

# ***TO LEAD OR NOT TO LEAD***

## ***PRINCIPALS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN A CLIMATE OF SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION***

**Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for a Doctoral Degree in  
Education in the School of Educational Studies, Faculty of Humanities at the  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.**

**Promoter: Dr P Ramrathan**

**2006**

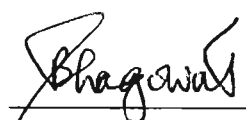
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## DECLARATION

I, L Bhagawat do solemnly declare that this dissertation is my original work and that the views of the experts in my field of research have all been duly acknowledged and listed in the bibliography.

This research report has not been previously submitted for a degree at another institution.



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this book to:

- ❖ my dad Freddy Pillay and late mum Varnie Pillay who inculcated in me a love for books and learning;
- ❖ my husband Roy who walked beside me through all my tertiary learning;
- ❖ my son Rishan and daughters Marisha and Alisha for showing me new ways of learning.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This work has been a challenging journey of learning interspersed with moments of pleasure and pain, but a journey come to fruition with the support of the following individuals who possess an immense ability to care.

It is my distinct pleasure to acknowledge their contributions to the completion of my dissertation.

- ❖ My husband Roy, for lovingly edging me on, constantly critiquing my conceptions of leadership and being my personal computer specialist
- ❖ My dad Freddy Pillay, for his love, patience and support of not only me, but my children
- ❖ My awesome children, Rishan, Marisha and Alisha for their love, understanding and inspirational force
- ❖ My respondents, especially the life history participants - Tina (pilot study), Thembi, Farouk and Joppie - for granting me the privilege of sharing their life histories
- ❖ Lecturers in the School of Educational Studies for their views and reviews
- ❖ Colleagues in the D Ed team for their caring and sharing
- ❖ Foreign editor of SABC, Charmeela Bhagowat for finding time from her whirlwind of activities to edit my work, with such meticulousness
- ❖ Members of the Spencer Foundation for awarding me a Fellowship
- ❖ Human Sciences librarian, Pravina for coming to my rescue in the library during my dark hours
- ❖ School of Education Studies administrator, Juliet for being a wonderful mediator between my promoter and me
- ❖ My promoter Dr P Ramrathan, for his professional and personal support, his commitment to excellence and advancement, and his capacity for action and interaction

## *ABSTRACT*

This dissertation assumed the style of the narrative to document how principals lead school transformation within the realm of a fledgling democracy after decades of apartheid rule. It zooms in to the school site to portray how principals construct themselves to orchestrate change that is consistent with the national policies of redress and equity. Located in the quantitative paradigm, the study depicts a general sense of school transformation. Thereafter, it is relocated in the qualitative paradigm to document the topical life histories of three principals from diverse backgrounds to illustrate how their experiences - lived and living - give definition to their constructions of leadership.

Working within the interpretative paradigm, with the theory of transformational leadership underpinning the theoretical orientation of the study, has led to the understanding that the role of the principal is a conflicted one. The principal is conflicted by the incremental demands and the evolutionary nature of the role, the principal's interpretation of transformation and his/her expectation to manage and lead transformation. As a result, principals construct themselves mainly as managers of change, but perceive themselves to be leaders of change. While leadership gurus are adamant about attributing distinguishing features to the process of managing as opposed to the process of leading, they also recognize that organizations need both managers and leaders.

It is undisputable that schools are organizations that also need managers and leaders. Therefore, it is incumbent on principals to manage and lead schools in transformation. In analyzing the data collated from principals and teachers in the study, it is evident that the processes of management and leadership are interdependent. Principals are expected to act as managers or leaders, depending on the situation, and at other times they are expected to draw on both skills of managing and leading. In the final analysis, it has been detected that while principals are leading transformation at different tempos because of their varied lived experiences, the important thing is that they are beginning to break the

bonds with apartheid education. A colossal task indeed, when one considers that the findings of the investigation illustrate that principals are charged with the following conflict situations. The past oppressive system with the present democratic system, decentralization of education while maintaining core elements of centralization, stakeholders that support transformation as opposed to those who resist the process and the roles of management versus roles of leadership. While implementing change the principal is responsible for ensuring the stability of the institution. All the time dealing with the fact that she/he hails from a background that is vastly different from the one she/he currently works and lives in.

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**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

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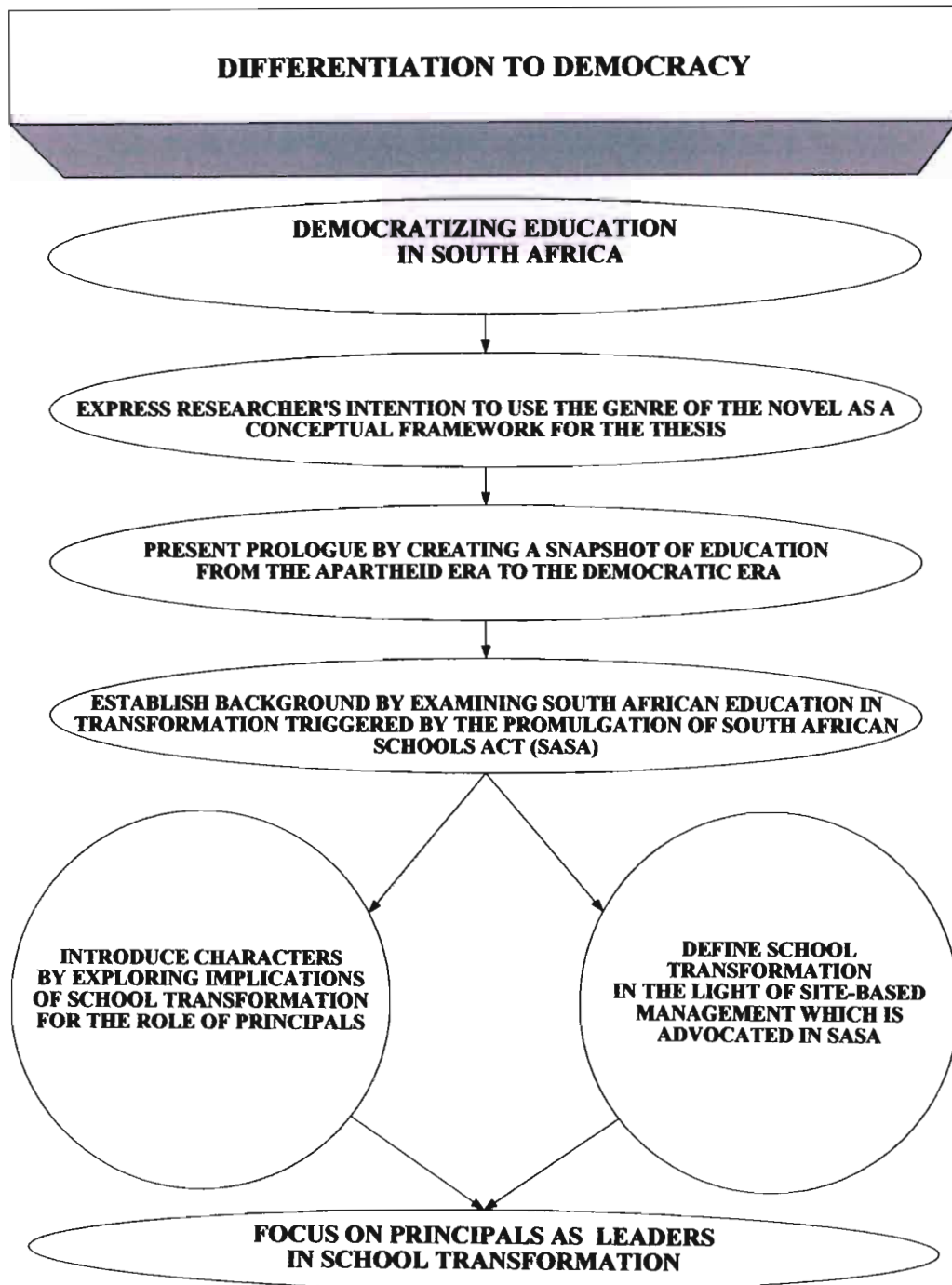
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**CHAPTER ONE**

