

**AN EXPLORATION OF PRINCIPALS' ROLE IN PROMOTING  
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN THE UGU DISTRICT**

**By**

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**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master of Education in the School  
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## **Abstract**

In some schools, teachers still work in isolation. It is therefore believed that school principals play a significant role in promoting collaborative learning among teachers. Some scholars have declared that school principal is the key person in determining whether the school succeeds or falters. The study explored the role of school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. principals who completed advanced certificate in education- school leadership (ACESL) were investigated. The assumption is that these principals would have promoted collaborative learning among teachers after the completion of this programme.

The study followed a qualitative approach which utilised a case study design. The purposive sampling was used to select the participants from participating schools. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were employed to generate data. The research interviews were recorded and transcribed before they were analysed. Data from the transcriptions were coded and themes emerged transcribed data. The documents were also analysed through content analysis. This was done to ensure the trustworthiness of data. The study reveals the following findings: (a) participants understand collaborative learning from different perspectives (B) principals facilitate collaborative learning by ensuring that heads of departments (HODs) meet with teachers in respective departments. They also encourage even learners to work collaboratively (c) participating principals professionally develop teachers through collaborative learning such as workshops, inviting subject advisors and teachers from other schools, developing teachers in staff meetings and promoting teacher networking (d) principals established teams to promote teacher collaborative learning. These include departmental teams, subjects teams, grade-teacher teams and team-teaching (e) there are fruits in from promoting teacher collaborative learning. These are curbing teacher absenteeism and late coming, performance of teachers and improved teacher morale and commitment (f) principals faced with barriers in promoting teacher collaborative learning and these are teachers' reluctance to cooperation and the lack of time (g) participating principals employ strategies to overcome barriers of collaborative learning among teachers.

## Declaration

I, Sithembele Goodman Ndovela, declare that

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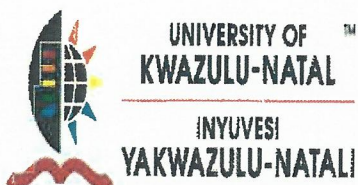
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This dissertation is submitted with/without my approval

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## Ethical clearance approval



11 November 2014

**Mr Sithembile Goodman Ndovela 211556933**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

**Protocol reference number: HSS/0389/014M**

**Project title: An exploration of the principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning: a case study of two secondary schools in the UGU district.**

Dear Mr Ndovela

**Full Approval – Expedited**

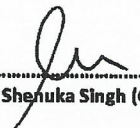
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Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to my late father Silwanyana 'Manqukela' Ndovela for the hard work he had done while he was still alive.

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I hereby wish to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the following persons:

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<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACE:SL	Advanced Certificate in Education (School Leadership)
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
BSS	Beef Secondary School
BCM	Business Commerce and Management
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
MSS	Mutton Secondary School
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
SGB	School Governing Body

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## CHAPTER ONE

### AN ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Many scholars in the field of educational leadership (Hallinger, 2005; Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Bush, 2014) agree that the principal has a major influence in improving teaching and learning. The principals' fundamental role is to provide leadership and management by creating and supporting conditions for effective teaching and learning to occur (Bush, 2014). Similarly, many scholars view principals as instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2005; Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Bush, 2014). Furthermore, these scholars contend that school principals are instructional leaders because the core purpose of the school is teaching and learning. The principal is an influential person who ensures teaching and learning takes place. The study that is reported in this dissertation is about the role that principals play in ensuring that teachers are supported in their learning and that they learn collaboratively. Collaborative learning has been identified in the literature (Hallinger, 2005) as a crucial element in supporting learning. The study focus is based on the assumption that principals have a critical role to play in supporting a collaborative climate in the school. Therefore, the study sought to understand the principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning in their schools. Furthermore, the study sought to gain insight into how these secondary school principals promote teacher collaborative learning.

This chapter is an orientation and is therefore meant to set the scene by outlining key issues that undergird the study. The background and rationale for the study are provided in this chapter. The three research questions that guided the study are also provided. It outlines the literature that was reviewed in order to understand the phenomenon. The theoretical frameworks that underpin the study are also provided. A brief overview of research design and methodology that was used is provided. Towards the end of the chapter a brief outline of the organisation of the study which spells out what each chapter entails is given. This chapter, like all other subsequent chapters, ends with a summary.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

This study sought to examine the extent to which the Advanced Certificate in Education School Leadership (ACE: SL) has enabled school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning in their schools. The research that is reported in this dissertation formed part of the broader research project that was conducted by the academic staff at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. That research project aimed to explore the extent to which ACE: SL programme had or had not enabled school principals that completed this programme to transform their schools into learning organisation. One of the key objectives of this programme was to enable principals to manage their schools as learning organisations. “The ACE, a practice-based two year part-time course, is aimed at providing management and leadership support through a variety of interactive programmes that improve the students’ practice” (Mestry & Singh, 2007, p.482). These scholars further assert that this programme improves school principals’ professional growth and ethos of leadership. It also allows teachers to be involved in their own development by learning collaboratively in order to develop one another.

Several studies (Hallinger, 2005; Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013; Bush, 2014) have been conducted on professional learning communities (PLCs) as an approach to professional development. PLCs have demonstrated to be powerful instruments that can assist in solving complex problems not easily tackled by individuals (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). Furthermore, Hemmasi and Csanda (2009) describe PLCs as methods to promote organisational learning through information sharing. For this to happen, Timperly and Alton-Lee (2008) argue that school principals must provide time for teacher reflection on their own practice and invest in teacher learning. It is believed that principals, who connect professional development to school learning goals, provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and think together (Crow & Matthews, 2010). It is therefore assumed that the principal is the key person in determining whether a school succeeds or falters. In keeping with this expectation, the SMT must provide time for teachers to plan collaboratively, examine their learners’ assessments results (Crow & Matthews, 2010).

The Department of Education (DoE) emphasises that teachers must work together to reflect on their practice. However, what I have observed over the years happening in schools does not seem to

support the DoE's strategy. Teachers in some schools seem to participate in programmes that are in place to assist them to improve learner outcomes. For example, workshops that are, from time to time, organised by DoE and teacher unions are not adequately attended by the teachers. When teachers work collaboratively they would be able to reflect on their practice. National Education Policy Act (1996) declares that continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) succeeds best when teachers themselves are integrally involved and reflect on their own practice. This policy states that it is the responsibility of teachers themselves, guided by their own professional body South African Council for Educators (SACE) to take charge of their self-development by identifying areas in which they need to grow professionally. In a study conducted by Sargent and Hannum (2009) in resource-constrained primary schools in China, the findings reveal that teachers collaborate to discuss activities which include peer observation, demonstration lesson and joint lesson planning. In that study, it was further revealed that, for the PLCs to be effective, principals must provide time and space for teacher collaboration.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Since I started teaching, I have not seen teachers working together in trying to solve challenges pertaining to their day to day operations. This scenario occurs contrary to the view that schools are places where teachers and principals collaborate in discussing issues relating to teaching and learning in order to achieve improved learner outcomes (Steyn, 2013). After having reviewed a plenty of literature, I have not found the role of school principals in promoting collaborative learning. Therefore the study aimed at closing that gap. It sought to deeply understand the role that school principals play in promoting teacher collaborative learning. The Department of Education (DoE) has introduced Advanced Certificate in Education for school leadership programme, referred to in this report as ACE: SL, to provide leadership and management opportunities for them as part of their professional development.

In this ACE School Leadership programme, principals learning collaboratively and are also equipped with skills that will help them establish collaborative learning among their teaching staff. Dooner, Mandzuk and Clifton (2008) acknowledge that when teachers reflect on their teaching practice, the quality of teaching improves as they would come up with new teaching



strategies. Many scholars (Reichstetter, 2006; Dooner et al., 2008; Hord, 2008) share similar views that teacher collaboration enables them to discuss subjects and grade level pedagogical issues which, ultimately helps improve learner achievement. In my view teachers should collaborate to discuss problems that are relevant to their subjects. I also argue that such collaboration should not be limited to their subjects but also that other important issues affect different grades and the whole school need to be considered.

#### **1.4 Purpose and rationale for the study**

I have observed that teachers that I know have not developed a culture of assisting one another and learning from one another. Consequently, poor learner achievement has continued unabated. Similarly, I have not seen School Management Team (SMT) providing support to the teachers, not even giving them time to reflect on their practice. I have also noted that the SMT does not provide time and space for teacher collaboration in order to solve challenges and reflect on their practice. Principals are expected to promote collaborative learning in their schools and to engage the broader school community and achieving a compelling school' vision (Timperly & Alton-Lee, 2008). Research shows that principal leadership is an important factor that can support or impede teacher professional learning communities (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). Therefore, there is a need for this study because there has not been many empirical studies have been conducted in South Africa on teacher collaborative learning.

In some schools each teacher works individually without any attention to possible support from other colleagues. There are no mentoring programmes for novice teachers. Novice teachers are not guided by senior teachers about how to perform their tasks. In some of the schools I have worked at, some teachers had difficulties doing lesson preparations. They did not collaborate on anything; they did not learn from one another about, for example, how to assess the learners or how to solve critical problems for the learners. When experienced teachers interact with novice teachers in PLC, such teachers may be able to mentor and assist new teachers (Reichstetter, 2006; Steyn, 2013).

At the time of conducting the study I was a Post-level One educator, usually referred to as teacher. I have recently been promoted to the position of head of department (HOD). As a

teacher I have not been exposed to collaborative learning experience, nor have I ever worked closely with other teachers who teach the same subjects like mine. The SMT does not emphasise the importance of grade teachers to interact in order to solve problems for that specific grade. Through reading, I have come to understand that there is a need for teacher professional learning communities or communities of practice. It is important that teachers work together to discuss issues about their practice (Mestry & Singh, 2007). These scholars further posit that communities of practice develop themselves in order to improve their practice as they engage in a process of collective learning. In support of this endeavour, it is believed that principals need to provide opportunities to address shared practical problems (Steyn, 2013). When teachers collaborate they form a community in which they share ideas on how they can improve their practice (Steyn, 2010). He emphasises that the ultimate goal of communities of practice is to improve learners' learning. Sargent and Hannum (2009) describe communities of practice as an approach in which teachers interact and collaborate regularly around issues of teaching and learning. In these communities, teachers engage in the production and consumption of knowledge about improved practice for the learners' learning (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). The purpose of the study is to investigate the principals role in promoting teacher collaborative learning.

### **1.5 Aims and objectives of the study and key questions**

The following are the aims, objectives and key questions which guide the research study.

#### **Aims and objectives of the study**

- To investigate the role of school principals who successfully completed ACE School Leadership programme in promoting collaborative learning in their schools.
- To examine whether school principals who completed ACE School Leadership have succeeded or not succeeded in promoting collaborative learning among their staff members.
- To explore the barriers that school principals may experience when promoting collaborative learning within their schools.

**This study is guided by the following three main critical research questions.**

- What do school principals who completed ACE School Leadership programme do to promote teacher collaborative learning in their schools?
- How have school principals who completed ACE School Leadership programme succeeded or not succeeded in promoting collaborative learning among their teaching staff?
- What are the barriers principals may experience when promoting collaborative learning within their schools?

### **1.6 Clarification of key concepts**

The key concepts that will be clarified are collaborative learning, professional learning communities and teamwork. These concepts fit well to this study because they all talk about teacher collaborative work.

#### **Collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term which involves a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual efforts by students and teachers (Duncombe & Armour, 2004). These scholars further contend that collaborative learning is an occasion where a teacher works with or talks to other teachers with a view to improving their own or others' understanding of any pedagogical issue.

#### **Professional learning community**

This refers to a group of people who are motivated by shared learning vision and who learn together new pedagogical approaches that will enhance the opportunities for learners' learning (Jansen, Cammock & Conner, 2010). These scholars also contend that PLCs have the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in a school community with the collective purpose of enhancing learner outcomes. It is clear that the PLCs are also about teachers in schools motivated by shared learning vision with the purpose to enhance learners' learning and improved learner outcomes. In these communities teachers as professionals learn together with an aim of enhancing learners' learning.

## **Teamwork**

This term implies cooperative and coordinated effort by individuals working together in the interest of their common cause (Harris, 2009). In an organisation like a school, there could be many different teams. As per definition above, a team consists of people with common objectives and they combine their efforts together to fulfill their common objectives. In a team there is no individual with his or her own objective but objectives are common to all team members. All these concepts seem to point to one direction; that is, they all emphasise the phenomenon of teachers working together in order to improve learner outcomes. Scholars such as Swanepoel, Erasmus and Schenk (2010) and Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012) also share the same idea that when teachers work together they share common purpose and objectives. These concepts are relevant to the study because they involve collaborative learning among the teachers for the purpose of improving learners' learning outcomes.

### **1.7 Theoretical frameworks**

This study is underpinned by three different theories that helped to better understand the phenomenon that was investigated. The first theory is Hord's (1997) five attributes of professional learning communities. These attributes are supportive and shared leadership; collective creativity; shared vision and values; supportive conditions and lastly, shared personal practice. Each attribute is discussed in details in Chapter Two and it is linked to the phenomenon under investigation. The study is also underpinned by Hallinger's (2003) model of instructional leadership. Hallinger (2003) proposes three dimensions of the instructional leadership, and these are defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate. The third theory is Knowles' (1984) theory of adult learning. Adult learning theory has five principles. These principles are adults have a need to know why they should learn something, adults are self-directed, adults have different quality of experience than youth, adults become ready to learn when they are experienced in their life situations and adults involve themselves into learning experience with a task-centred or problem-centred or life-centred orientation to learning. These theories are discussed in details in Chapter Two. Both the international and national literature will be reviewed in the next chapter. The purpose of this review is to highlight the critical issues and arguments related to teacher collaborative learning.

The review discusses the role of principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. As part of the discussion, barriers and benefits to collaborative learning will be discussed. The main purpose is to paint a picture regarding some of the existing debates on the area of collaborative learning, professional learning communities and the role that is played by school principals in all the above mentioned issues.

### **1.8 Research design and methodology**

The study followed a qualitative research approach which utilises case study design. The study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. In this paradigm, it is believed that ontologically, reality exists in the form of multiple mental constructs, socially, experimentally based, local and specific (Kobus, 2011). With regard to the research design, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) assert that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. Data generation methods entailed semi-structured interviews and documents review. A detailed discussion on these issues is presented in Chapter Three.

### **1.9 Delimitation of the study**

The study focuses on the principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning in two rural secondary schools in the UGU district. It is restricted to two rural secondary schools with principals who completed ACE School Leadership. This is a programme which was conducted by a number of universities in South Africa. However, for purposes of this study, only those school principals that studied and passed in ACE: SL at the University of KwaZulu-Natal between 2007 and 2009.

### **1.10 Organisation of the study**

The study is organised into five chapters and each chapter is summarised below.

#### **Chapter One**

This chapter gives the overview of the study, background, purpose and rationale of the study. It also outlines the aims and objectives of the study and the three key questions which guided the

study. The review of related literature and theoretical frameworks which underpin the study are provided. In addition, it highlights the research design and methodological approaches employed to generate data. This chapter also explains the demarcation of the study. Lastly, it closes with the organisation of the study and a brief summary or conclusion of the chapter.

## **Chapter Two**

The chapter focuses on the theoretical frameworks which underpin the study. It also discusses the literature review on the role of principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning, as well as the conceptualisation of collaborative learning. Benefits and barriers of collaborative learning are discussed. PLC as an approach which supports teacher collaborative learning is discussed in this chapter.

## **Chapter Three**

The chapter provides a detailed account of the research design, methods and procedures that were followed in conducting the study. It also outlines research instruments that were used to elicit data for this study.

## **Chapter Four**

This chapter presents and discusses data that were generated through semi-structured interviews. It deals with the analysis and interpretation of data generated.

## **Chapter Five**

This chapter contains the summary of the whole study, findings and recommendations.

