; Sergeovanni, 1994).

The idea of building communities of professionals in schools is said to emanate from studies of teachers’ work. In these studies it was observed that teachers are isolated and lonely in classrooms with little contact with adults. Moreover, teachers are said to have little freedom since they work under bureaucratic rules. These conditions are observed to be against teachers’ work which needs freedom and autonomy (Lortie, 1975). It is from such an environment that teachers need to build collegiality among themselves in the process of creating communities of professionals. Little and McLaughlin, (1993) developed a model of building a community of professionals that is based on three aspects, namely, intensity, inclusivity and orientation to common beliefs. These authors argue for the creation of working conditions which will support teachers in adapting to new challenges in the society.

Sergiovanni (1994) makes a deeper analysis by extending this model of professional communities. In fact, he argues not for the community of professionals but, a school as a community. Based on Tonnies’s (1957) analysis, Sergiovanni defines community using two terms: *gemeinschaft* and *gessellschaft*. The *gemeinschaft* is a communal community with common locale and kinship. Such communities are said to be natural, based on family, clan and tribe, thus, a blood-united community. The *gessellschaft* on the other hand, is a contractual community bound together with a certain trade. According to Sergiovanni (1994), the community which should be built in schools is the *gemeinschaft*. He says: “Throughout this book I make frequent reference to the family in illustrating how the theory of *gemeinschaft* can apply to schools” (p. 7), that is urging that schools build communal, as opposed to contractual communities:

Building community requires the development of community of mind represented by shared values, conceptions, and ideas about schooling and human nature. This mind structure provides the community and its members with purpose and meanings that are
embodied in duties and obligations. Fulfilling these duties and obligations requires selfless behaviour, altruistic love (p. 29).

This highlights the three elements to be used in building the community of mind in schools: shared values; democracy in which students will be invited to share the responsibility for regulating their own behaviour; and teachers redefining their relationships to build a caring community.

There is a relationship between students' achievement and school characteristics such as a clearly shared purpose for student learning, collaborative teaching activity, and collective responsibility for student learning (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995). However, this conception has a number of shortfalls. The community of mind fails to capture the reality that in modern life the concept of 'belongingness' is very limited (Merz and Furman, 1997). To accept the “community of minds” in schools will imply that all stakeholders share the same beliefs, values, tradition and norms. If this is the case, as it is expected in homogeneous communities and in religious faith, those who do not share such beliefs and values will be alienated from the school community. This will create boundaries between believers and non-believers in schools (Shields and Seltzer, 1997, p. 414). Noddings (1995) argues that the dark side of community in schools is the creation of boundaries. Moreover, the ‘community of minds’ as advocated by Sergiovanni (1994) is difficult to attain, not only in mixed communities, but also in homogeneous community. Drawing experience from a relatively remote, isolated and apparent homogeneous native American community, Shields and Seltzer (1997) argued that shared values and vision may not exist in every aspect of life.

The second shortfall is that this model does not take seriously the surrounding community and the homes students are coming from. On this account, Merz and Furman (1997) argue that the community of teachers is a misguided concept. Professionals are only one among many of the stakeholders of the school system. Absolute professional autonomy may exclude other parties from effective participation. Furthermore, professional perception of relevant knowledge and skills is not necessarily the clients’ perception and needs. On the basis of this shortcoming, Lauglo (1996) argues for teachers to be transparent and exchange ideas with their clients and other groups of stakeholders in education.

Unless such expertise and sensitivities are strengthened, there are risks that teachers increasingly will be reduced to demoralised operatives controlled by strong management that either will be more accountable than previously to non-professional outside authorities, or whose decisions will be shaped more by market forces (Lauglo, 1996, p. 44)

Bottery and Wright (1997, p. 10) argue that although professional normative processes are necessary, they are not sufficient. In addition, teachers should "ground their practices in terms of the ability to recast their theories, using the
insights of others, including their clients, in an intelligent and self-critical, and ultimately unpredictable manner”. As such, professional theories are required to reconsider the wider community which will include parents, students and other stakeholders in the school system. However, if teaching and learning are complementary activities, there is a need to develop communities in schools that will enhance collaboration between students and teachers, a community sharing the same values.

THE LOCAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY: THE POPULIST IDEOLOGY

The populist ideologies are social values that protest against the dominance of the elites and, instead, advocate local democracy and the empowerment of ordinary people in their local communities. This perception views schools as one of several learning places which include, homes, communities and work places. Skills which can be applied to life are advocated, and learning is perceived from a practical view point. In this aspect of practical education, the populist ideologies can be compared with Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy of education (Dewey, 1929).