**DIFFERENTIATION TO DEMOCRACY**

**FIGURE 1: MIND-MAP OF CHAPTER ONE**



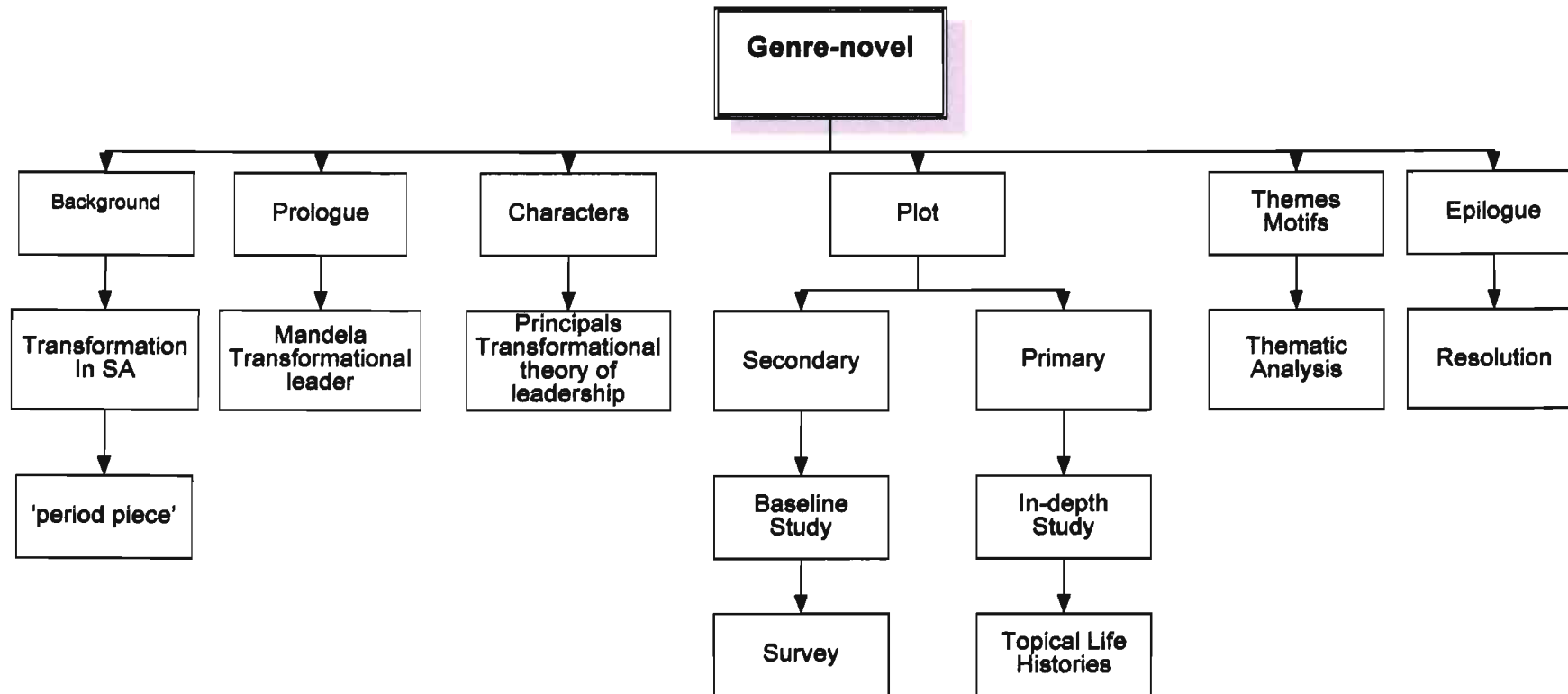
### **Foreword**

To engage in research means traversing new territory, but it is what the journey uncovers and the impact it has on the understanding of some aspect of life that is intriguing. So there I was, having to decide the intricacies of my investigation which aimed at principals as leaders in school transformation. The initial step was to establish a plan of action while observing the benchmarks of research; in other words the introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis and finally the conclusion, which receive ample attention in their respective chapters. At this stage I illuminate the plan of action which allowed the report to assume its style, structure and pattern.

Since the topic of my investigation is current in that it has a direct bearing on transformation at the school, the aim was to make this work accessible to readers, especially school principals. Without detracting from conventions of research writing, I took my inspiration from the genre of the novel to tell the story of my investigation which was predominantly qualitative in nature. According to Wolcott (1994), qualitative researchers need to write stories that are able to engage others. Furthermore, my position as a teacher of English for several years injected my enthusiasm for exploring narratives (literary works of art) to compile my research report.

During periods of surveying the literature, conducting my research and discovering various layers of analysis, the techniques of narrative writing - the background, setting, prologue, characters, plot, themes and motifs, and finally the epilogue came to fruition. These stylistic devices of the narrative with specific reference to the report have been illustrated in **Figure 1.1: Diagrammatic Representation Of The Story Of Principals As Leaders In Transformation.**

The classic pattern of narrative writing, which involves some sort of conflict which reaches a climax before reaching some kind of resolution, became discernible as my story took shape. These critical phases which are characteristic of works of fiction have been experimented with in the course of writing my research report.



**FIGURE 1.1: DIAGRAMMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE STORY OF PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS IN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION**



## **Prologue**

Nineteen forty seven. South African President H F Verwoerd declares the country under apartheid rule. The people are divided, the minority is promoted to supremacy and the majority is relegated to the dumps. Various laws and policies determine that the different races live separate lives.

Tragically, this separation infiltrates the field of education, creating inequalities in the delivery and provision of education. "Own affairs" departments of education are structured under the White, Indian and Coloured chambers of the Tricameral Parliament, with African education under the Department of Education and Training (DET). A further 10 homeland departments (National Education Co-ordinating Committee, 1993) exist. Subsequently masses of children receive inferior education while the privileged few enjoy quality education. Opposition parties revolt against the inhumanity and humiliation of apartheid rule. The country plunges into a kind of civil war. Even children take to the streets, dying in the name of freedom.

February 2, 1990. A visionary leader is released from prison and after a prolonged struggle for liberation a new South Africa is born. Nelson Mandela truly epitomizes transformational leadership. This gives momentum to a proliferation of legislation and policy to address the injustices of the past which hamper the revamping of the education system.

To create a focus, let's turn to the cornerstone of South African education, the South African Schools Act of 1996. The Act promulgates decentralization in education, according management and governance to be enacted at the school site. What does this mean for the school principal? Well she/he is primarily tasked with transforming the school to meet the education needs of the children of our country. The study intends to explore how the principal constructs herself/himself in this rather daunting role.

## **Background**

### **1.1 A GLIMPSE OF TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION**

Paradoxically, change is a constant in our lives. It is a global phenomenon that infiltrates all fields and entertains no boundaries. This is evident in the transformation taking South African education by storm, since the first democratic election just over a decade ago. To focus on the basis of such radical change, I embarked on a largely qualitative study to explore how the role of leadership is critical to the transformation process within schools. It can be argued that leadership exists at other levels of the institution, but for the purpose of this study the unit of analysis will be the principal, who remains the central figure in most schools.

South African education is currently in transformation, triggered by the 1994 democratic election and at the school site the principal lies at the hub of transformation. She/he is tasked with interpreting and implementing the glut of legislation and policies handed down from the national and provincial departments of education. Examples of such policies are the South African Schools Act 1996 (SASA), Curriculum 2005 (C2005), the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and Whole School Development (WSD), which are all supposedly designed to combat the inequalities of apartheid education and create quality education for the learners of our country. Consequently our schools have become sites for change.

SASA, the cornerstone of South African education, imposes a host of new responsibilities on the principal. The devolution of power to schools has led to the principal gaining more power over finances and resources, thus increasing her/his administrative functions. Our schools are advised to become self-reliant and the onus is on the principal to design the path to self-reliance. In the majority of our schools the principals are also contending with issues such as budgetary constraints, threats to school security, huge classes, insufficient human and material resources and resistance to change. The question is: how are principals responding to this rapid transformation and the sudden onslaught of challenges?

South African schools are beginning to grasp a sense of what Fullan (2000: 157) presents as a scenario prevalent in schools:

The walls of the school have come tumbling down, metaphorically speaking. "Out there" is now "in here" as government policy, parent and community demands, corporate interests, and ubiquitous technology have all stormed the walls of the school. The relentless pressures of today's complex environments have intensified overload.

Contextual factors indicate that while all schools present certain similar situations, they do present significant differences. According to the School Register of Needs Survey (Department of Education, 2000), South Africa has a diversity of schools ranging from the well resourced to the under resourced, each with its own diversity in terms of culture, demographics, language, staffing and community. Whatever the condition at the site, the principal is expected to work in partnership with all stakeholders to lead and manage change in the institution. But are principals including stakeholders? If they are, one needs to question the extent and terms of the involvement. How the principal perceives her/his role and acts upon such perceptions will determine the effective transformation of the school. It is clear that the role of the principal, as an agent of transformation is a significant one that warrants investigation.