### **1.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter orientates the study namely, principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning. It provided the background and rationale for the study. More importantly, the aims and objectives of the study were explained. The key questions which guided the study and clarification of key concepts are provided in this chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter was an orientation to the study. An outline of all key aspects of the research process was discussed. This chapter reviews international and local literature on teachers' collaborative learning and the role that school principals play in that regard. Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the major trends and critical issues related to the role of secondary school principals in promoting collaborative learning among teaching staff. This chapter is organised into eight major components. Firstly, it discusses the conceptualisation of professional learning communities as an approach to promote collaborative learning. Secondly, it focuses on conceptualising collaborative learning. Thirdly, the discussion on steps that the school principals follow when creating collaborative learning is provided. Fourthly, it discusses the role of school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. But it starts off by discussing the international perspective on the role of school principals. And it is followed by the discussion of the South African perspective. The aim of the literature was to understand the role played by school principals in other countries and even in the South African context in promoting collaborative learning. Fifthly, the benefits of collaborative learning are discussed. Since the South African literature is silent on the barriers of collaborative learning, thus only the international perspective is discussed. Lastly, it closes with a discussion on the theoretical perspectives that underpinned the study.

#### **2.2 Conceptualising professional learning communities as an approach to promote teacher collaborative learning**

As a point of departure, it must be mentioned that several studies have been conducted on collaborative learning (Hord, 2008; Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009; Sargent & Hannum, 2009; DuFour, 2011; Steyn, 2013). Hord (2008) declares that collaborative teamwork is the significant attribute of professional learning communities (PLCs). He also highlights that schools teachers work collaboratively in a variety of permutations such as learning teams, grade teams and department teams in secondary schools. PLCs provide teachers with a wide range of

collaborative team structures (Skytt, 2004). In these collaborative teams, teachers solve problems collectively; innovate, reflect on practice as well as on collaborative professional development initiatives.

Sargent and Hannum (2009) mention that teachers in China participate in PLCs to discuss issues of teaching. Collective lesson planning and peer observation were some of the issues which were highlighted as part of the PLCs' discussions. In PLCs, teachers interviewed in the study by Sargent and Hannum (2009) stated that they learned new ideas about teaching and learning and how to implement new curriculum in their respective classrooms. That research further showed that in other schools they experienced some difficulties in holding meetings dedicated to PLCs activities. They declared that teachers have heavy teaching loads which makes the holding of PLCs activities less frequent and is therefore less emphasised. DuFour (2011) acknowledges that principals should concentrate on staff capacity to participate in PLCs in order to improve learner performance. The success of PLCs depends heavily on the extent to which school principal places emphasis on it and the support that he or she is providing. Therefore, it is evident that teacher participation in PLCs depends on the vision and the strength of school principal (Sargent & Hannum, 2009).

Schools develop PLCs in order to improve the quality of schooling (Steyn, 2013). For this to happen, it depends on the strong leadership of the principal. Research by Steyn (2013) on building PLCs to enhance professional development (PD) in South African schools reveals a number of findings. He states that PD should be school-based and it should focus on teacher learning processes in order to improve their practice. Intensive involvement of the teachers in PLCs has a positive change in school practices, and thus improvement in the learner outcomes, is realised. "Active involvement in PLCs lies in teachers' sincere commitment and willingness to participate and learn in learning communities setup (Steyn, 2013, p.282). He insists that it is important that teachers must change their minds and hearts before real change can occur in them and learners' learning. It is therefore believed that when teachers show commitment and willingness to participate and learn collaboratively in learning communities, learner performance improves.



Principals have the responsibility not only to control the teachers, but also to support them and create opportunities for teachers to grow professionally (DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006). For PLCs to be effective, principals must create environments where teachers would meet and learn together. To this end, DuFour (2011) claims that principals must create time for teachers to discuss and reflect on their practices. He further declares that in learning communities teachers identify areas in which they want to be professionally developed and collectively solve problems. PLCs also empower teachers to identify what the learners should know and be able to do as a result of collaborative learning (DuFour et al., 2006).

### **2.3 What is collaborative learning?**

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term which involves a variety of educational approaches relating to joint intellectual efforts by the learners on one another and also by the teacher (Mitchell, Reilly & Logue, 2009). Duncombe and Armour (2004) contend that collaborative learning is an occasion where a teacher works with or talks to another teacher to improve their own or others' understanding of any pedagogical issue. Similarly, Erickson, Brandes, Mitchell and Mitchell (2005), highlight the view that collaborative learning focuses on the practice of working together. It can therefore be argued that collaborative learning is about people working together to achieve the common goal. The idea of collaborative learning in this context aims at improving teaching practice and learners' learning. It is evident from Erickson et al. (2005) and Jones, Stall and Yarbrough (2013) that the end result of such collaborative learning is ensure learners' academic achievement. Mitchell et al. (2009) concurs with the notion of Erikson et al. (2005) that collaborative learning is about using small groups so that people work together to maximise their own or other's learning.

The concept of collaborative learning encompasses a range of concepts and processes such as mentoring colleagues, peer coaching, critical friends and collegiality (Duncombe & Armour, 2004). Principals are expected to promote collaborative work. But this is not easy as other writers such as Erikson et al. (2005) declare that there are some barriers in promoting collaborative learning. Duncombe and Armour (2004) suggest that collaborative learning among teachers take place where mentee work under the supervision of the mentor. They emphasise that every school has expert or experienced teachers who possess knowledge and experience. In this

way, the less experienced teacher shares knowledge with the experienced one. It is believed that collaboration results in teacher development and thus school improvement. In this process, it is evident that experienced teachers also benefit by strengthening their knowledge.

Duncombe and Armour (2004) agree that, in learning communities, there are a whole range of activities. It is highlighted that the principal as the statute negotiator should promote these activities. These activities include observation, working on task together, sharing ideas or discussing the implementation of resources. In other words, collaborative learning includes teachers observing each other in a classroom. The whole idea is to improve each other's practice. One of the ways in which teachers can work together is where they jointly prepare lessons. In my understanding, where collaborative work ethos exists, teachers prepare lessons and tasks collaboratively. Recently, the Department of Education has introduced the new curriculum known as Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This then calls for teachers to meet and talk about how the curriculum would be implemented. In short, sharing ideas and discussing the implementation of resources are important for effective implementation of the curriculum.

Mitchell et al. (2009) posit that collaborative learning involves sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members. Each school has its own vision which it aims to achieve. In terms of this view, teachers within the school are expected to share authority and accept responsibility. For this to happen, the principal needs to acknowledge that teachers have expertise. When they acknowledge this reality, principal are able to allow teachers to assume leadership roles in the schools. This helps make them feel a sense of ownership and promote collaborative culture. Collaborative learning is a personal philosophy and not just classroom teaching (Mitchell et al., 2009). Teachers can apply this philosophy in classroom, at committee meetings, within their families and generally as a way of living with people. Collaborative learning can be applied where one meet with other people. That is why those principals who believe in collaborative work are more likely to promote the notion of teachers taking on leadership roles in the school.

## **2.4 The four step-process in creating teacher collaborative learning**

Lunenburg (2010) declares that for effective creation of collaborative learning atmosphere, there are four important steps that need to be followed and he calls them ‘four step-process’. The first step is to create a mission statement that identifies the school’s purpose. Mission statement states the mission and fundamental purpose of the school. It helps to begin to have an influence on the day-to-day teaching and learning that take place in the school. All teachers in school would be in a position to know what the purpose of the school is and why the school exists. Arguing along similar lines, Steyn (2013) posits that all schools exist to help the learners to learn and the school staff will respond when the learners do not learn.

The second step is to develop a school vision. A vision is an attempt to describe what the school’s faculty members are hoping to become (Lunenburg, 2010). The principal must engage the teachers in agreeing about what they hope the school will become. The principal also should not impose what the school will become, but this should be the collective agreement. It is important that the principal must revisit the vision to ensure that it is still relevant and principals in a sense are the keepers of the vision. The third step entails developing value statement. Stakeholders share values, attitudes, behaviors and commitments they would demonstrate so as to move the school closer to their shared vision. Teachers, learners, parents and community members engage in discussion about attitudes, behaviors and they commit themselves to the school needs and vision. The fourth step is about establishing the goals; Lunenburg (2010) states that goals are the results that a school tries to achieve. In collaborative learning environment, the teachers as learners work together in order to achieve the goals for which the school exists.

## **2.5 The role of school principals in promoting collaborative learning**

Principals should lead through shared vision and values rather than through rules and procedures (DuFour, 2011). One of the responsibilities of the principals is to protect shared vision. Principals are expected to create school vision. They must engage all stakeholders in creating the school vision in order to promote teacher collaborative learning. I agree that in schools there are policies in place, but principals should lead through shared vision and values. Principal alone

cannot establish school vision. They must engage all staff members about what their school would hope to become. DuFour et al. (2006) highlight that school principals should deploy faculty task force to conduct research on school improvement. In the end, the faculty task force would share their findings together with other members.

Principals should provide staff members with the information, training and parameters to make good decisions (DuFour et al., 2006; Sargent & Hannum, 2009). If the school principal has gathered the information he or she should share it with staff members so as to keep them informed about the current education issues. They must ensure that teachers receive training and coaching to master skills that make them more effective in achieving the goals of the school (DuFour, 2011). Training should be context-based because it would try to help staff members to achieve the goals of their school. Sargent and Hannum (2009) declare that principals must provide time and create structures for staff to engage in reflection and discussion. The research reveals that lack of time and place are important challenges for teacher collaboration. In collaborative learning, teachers are expected to do a number of things such as to prepare lesson plans together, do peer observation and to reflect on their practice.

In addition, DuFour et al. (2006) insist that school principals should concentrate on posing the right questions rather than imposing solution. Janson et al. (2010) concur with the notion that in collaborative learning environment, principals must have the ability to participate without dominating. It is very important that principals allow staff members to come with their own ideas about what can be done to improve learner outcomes. Principals must engage in a discussion together with the teachers, but not dominating and telling them what needs to be done. The idea of professionals learning from one another has positive impact on the learners' success. Jansen et al. (2010) insist that principals should ask questions which build consensus and develop the capacity of the staff to function as a professional learning community.

DuFour (2011) contends that principals must provide time for teacher collaboration. In collaborative learning teachers reflect on their practice and invest in teacher learning. Scholars (Sargent & Hannum, 2009; Lee & Shaari, 2012) also insist that principals should provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan and think together. The purpose of collaborative learning

lies on the principal's shoulders. According to Bhengu and Mthembu (2014), effective schools have effective leaders. Teachers spend most of their time in classroom teaching. The role of the principal is to create time for collaboration. Teachers as collaborative workers share successes and failure with team colleagues. They work together on various instructional strategies and programmes (Hord, 2008). All these activities require the principals to provide teachers with enough time for collaboration.

In collaborative learning, Thompson, Gregg and Niska (2004) declare that principals encourage teachers to pursue personal development. Sargent and Hannum (2009) share the same view that principals can nurture and develop teachers' professional growth as part of the school culture by creating consensus, promoting shared values. They insist that principals ensure systematic collaboration, encouraging experimentation and promoting the self-efficacy of teachers. In doing so, teachers improve teaching practice. Since the school's purpose is effective learning of the learners, the teachers' personal growth helps them to improve their practice and ultimately improve learner achievement.

The principals promote collaborative learning by providing opportunities for professional growth which invariably occurs within the context of ongoing professional development (Crow & Mathews, 2010). These scholars further emphasise that ongoing professional development should focus on developing the areas of need. Thompson, Gregg and Niska (2004) agree that the principals' role is to help the teachers to meet in small groups so that they can discuss classroom application of what they have learnt, for example, in professional development workshops. They further emphasise the view that professional development should be context-based. This means that what teachers learn in their collaborative learning should help them to solve their classroom related problems. National Education Policy Act (1996) seems to emphasise the same point that principals must encourage teachers to be in charge of their self-development by identifying areas in which they want to grow professionally. Crow and Mathews (2010) assert that it is the principals' role to monitor, guide and facilitate the process of teachers' collaborative learning.

Many researchers (Sargent & Hannum, 2009; Crow & Mathews, 2010; DuFour, 2011) agree that school principals must provide time for teachers to meet in groups. These scholars also insist that by providing time for teachers to meet, they would have more opportunities to work, plan and think together. They will also be able to identify the need to continually improve their own professional practice. It is quite clear that time is an important factor for the promotion of teacher collaborative learning. On the same point, DuFour (2011) highlights the view that the principal is the key person to ensure the success of teacher collaborative learning.

Some researchers (DuFour, 2006; Crow & Mathews, 2010) posit that when teachers meet in groups they need skills and knowledge in different areas of their work. Research reveals that teams need skills in areas such as group roles, stages of development, effective communication, trust-building, problem solving and decision-making (Crow & Mathews, 2010). DuFour et al. (2006) on the other hand emphasise this view that principals must work with the teachers to strengthen their skills. These skills would help teachers to be effective in their practice so that learners can learn effectively and ultimately improve on their achievement. Thompson et al. (2004) in their study findings show that principals viewed their main business as that of ensuring that learners learn in the most effective manner. For this to happen, they have to serve teachers and learners as instructional leaders who pay special focus on learners' learning. Principals also develop teachers' knowledge and skills and ensure that teachers are provided time to plan and engage in collaborative activities. Hughes and Kritsonis (2006) share similar views that PLC is a powerful strategy for staff development.

Some scholars (Robinson, 2010; DuFour, 2011) seem to concur with the view that principals should establish teacher teams to which each teacher belongs. The school principals are also expected to create collaborative cultures where teachers work in teams with shared purpose which focuses on positive learner outcomes. On the same vein, Robinson (2010) asserts that each teacher should belong to a team in which they will share responsibility for instance, for a common group of learners. These teams include grade-level or subject matter teams where teachers regularly meet to improve their teaching so that learners' learning can also be improved. It is the school principal's responsibility to identify a teacher in each team to be a facilitator or

leader (Robinson, 2010). This speaks to the fact that school principal's leadership skills play a very crucial role for teacher collaborative learning to occur.

The literature reviewed for this study reveals a strong correlation between the South African perspective and international perspective regarding the role of principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. There is a widespread agreement that the core business of the school is teaching and learning (Bush, 2014; Naicker et al., 2014; Mestry, Moonsammy-koopasammy & Michele, 2014; Ramrathan & Ngubane, 2014). Research study by Naicker et al. (2014) on instructional leadership practices in challenging school context reveals that principals spent their time mentoring teachers. Principals encourage experience teachers to mentor other teachers (Mestry et al., 2014). This shows that school principals do promote collaborative work among the teachers. Naicker et al. (2014) further declare that novice teachers teach alongside experienced teachers. These scholars highlight that developing the teachers is a shared task among all experienced teachers.

Research by Bush (2014) and that conducted by Naicker et al. (2014) share similar findings. They both found that principals deployed Heads of Department (HODs) to observe teachers teaching and they provided feedback to them. These scholars also posit that instructional leadership is not a monopoly of school principals alone. They emphasised that principals encourage HODs to meet with teachers to discuss the findings from their observation sessions. Naicker et al. (2014) highlight the view that the teachers sometimes invite their school principals to observe them teach. It is quite evident that some school principals teach while teachers are observing them (Mestry et al., 2014). Ramrathan and Ngubane (2014) carried out an investigation about instructional leadership practices in multi-grade classrooms. Their findings highlight that teachers working in such conditions help one another. This is because there are challenges that are unique to multi-grade classrooms and teachers working under such conditions have to find ways of coping. They highlight the fact that in South Africa, there is no curriculum designed specifically for multi-grade schools and multi-grade classrooms. Therefore, these teachers meet regularly to discuss and plan lessons together. Ramrathan and Ngubane (2014) further emphasise the point that collaborative efforts ultimately results in enhanced learner

outcomes. Therefore, all that the principal does is to get ways in which to improve learner achievement (Mestry et al., 2014). For this to happen, the principal enhances teachers' skills and knowledge mainly through collaboration among teaching staff.

## **2.6 Benefits of teacher collaborative learning**

Several studies seem to agree that collaborative learning improves teacher practice (Johnson, 2003; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008; Robinson, 2010). Literature shows that teacher participation in collaborative learning helps them to improve their quality of teaching. Many scholars share the same view about collaborative learning improving teachers' quality teaching which ultimately results in improved learner outcomes. A study by Robinson (2010) found that teacher participation in collaborative learning helped them to develop their teaching capacity to support learners who were struggling to cope with their academic work's demands. He also highlights that when teachers collaborate they are better able to diagnose the academic needs of the learners. A study conducted by Sargent and Hannum (2009) also seems to produce similar findings. Teachers interviewed mentioned that when they meet they study new ideas about teaching and learning. The study conducted by Johnson (2003) showed that teachers' collaborative learning increased their morale and commitment to their work. Many teachers in Johnson's study declared that working collaboratively contributed to lower absentee rate since teachers were working collegially and improved their commitment and enthusiasm. Collaborative learning encourages teachers to come to school because they know that if they experience challenges they would share with their colleagues. It was also found that teacher collaborative learning improved their morale and this led to the removal of teacher isolation.