The important changes that are advocated by populist ideologists seem to be summarised by Nyerere (1968, p. 270) :

There are three major aspects which require attention if this situation has to change: the content of the curriculum itself, the organisation of the schools and entry age into primary schools. But although these aspects are in some ways separate, they are also interlocked. We cannot integrate the pupils and students into the future society simply by theoretical teaching, however well designed it is.

Among the three elements pointed out by Nyerere, two seems to be typical of the populist ideology, namely, the curriculum content and the way schools are organised or managed.

Nyerere (1968) argues for a curriculum that will prepare “young people to live in and to serve the society, and to transmit the knowledge and skills, and values and attitudes of the society” (p. 272). This argument refers to the culture of learning that requires local participation in determining what students should learn. It is argued that different learning situations provide different learning needs and thus different learning experiences. For example, students from a semi-arid region might require different skills in water management from those in a humid region. Other things that tend to change with location include economic activities, cultural beliefs, language, and rural-urban diversity. From these premises, centralisation of the curriculum tends to produce a mismatch between students' needs and schools' specific learning activities (Weiler, 1990, p. 49). Proponents of the argument advocate the type of education system that "can provide a greater sensitivity to local variations" (Bray, 1984, p. 9). Schools are required to adapt the educational efforts
to local conditions in terms of skills and knowledge, hence the decentralisation of
the curriculum (Weiler, 1990).

The populist ideology argues for community schools in which parents, the local
community and teachers participate on an equal basis in decision-making and be
involved in carrying out decisions (Lauglo, 1996, p. 27). On this aspect, the populist
ideology is supported by the participatory democracy ideology which emphasises
equal rights of people to take part in decisions affecting their lives, and minimal
hierarchical organisations with flat structures (McLean and Lauglo, 1985).

In education, a number of ideas from a participatory democracy stance have
developed at different times. For example, in the 1970s there came a wave of
‘dialogue pedagogy’ and the ‘negotiated curriculum’. Paul Freire (1972) is against
the ‘banking method’ and the notion that teachers are depositors and learners are
depositories. He argues that “education must begin with the situation of teacher-
student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are
simultaneously teachers and students” (p. 59).

Therefore, populist and participatory ideologies emphasise that those affected by
any action should have power to decide on ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘when’ the action
should take place. As such, participation in decentralised schools should include
all stakeholders and develop effective relationships between the school and the
community.

**Home-School Relationships**

According to Swap (1993), there are four types of relationships that can be
developed between the school and the community. These are presented as three
distinctive, but not exclusive, models. They include the protective model, the
school-to-home transmission model, the curriculum enrichment model, and the
partnership model. These models are differentiated by the goals they intend to
achieve, the behaviour emphasised, and the strategy employed. In the protective
model, schools perceive the surrounding communities (including parents) as a
threat and, therefore, a need to buffer themselves. Strategies used for this end are
parent-teacher associations, parents’ conferences, and to some extent, limited
projects between the school and the community on a voluntary basis, the strategies
which are observed by Blase and Anderson (1995, p. 5) as a “public relations
exercise”. These strategies are used to divert parents’ demands to participate on
an equal basis in school affairs. It is protective because the approach “ignores the
potential of home-school collaboration for improving students’ achievement [and] rejects rich resources for enrichment and school support available from families”
(Swap, 1993, p. 29).

The school-to-home transmission model illustrates the relationship that develops
when teachers underscore the importance of parents in educating their children.
As a result teachers initiate communication between the school and the home. Things like school newsletters and homework hotlines are introduced. Active volunteer programmes are formulated and workshops for parents are conducted. Swap (1993) argues that these activities present a one way communication, and parents play a lesser role in planning these strategies. She argues that programs built on this model "often contain components that reflect an unwillingness to consider parents as equal partners" (p. 36). It is this type of participation that is described by Mason (1982, p. 20) as social, and not political.

The third model intends to clarify the curriculum enrichment relationships. According to Swap (1993), educators seek a direct involvement of parents in shaping the school curriculum. The assumption is that the curriculum with parents' input will reflect the values of families from which students are coming. Feedback from parents is sought on how the curriculum is planned and implemented. The pitfall of this level is that this reciprocal relationship is restricted to matters of the curriculum.

The fourth model illustrates partnership between teachers and parents. This relationship is a two way communication in which teachers and parents collaborate to solve different problems related to school. Under partnership, "collaborative relationships between home and school permeate all of the school culture" (Swap, 1993, p. 46) and the "goal is for educators and parents to work together towards a mission that is jointly defined" (Merz and Furman, 1997, p. 63). In the partnership type of relationship, there are four elements. Firstly, there is a two-way communication between parents and teachers in their effort to form a negotiated set of joint expectations for children and the school, i.e., the negotiated curriculum. Secondly, there is mutual responsibility between parents and teachers to enhance learning for students. Thirdly, there are mutual support activities such as parents' education programmes provided by the school and volunteering by parents to support the school program. Fourthly, there is joint decision-making between parents and teachers (Merz and Furman, 1997).