It therefore becomes a point of contention that educators in South Africa qualify to become principals based on a M+3<sup>1</sup> qualification (REQV 13)<sup>2</sup>, after serving a minimum of five years in the profession for a level 3<sup>3</sup> post and a minimum of seven years for a level 4<sup>4</sup> post (HRM Circulars No 9 of 2003; No 105 of 2004 & No 55 of 2005).

The Personnel Administration Measures (PAM), South African Council for Educators (SACE), Educators Employment Act (EEC) and Skills Development Act (SDA) profiles duties and responsibilities of the principal. The onus then lies on the principal

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<sup>1</sup> M+3 is a teaching qualification earned at the end of three years of study

<sup>2</sup> REQV: Relevant Education Qualification Value, a structure used by the Department of Education to categorize post matric qualifications

<sup>3</sup> level 3 : Principalship in a school with a minimum learner population of 719 (primary school) and 629 (secondary school)

<sup>4</sup> level 4 : Principalship in a school with a minimum learner population of 720 (primary school) and 630 (secondary school)

to acquire the necessary skills and competencies to fulfill her/his function. But countries like the United States, Australia and United Kingdom have established criteria, key roles and mandatory qualifications respectively for leadership positions in education. All these prerequisites have considered change leadership and management to be a crucial aspect of leadership and management. For example, Education Queensland has developed the Standards Framework for Leaders model which is based on six key roles:

1. Leadership in Education
2. Management
3. People and Partnerships
4. Change
5. Outcomes
6. Accountability

It is important to study the principal and gain insight as to what she/he actually does in the organization. To understand educational leadership, cognizance must be taken of the bureaucratic context and the power struggles inherent in the organization. "For although leaders deal directly with individuals, ultimately it is organizations - that is, group traditions, established relationships and vested interested groups - which are their main concern" (Rao, 1996: 204). It is assumed that all principals have the competencies to lead and manage schools in this age of transformation, irrespective of school contexts. But there is a need to look more closely at the manner in which the principal functions and how she/he is leading change.

Are principals drawing from their backgrounds, experiences, ideologies, role models, intuition, influence, personal working theories and training programmes? This study which explores how principals draw from their backgrounds and experiences both personally and professionally could facilitate the:

- (i) designing of programmes that will capacitate and support principals to lead school transformation effectively
- (ii) development of leadership centres
- (iii) reviewing of criteria for promotion to the principalship
- (iv) contribution to this knowledge domain.

Presenting profiles of principals engaged in school transformation may provide a reference point for reflection as fellow principals lead and manage their schools. And importantly, the implementation of school reformation policy would be under the microscope, creating opportunities for evaluation and review if necessary.

After examining various studies on the role of the principal in change efforts, Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991: 145) contend: "The role is not as straightforward as we are led to believe in statements constantly referring to principals as the key to change. But the principal is central, especially to changes in the culture of the school."

## **1.2 WHAT SIGNIFIES TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION**

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word transformation as follows: changing the form or appearance or character of a person or thing.

For my working definition of transformation within the context of this study, I take my cue from Caldwell (2003: 2) who explains:

- Transformation means change that is significant, systematic and sustained.
- Transformation means that the school of the future will look quite unlike the school of the present.
- The transformation of schools means the transformation of the teaching profession.
- If the profession is transformed then the role of those who exercise leadership will be transformed.

When Caldwell elucidated on school transformation he was referring to transformation efforts mainly in the context of the English and Australian schooling systems, whose decentralization has been evolving over the last three decades. But I would like to contextualize his definition of transformation to the South African schooling system in terms of:

- changing from the segregated education of the past apartheid system to a

unified system of education within a democratic system

- the decentralization of education to the school site, impacting on governance, management and administration over the last decade

To localize the definition even further, my study zooms in on the efforts at the school site to provide education for learners irrespective of race and other discriminatory factors, and again the extent to which schools are practicing site-based management (SBM), both of which are advocated in the South African Schools Act.

While the general purpose of site-based management is to devolve more power, authority, and accountability to the school with the intention of increasing school autonomy and improving the quality of decision making, it assumes different connotations in different countries. Within the South African context decision making is shared with teachers and sometimes parents, learners (in secondary schools) and the school community. SBM is designed to engage those closest to the action in order to improve the quality of decision making. It involves the formation of school governing bodies, empowered by SASA to make governance related decisions.

Standard accounts of education reform tend to associate the transformation of South African schools with the South African Schools Act. The 1996 Act, the local version of the global trend towards decentralization, is sometimes thought of as ushering in a new age of community control of schools (Fleisch, 2002).

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of principals as leaders of transformation within the school.

### **1.4 CRITICAL QUESTIONS**

1.4.1 How do principals perceive their role as leaders in school transformation?

1.4.2 What leadership roles do principals perform as agents of school transformation?

### 1.4.3 How do principals construct themselves as leaders within school transformation?

## **1.5 RATIONALE**

The educational arena is inundated with policy initiatives to address the injustices of the apartheid education system. But are the objectives of such policies being realized to generate the desired transformation of schools?

Perhaps it is time to evaluate. At the moment the country is reflecting on its transition to democracy and various stories of triumph and tribulation are celebrated in the spirit of “10 years of democracy”. So is it not time to reflect on a few tales from the field of education? How does one proceed to tell these tales? A point of departure would be to inquire how principals perceive transformation, what needs they fulfill as agents of transformation and the challenges that these roles present. Since the prerequisites for being appointed to principalship do not include formal qualifications or ongoing training in education management and leadership, the study intends to explore how principals’ previous experiences, qualifications, ideologies and life histories pertaining to their schooling and tertiary level years, influence them to construct themselves as leaders of transformation in education.

Research on the role of the principalship gained momentum in the eighties, indicating the central role of the principal in school change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). But Dimmock & O’Donoghue (1997: 24) assert that, “In particular, there has been little research which has studied the relationships and connections between individual principals, and their approaches to managing school restructuring and change, and their personal backgrounds and life histories which might provide at least partial explanations for the connections.” Working from this premise, this study intends to focus on the role of the principal in the light of school transformation in the South African context.

Also, the major part of the literature prescribes what leadership and management should be, while the minority shifts to documenting it from the principal’s

perspective. Wolcott's (1973) ethnographic study of one elementary principal is a classic case that attempted to tell the story from the principal's point of view. A more recent study by Dimmock & O'Donoghue (1997) on the Life History Portraits of Successful Managers of Change, explores how one's life history experiences impact on the way one manages change at the school site. But research in South Africa is yet to make its mark on telling stories about the work and lives of principals and it is this area that I wish to traverse. I think it is a significant context considering the current theme in South African life: celebrating "10 years of democracy".

The study shall also shed light on the leadership skills and competencies required for the transformation of schools. The plan is to explore the theories of leadership and management that principals are drawing from to transform schools. Are they limiting themselves to their personal working theories or are they drawing from leadership theories such as the theory of transformational leadership (discussed in **Chapter 2: The Principals**) as defined by Bass (1985); Bass and Avolio (1994)? Why are some principals embracing transformation in education and others simply being overwhelmed by it? It is imperative that principals be empowered in the field of education management and leadership. The study shall provide an informed understanding of the prerequisites/criteria for successful principalship, which may decide the minimum training and qualification for those aspiring to the principalship. It would also give impetus to the much needed INSET (in service education and training) programmes for principals.

On a personal level, the study is going to empower me in my position as deputy principal of a secondary school which has embraced the spirit of transformation. The intensive and ongoing engagement with leadership and management issues, both past and cutting edge, has given me a clearer focus on my responsibilities as a deputy principal. Interacting with principals and teachers from diverse school contexts has been an empowering experience in itself - and in some ways an eye opener. Visiting schools ranging from the previously advantaged to the previously disadvantaged (in many cases the status quo remains) alerted me to the burgeoning differences that remain and others that are perpetuated.



Also, for every success story there is an infinite number of horror stories. Reflecting on my practice has allowed me to develop some critical perspectives on education management and leadership, which have enhanced my own performance as well those of my colleagues.

## **1.6 SYNOPSIS OF EACH CHAPTER**

### **1.6.1 Chapter One: Differentiation To Democracy**

The introductory chapter gives impetus to the narrative style of the report by indicating it is conceptually based on the genre of the novel. In the tradition of the novel it attempts to engage the reader by providing a foreword, prologue and background which capture the focus, purpose and rationale for the study. The foreword explains that the features of the report will be based on the development of the plot, character, theme, conflict and resolution. The prologue captures a snapshot of the transition from apartheid to democracy by saluting the father of South African transformation, Nelson Mandela. Finally the chapter sets the context which is the transformation of education initiated by the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, which in turn has far reaching consequences for principals (characters), who will be introduced in the next chapter.