Robinson (2010) conducted a study similar to the one conducted by Sargent and Hannum (2009). Robinson's (2010) findings also showed that during their meetings, they do collective lesson planning, peer observation and evaluation and also offer a critique. Robinson mentions that he would go to classrooms and observed each other's lesson. In addition, Robinson (2010) shares the same opinion as Sargent and Hannum (2009) in that collaborative learning provides opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Teachers interviewed declared that collaborative learning helped them to fill the gaps in their teaching. Research also shows the fact



that novice teachers highlighted that teaming with experienced teachers have helped them to address pedagogical issues and improved their practice. Some of the teachers were struggling to do lesson planning. Sargent and Hannum (2009) assert that teachers in China, especially novice teachers, would plan their lessons together. They postulate that teachers were planning lessons on individually, but the advent of collaborative learning in their schools promoted collegial working. The purpose of their collaborative work is to plan lessons, observe each other so that they will improve their practice and to improve student learning.

Professional Learning Community entails an approach which supports collaborative learning. PLCs provide an environment and opportunities for teacher leadership and teacher capacity (DuFour, 2009; Robinson, 2010). DuFour (2009) posits that the purpose of collaborative learning is not to ensure that learners are taught but it ensures that they learn. Collaborative learning ensures that teachers close the gap in terms of learner achievement. This emphasises the fact that when teachers work together, they help struggling students. Scholars such as Bhengu, Naicker and Mthiyane (2014) acknowledge that teamwork promotes togetherness and team spirit among teaching staff. When teachers meet, they plan what learners need to know. Teachers should be more concerned when students experience difficulties in learning. Teachers in collaborative learning should not only teach the learners, but they must ensure that all learners learn. This is the core purpose of collaborative learning (DuFour, 2009).

## **2.7 Barriers of teacher collaborative learning**

Some studies reported the existence of conflicts and tensions among principals and teachers (Johnson, 2003; Robinson, 2010). School principals seem to dominate in collaborative learning; hence teachers sometimes become voiceless in their collaborative work (Robinson, 2010). These tensions have, in some instances, led to a decline in the improvement of collaborative learning cultures. In such instances, it is argued that teachers are not given opportunities to raise their opinions (Jansen, Cammock & Conner, 2010). This may be due to the view and belief that school principals are leaders of leaders in schools (Seo & Han, 2012) . They further emphasised that for collaborative learning to be successful, teachers should feel part of the organisation. Johnson (2003) and Robinson (2010) emphasise that teachers would come up with good

strategies to improve learners' learning. But the school principal on the other hand would discourage the opinions of teachers. Despite the issues of power, school principals should recognise that teachers have their own expertise.

My review of literature on teacher collaborative learning convinces me that there is little, if any empirical studies that has been conducted in South Africa which addresses the barriers on collaborative learning. Because of this reality, I have drawn only from the international literature. DuFour (2009) reveals that despite the growing evidence which shows that collaborative learning improves teachers' practices, some teachers still work in isolation. DuFour (2011) mentions the fact that in collaborative learning teachers work together and they improve their classroom practice. This is also supported by Johnson's (2003) findings that teachers are complaining that working with colleagues to discuss and plan together add a lot of work burden. Sargent and Hannum's (2009) study shows that the lack of time for teacher collaboration is one of the factors hindering teacher collaborative learning. This happens despite the fact that time is an important resource for collaborative learning to occur (Naicker, Mthiyane & Chikoko, 2013). Teachers need sufficient time to plan together and to devise strategies to improve learners' achievements. During teacher collaborative learning, teachers observe each other, plan and teach each other (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). But without sufficient time this does not become success.

The study by Bhengu, Naicker and Mthiyane (2014) suggests that teachers are demotivated by the changes brought the department of education. This demotivation of teachers resulted in teacher absenteeism. It also indicated that some teachers are departing early from schools. All these barriers contribute to the ineffective of teacher collaborative learning. They also state that teachers sometimes absent themselves for lengthy periods from school.

## **2.8 Theoretical frameworks**

The following discussion discusses the theoretical perspectives which underpin the study. These theories are Hord's (1997) five attributes of professional learning communities, Hallinger's

(2003) model of instructional leadership and Knowles (1996) adult learning theory. Each theory is discussed separately in the following discussion.

### **2.8.1 Hord's (1997) Five attributes of professional learning communities (PLCs).**

The study is underpinned by Hord's (1997) five attributes of professional learning communities (PLC's). These attributes are supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared vision and values, supportive conditions and lastly, shared personal practice. Each attribute is discussed in detail in this section and it is linked to the phenomenon under investigation. Five attributes of professional learning communities is more relevant to the study and it addresses some of the roles that the principals play in promoting teacher collaborative learning. Professional Learning Communities seem to focus on the learners' learning. Where teachers are involved in the PLCs they want to ensure that learners learn (Hord, 1997; Reichstetter, 2006). Therefore, in the context of this study, the discussion about teacher collaborative learning focuses on how school principals promote teacher collaborative learning as a way of improving teachers' practice and learners' learning.

#### **2.8.1.1 Supportive and shared leadership**

Hord (1997) suggests that the first attributes of PLCs is supportive and shared leadership. In this attribute, it is assumed that principals should not view themselves as omni-competent. Instead, they need to involve teachers in decision-making processes. In keeping with this requirement to be inclusive of the teaching staff, there are three factors that principals are required to do in the PLCs. Hord (1997) argues that they need to have the ability to share authority; the ability to facilitate the work of staff and the ability to participate without dominating. Hord (2008) further emphasises the point that principals must share power, authority and decision-making. By so doing, teachers would be motivated and will actively engage in the organisation's activities.

When principals share authority and power, leadership capacity of the teachers develops. Reichstetter (2006) for instance, argues that principals are also regarded as learners attending professional development. They are expected to share leadership and power and give staff

opportunities to come with their input in the decision-making processes. Principals are also expected to let go of power and his or her own sense of omnipotence and omni-competence. Therefore, teachers would learn together and participate in decision-making. In this regard, the principal is the key person to promote teacher collaborative learning. It has also been emphasised that the principal must believe in the teachers' capacities to address the needs of the learners. For this to happen, the principals must create an environment where teachers can learn continuously. Reichstetter (2006) on the other hand contend that trust, respect and openness exist when teachers work collaboratively.

### **2.8.1.2 Collective creativity**

The second attribute of the PLCs is collective creativity. Collective creativity or inquiry focuses on the principals and the teachers coming together to plan and discuss new pedagogical issues to improve learners learning (Hord, 2008). Collective inquiry helps the principals and the teachers to solve problems they encounter from different departments (Hord, 1997; Reichstetter, 2006; Hord, 2008). For the purposes of this study, this attribute seems to be relevant to the phenomenon (teacher collaborative learning). When teachers learn collaboratively, they actually discuss and reflect on their practice and challenges or problems encountered from various departments. On the same vein, literature (Reichstetter, 2006; Hord, 2008) shares similar sentiment that what is learnt in the PLCs is determined by the teachers' deep exploration of the learners' data. Such data helps teachers to identify problems experienced by the learners. After deep exploration of the learners' data teachers would plan precisely what they would learn when they next meet. In this regard, Hord (2008, p.12) maintains that "The identified student learning areas provide the target for the staff's intentional learning". Teachers collaborate regularly to dialogue on curriculum, common formative assessment, instruction and needed job embedded professional development (Reichstetter, 2006). Teacher inquiry helps teachers to understand and appreciate the work of others. Hord (1997) further argues that when the principals and the teachers inquire they become a community of learners. This seeks to emphasise that in collaborative learning, teachers are also learners who regularly discuss learners' needs. During their collective inquiry they collectively solve problems and learn new ideas and information to be used in addressing student needs.

### **2.8.1.3 Shared vision and values**

The third attribute of the PLCs as suggested by Hord (1997), emphasises the notion of shared vision and shared values. She postulates that vision is a trite term and it refers to mission, goals and objectives. It is emphasised that PLCs adhere to the vision of learners' learning. Teacher collaborative learning concept focuses on learners' learning through collaboration and interdependent practice. Viewed this way, teachers must not only be part of developing the shared vision but must also use the vision as a guidepost in decision-making. It has also been mentioned that the core purpose of PLCs is learners' effective learning. Therefore, whatever they are discussing should focus on addressing this imperative and should be guided by their shared vision and values. In the PLCs, individual staff member are responsible for their actions and behaviours.

Shared vision and shared values play a big role in influencing the teachers to work collaboratively. For collaborative learning to occur, principals and teachers should have similar vision and values. Similarly, Reichstetter (2006) posits that teachers must agree on the learning outcomes that learners must achieve at the end. When teachers work collaboratively in the PLCs and share the same vision, mission and values, transparency is likely to exist in relation to what the learners must know and be able to do. Since this study investigated principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning, shared vision and shared values are some of key issues that principals are expected promote for the success of teacher collaborative learning.

### **2.8.1.4 Supportive conditions**

It is highlighted that supportive conditions characterise professional learning communities (Hord, 1997; Reichstetter, 2006). Supportive conditions determine when, where and how regularly the staff comes together to do collective learning, decision-making, problem solving and creative work (Hord, 1997). In relation to the study, this attribute is relevant as it addresses some of the key issues that the principals are expected to do. There are two types of conditions that enhance learning communities. These are the physical or structural setup and human qualities or capacities of the people involved (Hord, 1997). The literature reveals that physical factors such

as time for the teachers to meet, physical proximits, teaching roles that are interdependent and communication structures are suggested as factors that support PLCs (Hord, 1997; Reichstetter, 2006). If teachers are not given enough time to meet collaborative learning would not be effective. Hord (2008) further posits that policies and resources that support staff collaborative learning are also imperative. It is quite clear that time is an important factor that reduces teacher isolation. On the other hand time is highlighted as a barrier for teachers who want to collegially. Therefore, principals must rearrange the use of time in schools so that teachers are supported in their collaborative learning.

Developing people's capacities is one of the conditions that support the PLCs. Literature shows that people in the organisation must accept feedback and work toward improving the organisation. It is emphasised that respect, trust and positive attitudes across all teachers are imperative as they meet in the PLCs. Principals have a role to play in ensuring the practice of all these behavioral factors. For all this to happen, it has been mentioned that principals' supportive leadership is an important ingredient.

#### **2.8.1.5 Shared personal practice**

The last attribute of the PLCs is shared personal practice. This practice advocates the notion of peers helping one another. In the school context, teachers are expected to help each other. This practice is done by for example, teachers visiting one another in a classroom for observation; scripts notes and discuss their observations with each other (Hord, 1997). Research shows that such practices promote trust, honesty and openness among the teachers. Teachers need to be honest about what they know and what they need to know. It is that time when teachers would meet and develop one another based on areas that require professional development. The promotion of mutual respect and understanding by the principals enhance PLCs. The principals need to create an environment that values and supports hard-work and promote shared personal practice.

## **2.8.2 Hallinger's (2003) Model of instructional leadership.**

Hallinger (2003) proposes three dimensions of instructional leadership. These dimensions focus on the role of school principals in managing teaching and learning. I found that this model is more relevant to the study, since it focuses on the school principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning. The following section discusses each dimension of this model as suggested by Hallinger (2003). He proposes three dimensions of the instructional leadership; namely, defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school learning climate.

### **2.8.2.1 Defining the school's mission**

The first dimension focuses on the role of school principals in defining the mission of the school. The principal is expected to frame the school's goals and to communicate them to the various stakeholders including the teachers. It is suggested that the principals must work with the staff in order to ensure that the school has clear and measurable goals that focus on the learners' academic progress. This view is shared by Bush (2014) when he says that the principals must develop the mission and vision for the school that places teaching and learning at the centre. This dimension clearly links the study that is reported in this dissertation because it interrogates the role of principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. I argue that this theory is relevant because teacher collaboration is also guided by the vision and mission of the school. Hallinger (2003) emphasises the fact that principal does not develop the school vision alone, however, it remains his or her responsibility to ensure that the school has a clear academic mission. They also have to communicate the mission to the staff and other stakeholders.

### **2.8.2.2 Managing the instructional programme**

Hallinger (2003 & 2005) suggests that managing the curriculum is the second dimension of the instructional leadership. It focuses on the coordination and control of instruction. He further mentions that it is about supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum and monitoring progress of the learner. This dimension requires the school principal to be deeply engaged in supervising and monitoring of teaching and learning. In the South African context, the principal is not the only person involved in leading the instructional programme. The Heads

of Departments (HODs) have the responsibility of ensuring that they supervise teaching and learning activities that occur daily in their subjects (Bush, 2014). Despite all this, the principal remains the only person who is accountable for all this; he or she has to ensure that the HODs do what they have to do. However, Hallinger (2005) states that principals in large schools are consumed by many activities which make it impossible for them to focus on instructional programme as they should. However, in small schools, the principal happens to know the academic progress of all the learners.

### **2.8.2.3 Promoting a positive school learning climate**

The third dimension of the model is promoting a positive school learning climate. This dimension includes several functions such as protecting the instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility (Hallinger, 2003). For the purposes of the study, this dimension is deemed to be relevant as it is the principals' role to provide positive learning climate. And, to provide time for teacher collaboration it is the principals' responsibility to provide professional development of teachers (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). Therefore, teachers' collaboration is viewed as part of their professional growth. The principal's responsibility is to align standards and practices of the school with its mission, and also to create a climate that supports teaching and learning. This view is shared by other scholars (Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013) that instructional leaders promote a positive learning by communicating goals and establish expectations.

### **2.8.3 Knowles Adult learning Theory**

This study is also underpinned by Knowles (1996) adult learning theory. Knowles (1996) posits that this theory has a number of principles. The first principle is that adults have a need to know why they should learn something. In this principle adults should be told about the benefits of them learning something. Adults learning theory is relevant to this study because it seeks to understand how principals who successfully completed ACE School Leadership programme have promote collaborative learning. Since teachers are adults, they need to be informed about the importance of learning collaboratively and this happens more effectively when professionals are organised as a community of learners.



All information which would be discussed in the PLCs such as lesson planning should include the reasons for learning. Secondly, adults are self-directed (Sargent & Hannum, 2009). Steyn (2013) insists that an adult is someone who understands him or herself and is in charge of his or her life. Steyn (2013) further declares that adults have responsibility for making their own decisions and living with the consequences. It is presumed in this thinking that teachers as adults are responsible for identifying areas in which they want to be professionally developed.

Thirdly, this theory holds it that adults have different quality of experience compared to the youth. Adults are able to bring their background of experience into the learning situation. Knowles (1996) acknowledges that adults have a broader base of experience on which to attach new ideas and skills and this gives them richer meaning. In the PLCs, teachers would understand a problem better because they would juxtapose old information with new one (Steyn, 2010).

Fourthly, adults are ready to learn as they are capable of drawing from their experience when faced with new life situations. They need to know so that they would be able to perform effectively and satisfyingly. Fifthly, adults involve themselves in learning experience with for instance, any of the following, namely, task-centred or problem-centred or life-centred orientation to learning. In collaborative learning teachers should learn what they can do in addressing work related challenges. According to this theory, learning should be problem-centred. The knowledge that teachers acquired from collaborative learning should help them in improving their classroom practice. Lastly, adults are motivated to learn by both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. Extrinsic motivators could for example, be promotion or bonuses but, the most important motivators are intrinsic ones which usually take the form of the need for self-esteem, power and achievement.