The four models developed by Swap (1993) seem to be based on Sherry Arnstein's (1971) concept of a ladder of citizen participation. What Swap has represented the process of participation as different and discrete stages. According to Arnstein, at the bottom of the ladder are two steps of pseudo-participation in which citizens are observed as not capable to contribute effectively in the participative process. These stages are called manipulation and therapy and they can be compared to the Swap's idea of protective relationship. The second phase of Arnstein's ladder has three steps of information, consultation and placation. They resemble the transmission and curriculum enrichment relationships among members of the school community. The third phase of Arnstein's ladder has three steps of partnership, delegated power and citizen control, of which the first two seem to
explain collaboration and partnership in Swap’s model. Hence, the Swap’s four models are not discrete but a continuum. At one end there is pseudo-participation (protective strategies) and at the other end there is partnership.

One of the main shortcomings of the populist approach is the absence of a mechanism to ensure quality of services provided. While it is important for schools to ensure that democracy is preserved in their practices, it is also equally important for the same system to address the issue of quality and to improve standards.

Another shortcoming of the populist approach arises from a need to localise the curriculum. The present world communities and societies are moving from being isolated to being interactive (Lauglo, 1996; McGraw, 1997). Thus, communities are no longer as parochial or insular as they once were. As a result, the relevant and appropriate knowledge and skills within a certain society needs to take the new technologies into consideration. These tendencies are aiming at meeting the demand of the modern labour market and communication system. Under these circumstances, learning becomes linked to technology rather than culture (Lundgren and Mattsson, 1996). While culture requires a localised curriculum, technology tends to universalise the curriculum "that will respond to macro forces of world globalisation of the emergence of independent and social functions of the (community)” (Mawhinney and Kerchner, 1997, p. 31)

Moreover, a partnership of stakeholders has a number of obstacles. One of the obstacles is the class issue. From the political point of view, all stakeholders are supposed to be equal. However, in any society, equality does not exist. “The resources of time, money and cultural capital are not randomly distributed throughout the population” (Deem, et. al., 1995, p. 53). Importantly, participation entails having something to contribute in the participative process. Those who lack time, money, or the cultural capital may not be attracted to participate. Other obstacles related to the class issue are gender, ethnicity and race. These obstacles may contribute to a situation whereby participation is characterised by a faction of core activists surrounded by the inactive majority (Bullock and Thomas, 1997, pp. 118 - 135).

MANAGING PARTICIPATION: THE COLLABORATIVE MODEL

The collaborative model in management uses theories that emphasise shared decision-making among stakeholders. Collaborative decision-making ranges from pure collaboration where all members have an equal voice in determining the school policy, to restricted collaboration where the principals/head teachers share power with some senior staff members in schools (Bush, 1995). Collaborative management assumes that common values held by members of the school community will guide managerial activities since it is believed that all members share the same educational objectives (Bush, 1995). Collaborative management,
therefore, requires a shared vision and this assumes a common “mental picture of a preferred future of the school” among the participants in the collaborative process (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, p. 37).

The adaptation of collaborative models in school management under participative decision-making can be illustrated by the collaborative school management cycle (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988; 1992). Collaborative management of schools is a process in which the local school community (staff, parents, students, and all others with a stake), within the defined parameters and in specified relationships, engages in setting goals, identifying needs, making policies, planning, budgeting and implementing the school programme (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, pp.25 - 35).

The collaborative school management cycle was developed by Caldwell and Spinks (1988) through their involvement in self-managing schools for several years in Tasmania, Australia. Specifically, the model describes what happened at Rosebery District High School in Tasmania, the school which was used as a case study. The model has a circular structure with delineated successive stages or steps in collaborative school management (see Figure I).
The original model had six successive phases of functions divided into two main areas labelled the policy group functions and the program team activities. These phases do not need to be followed mechanically. There is a forward and backward relationship and activities can start at any phase, although some phases form the basis for the subsequent phases. The model aims at showing the appropriate involvement of those responsible for the school – e.g., teachers, parents and students in goal setting and need identification, policy-making, planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluation (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988). It is these functions which represent the six phases of the collaborative cycle. Participants are in two categories: the policy group and the program teams.

In the refined model (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992), the context of policy-making, planning and evaluation have been broadened to include the charter which is formulated according to the centrally determined framework. In that context, the management cycle starts with a broad or a long-term plan from which operational
or annual plans can be determined. Since the model starts with the charter, it provides a framework for evaluation and accountability. Another important element in the modified model is the focus on the learning and teaching process as the major function of a school. Therefore, instead of six stages of the original model, the management cycle has seven activities of the long term management strategy which includes the charter, policies and the development plan; annual priorities setting; curriculum design, curriculum delivery; preparation, resource allocation and approval; learning-teaching process; and evaluation and review. The distinction between the policy body and the program team is maintained.