### **1.6.2 Chapter Two: The Principals**

Chapter Two introduces the characters by clarifying the need to investigate the role of the principal, as a leader in school transformation. It traces the evolutionary nature of the principal's role, identifies the centrality of the principal's role within school reformation and restructuring and examines the theory of transformational leadership, as a framework to critique the role of the principal within school transformation. Thereafter, it discourses the dichotomy of the principal's role by focusing on management versus leadership. The chapter concludes by highlighting the moral crisis confronting principals, which is to ensure that schools are inclined to provide quality education to all its learners, a vision that can be realized by modelling the qualities espoused by transformational leadership theory.

### **1.6.3 Chapter Three: Designing A Methodology**

This chapter provides insight as to how the narrative unfolds. It backgrounds the secondary plot (baseline study) and then proceeds to foreground the primary plot (in-depth study). Thereafter, it details the data collection strategies employed to yield the rich data necessary to give form and shape to the setting and the characters. In the following stages, it brings to attention the challenges and concerns of the writer in gaining access into the field and to the characters. Finally, it tabulates the identities of the three main characters and sets the scene for an incomplete story within the story.

### **1.6.4 Chapter Four: Conflicting Views On Principals As Leaders**

By analyzing the baseline study, the broad strokes that signify schools as sites of transformation are painted. At the outset, three case studies showcase the varying extents to which principals engage in the process of school transformation. Attention is then drawn to features of the school and leadership practices (perceived and actual) to indicate that school transformation is occurring at different tempos in different schools and that there are conflicting views on principals as leaders. Findings of the study indicate that the principalship itself is conflict ridden: past oppressive system with the present democratic system; decentralization with centralization; stakeholders that support change with those that resist it and roles of management with roles of leadership.

### **1.6.5 Chapter Five: Topical Life Histories**

Chapter 5 gives impetus to the stories within the story by proceeding from the pilot study to the topical life histories. Each life history narrative is told from the perspective of a career trajectory, commencing in the early years of the participant's primary schooling. While each story is meant to stand on its own, the themes emanating from the three life histories are interwoven to identify common threads that have an impact on how principals engage the process of school transformation.

**1.6.6 Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions And Recommendations**

The final chapter reviews the major theme of conflict pervading the narrative with the express intention of reaching some kind of resolution. This is accomplished by highlighting the tremendous challenges confronting South African principals and by disclosing how principals are dealing with the often conflicting contexts in which they operate, as well as the often conflicting demands of their roles. To draw the narrative to a close, some recommendations are made to empower principals to face their challenges and to engage in a more rigorous process of selecting personnel for the principalship.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE PRINCIPALS**

#### **Characters**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the tradition of story telling I have established the *prologue* and *background* in the opening chapter, but all great stories have characters, so this chapter sets out to create the *characters*. I explore ways and means of infusing life and form to them by reviewing the literature on principals with a multi-focus lens to capture the following components:

- reconceptualization of the role
- development of the theory of transformational leadership
- research on the principalship
- the leadership management dichotomy

#### **2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

##### **2.2.1 Reconceptualizing the role of the principal**

Traditionally the role of the principal was encapsulated in the title headteacher or headmaster to mean the person responsible largely for the teaching and learning of learners. In addition to ensuring that the school environment was conducive to the delivery of education, the head nurtured contact at grassroots by being a classroom practitioner herself or himself. Marsh (1997), drawing from the work of Murphy (1992), described the principal as an instructional leader responsible for four aspects of schooling:

- defining the mission and setting goals
- facilitating teaching and learning
- promoting an academic learning climate
- developing strong culture

If the principal accomplished all of the above functions she/he would be successful. However, over the last two decades, such a principal would be considered inadequate in the face of global restructuring initiatives which have led to the changing school environment.

The role of the principal is characterized by dynamic tendencies internationally. Due to externally imposed legislation and other related demands, it has begun to evolve for over two decades in countries like Australia (initiated by the Karmel Report, 1973) and England and Wales (initiated by the Education Reform Act of 1988). The legislation in these countries advocated decentralization, resulting in the practice of site-based management which moved the emphasis from the principal as instructional leader to the emphasis on the principal as administrative manager. However, the continual implementation of school restructuring and reformation efforts demands a further reconfiguration of the principal's role: a matter which will be addressed at a later stage.

A similar trend has reached South Africa with the promulgation of the South African Schools Act of 1996 in the last decade. The implementation of the South African Schools Act intended to redress the injustices of apartheid education, in keeping with the transformative agenda of democratizing the country as a whole. Following the tenets of its counterparts in Australia, England and Wales, SASA advocated decentralization in education which generated the practice of site-based management.

This educational revolution in turn called for the role of the principal to be reconceptualized. The infiltration of policies which creates an ever changing school environment comes to bear heavily on the role of the principal by giving new meaning to the term multitasking. Accordingly, the restructuring process has marked implications for the principal who is expected, perhaps for the first time, to draw on a multitude of roles and skills, particularly in the personnel field, rather than rely on bureaucratic direction as in the past (Handy, 1985; Duignan, 1990 as cited in Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997).

The role of instructional leader, reconfigured to accommodate the role of administrative manager, demands the acquisition of a host of new skills and expertise such as financial management, budgeting, marketing, delegation, strategic planning, policy formulation and implementation. At the same time, the role demanded the establishing of collaborative relations with all stakeholders, in keeping with the demands of devolution in the system of education.

Studies on the principalship in countries that began their restructuring initiatives in the 80s highlighted the educator-administrator duality of the principal's role. Cuban (1988c as cited in Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991), conducted a historical review of the role of the principal, locating the earliest empirical studies around 1910. In examining research studies over a 70-year period, he concluded that principals prioritized the management role over instructional leadership. But with the emergence of the influential school effectiveness movement in the late 70s, which continued into the early 80s, there was a resurgence of interest in the role of the principal as an instructional leader rather than an administrative manager. This observation has been noted by Purkey & Smith (1985) and Collarbone & Billingham (1998). Instructional leadership has been identified as 1 of the 7 correlates of effective schools: "In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents and students." (Association for Effective Schools Inc., 1996: 1)

In the article, 'Leadership and Our Schools' (Stoll, 1998) reference is made to Grace (1995) and Fullan (1996) who capture the historical development of the role of the principal from professional leader to administrative manager to instructional leader in the English and American schooling systems respectively. However, the article asserts that the current role that is expected of the principal in the English and American schooling systems is that of change agent within their organizations. This evolutionary nature of the principalship, alluded to earlier, is also evident in the Australian schooling system: the principal has gone from being a professional to an administrative manager to an instructional leader acting as change agent (Chapman, 1991).

Since the 1990s, reformation and restructuring initiatives in the South African system of schooling have also resulted in the principalship taking on an evolutionary nature, following in the wake of certain international trends with the principal diminishing her/his role as professional leader to assuming the role of administrative manager. Due to the fact that South Africa's schooling system only began to transform decades after the English, American and Australian systems, it is understandable that the evolution of the South African principal is at an earlier stage, which is administrative management. But the question is whether the current role of administrative manager is going to realize the agenda of transformation within the education system and within the country at large.

What South Africa is currently experiencing is the need for the principal to extend beyond the role of administrative manager because of the wave of school reform spanning national boundaries. This movement validates Marsh's (2000: 129) prediction: "Pressures for accountability and 'value-added' will also push schools to improve in ways that require fundamental paradigm shifts in the nature of schooling. The paradigm shifts will involve major change and new patterns of leadership, but also the significant educational leadership of the school principal – the reforms won't be successful without this educational leadership from the principal."

Drucker (1993) claimed that a knowledge society would emerge from the social revolution of the nineties. And with the explosive arrival of the information age education will never be the same. While Drucker (1993: 203) states that "no other institution faces challenges as radical as those that will transform the school", Collarbone & Billingham (1998: 1) emphasize that "the role of the school leader will fundamentally change but, crucially, the effective leader will remain the lynchpin of the effective organization".

The major thrust of transformation in South Africa is the provision of equal education to all learners irrespective of their racial, social or economic backgrounds. This is being attempted via legislation being enacted in the spirit of democracy and transformation, but policies alone cannot achieve this goal. Rather, the success of these policies will depend on implementation and more importantly, on the people

who are responsible for the implementation process. In the context of schooling it is the none other than the principal who is responsible for the interpretation and implementation of policies. It follows that the role of the principal must evolve from that of administrator/manager to that of leader, or more specifically, to a transformational leader. Who is a transformational leader?