## **2.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the literature on collaborative learning generally, collaborative learning among adult people such as teachers and the role of school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. The literature has amongst other things, highlighted

that school principals should provide time for teacher collaboration activities in the schools. Literature reviewed has shown that principals do encourage experienced teachers to mentor inexperienced teachers in the schools and also discuss problems with them. Principals also deploy HODs to observe teachers and to discuss their findings from observations. It was found from the literature that school principals create teams such as subjects matter teams, grade level teams in which teachers discuss, plan lessons collaboratively. It is assumed that by so doing this will ultimately result in improved learner achievement. The chapter also highlighted that collaborative have some benefits. Literature shows that when teachers work collaboratively their teaching practices improve. Collaborative learning increased teacher morale and commitment to their work. When teacher work collaboratively they observe each other's lessons, solve problems together and prepare lessons together. Barriers to collaborative learning were identified and discussed, and these included tensions and conflicts among teachers and school principals.

The chapter also discussed the three theories that framed the study. These theories are Hord's (1997) five attributes of PLCs, Hallinger's (2003) three dimensions of instructional leadership and it ends with Knowles' (1984) adults learning theory. All these theoretical perspectives were found to be relevant to the study. The following chapter discusses the research design and methodological approaches that were employed to generate data that would help answer the research questions driving the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Two, the review of relevant literature was presented regarding the role of principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning within schools. This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that was followed in carrying out the study. According to Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006), research design refers to the plans used to generate data with an aim of understanding the phenomenon. This chapter starts by explaining the research paradigm within which the study is located. Secondly, research approach and research design that were used to understand principals' role in promoting collaborative learning is discussed. Thirdly, it also discusses the sampling methods and also how the data was generated. Fourthly, the data analysis procedures, ethical issues and trustworthiness of the findings are discussed.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

The study was located within the traditions of interpretivist paradigm. In this paradigm, it is agreed that, ontologically, there are many realities and these exist in the form of multiple mental constructs, socially based, local and specific (Maree, 2011). Therefore, in terms of this paradigm, it was expected that participants will provide different responses about the phenomenon under investigation. Interpretive researchers study social action of people to generate large volumes of detailed qualitative data to acquire in-depth understanding of how meaning regarding the phenomenon under scrutiny is created. In terms of epistemology, Maree (2011) argues that interpretivist believes that knowledge is the creation of the process of the interaction the researcher and the participants. In this study, knowledge was created by exploring the school principals' role in promoting collaborative learning among teachers. This paradigm was deemed to be relevant to this study because participants were investigated their views about the principals' role.

### **3.3 Research approach**

The study followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research refers to the inquiry in which the researcher generates data through interacting with selected participants in their settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). These scholars also insist that this type of research is concerned with understanding participants' perspectives of the phenomenon. In order to understand people's experiences, school principals, Heads of Departments (HODs) and Post-Level One teachers were interrogated. Mouton (2011) on the other hand views qualitative research as an approach which aims to understand and describe the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers attempt to understand the phenomenon through peoples' meaning assign to them (Maree, 2011). Therefore, this study aimed at understanding how the school principals promote collaborative learning. As a result this approach was deemed to be more appropriate for the study.

The major aim of the study was to understand how participants view the school principals' role in promoting collaborative learning. Mouton (2011) declares that the fundamental aim of this approach is to understand social actions and not to generalise them to the broader community. In keeping with the qualitative research approaches, the experiences and perceptions of the research participants were not generalised to other settings. Qualitative researchers are interested in describing participants' actions in great details and then find meaning from these actions to understand the phenomenon. The qualitative approach has enabled me to study the whole context in order to understand the holistic nature of the phenomenon. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) and Mouton (2011) share similar views that the main aim of qualitative approach is in-depth understanding of actions. Actions and events were studied in the participants' context to better understand the phenomenon.

### **3.4 Research design**

This study employed the case study design. Some scholars (Wynsberhge & Khan, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) maintain that there is no agreement or consensus about what a case study really is. Researchers view case study as a method, methodology, or research design

(Wynsberhge & Khan, 2007). However, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) argue that it is inappropriate to conceptualise it as a method, methodology, research design. These scholars further contend that other researchers conceptualise it as a paradigm. It has been found that a case study is trans-paradigmatic and trans-disciplinary (Wynsberhge & Khan, 2007). This means that it fits everywhere regardless of a research paradigm. In addition, it can also be used in any discipline. In this study, the case study was employed as a research design. Wynsberhge and Khan (2007) assert that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study seeks to understand the phenomenon under investigation and it also provides the opportunity to penetrate the question in order to understand organisational behaviour (Gable & Guy, 1994). For the purposes of this study, the case study was deemed appropriate in order to understand people's behaviour about the phenomenon. It also helped me to investigate the phenomenon within participants' real life context.

Scholars (Gable & Guy, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Maree, 2011; Mouton, 2011) agree that conclusions drawn are only specific to that particular context studied and conclusions may not be generalised. I investigated the case of two secondary schools in the UGU district. The focus was on those secondary schools with principals who had successfully completed ACE School Leadership programme. These schools were studied in order to fully understand the role played by school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. The findings from these schools cannot be generalised to other secondary schools within the UGU district. The findings were specifically for those schools studied. The case was the principals not promoting collaborative learning among teachers. In this study, I explored the case of school principals who completed ACE School Leadership programme in promoting collaborative learning among teachers.

Maree (2011) sees case study as a research strategy that reveals an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The reason why I have used a case study is that it would reveal an in-depth understanding of the school principals' role in promoting collaborative learning among teachers. Wynsberhge and Khan (2007) concur with Maree (2011) that the case study provides a holistic

understanding of the phenomenon. The major advantage of the case study research is that it uses a multiple sources of data and techniques in the data generation process (Mouton, 2011; Maree, 2011). It is emphasised that this involves multiple interviews. In this study, multiple interviews were conducted with school principals, HODs and Post-Level One educators. This enabled me to understand the holistic nature of the phenomenon being interrogated.

### **3.5 Selection of participants**

Purposive sampling was employed in selecting participants for the study. The purposive sampling is a deliberate choice of participants due to the qualities the participant possesses (Dolores & Tongco, 2007). They further assert that in this method the researcher decides what needs to be known and to find people who can and are willing to provide information because of the experience and knowledge. In both schools, the principal, one HOD and two Post-Level One educators were purposively identified. The principals who had completed ACE School Leadership programme offered by the University of KwaZulu-Natal between 2007 and 2009 were selected. The secondary schools were also selected purposively. Only secondary schools with principals who completed ACESL at university of KwaZulu-Natal were selected. They were selected because of their convenience. I selected secondary schools that were easily accessible. HODs and Post-Level One educators from schools with principals who attended ACE:SL were purposively selected. It is important that the readers understand the context of the participants and that is why the profile of each participant is provided.

### **Profiling of the participants and school**

Names of the participants and schools used in the study are *pseudonyms*. This is done in order to protect their identities and it is done as part of ethical considerations. The study was conducted in two secondary schools in the UGU district of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The data sources were school principals, HODs and Post Level One Educators (teachers). All secondary schools participated in the study are located in rural areas. The participants of the study are profiled below.

### **Mr King**

He is a male secondary school principal of 56 years of age. The school is named Beef Secondary School (BSS). The school is situated in rural community and is ranked Quintile 3. BSS has five SMT members comprising the principal, deputy principal and three HODs. The school has three departments namely, Business Commerce and Management (BCM), Science and Languages. The school enrolment is currently 804 learners. The school has got computer laboratory. School buildings are well maintained and sports grounds are outside the school premises.

### **Mr Smarth**

He is an HOD of the commerce department. He is 36 years of age and has 8 years of experience, having assumed his duties as an HOD in 2007. He supervised 8 teachers under his department. He teaches economics in Grade 11 and Grade 12 as well as Accounting in Grade 10.

### **Mr Chippa**

He is teacher at BSS. He has 7 years teaching experience, having started teaching in 2008. He teaches Accounting in Grades 11 and Grade 12 respectively. He also teaches Economics in Grade 10 and Economics and Management Sciences (EMS) in Grade 9.

### **Mrs Kaizer**

She is an HOD of the humanities at BSS. She has 43 years of age and 12 years' experience as an HOD, having assumed her duties in 2003. She manages 13 teachers in her department. Mrs Kaizer teaches History in Grades 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12 respectively.

### **Mr Xaba**

He is a secondary school principal and his age is 47. The name of the school is Mutton Secondary School (MSS) also for anonymity reasons. The school is located in the UGU district within the rural communities. It is ranked Quintile 2. Mr Xaba has 21 years of experience as principal, having assumed his duties from 1991. MSS has an enrolment of 575 learners which are accommodated in 13 classrooms. MSS has two support staff members. The SMT consists of five members consisting of the school principal, one deputy principal and three HODs. The first HOD

manages Business Commerce and Management (BCM) department. The second one manages Science department and the last one manages Languages department.

### **Mrs Buthelezi**

She is an HOD of the Language department at MSS. She is 48 years of age and 4 years' experience as an HOD, having assumed her duties in 2010. She manages 5 teachers in her department. Mrs Buthelezi teaches English in Grade 11 and in Grade 8.

### **Mr Bham**

He is a teacher from MSS. He is 42 years of age and has 14 years of experience as a teacher, having started teaching in 2001. Mr Bham teaches Grades 9, Grade 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12 respectively.

### **Mrs Bush**

She is a teacher from MSS. She is 37 years old and has 7 years of experience as a teacher, having started teaching in 2008. Mrs Bush is teaching Economics in Grades 10, Grade 11 and Grade 12 respectively.

## **3.6 Data generation methods**

Semi-structured interviews and documents reviews were used to generate data. In the semi-structured interviews, the researcher uses interview guide and topics are outlined in advance (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). I prepared the questions in the interview guide in advance. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher uses a set of questions to guide the conversation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). These scholars further posit that the researcher is likely to allow new topics that the interviewer did not expect. Interview guide has helped me to know exactly what I will be asking to the participants. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) further emphasise that in this type of interview the researcher decides the sequence and wording of the topic during the interview.



There are many benefits of semi-structured interviews and one of their benefits is that they allow probing during interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). I made it a point that where I do not understand I ask a follow up question. This helped me to get deeper understanding of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon. The interviews were conducted in schools that participated in the study. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes. During the interview I have used a digital Voice recorder to ensure the completeness of the verbal interaction. With the voice recorder, it is guaranteed that what I find is exactly what the participants have said. Interviews also limited the waste of time writing down everything the participant was saying. I understood that writing down while the participant is talking would make me lose focus on what the participant has to say. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) acknowledge that voice recorded interviews ensure completeness of the verbal interaction and provide material for reliability checks.

As mentioned above, I also used documents review to generate data. Documents reviews refers to a non-interactive strategy for obtaining qualitative data with little or no reciprocal interactions between the researcher and the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This method is more extensive and the researcher does not have to do transcription of data (Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). For the purposes of the study, departmental minutes of the meeting, SMT minutes and staff meeting minutes were reviewed in order to provide clues about what the participants had said. These documents were reviewed in both schools. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) declare that documents describe the values and how different people define the organisation. Documents were used to understand how the principals of participating schools promoted teacher collaborative learning. I used the documents because they helped me to strengthen my arguments. Documents were also useful in order to corroborate or refute the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

The data generated were analysed through qualitative content analysis. Maree (2011) claims that content analysis is used to analysed things like books, brochure, written documents, transcripts, new reports and visual media. Content analysis was used to analyse data. Content analysis is defined as a research method which examines words or phrases including essays, interviews and

speeches (Mouton, 2011). This form of analysis was found to be more relevant to my study, as it has been indicated that it can be used to analyse data from the interviews. I have mentioned in the data generation discussion that I have used digital voice recorder during interviews. Firstly, I downloaded and transcribed data from the digital voice recorder into my laptop. I transcribed the interviews *verbatim* speaking from the participants. After I have finished data transcription I coded each line. Such a process entails “reading and re-reading the texts, trying to make sense of the patterns and themes that emerge from your data” (Mouton, 2011, p.493). I read the interview transcripts several times trying to make meaning attached by the participants. Maree (2011) posits that content analysis is inductive and iterative process. I have read each line of the interview transcripts to understand the participants’ meaning making of the phenomenon.

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), content analysis has the advantage of comparing interview transcripts in order to find similar meanings the participants attached. This type of analysis has enabled me to find the differences and similarities from the meaning attached by the participants. Hesse-Biber (2007) seems to share similar views as those expressed by Mouton (2011) when he argues that content analysis examines the repetition of certain words and phrases in the interview transcript. By so doing, the researcher is able to make inferences about the participants’ understandings of the phenomenon. I discovered that some words were repeated from interview transcripts which attempted me to make inferences about the participants’ understandings. The content analysis was also used to analyse data generated from documents reviewed. I read all the documents, then I noted important phrases which corroborated or refuted the findings from the semi-structured interviews. This made me to produce the rich data

### **3.8 Trustworthiness of the study**

The following section discusses the aspects that enhance the trustworthiness of the study findings. I used the framework developed by Guba and Lincoln’s (1985), and this framework consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These criteria are used in qualitative research to determine the trustworthiness of the study (Krefting, 1990). These concepts strengthen the study’s trustworthiness and are discussed in detail here-below.

## **Credibility**

According to Blanche et al. (2006), credibility is established while the study is being conducted. In enhancing the credibility of the study I interrogated different participants as discussed in the sampling phase. As I explained earlier, principals, HODs, and teachers were interviewed. This can be referred to as multiple data sources and, by so doing, I ensured the credibility of the research findings. In enhancing credibility I compared data from participants to check whether what I have found from the principals matches with the findings from HODs and teachers. The idea was to ensure trustworthiness of the answers from the principals on whether they do promote collaborative learning among teachers in schools they lead. I compared the findings from participants because they are all from the same sites. It is therefore assumed that they are likely to provide indistinct responses.

Krefting (1990) acknowledges that one of the powerful strategies for enhancing the credibility of the research findings is triangulation. Triangulation can happen in different ways (Blanche et al., 2006; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). They declare that triangulation of data sources help the researcher to generate a range of data that might contribute to a complete understanding of the phenomenon.

## **Transferability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe transferability as the extent to which the results of the research can be applied in similar contexts. To be able to do this, researchers have to provide thick descriptions of the research process (Shenton, 2004). In the context of this study, I had to ensure that the process I followed were fully described so that each and every step can be understood by the readers and other researchers who may want to conduct a similar study.

## **Dependability**

In the previous sections, I have mentioned that voice recorder was used to elicit data from various categories of participants. After the interviews have been voice recorded, the voice

recorder was played to the participants to check whether I have recorded exactly what they have said during the interviews. This is contended by Krefting (1990) when maintaining that the summaries of taped interviews can be played to informants for their responses. Spending considerable amount of time with the participants helps to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Krefting, 1990). I spent sufficient time with the participants to identify reappearing patterns. By spending sufficient time with the participants, I was in a better position to understand participants' perspectives and be able to discover the hidden facts. Krefting (1990) insists that prolonged engagement with the participants allows them to become the accustomed to the researcher. This had an advantage that I would get richer data which I could not get if I had just come in during interviews and left thereafter.

### **Confirmability**

Maree (2011) posits that member-checking enables the participants to confirm the interpretations made by the researcher. In that way, research participants are given the chance to comment on whether interpretation are in line with their personal experiences they have tried to express during the interviews. The participants will be given a chance to read interview transcripts to check whether what I have transcribed is exactly what they have said.

### **3.9 Ethical issues**

It is important that the research is conducted in an ethical manner. In order to ensure ethical practice, codes of ethics have been established in order to regulate the relationships between the researchers and the people that will participate in the study (Flick, 2006). The principles of research were observed such as autonomy and consent form, principle of non-maleficence and the principle of non-beneficence. A consent form which spelt out the specific nature of the project including any potential risk and the degree of confidentiality afforded to the participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Permission to conduct research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and also from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE). The consent forms were issued to all participants. Participants were told that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they had a right to withdraw at any time. The protection of the school, participants and the protection of the name of the community

in which the school is located is important (Blanche et al., 2006). The participants were assured that their names would remain anonymous to the readers or any person other than the researcher. The names of the schools would also remain anonymous. Lastly, I emphasised to the participants that the name of the community where the school is located would also not be disclosed. All participants have agreed to participate voluntarily and they have signed the consent forms. These consent forms were signed on the date of the interview with the participants. The official stamps and physical addresses of schools participated in the study were hidden in the dissertation. This was to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and schools participated in the study.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology that was utilised in conducting the study. The discussion of the research paradigm and research approach that was adopted for the study was also presented. It was highlighted that a case study was a preferred methodology for this study. A detailed discussion of the data generation methods and how data were analysed was also provided. Purposive sampling was chosen as the most appropriate method to use in selecting the participants. Towards the end of the chapter, a discussion about ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the findings is presented. The next chapter presents the data presentation and discussion.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the research design and methodology that was used to answer the research questions. This chapter presents and discusses the data after the analysis of the transcripts was done. In this study, the two methods of generating data were used. These methods are semi-structured interviews and documents reviewed. Therefore, this chapter presents and discusses the data that was generated through the use of these two methods. This was to ensure that the data generated from one method can be corroborated or refuted by the data from another method. The literature and theoretical frameworks are infused in the discussion in order to strengthen the analysis of the data. Such an approach assists in assessing the extent to which what emerges from the data can be linked to knowledge that is already in the public domain.