While the model explains the activities to be conducted and the relationships of those involved in the school system, it does not compel parties with a stake in a school to be involved. The model suggests practical strategies and procedures of interaction for those who will happen to be involved in school affairs, but does not specify how the collaborators are identified. As such the model can function even if some of the stakeholders are not involved. Caldwell and Spinks (1992, p. 30) comment:

When the wider community is not involved, the policy group may be the principal alone, the principal and senior teachers, or the principal and senior teachers with advice from other members of the school community (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, p. 30).

This makes the Collaborative School Management Cycle a management tool with an emphasis on what participants should be involved in and how they should be related in the participative process, rather that ideological models which emphasise the issue of who has to participate.

According to Bush (1995), however, collaborative management models have a number of deficiencies. One of these deficiencies emanates from the philosophical base of all normative models. Normative models are sequential and prescriptive, and avoid the analysis of different facets of human behaviour in organisations. Normative models fail to focus on interests, conflicts between groups and struggle for power among members of the organisation. As such, these models always advocate the ideal situation. Those who advocate collaboration, do so as a matter of what is supposed to be and not what it is. Bush (1995, p. 53) argues that the collaborative model is a more “idealistic model rather than one that is founded firmly in practice”. He further argues that, this model “tends to obscure rather than portray reality” (p. 67).

In addition to the above deficiency, the ideal conditions on which collaborative theory is based, rule out the possibility of conflict in organisations. Although Caldwell and Spinks (1988; 1992) acknowledge the existence of conflict between individuals’ and the schools’ objectives, they associate these conflicts with scarcity
of resources, individual autonomy and disagreement on the means and ends of education. They argue that the collaborative school management model provides a framework for management of conflict by minimizing hostility and the potentiality of the harmful effects of conflict.

Collaborative management is sometimes seen as imposed by the system as an official model of good practice (Wallace, 1989, p. 182). This might lead to making this model being regulated administratively and it being made compulsory practice. In this case, participation could be conceived as a burden and might produce what Hargreaves (1994) calls ‘contrived collegiality’. Although the genuine collegiality as advocated by Hargreaves (1994, pp.195 - 6) seems to be more idealistic, there is a need to strike a balance and lay a base on which leaders of schools will inculcate and develop a supportive attitude towards genuine participation.

Another deficiency of the collaborative model is the slow and cumbersome decision-making process. In order to secure consensus, lengthy meetings and long chains of consultancy are required. There is a great deal of patience and investment in terms of time. From another point of vantage, McLagan and Nel (1995) argue that lengthy deliberations result in quality decisions that are smoothly implemented, thus, compensating for the time spent on decision-making. However, extended time in making deliberations does not guarantee good decisions.

CONCLUSION

It is argued that decentralisation facilitates greater involvement of stakeholders, and that participation of stakeholders improves the quality of education and enhances efficiency and effectiveness of the public school system. However, there are various perspectives of how stakeholders should participate. The liberal perspective argues for the use of market forces to allow parents to select the best schools for their children. Competing for students is a mechanism assumed to make schools efficient and effective. On the other hand, the professional autonomy perspective holds that quality education is the one provided by teachers who are guided by the professional ethics of commitment to one’s profession. At the same time, the populist perspective maintains that schools are part of their communities. As such, their effectiveness depends on the extent to which the education provided is relevant to the students' communities. The analysis of these perspectives reveals that each perspective has its strengths and weaknesses in making public schools efficient and effective. Policies for decentralisation need to reflect in a flexible way the insights of each model. Figure II draws on elements from the three models to create an eclectic model of local participation.
FIGURE II: CONCEPTUALISING PARTICIPATION IN DECENTRALISED SCHOOLS

PERCEPTIONS ON PARTICIPATION UNDER DECENTRALISATION

COMPETITION
Individual choice and markets

ETHICS
Professional Autonomy

SOCIAL NEEDS
Collective Choice

STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES
(Political Process)

SCHOOL COUNCIL/COMMITTEE
Policy and Decision Making

TEAMS, COMMITTEES, etc.
Collaborative Management

HOME-SCHOOL INTERACTION
Communication and involvement

EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN DECENTRALISED SCHOOLS
management and supportive leadership;
teaching practice and professional life;
involved of parents in their children's learning;
school physical and learning environment;

REALISATION OF DECENTRALISATION GOALS OF
QUALITY, EFFICIENCY, COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
REFERENCES