### **2.2.2 Who is a transformational leader?**

To understand the theory of transformational leadership it is important to trace its history. The term transformational leadership was conceived by Downtown (1973) and conceptualized by Burns (1978), who differentiates between two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. The transactional is based on exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers, whereas transformational leadership refers to the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2001). House (1976), in his theory of charismatic leadership, identifies charisma to be the trait that allows leaders to influence their followers. Bass (1985: 20) reviewed the theory of transformational leadership to extend the focus to followers by arguing that transformational leadership motivates followers by:

- (a) raising followers' levels of consciousness about the importance and value of specified and idealized goals
- (b) getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization, and
- (c) moving followers to address higher-level needs.

It is apparent that transformational leadership aims to encourage followers to explore their potential for the greater good of the organization. It follows then that transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994) is seen when leaders:

- *stimulate interest among colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspectives,*
- *generate awareness of the mission or vision of the team and organization,*
- *develop colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and*



*potential, and*

- *motivate colleagues and followers to look beyond their own interests towards those that will benefit the group.*

To achieve the above outcomes, transformational leadership incorporates four factors, each of which elaborates behaviour/qualities of the leader that drives followers to develop their potential and to work in collaboration with others to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. The four transformational leadership factors listed below will form a theoretical framework for my study of the principal as a leader in school transformation. In the process of exploring how principals perceive their roles, perform their roles and construct themselves as leaders within school transformation, I constantly measured their behaviour/qualities in terms of the following factors:

#### **Idealized Influence**

- role models
- high morals/ethics
- admired, respected and trusted
- prioritizes needs of others over personal needs.

#### **Inspirational Motivation**

- provides meaning and challenge in work
- clear expectation of followers
- generates team spirit

#### **Intellectual Stimulation**

- encourages creativity and innovation
- includes followers in problem solving

#### **Individualized Consideration**

- acts as coach or mentor to individuals
- respects individual differences
- personally interacts with followers
- delegates to develop

### **2.2.2.1 Research in the area of transformational leaders**

Research conducted by Bennis and Nanus (1985) on 90 leaders and Tichy and DeVanna (1986a; 1990b) on 12 CEOs shed new light on transformational leadership. Bennis and Nanus identified four strategies that are adopted by leaders in transforming organizations. They begin by creating a practical *vision* for the organization by considering the inputs of followers and assessing the needs of the organization so that the vision is embraced by the leader and the followers. They take on the role of *social architects* whereby they change the values and norms of the organization. These leaders go on to develop *trust* in the organization by being open and transparent. Finally, transforming leaders use *creative deployment of self through positive self-regard* by recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, but importantly focus on their strengths.

Tichy and DeVanna's investigation revealed a special interest in how leaders conducted the change process. Their findings suggested that leaders manage change through a process that involves three acts: Act 1- recognize the need for change and instill this need in the individuals within the organization, Act 2 - create a vision with the inputs of individuals within the organization and Act 3 - institutionalize change together with the individuals within the organization.

After exploring the history of transformational leadership to its current development it would be safe to say that a transformational leader is a change agent, committed to change her/his followers for the progress of the individuals and for the institution at large. She/he strikes the image of a moral and just individual who serves as a role model prepared to take people and organizations to new heights. This is executed by convincing people that change is necessary by securing their trust and confidence. Most importantly transformational leaders provide direction for the organization by creating a vision by taking cognizance of the needs of the organization and its people. To sum up, transformational leadership is recognized when there is a positive and productive interplay between leader and followers to work towards the vision of an organization.

Dimensions of transformational leadership within schools (as cited in Collarbone & Billingham, 1998) have been advanced by:

- Kouzes and Posner (1987), whose research identifies the following qualities found in good leaders: ability to challenge the process, to inspire a shared vision, to enable others to act, to model the way and to encourage the heart.
- Leithwood (1992), who identifies three fundamental goals of transformational leadership:
  1. the structure and development of a collaborative climate
  2. the continuous professional development of teachers
  3. the expansion of the school's problem solving capacity
- Sergiovanni (1996), who sees leadership becoming moral in its tone and direction, enhancing both significance and meaning of work and life for leaders and followers. In 'Leadership for the Schoolhouse' he regards leadership for meaning, problem solving, collegiality, shared responsibility, serving school purposes, demanding high standards from all yet being tender enough to encourage the heart.

Similarly Leithwood (1994: 499) argues for transformational leadership in school-restructuring contexts: "Transformational approaches to school leadership are especially appropriate to the challenges facing schools now and through the remainder of this decade". Vision, group goals, high performance expectations, appropriate models, intellectual stimulation and support are highly rated.

Martin's (2000: 9) observation that "transformational leadership is philosophically and functionally compatible with a principal's efforts at developing a multicultural learning community" has particular significance for South African education since we are emerging from a past that practiced separatist education policy. To right the wrongs of the apartheid regime would take moral courage and motivation, which are factors of transformational leadership theory. By encouraging followers to pursue the vision of multicultural education in an environment which respects and celebrates diversity, sets the tone and atmosphere for transformation.

Avolio (1999) points to studies by Silins (1992), Koh (1990) and Philbin (1997) within school settings from British Columbia to Singapore to illustrate the positive impact of transformational leadership on levels of trust, commitment and satisfaction. Teachers perceived principals to be more effective and were inspired to go the extra mile.

In the process of exploring transformational leadership theory and its development a multimodal theoretical framework emerged, the main features of which can be summarized as follows:

- Transformational leaders are models of moral, humane, creative and visionary behaviour.
- Transformational leaders motivate followers to set higher goals, reach their full potential, work in collaboration and aspire to leadership.
- Transformational leaders and followers share a common focus, which is the betterment of the organization.

It is within the framework of this multimodal theoretical framework that the principals in my study were viewed and analysed.

#### **2.2.2.2 Characteristics of a principal as a transformational leader**

A review of the literature on transformational leadership theory led me to conceive of the principal as a transformational leader within the school. The result of my endeavour led to the following list of characteristics, which I believe are consistent with transformational leadership theory but is by no means exhaustive.

- prepared to change themselves
- trigger change
- provide a school climate that is conducive to change
- maintain high morals and ethics
- motivate all stakeholders
- inspire all stakeholders
- capacitate individuals
- be a visionary
- nurture a shared vision and mission

- practice participative decision making
- be a role model

### **2.2.3 Research unfolding on principals**

The literature review attempts to elicit a global picture by examining research unfolding on the principalship conducted on an international scale, after which it becomes specific to the national level by focusing on South African studies. This approach of moving from the international to the national is to understand whether international trends in the principalship are relevant to the South African context and to understand the principalship within a global context.

Research on principals in the eighties emanating from the schools effectiveness movement focused on the effectiveness of the principal as an instructional leader and emerging change agent. However, the nineties, with its proliferation of policies on restructuring, witnessed a refocus to the principal as an agent of change. Researchers concur that school renewal, restructuring and transformation all attribute the success of change to the key role played by the principal (Caldwell, 2003; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Marsh, 2000; Steyn & Squelch, 1994). They also illustrate how the roles and tasks of principals have been redefined by the process of school transformation.

The key role played by the principal and the redefinition of her/his roles within the context of school transformation form the signposts of the literature review. "It is axiomatic that strong leadership is critical for successful whole-school reform," (Datnow & Castellano, 2001: 219). Part of their study conducted in six Success for All (SFA) schools explores the changes, tensions and ambiguities that arise in schools as principals redefine their roles to support the reform. They exhibited a greater inclination towards administration and teaching. While principals encouraged the adoption of SFA, there was a correlation between their ideologies and leadership styles, and implementation. Similarly, Pettit and Hind (1992) identify the educational leader as the one who promotes educational change while ensuring that the organization does not destabilize. To meet this dual challenge she/he has to be

supportive, confident and possess negotiating and conflict resolution skills. James & Vince (2001) introduce another dimension to the role of headship - the emotional influence. This is integral for leadership since no organization is devoid of emotion.

Blasé & Blasé (1999) view instructional leadership to be one where the principals interact with the teachers and become lifelong learners. To inculcate continuous learning among all members of the school, it is imperative that the principal model the behaviour of a lifelong learner. Kotter (1996) highlights this dimension of leadership by affirming that it is the engagement in life learning that empowers one to take on the challenges of leading transformation. He derived five mental habits that support lifelong learning (Exhibit 1: 183).