The chapter discusses eight themes that emerged from the research data. These themes are as follows: (a) participants' understanding of collaborative learning (b) principals' role in facilitating teacher collaborative learning (c) professional development of teachers through teacher collaborative learning (d) encouraging teacher to meet on a regular basis (e) teams established by school principals to promote teacher collaborative learning (f) changes in teachers' practice (g) barriers faced by school principal in promoting teacher collaborative learning (h) strategies employed by school principals to overcome barriers of teacher collaborative learning.

#### **4.2 Participants' understanding of collaborative learning**

The following discussion presents the understandings of the participants about collaborative learning. Two of the four participants from Beef Secondary School (BSS) shared similar views that collaborative learning is about the working together of teachers. They asserted that teachers work together to solve problems that are related to teaching and learning and that the aim is to improve learner achievements. Mr King, the principal of BSS had the following to say:

*Collaborative learning is whereby a group of educators who come together to share problems attached to teaching and learning experiences (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

The same views were expressed by Mr Smarth, an HOD in the same school, who maintained that collaborative learning is about teachers working together to improve learner achievement.

*I think as far as I understand, it has to do with working together, working as a team, applying collective effort since our main aim is learner-centred. So it is based on improving learner performance (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

Miss Kaizer, a teacher from BSS conceptualised collaborative learning as the working together of all the stakeholders that are within the school. According to Miss Kaizer these stakeholders are School Management Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB), teachers and learners. This view agrees with that of Mr Chippa, a teacher from BSS, who argued that “collaborative learning is about people who are learning in a group”. He further emphasises his view that collaborative learning is about learners working as a group rather than as individual. Arguing on the similar line, Miss Kaizer had this to say:

*Collaborative learning is about the working together of all the stakeholders that are within the school institution. It must be the school principal that forms part of the SMT, the educators, the SGB and the learners. These make the whole component of collaborative learning (Miss Kaizer, teacher from BSS).*

Three participants from MSS agreed with the view that collaborative learning is about teachers assisting one another. One of the four participants views collaborative learning as a process where learners are given task to do in groups. However, another participant had a slightly different view by emphasising the view that collaborative learning the duty of the SMT when they help teachers in the process of teaching and learning. The principal of MSS saw collaborative learning as involving teachers whereby they help one another to promote individual learning and also to develop their skills and methods of teaching.

*I understand it in terms of teachers assisting one another in terms of promoting individual learning. And team work is also part of collaborative learning where teachers*

*assist one another in terms of developing their skills and the methodology of teaching*  
**(Mr Xaba, principal of MSS).**

Mrs Buthelezi, an HOD from MSS saw collaborative learning as the duty of the SMT whereby they assist teachers in order to process teaching and learning.

*According to my understanding of collaborative learning, I understand it as a learning whereby more than one party is inclusive in the process of teaching and learning whereby the SMT or the management is helping the team of post level one teachers the staff members in order to process the learning process* **(Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).**

Similar views were echoed by Mr Bham, a teacher from MSS that collaborative learning involves a group of teachers who work together to solve problems relating to their teaching situation. His understanding is in line with what Mr Xaba, the school principal has mentioned. Mr Bham further stated that collaborative learning is about learners working together to solve their subject related problems. Mrs Bush, a teacher from the same school concurred with Mr Bham when she described collaborative learning as a situation whereby “learners are encouraged to work as a group and to learn together or to do a task In agreeing with Mrs Bush, this is what Mr Bham had to say:

*My understanding is that collaborative learning is when a group of teachers or group of students comes together; they work together to solve problems or to complete a task or tasks. The main idea here is about a group of people who come and work together. That is my understanding of collaborative learning* **(Mr Bham, teacher from MSS).**

All participating school principals share the same understanding that collaborative learning is about teachers helping one another in order to share problems related to teaching and learning. The HODs from both schools agreed with school principals that collaborative learning involves teachers helping one another. They also agreed that teachers are part of the collaborative learning. What also emerged from data is that all teachers in study added another dimension to their conceptualisation of collaborative learning which tended to restrict it to learners, whereas the principals and the HODs seemed to focus only on the teachers and excluded the learners. It



was evidence from the research data that teachers saw collaborative learning as the sole domain of the learners. But overall, the dominant view to emerge from the participants was that collaborative learning involved the teachers helping one another.

The notion of collaborative learning involving both the teachers and the learners is supported by Mitchell, Reilly and Logue (2009). These scholars maintain that collaborative learning is a joint intellectual effort by the learners on other learners also by the teacher themselves. They further insist that in collaborative learning teachers work together to maximise their own and others' learning. Duncombe and Armour (2004) share similar view as that of Mr Xaba and Mr King that collaborative learning is about teachers assisting one another to develop skills and solving pedagogical problems. It is emphasised that it is an occasion where teachers talk to one another to improve their own or others' understanding of any pedagogical issue (Duncombe & Armour, 2004). It can therefore be concluded that collaborative learning is an all-embracing term which entails the working together of the teachers and the learners.

The research data also highlighted that collaborative learning is mainly about the working together of teachers within a school or across various schools. This is in line with one of Hord's (1997) five dimension of collaborative learning. Collective creativity (Hord, 1997) asserts that the school principal works together with the teachers with the purpose of improving learners' learning. Another dimension to collaborative learning is advanced by Hord (1997) by emphasising the creation of supportive conditions in which learning teachers come together to do learning and decision making. This dimension acknowledges that teachers solve problems and create work attached to teaching and learning.

#### **4.3 Principals' role in facilitating teacher collaborative learning**

Many participants from both schools were in agreement that school principals facilitated teacher collaborative learning by ensuring that teachers meet with their HODs in their respective departments. This view was supported by other teacher maintained that the school principal encouraged the teachers to let the learners do task collaboratively. This emanated from their

understanding of collaboration that it is also extended to the learners. This is what the school principal of BSS had to say:

*I normally encourage my teachers in staff meetings to ensure that if there are subject related problems they have to meet with HODs so that the problems might be solved for the good of the child or the learner (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

The HOD further mentioned that the principal's role is limited to the HODs in their departments to ensure that teachers work collaboratively. This view is illustrated by the following excerpts from the HOD from BSS:

*The principal's role is only limited to the HODs. In fact whatever role is played is the responsibility of each HOD. This is to ensure that all the members or teachers as per department work collectively (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

An HOD from MSS shared a similar view that the school principal delegated this task to the HODs and he consulted other teaching staff members. This is what had to say:

*He used to delegate some other tasks to the HODs so that they ultimately get to the learners. Delegating the duties entailed consulting some of the teachers and sometimes, the teaching staff consulting their HODs. (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

The principal of BSS also encouraged collaborative among the learners. This view was echoed by a teacher from BSS. This is what the teacher had to say:

*The school principal always encourages teachers to let the learners to learn in groups and tell us to give them some tasks which they should do in groups (Mr Chippa, teacher from BSS).*

It was also evident from Mrs Bush, a teacher in MSS, that the school principal encouraged teachers to work together. She further recognised the role that the school principal played in ensuring that in each department met its teachers and dealt with the issues affecting their respective subjects they teach.

*The school principal encourages us to work together like having subject heads; say you are in Commerce Department, and you have an HOD, then you are divided according to*

*your subject such as Economics; there is also a subject head, that is someone who is more experienced in Economics or Business studies for example, and that person will become a subject head (Mrs Bush, teacher from MSS).*

It was also pointed out by a teacher from MSS that if there is a problem regarding teaching and learning, the school principal does not solve it alone, but he calls the affected staff together to deal with the issue.

*The school principal is the head of the school; so, what he normal does is that when there is an issue to be addressed, he doesn't solve it alone. He calls the staff together. He puts the matter of the table and then we solve it together. Sometimes, he would tell us that if we cannot come up with the solution, we must go and think about it; he does not impose any task on us (Mr Bham, teacher from MSS).*

I found similarities in the way principals from both schools facilitated teacher collaborative learning. For instance, both of them (Mr King & Mr Xaba), contended that they encouraged collaborative learning through the use of HODs. This was done by ensuring that teachers met with the HODs in their respective departments. In both schools, the HODs (Mr Smarth & Mrs Buthelezi) shared similar views that their respective principals used them to facilitate teacher collaborative learning. The HODs had to ensure that teachers worked collaboratively.

The documents reviewed also showed that the principals of these schools facilitated teacher collaborative learning. For instance, the minutes of staff meetings from BSS indicated the school principal supported collaborative learning. Similarly, the minutes of staff meeting from MSS showed that indeed Mr Xaba encouraged teacher collaborative learning in staff meetings. The minutes of the staff meeting highlighted the importance of afternoon session. Mr Xaba also encouraged the HODs to hold meetings with teachers in their respective departments. This correlates with what Mrs Bush, a teacher from MSS had mentioned. Even though subject meetings minutes were not made available to me during the time of my visits to the school, it was evident from the minutes of departmental meeting that teachers do meet in various subjects. This supported Mr Smarth when he said some duties of the school principals are limited to the HODs.

The data presented in this theme concurs with the findings from the study conducted by Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2014). Their findings indicated that one of the principals' roles was to deploy the HODs to monitor the work of teachers and to ensure that teachers work collaboratively. This view is also supported by Bush's (2014) assertion that instructional leadership is not the monopoly of the school principals. The data presented in this section is congruent with Hord's (1997) model of professional learning communities. Hord (1997) posits that school principals should exhibit supportive and shared leadership. It is indeed the evidence from the data presented that school principals delegated some duties to the HODs to facilitate teacher collaborative learning. This is also in line with Hord's (1997) view that school principals should not view themselves as Omni-competence and omnipotence.

There are other leaders in the school they can delegate to facilitate teacher collaborative learning. The principals of the participating schools did not view themselves as the only facilitators of teacher collaborative learning, but they share leadership with the HODs. Hallinger's (2003) model of instructional leadership supports the data presented in this theme. This model advocates that the school principal should be deeply involved in managing instructional programme. Hallinger (2000) also emphasises that the facilitation of teacher collaborative learning is not the sole domain of the school principal. The HODs can manage teaching and learning through ensuring that teachers in their departments work together.

#### **4.4 Professional development of teachers through teacher collaborative learning**

Data indicated that all participating school principals promoted collaborative learning through professional development approaches they adopted. There are four ways in which professional development occurred as part of collaborative learning. These ways were workshops, subject advisors and teachers outside school encouraging teachers in briefing sessions and staff meetings as well as, promoting teacher networking.

#### 4.4.1 Workshops

All the participants stated that their school principals developed teachers by encouraging them to learn collaboratively in order to share what they learnt from the workshops they had attended. Encouraging teacher to attend workshops was found to be something done by all participating school principals. The principal of BSS encouraged workshops and those teachers who attended the workshop would report back to others. He also encouraged even the HODs to attend workshops together with the teachers. This is what the school principal had to say:

*I also sometimes encourage workshops and let those who attended workshops to report back to other teachers. Normally in my school, whenever a teacher is attending a workshop, he goes along with the HOD so that both the teacher and the HOD have the same understanding of the learning content (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

This practice was corroborated by the school principal of MSS who also adopted a similar strategy. This is what he said:

*We send them to workshop as well for some further professional development activities. We encourage them to sit together as subject committees and discuss issues that came up in a particular workshop so as to address issues and problems that other teachers have in relation to their performance inside the classroom (Mr Xaba, principal of MSS).*

Similarly, Mr Smarth, an HOD from BSS corroborated the view expressed by his principal and also by the principal of MSS regarding workshop attendance. They both send the teachers and the HOD of the department concerned. This is what he had to say:

*What normally happens is that teachers concerned go to the workshop together with the HOD. If it is Economics for example, I go with the educator and fortunately, I'm Economics teacher. Even if it is a Business studies, two teachers have to go including me, so that the information they have, would be the information I'm also have (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

#### **4.4.2 Subject advisors and teachers from outside school**

Three of the eight participants held the view that school principals invited subject advisors to come and help teachers if there were subject related problems. This is what the principal of BSS had to say:

*I normally invite the subject advisors to come to school and to have contact sessions with my educators concerning their learning areas (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

This view was corroborated by Miss Kaizer, a teacher from BSS, who confirmed the principal's assertion. This is what she had to say:

*He will make it a point that if you are not comfortable with some elements of your subject, he would ask outside people to come and help, for example the subject specialist or other educators to come and help. (Miss Kaizer, teacher from BSS).*

An HOD from MSS also emphasised that her school principal organised subject advisors to capacitate teachers within the school. In addition, he invited teachers from better performing schools to come and share their skills and knowledge with his teachers. They discuss problems collaboratively with teachers. In this way collaborative learning was encouraged. This is what she had to say:

*Our principal organises subject advisors to capacitate the teachers within the school. He also uses the feeder schools as well as our neighbouring schools to come and help (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

#### **4.4.3 Developing teachers through staff Meetings**

Some participants from MSS mentioned that school principal developed teachers during the staff meetings that were held weekly. Developing teachers through the use of weekly staff meetings emerged from the interviews with participants from MSS only. Mr Xaba, school principal at MSS usually conducted the meetings on a quarterly basis and they also organised teacher development sessions. The school principal of MSS used to organise development sessions with the teachers in order to close gaps if shortfalls had been identified in the teachers. The following is an extract from the interview with the principal:

*We normally hold meetings on quarterly basis and we also have teacher development sessions where we develop teachers on specific items where we see some shortfalls. In addition, we send them to workshops that are held outside the school. We also invite subject advisors to assist the school where it is necessary (Mr Xaba, the principal of MSS).*

This view was shared by all the teachers from MSS who mentioned that the school principal hosted teacher development sessions during weekly meetings. The principal conducts “staff meetings all most every week” (Mrs Bush, teacher from MSS). The school principal of MSS usually asks files on a weekly basis. This was emphasised by Mr Bham that the principal would ask teachers if they have any outstanding documents in their teaching files. He further pointed out that Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was not an easy document to implement. The school principal would explain some differences between CAPS and the National Curriculum Statements (NCS). It is evident that the culture of collaborative learning exists in these schools as this extract confirms.

*At the beginning of a term, he meets us as a staff and we all bring our various files then he asks us which document is available; which document is not in your file and then he will give you those files. If there is file that is outstanding he would provide you with one; and he would ask you if you have any input that you can give. (Mr Bham, educator from MSS).*

The above extract does not only indicate that collaboration occurred in the school, but also that active participation of the teachers happened, and that the principal was hands-on in terms of monitoring their work.

#### **4.4.4 Promoting teacher networking**

Networking was found to be one of professional development approaches that were used by school principal at MSS. However, no participants at BSS mentioned networking as an approach that they used for professional development. Principal of MSS also used networking as a strategy to promote collaborative learning among the teachers. Networking was found to be one of the strategies used by principal of MSS to develop teachers. Teachers were encouraged to help one

another if they face challenges in some aspects of their subjects. An HOD from MSS had the following to say:

*The principal also used to promote networking within the school whereby the teachers assist one another in their subjects for example, if you have a challenge in a certain area of your subject, you have to ask another colleague to help you (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

The principal of MSS used to meet with teachers and discuss subject related problems with them. Similarly, the teachers discussed some of their problems with the school principal. The teacher from MSS has the following to say.

*Yes, we network as teachers and the principal encourages us to network; actually he also sits down with us to come up with our own ideas. (Mr Bham, teacher from MSS).*

One of the ways in which the principal of MSS promoted collaboration was his dedication and encouragement he gave to Grade 12 teachers. These teachers positively responded to encouragement and even taught during June holidays. There is a strong correlation between what was found from the participants in MSS and the documents reviewed. For instance, when I read the minutes of SMT meetings, there were indications that the school principal prioritised collaborative learning. The minutes of the SMT meetings also highlighted that the school principal emphasised the need for teachers to engage in network exercise with others in order to develop one another in terms of their subjects. The following is an extract from the SMT minutes of the meeting from MSS:

*Teachers should network with other teachers. Transport will be paid for those teachers (SMT minutes book from MSS, dated, 26 May 2010).*

Data from the minutes of the SMT meetings corroborates what transpired from the interview with the participants at MSS. For instance, it was mentioned in the minutes that teachers can and actually, they were encouraged to network with other teachers. There is an agreement on what Mr Bham said in the interview. In the discussion Mr Bham recognised the fact that the school principal (Mr Xaba) used to call meetings where he would ask teachers if there had any outstanding documents for submission. The SMT minutes of the meeting served as evidence of



this. In BSS, collaborative learning was observed through the documents reviewed. In the minutes of the staff meeting, the school principal of BSS indicated that he was aware that there would be challenges since Grade 12 started using CAPS curriculum and new examinations would be written based on this curriculum statement. The school principal describes his thought in the following way:

*I'm aware that there will be challenges since Grade 12 started CAPS and new exams will be written. Mistakes must be identified sooner than later and they must be corrected as a collective and very urgently* (**Minutes of staff meeting, BSS, dated 31 April 2014**).

It is surprising that during the interviews with the participants at BSS, they did not highlight that in staff meeting the school principal had encouraged teacher collaborative learning. However, it was noted from BSS' departmental minutes of the meeting that the HODs did encourage teachers to keep their work up to date because subject advisors might come at any time. The following extract was said by an HOD from BSS in the departmental meeting:

*Grade 10, 11, 12 must be in order because the subject advisor might come at any time* (**Departmental meeting from BSS, dated 06 March 2014**).

Even though Mrs Buthelezi from MSS highlighted the importance of subject advisors in teacher professional development, but the minutes of departmental meetings did not reveal anything about the role of subject advisors in promoting teacher collaborative learning in her school. This was an opposite of what was happening at BSS where subject advisors were utilised for professional development.

Thompson, Gregg and Niska (2004) emphasises the important role that school principal can play in providing opportunities for teacher professional growth. According to these scholars principals should help teachers to meet in groups to discuss what they have learnt in professional development workshop. This is in line with what the participants from both schools highlighted. The school principal was viewed as a leader who encouraged teachers to attend professional development workshops. The teacher development workshop according to Steyn (2013) should be context-based. Teachers in those professional development workshops should learn things that

can help them to improve their teaching practice in their school context. It is believed that if teachers engage in intensive teacher involvement in the form of PLCs, learner achievement will be enhanced. According to DuFour (2011), development sessions in schools should be context based. Research by Steyn (2013) reveals that collaborative learning focuses on teacher learning processes. The ultimate goal is always to improve teachers' teaching practices. Drawing from Hord's (1997) model, as the principal and the teachers engage in serious inquiry about their professional activities, they become a learning community. The creation of supportive conditions for the teachers is one component of Hord's (1997). This model further emphasises that people must accept feedback and that they should work towards improving the organisation. It was noted from both participating schools that PLCs was used as a professional development approach. The principal was noted to be contributing ideas to the teachers. In this way the teachers and the school principals learn together from one another to diagnose strategies to improve learner achievements.

#### **4.5 Teams established by school principals to promote teacher collaborative learning**

Research data revealed four different types of teams that were established by participating school principals to promote teacher collaborative learning. These teams are presented into different sub-themes. These teams are departmental teams, subject teams, grade teacher teams and teacher-sharing teams, and these are presented in the following discussion.

##### **4.5.1 Departmental teams**

Four of the eight participants mentioned that the school principals normally encourage teachers to meet in departmental meetings every week. According to the teachers interviewed, during the departmental meetings they discuss issues of the whole department. The school principals also encouraged the HODs to conduct departmental meetings where they would solve teaching and learning problems together. Teachers also developed one another in those meetings. Data indicate that both principals encouraged teachers to meet at least once per week in their respective departments. During those meetings, HODs and teachers discuss everything pertaining to the departments. Mr Smarth had the following to say:

*He normally holds meetings with us starting from HODs and also makes meetings together with other educators. But basically, what he asks us to do is that every week we should at least hold our departmental meetings and address all important issues affecting us in that particular week (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

The views expressed above are corroborated by those of the teacher from the same school (BSS) that they have to meet every week. This is what he had to say:

*Yes, we meet; actually we meet weekly. We have departmental meetings every week and this is where we discuss the issues about the department and we try to solve our problems; we also develop one another (Mr Chippa, teacher from BSS).*

It was evident from the data from the interviews with a teacher from MSS that teachers discuss issues pertaining to the whole department. This is what she had to say:

*We meet according to our teams from various heads of departments or we meet as subject heads like subjects teams. Then we discuss issues concerning the whole department (Mrs Bush, teacher from MSS).*

#### **4.5.2 Subject meetings**

Six of the eight participants recognised the role of principals in promoting collaborative learning through subject teams. The data indicate that school principals encouraged teachers of the same subjects to come together to share ideas concerning the subjects. The idea is to achieve better the results in the school. As teachers work as a team, they are able to help one another if the teacher experiences a problem in the subject. When teachers meet in those meetings they elect subject heads. There are various requirements that are followed for the appointment of subject heads. It was found from Miss Kaizer, teacher from BSS, that they take into consideration the specialisation of the teacher, his or her performance in the subject and his or her academic qualifications. The principal of BSS shared the following sentiment:

*Teachers come together; to share ideas concerning the subject. Then in that way you find that those groups are assisting one another to achieve better results of the school (Mr King).*

The interview with the teacher from BSS explains the requirements needed for being subject head in the school. She mentioned the following:

*There are subject heads that look at various phases and that is we look how do we choose a subject head. We take into consideration the years that that person has taught. This is done democratically. (Miss Kaizer, teacher from BSS).*

Another teacher from BSS agreed that the school principal promotes teacher collaborative learning through subject committee meetings. This is done to ensure that teachers work with one another. This is what that teacher had to say:

*Sometimes the principal encourages us to hold subjects meetings. Then we have subject head that encourage us that teachers must be able to work with one another. (Mr Chippa, teacher from BSS).*

Subject heads have the responsibility to encourage teachers to work with one another. Very interestingly, the culture of collaborative learning was observed in the participating schools. In MSS, the data seems to suggest that school principal encouraged teachers to discuss problems they encountered inside the classroom. Participants from this school highlighted that the school principal emphasised the consistent use of subject meetings. Subject heads from this school consulted with HODs from time to time. The school principal of MSS encouraged teachers to meet and discuss problems they have in relation to their performance in classroom. This is what the school principal had to say:

*We encourage them to have meetings, subject meetings as committees because there are subjects committees as well. We encourage them to sit together as subject committees and discuss issues that may have come up in a particular workshop so as to address such issues and problems that other teachers have in relation to their performance inside the classroom (Mr Xaba, principal of MSS).*

A teacher echoed the same sentiments that the principal encouraged teachers to work together. The following is an extract from the interview with the teacher:

*The school principal encourages teachers to work together like having subject heads; say you are in commerce department, and you have an HOD, then you are divided according to your subject such as Economics; there is a subject head that is someone who is more experienced in Economics or Business studies will become a subject head (Mrs Bush, teacher from MSS).*

The views expressed above were also corroborated by the HOD from MSS. This is what she said:

*Our principal normally encourages subject meetings to be conducted on weekly basis. He does this through the HODs; he consults or to communicates with HODs and also with the heads of the subjects in order to conduct those subject meetings (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

While there was agreement about positive experiences regarding meetings in teams, Mr Bham, a teacher from MSS had a different view to this. Mr Bham argued that teams were not encouraged in his school. This is despite the fact that the school principal claimed the opposite. This is what this participant had to say:

*Some of the teachers do not want to open up; they do not want us to come together and form a group and have discussions about this. It is a challenge here seriously. I would say teams are not encouraged in this area. At the end of it all the problem are still hanging on even though the principal tries to develop us (Mr Bham, teacher from MSS).*

What can be said about collaborative learning through teams is that as much as principals of both schools emphasised this form of collaboration, some teachers did not want to work together with other teachers.

#### **4.5.3 Grade-teacher teams**

The generated data indicates that the use of grade-teacher team was not prevalent among many participants in the study. For instance, it was noted that only two participants talked about the use of grade-teacher teams to promote collaborative learning amongst teachers. The data did not

show if there were grade-teacher teams in MSS. But the Grade 12 team of teachers seemed to be the most effective grade-teacher team in BSS. Research data shows that Grade 12 teachers met together to devise strategies they can employ to improve learner achievement. It was also revealed that the principal in BSS encouraged teachers of the same grade to collaborate. One of the school principals also mentioned that the ACE: SL had resulted in positive Grade 12 achievement in his school. This is what the participants had to say:

*Using all these studies and all these styles that I got from ACE: SL because in my school the results have improved last year I had only one child that has failed. So I achieved 99% because of these leadership styles and all the things that I have got from the ACE: SL programme (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

The HOD mentioned that there was only one team of teachers that had been established. The following is an excerpt from the interview:

*Teams that have been established mainly targeted Grade 12 for extra classes and then extra classes meaning morning and afternoon as well as holidays, that is a winter classes and all that (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

#### **4.5.4 Team-teaching**

Team-teaching is the fourth theme to emerge out of the data analysis. Team-teaching was the kind of teaching that involved a number of teachers collaborating in the process of teaching and it was established by school principal. However, it was noted that this type of team emerged from the interview with two of the four participants from BSS. The data generated from MSS did not project the principal as a person who promoted teacher collaborative learning through team-teaching. However, the principal of BSS promoted teacher collaborative learning by ensuring that teachers who taught the same subjects in the same grade worked as a team. This was done by firstly, making sure that these teachers taught the same subject in the same grade. The participants also mentioned that the purpose of doing this was to promote teamwork among the teachers. Research also shows that if a teacher has a problem in a certain section of his or her work, he or she would seek assistance from another teacher to address that section. It was also noted from the duty loads of the teachers which indicated that there were teachers who shared the

subject in the same grade. The principal made it a point that these teachers met on regular basis to discuss what was to be taught. Participants mentioned that teachers taught at the same pace to avoid a situation where some learners would be left behind. Sharing the subject has the advantage that each teacher would ensure that his or her class did not decline in terms of learner achievement. The following extract supports this:

*There are a lot of techniques that we have applied especially when it comes to Grade 12 teaching. Some classes are shared. Say you are allocated Grade 12A, Grade 12B and Grade 12C and they all do business studies; we allow at least two teachers to take care of those classes even though we know that one can manage to take all three classes. So we want them to work as a team and that will help us in future because we don't know what the future holds for us so that whenever one may not be there then the other one can supports and the show goes on (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

Miss Kaizer, a teacher from BSS, claimed that the principal ensured that teachers who shared a subject met regularly to have a discussion about the content of that subject and strategies to teach it because the learners would write the same paper. On this issue, Miss Kaizer had this to say:

*And also you will find that in the duty loads, there would be teachers who would be sharing the subjects. So it is very important for the SMT to know exactly together with the principal, who these teachers are and then organise special meetings with them so that their work is synchronised, and so that the team meets and plan to work at the same pace. (Miss Kaizer, teacher from BSS).*

All the minutes of the departmental meetings reviewed revealed that the school principals promoted collaborative learning through the HODs. They ensured that teachers teaching the same subject in the same grade meet on a regular basis to discuss issues pertaining to the subject. The minutes of the departmental meetings from BSS corroborated those that emerged from the interview with the HOD and the teacher. The minutes indicated that teachers sharing the subject discussed their work that was to be done in the forthcoming week. They also emphasised that the activities given to learners must be the same. The data generated from the minutes of the departmental meetings highlighted that the teachers sharing the same subject worked together. It

suggests that school principals established team-teaching to promote collaborative learning. The following is an extract from the departmental minutes of the meeting:

*Teachers sharing a subject must discuss work to be done weekly and class activities must be the same (Department minutes of the meeting from BSS)*

The minutes of the SMT meetings from MSS concurred with what the participants had mentioned. It was also found from the minutes that the school principal encouraged the HODs to conduct departmental meetings weekly. The following is an extract from the minutes of the SMT meeting:

**Reinforcing curriculum management:** *The principal explained that it has been started last week (17-21). He further encouraged HODs to monitor the school activities weekly; at least one monitoring activity per week. Each activity done must be submitted and filed in the office (SMT meeting from MSS dated 28 February 2014).*

The above extract from the minutes show that the focus of the meeting was about how curriculum management can be reinforced. Holding monitoring activities per week was just one way in which weaknesses can be identified and lessons learnt from other teachers. The minutes of the departmental meetings served as evidence that school principal promoted collaborative learning. These meetings corroborated the research data that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The minutes of the departments from BSS were also reviewed. The minutes also showed that departmental meetings were held on certain days of the week. The following extract serves as evidence from departmental meeting from BSS:

*The department will meet every Tuesday for weekly meetings (Minutes of departmental meeting, BSS, dated 24 April 2014).*

The participants from both schools have indicated that subject teams existed in their schools. However, minutes of subject committee meetings in BSS were not made available to the researcher. They were only found in MSS. The minutes of such meetings indicated that teachers discussed, among other things, the appointment of new teachers in the school. Little was found that relate to teacher collaborative learning. The minutes also indicated the changes in duty loads among the teachers. There was nothing found which corroborated what the participants had



declared in relation to collaborative learning. They did however mention that teachers teaching the same subject met to share pedagogical ideas.

Participants mentioned that school principals encouraged the teachers to meet on a weekly basis to discuss issues pertaining to the department. They also developed one another in those meetings. Scholars (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009; Sargent & Hannum, 2009; DuFour, 2011; Steyn, 2013) declare that there are various teams exist in schools such as grade teams and departmental teams. Through these teams teachers are able to develop one another. This is supported by Hughes and Kritsonis (2006) who argue that collaborative learning is a powerful staff development approach and a best strategy for student learning. Scholars such as DuFour (2006), Crow and Mathews (2010), maintain that collaborative learning helps teachers to acquire new skills and knowledge in different areas. In the context of this study, it was mentioned that teachers in departments solved problems pertaining to teaching and learning. The HODs interviewed said that the school principals promoted collaborative learning through the HODs. The research conducted by Bush (2014) corroborated the data generated in this study. Skytt (2004) posits that for effective collaborative learning to happens, school principals should create a wide range of collaborative team structures. Teachers interviewed contended that subject meetings helped them to develop each other. Such stories are in line with Skytt's (2004) assertion that teachers are also responsible for ensuring that collectively, they are able to provide support to enhance one another teaching. Scholars such as Hughes and Kritsonis (2006) and Jones, Stall and Yarbrough (2013) also declare that collaborative learning among teachers provides quality instruction and improve student learning. Therefore, the school principal is the person to ensure that these teams are effective.

It was noted by Jones et al. (2013) that school principal must create a culture and climate for collaborative learning to take place. The data generated from BSS showed that teachers of the same grade work collaboratively. In BSS only Grade 12 teachers were found to be the most effective grade teacher team. According to Hughes and Kritsonis (2006) teaching teams should have a discussion about learners' assessment and the best teaching methods with the idea of achieving high learner performance. Grade 12 teachers collaborate to discuss strategies to improve learner achievement.

The second attribute of PLCs by Hord (1997) is collective inquiry, indicates that the school principal helped teachers to solve problems they encounter in classroom. This was done through the HODs who would meet with teachers in various departments. This is supported by Hord (1997) that teacher use learners data to identify problems they experienced. The third attribute by Hord (1997) is about shared vision and shared values which advocate that teachers work collaboratively in PLCs and that they share the same vision.

The first dimension of Hallinger's (2005) model of instructional leadership highlights that the school principal should monitors learner progress. But at the same time, it is highlighted that the school principal's time is consumed by many other activities. In the context of this study, the two principals were found to be providing opportunities for professional development. This is in line with Hallinger's (2005) assertion that school principal create positive school learning. These teacher teams were viewed as part of their professional development. Participants indicated that in each subject, subject heads are elected. One of the requirements was the experience that the teacher had.