### **Exhibit 2.1**

#### ***Mental Habits That Support Lifelong Learning***

- *Risk taking: Willingness to push oneself out of comfort zones*
- *Humble self reflection: Honest assessment of successes and failures, especially the latter*
- *Solicitation of opinions: Aggressive collection of information and ideas from others*
- *Careful listening: Propensity to listen to others*
- *Openness to new ideas: Willingness to view life with an open mind*

This idea of the leader being a lifelong learner links directly to the idea of the school assuming the form of a learning organization (Senge, 1990) in which the growth and development of individuals and groups is encouraged to achieve the goals, vision and mission of the school. Caldwell (2003) reinforces this point by indicating that it is the responsibility of the principal to develop leaders and teacher leaders at all levels of the school.

Blumberg & Greenfield (1986) in their study of eight effective principals discovered that while the principals adopted different approaches, they were “people administrators” because they practiced effective interpersonal skills. They were also inquiring by nature; keeping themselves informed of and responsive to the needs and

demands of their schools. When tackling problems they were guided by their personal perspectives. Elements of vision, initiative and resourcefulness characterize the general dispositions of the eight principals.

As stated earlier, efforts to decentralize education resulted in role redefinitions for heads of schools. Studies based on site-based management (Esp & Saran, 1995; Tanner & Stone, 1998) indicate a reconceptualization of the role of the principal from top-down manager to supporter and facilitator who engages in shared decision making with teachers and governors. This calls for the development of new skills - strategic management, facilitating group processes, building consensus and enabling commitment. A more focused study by Dimmock & O'Donoghue (1997) studied the factors that contributed to principals approaching school reform in an innovative manner, using the edited life history approach which they consider a pioneering exercise. They studied six innovative principals in Western Australia to investigate the relationship between principals' life histories and their initiatives to implement restructuring policies aimed at improving curricula, teaching and learning in their schools. These case studies indicated that there are past experiences, significant events and personal philosophies that seem to have shaped the innovative and adventurous manner in which these principals approach school reform.

Cline & Nechoche (2000) assert that school leaders are required to become transformational leaders by drastically redefining the structures and systems of the schools to satisfy the ever-changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But they highlight the paradox inherent in this expectation, since the socialization process of school administrators favours the maintenance of the status quo. Therefore they maintain that: "The dynamic creativity that is required of deep school transformations necessitates an energetic principal that serves as a maverick leader who can manage this complex change phenomenon masterfully" (Cline & Nechoche, 2000: 154).

Moore, George & Halpin (2002), in their study of headship, explored the impact of recent mandated reforms on roles of teachers and principals. Their findings indicate that heads used a consultative approach to management and leadership and drew from Taylorist and Total Quality Management (TQM) traditions.

Mcinerney (2003) contends that Australian principals have assumed the position of business managers (corporate heads). But he highlights the challenge of achieving corporate objectives while still working on school priorities of social justice and democratic values, and concludes: “if schools are to sustain a focus on social justice, principals not only have to know how to efficiently manage schools but they have to be able to re-imagine their roles as educational leaders” (Mcinerney, 2003: 14).

While the literature illuminates the call for the reinvention of the role of the principal and the centrality of his/her position in school reformation, the matter would be incomplete without turning to Deal & Peterson (1999) who reaffirm the significance of organizational culture on school change. They maintain that the success of school improvement is dependent on the school culture:

An extensive study of school restructuring showed conclusively that changing the structure of schools is not enough (Newman and Associates, 1996). To have success, both new structures and a professional culture are needed. In this five-year study, the researchers found that school success flourished in cultures with a primary focus on student learning, a commitment to high expectations, social support for innovation, a dialogue, and the search for new ideas. Also present was an “ethos of caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff, and between staff and students, based on respect, trust, and shared power relations among staff.” (P.289). Other investigations of all types have demonstrated the significance of school culture to school success.

(Deal & Peterson, 1999: 6)

Developed countries such as the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom have identified change management as a significant aspect on the training agenda for educational leaders. Educators who assume leadership roles are expected to acquire relevant skills and competencies in leadership and management prior to their appointments. Furthermore, they have access to support systems provided by leadership associations and consultants, since the idea of reform in any context presents challenges in many forms.

Lessons on leadership and management can be learnt from these international studies, but can we mimic the educational practices of countries which do not share a similar socio-economic climate? They are limiting in the South African context for the



following reasons:

- based on the assumption that principals have had appropriate training in educational leadership and management
- that all schools operate as functional organizations
- silent about transformation in developing countries
- based on the assumption that the communities in which schools are located can contribute to educational transformation
- silent about imbalances created by the apartheid system

Being cognizant of the above mentioned limitations, it is logical to proceed to the national level to explore the research unfolding on the principalship within the South African context. Implementation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) calls for principals to reconceptualize their roles and to collaborate with all stakeholders in education. Davidoff & Lazarus (1997) report that in most schools the culture remains entrenched in authoritarianism, of bureaucratic control of schools, teachers, students and curricula. To transform to a democratic state of education, principals have to emerge from the authoritarianism of the past and communities can no longer be complacent about their role in education. Steyn & Squelch's (1994) study: "South African Principals' Perceptions In Restructuring Schools" revealed that changes have affected mainly management, since more responsibilities were delegated to principals and school governing bodies. In line with other researchers, they view principals as the "focal point of many change efforts in schools."

Collarbone & Billingham (1998), in their article "Leadership and Our School" focus on the growing importance of the leader and the fundamental revision her/his role has undergone. The principal is not only viewed as instructional leader, but as change agent. This is evident in Nyembe's (2002) work within South Africa which indicates that effective principals are perceived as democratic leaders with vision.

Christie (1998) in her article, "Schools as (Dis)organizations" goes beyond rationalist approaches and portrays South African Schools (majority) as dysfunctional because they lack "consensual rituals", levels of control, structures on time and space, poor management and low stakeholder participation. "It seems clear that the breakdown of

management and leadership within schools is an important part of their dysfunction. Building leadership effectiveness and participatory management teams needs to be a priority and leadership potential needs to be an important criterion in appointing new principals” (Christie, 1998: 39).

Alan, Stephen, Gultig, Harley & Muir (1993) conducted a case study to explore the advent of racial integration in South African schools and found that schools, while wanting to be proactive, were actually reactive. The process of integration had begun, but on a conservative level because the principals in the study received no support from their respective education authorities and were in certain cases confronting challenges from school councils. However, the common theme emerging from this study was the ideology of racelessness: principals with the best of intentions see learners from various backgrounds through a non racial lens. By denying the race of the learner the principal is unwittingly perpetuating the existing social relations.

Mestry & Grobler (2002) viewed the principalship from a management perspective and established that principals should be competent in the following key functions to manage schools effectively:

- Management of the curriculum
- Management of organizational structures
- Management of educators
- Management of financial and physical resources

International and national research points to the significant role played by the principal in educational transformation. Marsh (2000: 29) responds to school reform by stating: “The paradigm shifts will involve major change and new patterns of leadership, but also the significant educational leadership of the school principal – the reforms won’t be successful without this educational leadership from the principal.” Within Western Australia, particular emphasis is placed on the role of the principal in implementing restructuring policies, many of which involve initiatives aimed at improving curriculum, teaching and learning (Dimmock & O’Donoghue, 1997). While Caldwell (2003) acknowledges the significant role played by the principal, he extends the notion that the role of the principal will have to undergo change itself

before it can implement successful transformation.

In synthesizing the studies on principalship, I took cognizance of two findings in particular:

- (i) the centrality of the principal's role in transformation efforts
- (ii) the evolution of the principal's role to effect transformation efforts.

In view of these findings it is evident that the role of principal has to be reshaped to support the implementation of policies such as SASA, which aims to transform South African education.

The critical responsibility of generating and perpetuating the mindset shift essential to creating continuously renewing, change friendly organizations lies almost solely with those in leadership roles. The success of these men and women and their organizations depends upon their ability to empower their people and to have them take responsibility and ownership for the organization's objectives.

(Oakley & Krug, 1991: 216)

The conservative, conforming school managers who have provided educational systems with direction and guidance since the beginning of this century cannot, by virtue of their very nature, offer the dynamic leadership needed to resolve the educational problems of a turbulent technological society (Naidoo, 1991).