#### **4.6 The 'fruits' of teacher collaborative learning**

The term 'fruits', as used in this study and in this section in particular, refers to the benefits of teacher collaborative learning. The fruits of collaborative learning included the following: curbing teacher absenteeism and late coming; teachers' performance in subjects and teachers' morale and commitment.

##### **4.6.1 Curbing teacher absenteeism and late coming**

The data has shown that teacher collaborative learning has resulted in a reduction of teacher absenteeism and late coming. Some participants from BSS and MSS have observed changes in terms of the teachers' inclinations to absent themselves or to arrive for work. They have noted that there was a reduction in teacher absenteeism and late coming. For example, teachers used to absent themselves due to their inadequacies and lack of confidence in dealing with challenges posed by the new curriculum (CAPS). Through teacher collaborative learning, teachers did not absent themselves as they did before. Data generated from MSS indicated that teachers were

punctual, arriving exactly at 07:30 or before. According to the school's policy the opening time in this school is 07:30. Teachers arrive early in order to prepare for the work of the day. The following extract supports the above claims.

*There has been a reduction in absenteeism rate among the teachers. Late coming among the teachers has also diminished; they come exactly at 07:30 in order to prepare for their work. This is good achievement that I have observed. (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

Both schools had experienced chronic absenteeism of teachers. The data corroborates the findings of Johnson's (2003) research that teacher collaborative learning has a significant impact on teacher absenteeism. Similarly, the findings of a study conducted by Sargent and Hannum (2009) in China supports the data that emerged. Teachers in China participate in collaborative learning to discuss and do collective lesson preparation. Through collaborative learning, participants have observed teachers coming to school on a regular basis.

#### **4.6.2 Performance of the teachers**

Three of the participants mentioned that teacher collaborative learning had influenced teachers' practices. Principals also shared the information with the teaching staff. Research data also suggested that ACE: SL had capacitated school principals to be able to equip their teaching staff with necessary skills, and subsequently, teachers' practices were no longer the same as before. The principal of MSS for instance, indicated that teachers' exposure to collaborative learning seemed to have contributed to positive learner achievement. Because of teachers' improved practices, Grade 12 NSC results were showing signs of improvement. However, despite such positive developments surrounding Grade 12 learners, one school principal declared that they still experienced problems with regards to General Education and Training Phase (GET) and some Further Education and Training Phases (FET) classes. In this regard Mr Xaba, the principal of MSS had the following to say:

*Performance among learners is improving, but very little. We have had great improvement with Grade 12 but not in other phases. Problems are severe at the GET Phase. (Mr Xaba, principal of MSS).*

The HOD from MSS has also observed that teacher performances had improved. For example, teachers were honouring their teaching periods and the way they taught had also improved. This seemed to support the claim that teacher collaborative learning had contributed to improved teachers' practices. This is what Mrs Buthelezi said:

*I have observed teachers in class teaching and also through activities they give learners. I have also observed the way they record their work. The way they teach is no longer the same as before. (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

The positive stories emerging from MSS were also shared by participants from BSS. For example, the principal of BSS and the HOD had similar views about their observations regarding improved practices among their teaching staff. This principal claimed to have used lessons learnt from ACE: SL to develop his teaching staff. Because of that, there were observable changes in the way they taught. Through collaborative learning teachers were motivated and confident in whatever they were doing. The data generated from BSS has also shown that ACE: SL had proved to be a fruitful programme. This was evident when Mr King contended that Grade 12 results had improved. The principal of BSS had the following to say:

*I will be very happy if you can make a recommendation that this programme of ACESL can be done by most of the principals because it bears some fruit. I've seen it in me and also in my school; there is a very big improvement. Using all the case studies in the programme, and all the styles I learnt from ACE: SL, results in my school improved last year; I have only one child that failed. (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

Participants have alluded to the fact that collaborative learning in their school contexts yielded good learner achievements. According to Jones, Stall and Yarbrough (2013), collaborative learning helps improve teachers' instructional practices which ultimately lead to improved learner achievement. The improvement in teachers' instructional practices is supported by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker and Many (2006) when they claim that, through it, teachers are empowered and are able to easily identify key items that are to be taught to the learners. Lee and Shaari (2012) postulate through when professionals share ideas and knowledge, their

professional capacities are enhanced. These scholars further declare that enhancement of teacher professional capacity leads to their ability to achieve better results for learners they serve. This was also noted from both participating schools that collaborative learning contributed to improved Grade 12 results. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to shift their thinking from teaching and pay more attention to the learners' learning effectively (Lee and Shaari, 2012).

#### **4.6.3 Improved teacher morale and commitment**

Participants from both schools acknowledged that collaborative learning improved the morale and commitment among the teachers. The data suggested that through collaborative learning problems that arose were easily solved. Since teachers work as a team, they were better able to address weaknesses that existed among them. This is what the principal of BSS had to say:

*That one has improved because through this collaborative learning problems are easily solved. And there is now no one with the problem because problems are solved together as group and are owned by the group. So, anybody's problem is another person's problem. (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

Mr Chippa, a teacher from BSS, highlighted that had experienced some challenges which, on face value, seemed to be insurmountable. However, working collaboratively, they were able to help one another to cover those challenges. This is what he had to say:

*It helps a lot because now we are working in a group. People always have weaknesses but then the group will be able to cover those weaknesses which you may have overseen (Mr Chippa, teacher from BSS).*

Teachers' motivation and commitment improved because they learned new ideas. Teachers also contributed new knowledge to the team. Through collaborative learning, teachers were able to help one another to address challenges, especially in relation to new curriculum that changes too often. Mrs Bush, teacher from MSS had the following to say:

*It does increase the morale and commitment because now whenever you go to a group you go there having ideas and having that mind of expecting that you are going to learn something new. At the same time you also have to give something new to the group. So,*

*as a teacher, it makes to be so committed to the group and also to trying to research things so that I can have input in the team (Mrs Bush, teacher from MSS).*

Scholars such as DuFour (2011) and Sargent and Hannum (2009) agree that effective teacher collaborative learning helps the teachers to learn new ideas about teaching and about learners learning. These scholars further emphasise the importance of involving the teachers in collaborative learning, particularly in terms of enhancing the implementation of new curriculum in the schools. Hord's (1997) fourth attribute of PLC advocates the working together of teachers to solve problems together. She also emphasises that the school principal must share power and authority with the teachers. This clearly gives teachers powers and authority to help one another and be motivated and committed to school improvement.

Teacher collaborative learning has a number of benefits to the teachers. A reduction of teacher absenteeism and late coming, changes in teachers practice and it improves teachers' commitment and morale were the benefits emerged from the interview with the participants. These benefits were in line with Hord's (1997) second attribute (collective creativity). Collective creativity helps teachers to work, plan together. On this point, Hord (1997) argues that collective creativity helps the teachers to learn and discuss new pedagogical issues in order to improve learner outcomes.

#### **4.7 Barriers faced by school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning**

Data generated revealed multiple views of barriers faced by school principals in trying to promote teacher collaborative learning. Teachers' reluctance to cooperation and lack of time factor are the barriers that emerged from the elicited data.

##### **4.7.1 Teachers' reluctance to cooperation**

Teachers' reluctance to work with others was found to be the barrier of teacher collaborative learning in both schools. Five of the participants explained that some teachers did not want to work together with their colleagues. This discussion of the barriers will be discussed per research site. In BSS for instance, teachers were found to be not keen to share their subjects related

problems with other teachers, but preferred to share them directly with the school principal. Some teachers still believed in working individually and were not keen to share their views and thoughts with fellow teachers. On the same vein, these teachers were reluctant to adhere to what the group or team is doing. Some of these participants mentioned that, since teachers come from different background, they did not want even to admit it if they had done injustice to their work. Some were reluctant to assist other teachers. The following is an extract from the interview with the principal of BSS who said:

*You must know that we are dealing with people. Sometimes we have got people that are not keen to share their subjects related problems or any problem with the others, instead they prefer to share them with the principal (Mr King).*

The views expressed in the above extract were shared by the HOD from the same school. The following extract is what Mr Smarth, an HOD from BSS said in this regard:

*In a working environment everyone is unique. So, there are people who are not eager to assist other educators. Then we have a problem of teachers who are unable to help others. Say you are a Grade 12 teacher, some two years or five years ago then we appoint another one just for this year and then you are free to assist; so the teacher always comes to the HOD concerned for any information because that information should have been obtained from the teacher because you were just there from the previous year (Mr Smarth).*

Some teachers still wanted to work in isolation rather than as a group or a team. Other teacher did not want to do what others were doing. What the teacher said corroborates what the principal and the HOD have said. Teacher from BSS said the following:

*There are challenges in working together.... there will always be a challenge in working together because some people don't like working individually rather they will work in a group. That is when then other people don't want to adhere to whatever the group is doing (Mr Chippa).*

Similar barriers also emerged from the interview with the participants in MSS. Data generated revealed that some teachers seemed to isolate themselves from the others. They did not want to work as a team. Mr Xaba, principal of MSS made the following comment in this regard:

*There are many challenges with regard to collaborative work among teachers; some teachers do not want to cooperate. Some teachers still do not want to work as a team; even after 20 years of democracy we as teachers still want to work as individuals (Mr Xaba).*

Mrs Buthelezi said that since teachers come from different background, some are uncontrollable. She observed that some of those teachers did not want to follow what is done in a team and as a result they have a tendency of dictating to others. These barriers were common to both schools. The following is an extract from the HOD, Mrs Buthelezi:

*We come from different families, from different backgrounds; so those are the reasons for challenges we are experiencing. For example, if you will find that a person is uncontrollable and you will find that some of such personalities like to dictate to others as well. They don't want to follow orders, at the same time; they simple don't want to suggest anything (Mrs Buthelezi).*

#### **4.7.2 Lack of time**

Lack of time for collaborative learning to happen emerged from the interview with all the participants in MSS. Teachers claimed that they did not have enough time besides teaching time to do other things. Because of that lack of time, teachers resorted to utilised morning and after school time to do collaborative activities. Time constraints were found to have a negative impact on the teachers' work. The principal of MSS emphasises this in the following extract:

*There is not too much time because we have got to be in class. Especially at high schools there are morning classes and afternoon classes that take place after the school's prescribed time. So, there is very little time (Mr Xaba).*

Some of the teachers did not even prepare their work effectively. As a result of this, they ended up not meeting the deadlines for the submission of work. The reason they cited was that they



were committed to other things which were not related to their school work. The extract from Mr Buthelezi's interview bears testimony to this:

*The time factor is the biggest problem that we are facing. Some of the teachers do not have time to prepare their work well. Some of the teachers fail to honour the dead lines also because of their commitments to different things out there (Mrs Buthelezi).*

The above extract suggests that, in fact, the so called lack of time may be an excuse by the teachers who are not committed to doing their work effectively. This scenario therefore, comes up as a constraint. DuFour (2011) states despite the imperative impact of collaborative learning in teachers' practice some of them do not cooperate but prefer to work in isolation. Skytt (2004) advises that teachers need time to discuss teaching. He further says they time for learning and professional practice to make changes to support student learning. Lack of time is also highlighted by Sargent and Hannum (2009). Time factor seems to be the generic barrier in all participating school.

Data indicated pointed to the teachers' reluctance to cooperate with school management and also with other colleagues. Time was also regarded as one of the key barriers of teacher collaborative learning. Factors such as time for teacher collaboration are some of the most important ingredient for teacher collaborative learning (Hord, 1997). Data indicated that teachers from participating school did not have enough time for collaboration. Hord (1997) advises that time is an important factor that support PLCs. It is unfortunate that time can be a barrier as it happened in participating schools.

#### **4.8 Strategies to overcome barriers towards promoting collaborative learning**

The data indicates that many school principals and other categories of participants such as teachers had different views about strategies that can be used to deal with the barriers to collaborative learning. It was revealed that some teachers did not cooperate with others despite obvious benefits for doing so. The school principals from both schools used to ask teachers to mention problems they faced. Working closely with the teachers was viewed as the most

effective strategies to deal with barriers to collaborative learning. This is what Mr King, the principal of BSS, had to say on this regard:

*As I have said before, it is the teacher that needs contact with the other teachers. I normally call the teacher to my office and I have the direct contact with the teacher or I can call it a face-to-face contact so that I can get to know his or her problem in working with the others (Mr King, principal of BSS).*

Chippa, a teacher from BSS concurred with Mr King, the principal of BSS that the principal used to encourage teachers to talk to the principal if they experience any problem. During such discussions, teachers are made to understand the importance of collaborative learning. To this end, Mr Chippa had this to say:

*He always tries to encourage those people to talk to them. May be to emphasise the importance of collaborative learning and to encourage them to work with the group (Mr Chippa, teacher from BSS).*

The generated data indicates that the strategy used to encourage the teachers to cooperate was similar from both participating school principals. Like Mr King, the principal of BSS, Mr Xaba, the principal of Mutton Secondary School (MSS) used to sit down and ask his teaching staff about their problems which invariably related to teaching and learning issues. This view was supported by the HOD from MSS who said the following:

*Normally the principal used to sit down with the teachers and talk to them and find out actually what is the basic problem there behind the challenge. What is the basic problem that causes the problem or challenge that we see (Mrs Buthelezi, HOD from MSS).*

As previously mentioned, teachers at BSS share some classes especially in Grade 12. By so doing they are encouraged to work as a team. If teachers share classes they are able to meet together to discuss subjects related problems. This is what the participant had to say:

*...that is why we decided that people must share classes, especially the senior classes because that is where you will learn to work together because when you set up your task you don't set for instance, Grade 11A only, but she also sets the task for Grade 11 B as*

*well if you teach the same subject. You have to sit together and decide on the same task that is where they would start to work together (Mr Smarth, HOD from BSS).*

The above discussion indicates that principals of both schools tried to encourage teamwork among the teachers as a strategy to foster collaborative learning and mitigate the challenges of isolation tendencies among some teachers.

Another barrier that was identified is the lack of time to engage in more collaboration. Despite this, some teachers were able to use the little time they have at their disposal to their benefit. For instance, at MSS, it was found that teachers also use afternoon time to work on their collaborative work. The school principal emphasised that there was no sufficient time to dedicate to collaborative learning support as he had to spend time in class teaching. To this end, this is what Mr Xaba had to say:

*The little time that they get they use it profitably. This is what we make sure of, but there is not too much time because we have got to be in class. Especially at high schools there are morning classes, afternoon classes. So, there is very little time to do anything else (Mr Xaba, principal of MSS).*

Such views were corroborated by Mrs Bush, a teacher from MSS. This is what she had to say:

*We don't get enough time, but we try and make time for instance we use our break time or we use our own time that is after school so meet and discuss key issues about our respective subjects (Mrs Bush, a teacher from MSS).*

Time constraint seems to be a problem in MSS. The school principal sometimes tried to reduce periods during the working day so that teachers can meet and discuss critical areas of their subjects and learn from one another. In this way, teachers in these schools are able to mitigate the challenges posed by time constraints. During such collaboration time they do joint lesson preparations and also devise some strategies. Their work is recorded and such records serve as evidence of what transpired in the meetings. This is what Mrs Buthelezi, an HOD had to say:

*The principal tries sometimes to even reduce even the periods during the day in order to find enough time in order for teachers to organise themselves; do their work and do their lesson preparations together and also record their work (Mrs Buthelezi).*

Jones et al. (2013) highlight the issue of having a strategy to deal with time constraints in order for teacher collaborative learning to occur. These scholars argue that teachers can do collaborative work after teaching hours when they are pressed for time. Jones et al. (2013) suggest that principals should provide time for teacher collaborative learning during the working day. If teachers collaborate during the working hours they are energetic and they can work (Jones, et al., 2013). This suggests that, for teacher collaborative learning to be effective, school principals should try to arrange time during the working hours.

#### **4.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided a detailed presentation and discussion of the data that was generated from semi-structured interviews and documents review. The presentation was organised under 8 themes that emerged after the qualitative content analysis. The next chapter focuses on findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented and discussed the data that was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews and documents review. This chapter presents the study summary, the findings and recommendations that are drawn from the findings. In presenting the key findings from the themes that were discussed in Chapter Four, the research questions are utilised. Therefore, the chapter begins by discussing the study summary. This is followed by the restatement of research questions and this is followed by the presentation of findings which are presented under the research questions which are used as subheadings. This is followed by the discussion of recommendations. The chapter is brought to the end by presenting chapter summary.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

The study investigated the role of school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning among the teachers. The study was conducted in two secondary schools with principals who completed ACE: SL programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The first chapter was an orientation to the study and presented key elements of the research process. These are the problem statement, background of the study, rationale of the study, research questions. It also outlined the research design and the methodology of the study. The second chapter presented a detailed discussion of the review of related literature as well as the theories that framed the study. The third chapter presented a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that was employed to generate data from the two participating secondary schools. The fourth chapter presents and discusses the data which emerged from the two methods used. The last chapter summarises the study and presents the findings. It closes with the discussion of the study recommendations that were drawn from the findings as well as the chapter summary.

### **5.3 Presentation of findings**

The following section presents the findings emerged from the two methods of generating data that were discussed in Chapter Four. Research questions were used to organise the presentation of the findings. These research questions are the following (a) What is the role of principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning (b) How have the school principals who completed ACESL programme succeeded or not succeeded in promoting teacher collaborative learning (c) What are the barriers in promoting teacher collaborative learning.

#### **5.3.1 What do school principals who completed ACE School Leadership programme do to promote teacher collaborative learning in their schools?**

The research findings presented below respond to the research question which aims at exploring the role of school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning. The findings seem to indicate that first, the school principals understood collaborative learning as a process whereby teachers help one another to solve problems attached to teaching and learning. It was found that the role of school principals in promoting teacher collaborative learning was very important in improving learner achievement. They promoted collaborative learning among the teachers by mobilising them to work as teams. They also extended collaborative learning to other stakeholders in the school. It was also noted that stakeholders such as SMTs, SGBs, teachers and learners were considered as part of collaborative learning. All teachers participated in the study associated collaborative learning to the learners whereby they help each other during the learning process.

The principals' role was found to be important in promoting collaborative learning. The research findings seem to suggest that through the HODs the school principals promote collaborative learning among teachers. One of the participating school principals indicated that he used to encourage teachers to meet with their respective HODs. The intention was to ensure that subject related problems were resolved collectively. More details about how this was done can be found in Section 4.4 of Chapter Four. In addition, principals also promote collaborative learning by consulting with other teaching staff. School principals in the study used to encourage teachers to

work together and they emphasised that teachers should meet according to the subjects they teach. It was also found from the minutes of the staff meeting that school principals encouraged teachers to continue with the good work and they must work as a team.

The research findings also indicated that there was a number of different ways in which the participating school principals promote collaborative learning among teachers. All participants mentioned that principals promoted collaborative learning through workshops. This was done by encouraging teachers who attended workshop to report back and discuss what they have learnt from workshop with those who did not attend. Another way of promoting collaboration was to encourage HODs and teachers to go to the workshop together. This was to ensure that the information that the teacher obtained from the workshops can be shared with the HODs. From both participating schools, it was found that principals promoted collaborative learning through the services of subject advisors. Principals used to invite subjects advisors to meet with teachers concerning the subjects they teach. When the subject advisors come to the schools, they meet with teachers and discuss problems relating to teaching and learning.

Besides the use of subject advisors, school principals also invited other teachers from other schools to help teachers if there are subject related problems and that they experienced difficulties in addressing. The findings from the interview also revealed that the school principal encouraged collaboration among teachers in staff meetings. In addition, the findings suggested that principals also organised teacher development sessions and also through networking strategy as a way of promoting teacher collaborative learning. The SMT minutes of the meeting from one of the two participating schools revealed that the school principal prioritises collaborative learning for teachers to develop each other. The detailed discussion of these issues can be found in Section 4.5.9 of Chapter Four.

Participating school principals promoted collaborative learning in different ways. Research findings indicate that school principals established a number of different teams to promote teacher collaborative learning. These teams included departmental teams, subject teams, grade-level teams and subjects-sharing teams. These teams were found to be beneficial in participating

schools. Principals encouraged teachers to meet in their departments every week. This was to ensure that teachers discuss their work weekly. But more details are found in Section 4.6.1 of Chapter Four.

### **5.3.2 How have school principals who completed ACE: SL programme succeeded or not succeeded in promoting collaborative learning among their teaching staff?**

Research findings have shown that participating principals succeeded in promoting teacher collaborative learning. Among other things was the fact that teacher collaborative learning contributed in curbing teacher absenteeism and late coming. There were teachers who were used to absent themselves from school due to inadequacy that they felt when dealing with new challenges posed by the curriculum reforms. However, due to a number of professional development sessions and collaborations with other teachers, such teachers were no longer absenting themselves as they previously did. The findings suggest that the teachers had changed and came to school on time and had their lessons preparations done. All this is ascribed to collaborative work that they were involved in. For more details on these issues; please refer to Section 4.7.1 of Chapter Four.

Collaborative learning among teachers resulted in the improvement of teacher performance. Findings suggested that ACE: SL equipped participating school principals to be able to promote collaborative learning among teaching staff. Collaborative learning in participating schools yielded some fruits. Teachers were found to be performing better than before. All participating principals mentioned that Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results had improved due mainly to teacher collaborative learning. More details in this regard are found in Section 4.7.2 of Chapter Four.

Findings also revealed that through collaborative learning, teacher morale and commitment improved. It was found that working as a team helped teachers to improve their morale and commitment to their work. Teachers were found to be able to address their problems collaboratively. Some of the teachers interviewed highlighted that they contributed new knowledge they solicited elsewhere to the members of the team. Teachers are also able to



address challenges brought by new curriculum. It was stated that working as a team teachers are able to cover their weaknesses. Other participants indicated that teachers have to research about what they will be learning during collaborative learning. This is discussed at length in Section 4.7.3 of Chapter Four.

### **5.3.3 What are the barriers the school principals may experience when promoting collaborative learning within their schools?**

The findings showed that there were two major barriers to teacher collaborative learning. The first was the teachers' reluctance to cooperate with the others and the second was the lack of time. These were found to be the major barriers that emerged from the interviews with the participants. Despite the fact that there were structures that had been established by school principals in participating schools, but it was found that some teachers do not cooperate. While it was noted that teacher collaborative learning had contributed to the curbing of teacher absenteeism and the improvement of teacher morale and commitment, some teachers did not cooperate. These teachers still did not want to share their subject related problems with their colleagues. Others seemed to believe in working in isolation. For a detailed discussion on these issues, please read Section 4.8.1 of Chapter Four.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

Recommendations made in the study are directed at school principals and researchers. These are discussed separately in the following paragraphs. The research findings highlighted that school principals in participating schools are facing some barriers in promoting collaborative learning. Even though there are structures that have been established to promote collaborative work, but some teachers still did not want to cooperate. Others still believed in working in isolation. It is therefore recommended that school principals should strengthen their efforts in ensuring that teachers work together. One of the ways in which this can be done is by working tirelessly in ensuring that the school vision becomes the main focus; they need to mobilise the teaching staff around a common vision for the future of the school. In addition, given the fact that collaborative

learning has been seen to be bearing fruits, principals need to make teachers to understand the importance of collaborative work and collaborative learning.

The studies on teacher collaborative learning are minimal. Studies are very few that have been conducted in South African context around the phenomenon of teacher collaborative learning. Since the findings have revealed a number of barriers to teacher collaborative learning, Researchers community needs to know what actually causes these barriers despite evident positive benefits to collaboration. This study focused on how school principals promote collaborative learning. However, we still need to obtain insights about how the barriers can be eliminated.

## **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented the findings emerged from the emerging issues in Chapter Four. The findings were organised according to the research questions that guided the study. In that way, it was easier to assess the extent to which the research questions were adequately addressed. Before the findings were discussed, the study summary was presented. Drawing from the findings, recommendations were made.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Letter to request permission from gatekeepers

P.O. Box 201  
Port Shepstone  
4240  
17-02-2014

The Principal

Dear sir/madam

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

I am Sithembele Ndovela and I am conducting a research as a requirement of the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards my Master of Education degree. The title of the research study is “an exploration of the principals role in promoting collaborative learning among teachers”.

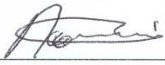
I therefore request your permission to conduct this study in your school. Since the study’s focus is on understanding the principals’ role in promoting collaborative learning among teachers, it will be highly appreciated if you would agree to personally participate in this study. Should you agree to participate, we will hold interviews at the date and time that is convenient to you, and will last for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Care will be taken that no disruption is caused during such interviews. Please be informed that your participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. In addition, you are assured that personal details of the school, other participants in the study and that of your school will be kept confidential. Your identity, the other participants and that of your school will never be disclosed to anyone.

For more information, you may use the following details:

- Sithembele Ndovela Cell No.: 0836651607; email: [sithembelendovela@gmail.com](mailto:sithembelendovela@gmail.com)
- My supervisor: Dr TT Bhengu: Tel No.: (031) 260 3534; Fax: (031) 260 1598; Email: [bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za) or
- Officials in our research office: Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). Tel No: (031) 260 3587; email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Thanking you in advance.

Yours in education



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MR S.G. Ndovela



**Appendix B: Permission letter from gatekeepers**

P.C.

27-02-2014

Mr. SG Ndovela  
P.O. Box 201  
Port Shepstone  
4240

Dear sir/madam

**Re: Permission for conducting a research in my school**

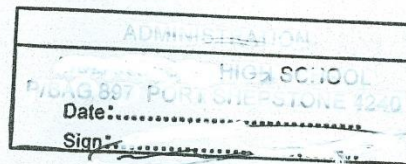
Your letter requesting permission to conduct research in our school has a reference. Permission is hereby granted on the condition that it will not disturb our teaching and learning programme. I fully understand the nature of your study as you explained to me and understand the contents of your letter. I agree to my school's participation in the study. Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is acknowledged and appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well and success in your studies.

Thank you

Yours in education

Signature. \_\_\_\_\_



27-02-2014

Mr. SG Ndovela

P.O. Box 201

Port Shepstone

4240

Dear sir/madam

**Re: Permission for conducting a research in my school**

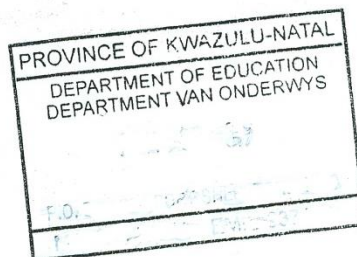
Your letter requesting permission to conduct research in our school has a reference. Permission is hereby granted on the condition that it will not disturb our teaching and learning programme. I fully understand the nature of your study as you explained to me and understand the contents of your letter. I agree to my school's participation in the study. Your assurance of confidentiality and anonymity is acknowledged and appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well and success in your studies.

Thank you

Yours in education

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_





**Informed consent**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter, fully and I do/ do not consent to have this interview recorded and participate in the study by S.G. Ndovela entitled: **An exploration of the principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning**. I am also fully aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time I wish to do so, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Date

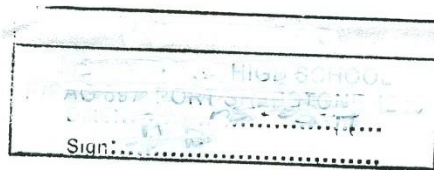
ADMINISTRATION
_____ HIGH SCHOOL
P/BA 3892 PONT SHEPSTONE 4240
Date: .....
Signature: .....

**Informed consent**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this letter, fully and I do/ do not consent to have this interview recorded and participate in the study by S.G. Ndovela entitled: **An exploration of the principals' role in promoting teacher collaborative learning.** I am also fully aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time I wish to do so, without any negative or undesirable consequences. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Informed consent**

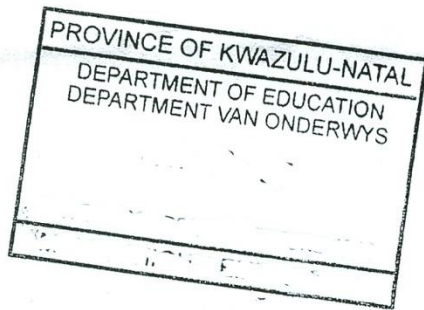
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\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date





**Informed consent**

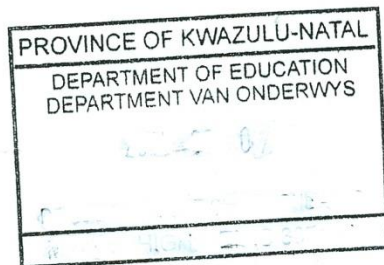
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\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Date







**Informed consent**

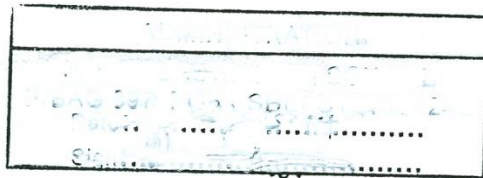
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\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date



## **Appendix D: Interview guide for principals**

### **Principals' role in promoting collaborative learning**

What do you understand by the term 'collaborative learning'?

Tell me, how do you professionally develop your staff within the school to improve teaching and learning?

How do you encourage teachers to meet on a regular basis to reflect on their practice?

### **Successes**

Having completed ACESL programme, are there any changes in teachers practice as a result of collaborative learning?

To what extent has teachers' morale and commitment increased as a result of participation in collaborative learning?

After completing ACESL, have you established teams and groups that promote teacher collaborative learning?

### **Barriers**

Are there any challenges have you faced in promoting teacher collaborative learning? Please elaborate

## **Appendix E: Interview guide for HODs**

### **Principals' role in promoting collaborative learning**

What do you understand by the term 'collaborative learning'?

Tell me, how does the school principal professionally develop teaching staff to improve teaching and learning?

How does the school principal encourage teachers to meet on a regular basis to reflect on their practice?

#### **Successes**

Having participated in collaborative learning, have you observe any changes in your teaching practice? Please elaborate

To what extent has teachers' morale and commitment increased as a result of participation in collaborative learning?

Are there teams and groups that were established to promote teacher collaborative learning?  
Please elaborate

#### **Barriers**

Are there any challenges have you faced when you are working together? Please elaborate

## **Appendix F: Interview guide for teachers**

### **Principals' role in promoting collaborative learning**

What do you understand by the term 'collaborative learning'?

Tell me, how does the school principal professionally develop teaching staff to improve teaching and learning?

How does the school principal encourage teachers to meet on a regular basis to reflect on their practice?

#### **Successes**

Having participated in collaborative learning, have you observe any changes in teachers' teaching practice? Please elaborate

To what extent has teachers' morale and commitment increased as a result of participating in collaborative learning?

Are there teams and groups that were established to promote teacher collaborative learning?  
Please elaborate

#### **Barriers**

Are there any challenges have you faced when you are working together? Please elaborate

# APPENDIX G: Turn it in certificate

The screenshot displays a Turnitin submission interface within an Internet Explorer browser. The address bar shows the URL: <http://learning.ukzn.ac.za/mod/turnitintool/view.php?id=179866&user=54928&do=allsubmissions>. The browser tab is titled "2014 EDMN815E1 Theo & Method...". The page header includes "Turnitin Assignment - Part 1 (Moodle 25...)", a "Roadmap" icon, and "Paper 4 of 15".

The main interface features a navigation bar with "Originality", "GradeMark", and "PeerMark" tabs. The document title is "Edited Cleaned document" by "SITHEMBELE NDOVELA". The Turnitin logo and a similarity score of "8%" (SIMILAR) are displayed, along with "OUT OF 100".

The document content is visible on the left, showing "CHAPTER ONE" and "AN ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY". The "1.1 Introduction" section contains text with several highlighted phrases: "school principals are instructional leaders", "the core purpose of the school is teaching and learning", "collaborative learning has been identified in the literature (Sources)", and "collaborative learning".

On the right, a "Match Overview" sidebar lists seven matches, all with a similarity of "<1%":

- 1 Submitted to University... Student paper <1%
- 2 A. W. Dodd. "How Pare... Publication <1%
- 3 philphallinger.com Internet source <1%
- 4 Rebecca Duncombe. "... Publication <1%
- 5 repository.upenn.edu Internet source <1%
- 6 Submitted to Northcentral Student paper <1%
- 7 Submitted to Grand Ca... Student paper <1%

The bottom of the interface shows a taskbar with various application icons and a system tray displaying the time "22:26" and date "09/11/2014".