Research on principals emanating from the international and national studies, indicate the following:

- the effectiveness of principals as instructional leaders
- the importance of principals becoming life long learners
- the acquiring of administrative skills and acumen
- the role of the principal is evolving, leaning towards the role of transformational leader
- the central role played by the principal in implementing change, be it internally or externally imposed, educationally, socially or politically motivated.

But the design and implementation of policies alone does not ensure the desired change. Research on educational management identified how policy initiatives have resulted in role redefinition for principals (Bhagowat, 2001; Govender, 1997; Moloko, 1996). But there remains the need to study how the principal is responding to and advocating the transformation of education to embrace the spirit of democracy, especially because many principals who participated in my survey have had minimum training in educational leadership and management, let alone change management and have minimum access to any support systems when implementing new transformation policies. Policy makers need to inquire about principals' successes and failures, comprehend their challenges and listen to their stories to evaluate whether education in schools is being transformed and whether such transformation is effective in securing quality education for the learners of our land.

The study intends to explore the principal's role in depth: to understand how she/he fulfills the pivotal role of change agent within a fledging democracy whose change agenda prioritizes social justice and transformation. After all, no other country in the world is emerging from the aftermath of the apartheid regime which deliberately set out to oppress the majority of its citizens. Since each country's school reformation strategy is determined by its history of education, South Africa's school reformation strategies are designed to address the inequalities of the past education system, a mission which is delegated to the principal at the school site. How do principals perceive this role and how are they constructing themselves in this role? The need to study the principal as change agent is given impetus by Fullan & Stiegelbauer's assertion (1991: 169): "As long as we have schools and principals, if the principal does not lead changes in the culture of the school, or if he or she leaves it to others, it normally will not get done."

The focal position of principals as change agents puts a premium on the existing knowledge base as to how and why some principals are more effective in leading school transformation than others. The studies cited above have focused on the principal as change agent; however studies outside South Africa have concentrated on the role reconfiguration of the principal and the efforts to improve teaching and learning. Studies in South Africa have begun to explore the role reconfiguration of the

principal, but there are no documented topical life histories of principals as agents of transformation which may account for the way they construct their roles. It is this gap in South African school literature that the study intended to address. It must be noted that principals are operating in a turbulent environment where the waves of change are socially, economically and politically propelled. And while riding the waves of school change, principals are accountable for school efficiency and effectiveness.

It is within this context that the study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base by:

- presenting a general picture of how principals are leading transformation within schools by using the survey method and
- composing narratives by using the topical life history approach to investigate the relationship between principals' histories and the initiatives they are taking to transform their schools.

My study is located in a context of transformation of national magnitude. South Africa has a transformative agenda: it is emerging from an oppressive past where the majority of its people were marginalized in every sphere of life. While the transformative agendas of many countries seek to include minorities, South Africa has to include its majority. So when it comes to schooling, the principal is tasked with leading transformation with the ultimate goal of providing quality education to all learners irrespective of race, gender, background and socio-economic status.

The thrust of my study would be to explore the roles that principals are assuming and how they are constructing themselves as leaders in school transformation. Are they taking their cues from management or leadership or perhaps from both these components of education management and development? To understand principals as managers or leaders, or perhaps a combination of both, it is important to explore the concepts of management and leadership.

### **2.2.4 Leadership versus management**

Research into the role of educational leaders point in opposing directions: the containment or reactive role of crisis management or the proactive or promotional role. Another way of perceiving the dimensions is in terms of management and leadership where management functions focus on organizational maintenance and leadership involves a proactive visionary role (Sergiovanni, 1987).

The literature on leadership and management spans decades and reaches extensive proportions. To elicit a working definition of these processes within the context of my study I draw from the more contemporary writers.

Leadership is aligned to the concept of effectiveness; it is about doing the right things. A leader acts as a driving force by bringing values, vision and learning to the organization. She/he is a role model/mentor/coach who influences/inspires followers to develop themselves and to realize the organization's vision (Collarbone & Billingham, 1998; Kotter, 1996; Maxwell, 2002; Reed, 2003). In fact Kotter (1996: 25) alludes to the powerful influence of the leader when he claims: "Leadership is a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstance."

Management is aligned to the concept of efficiency; it is about doing things right. A manager ensures that the organization is running smoothly by fulfilling the functions of planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and problem solving (Collarbone & Billingham, 1998; Kotter, 1996; Maxwell, 2002; Reed, 2001).

Kotter (1996) explains that while the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the rapid increase of organizations in their thousands, there was a dire shortage of managers, consequently management took precedence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century agenda. Every leader required the services of hundreds of managers to operate their business. However, there is a shift of expectations to leadership since the 21<sup>st</sup> century is bombarded by the agenda of change, change and change. To explore the relationship between leadership and management I allude to Kekale (2001 as cited in Yelder & Codling, 2004): he sees

them as two complementary aspects or systems of action. Management focuses on results and goals, organizing tasks and systems, while leadership focuses on human relations and personnel.

Yielder & Codling (2004) advance the notion that in an academic context (tertiary institution) leadership and management functions have been closely integrated at departmental or school level. They maintain that it can be argued that both the academic leadership role and the management role require aspects of 'leadership', which cannot be described as a 'function'. Leadership is aligned to being inspirational, building a vision and nurturing a culture that can support and can achieve that vision. While I acknowledge that the dynamics of a tertiary institution are different from that of a school, the fundamentals of leadership that Yielder & Codling refer to pertain to a school, especially in light of the following:

In the literature, the general outline for a management role in an educational setting is fairly consistent, for example managing finances, staff, space and resources, plus strategic and operational planning (Kettridge, Marshall & Fry, 2002). Academic leadership is less well defined. General characteristics are given, such as the responsibility for mission, direction, inspiration, building teamwork and setting an example (Law & Glover, 2000)

(Yielder & Codling, 2004: 319)

On a similar note, Louis and Miles (1990) distinguish between leadership and management but see both processes as valuable and conducive to change initiatives. This point is validated by Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991: 158) who assert that "both sets of characteristics are essential and must be blended or otherwise attended to within the same person or team."

In a study relating management support to leadership, Marsh (1992 cited in Marsh 2000: 135), noted that school principals progressed through three stages to become strong educational leaders.

- *Educational leaders at Stage 1 focus primarily on the "nuts and bolts" of school management. They learn to operate these management functions at the school level as discreet pieces – the master schedule is not linked to the personnel and teacher evaluation system, for example. In addition, Stage 1 educational leaders have no focus on educational leadership.*

- *Stage 2 leaders are typical of school principals across many national settings. Here, they have greater capacity for carrying out management functions. They are good at carrying out the pieces of educational leadership and reflecting about management functions or these educational leadership pieces. They have a fragmented view of educational leadership, but they are quite good at carrying out pieces of work in the education setting.*
- *Stage 3 leaders are different from Stage 2 not so much by their overt actions, but rather by their understanding of the whole. This whole includes the integration of management functions and educational leadership - that is they see how functions such as budgeting and personnel can be linked to the teaching and learning and high performance work teams, for example. Moreover they are quite insightful about the integration of various educational pieces and are reflective about the integration of educational leadership and school life, especially towards student results. It is only Stage 3 leaders who are able to manage the interface between management functions and the educational programme both in terms of designing these support services for high performing work teams and operating these management functions, even if the operational details are ultimately delegated to other participants at school.*

While Marsh's theory that, principals progress from being managers to strong leaders holds true for some, it is a well publicized fact that not all managers transform into strong leaders (Yielder, 2001, 2003 as cited in Yielder and Codling, 2004). However, by empowering themselves with sound leadership practices, more managers can practise leadership. This brings to light another perspective on leadership versus management, that of Wells (1997), who is opposed to 'separate managing from leading'. Instead he describes nine leading edge roles: sage, visionary, magician, globalist, mentor, ally, sovereign, guide, and artisan. Wells (1997: 3) maintains: "Each one is the intersection of a leadership process (creating order, inspiring action, or improving performance) and a focused content of management (systems, people or work)." His model suggests that institutional leaders are not allocated any one role, but depending on institutional needs can be expected to play one or more roles, in other words, there is interdependence between managing and leading. Table 2.1 has



been extracted from Wells (1997: 5) to provide an understanding of how the nine leading-edge roles impact on the organization.

**Table 2.1 Organizational Value of the Leading-Edge Roles: A Quick Overview**

<b>Sage</b>	Pulls together diverse information and designs a coherent strategy
<b>Visionary</b>	Thinks about the future to specify a vision that inspires others to act
<b>Magician</b>	Maintains flexibility to bring about large-scale change when necessary
<b>Globalist</b>	Operates across cultures and consolidates different perspectives
<b>Mentor</b>	Motivates others and assists their professional development
<b>Ally</b>	Forms highly effective and productive teams and alliances
<b>Sovereign</b>	Accepts responsibility for consequences of decisions
<b>Guide</b>	Sets clear and challenging goals and organizes work to achieve them
<b>Artisan</b>	Sets and meets increasingly higher standards of quality and excellence

While the literature indicates a distinction between management and leadership there is a tendency to acknowledge the valuable contributions that each process brings to an institution. But of greater significance is that these two processes are viewed as being interrelated, interdependent and complementary, pointing to their co-existence to ensure an institution's success.

While the foregoing paragraphs attempt to create an interpretation of the concepts of management and leadership which conclude with commentary on the interdependency of these two functions, this section would be incomplete without alluding to the manifestation of managerialism in education. Deem (2001) highlights the rigidity and control inherent in managerialism and the external controls imposed on it. Thrupp & Willmott (2003) oppose the intrusion of managerialism on school leadership and management. They advocate that principals should not invest energy into managerial activities unless they are strictly necessary:

Towards this end, school leaders should be open and honest about unpalatable decisions they have to make around school budgets, staffing, marketing and the like so as to problematize managerialism rather than obscure it by absorbing these problems themselves.

(Thrupp & Willmott, 2003: 180)

Managerialism took root in post apartheid South Africa, when the country rose from isolation to claim its position in the global political-economy and was consequently seduced by the global movement towards neo-liberalism. In succumbing to globalization the government turned to neo-liberalism to restore its economy; impacts of which reverberate in the educational sphere. The spin offs have given rise to the marketization of education and the corporatization of schools which is the antithesis of education. This method of management, termed New Public Management (NPM) is impacting on school leadership in such a way that the principal's attention is refocused on matters of management rather than matters of education.

There is a dire need for principals to reclaim their educational stance. This need is addressed by the critical management theorists who view education as a public service whose delivery must engage government intervention. In attempting to realize its goal of transformation and a better life for its citizens, South Africa must strive towards liberal education which focuses on holistic development, diverse ways of learning and encouraging creative and critical thinking. To be valued, liberal education must denounce education as a commodity to be marketed and promote it as a civic responsibility.

### **2.2.5 In closing**

In illustrating the components of transformational leadership theory in action, Avolio (1999: 109) alludes to the achievements of Mandela, the first African president of South Africa, of whom he says: "He is by far one of the most reflective, transformational leaders in modern times and, I might say, throughout history." At this stage, I would like to point out that when I decided to feature Mandela in my prologue I had not been exposed to Avolio's (1999) regard for him, but was delighted to discover our former president's recognition as a transformational leader.

Avolio (1999) views our country as a forerunner in leading transformation. He talks about Mandela's historic battle to 'create an equation of "blood over brains" and reverse the thinking on this to be "brains over blood" by using "unity through diversity" as a mantra for change' (Avolio, 1999: 109). He describes this vision as

remarkable since the foundation of apartheid was separation and admits that while the laws have changed it will take time for the mindsets of people to change.

To achieve our national goals of transformation, which are living by the tenets of equality, justice and democracy, we have to transform our smaller communities which eventually constitute South Africa as a community at large. One such community is the school, which is first and foremost a place of learning, and what better place to cement the pillars of transformation. To ensure the success of this mission we turn to the school leaders who need to internalize the components of transformational leadership since: “To bring about change, authentic transformational leadership fosters the modal values of honesty, loyalty and fairness and the end values of justice, equality and human rights.” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998: 4)

This literature review has placed the school principal under the spotlight and in so doing illuminated the following:

- the evolutionary nature of the role which is constantly in need of re-skilling
- the principal as a manager
- the call to resume the role of instructional leader
- the centrality of the principal in school reformation
- the effectiveness of the principal

But there is an apparent lack of research on the principal as an agent of school transformation in the South African context, so this is where my study finds its point of departure. While from a global perspective the country serves as an exemplar of national transformation, much work has to be accomplished on the micro levels. This is a mammoth task indeed, considering we are charged with changing models of thinking implicit in the mindsets of people for centuries. It will take a moral awakening of sorts to transform South African education in keeping with the transformative agenda of the country. With my lifelong leaning towards education I wanted to explore how principals are leading school transformation.

### **2.3. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

The research is set in the interpretive paradigm which “is characterized by a concern for the individual”, since it attempts to “understand the subjective world of human experience” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001: 22). The individuals in this study are the principals and their roles (change agents) are explored within the context of their organizations (schools which are in the process of transforming).

It follows then that the study will be informed by the theory of transformational leadership: based on the assumptions that leadership focuses on the potential of the organizational members, organizational goals and the achievement of these goals. The success of organizations will be dependent on engaging the learning potential of people at all levels in the organization (Senge, 1990). The rationale for selecting the theory of transformational leadership rather than theories such as distributed or servant leadership lies in the fact that South Africa is undergoing social transformation of epic proportions. To achieve the goals of social justice, redress and equity there is a need to lead people with vision, trust, commitment, inspiration and consideration, factors on which transformational theory is developed. The underpinnings of transformational leadership have been detailed in **Section 2.2.2, Chapter Two: The Principals.**

Whilst the theory of transformational leadership is not without its critics (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003; Gronn, 1995) it is what South African education needs, to make its transition to a system that can provide quality education to all its learners irrespective of colour, class or creed. To briefly reflect on our history: who would have imagined that Mandela would emerge from 27 years of imprisonment to realize his lifelong vision of a democratic South Africa. Mandela whom I regard as the father of transformation is an international icon and his influence must infiltrate the field of education. Whilst I am not suggesting that all principals become visionaries but they will do well to take their cue from the theory of transformational leadership which contains elements of distributed leadership.

The baseline study which leans towards the quantitative paradigm adopts a survey

method as its data collection strategy. However, the research instruments - the questionnaires - are interfaced with quantitative and qualitative ways of probing the subjects.

The major thrust of the study follows the qualitative genre in the composition of narratives. It germinates from the baseline to develop into the edited life history study as a means to capture the career trajectories of my subjects.

#### **2.4. CONCLUSION**

The intention of this chapter was to provide the background and context against which to relate my story which is the transformation of South African education from its oppressive past. Having established the background and context, it's time to explore how my story was developed at various stages of planning and plotting, which will be elaborated upon in **Chapter Three: Designing A Methodology**.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DESIGNING A METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Plots: Primary and Secondary***

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The context of the study, as determined in **Chapter Two: The Principals**, is the restructuring initiatives to transform South African education from its past system of discriminatory practices to a fair and just system at the school site. This change is playing out against the background of social, economic and political upheaval in the country. A survey of the literature on the role of the principal in change efforts identifies her/his role to occupy centre stage in the realm of school transformation. It is in this context that the study explored:

- principals' perceptions of their roles as leaders in school transformation
- the leadership roles principals perform as agents of transformation
- how principals construct themselves as leaders within school transformation

The research was conducted on two levels, a baseline study (secondary plot) and an in-depth study (primary plot). Due to the practical aspects of the study, a mixed method paradigm was selected. As the baseline study sought to ascertain a general sense of how principals are perceiving and constructing their roles as leaders in school transformation in parts of a local education region, data needed to be collected from a fairly large sample of principals. To accomplish this exercise required the application of a quantitative data collection method; hence the survey approach was adopted in the baseline study.

On the other hand, the in-depth study extended the boundaries by specifically examining how three principals from diverse backgrounds are perceiving and constructing their roles as leaders in school transformation, by bringing into focus their lived experiences. This necessitated a qualitative data method; hence the in-

depth study adopted the life history approach or more specifically the topical life history approach. The topical life history illuminates a focused area of life (Plummer, 1983; Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997): this study attempted to document the life story of the principals over their career trajectories which commenced in their introduction to apartheid education in the primary school to its conclusion in the tertiary institution, and then to their teaching posts which culminated in their promotion to the principalship. The quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented sequentially at different phases in the study.

### **3.2 THE SECONDARY PLOT**

The secondary plot which assumed the form of the baseline study was undertaken for two specific purposes:

- to develop a general sense of how principals are perceiving and constructing their roles as leaders of school transformation, casting a background for the primary plot
- to select three principal characters for the primary plot

The instruments for the baseline study (survey) were as follows:

- questionnaire (Appendix A) to principals to collect basic information on school biography, principal's biography and the principal as a leader in school transformation
- questionnaire (Appendix B) to educators to collect information about their impressions of the principal as a leader in school transformation

Piloting of the questionnaires for the principals and teachers, which were conducted at three school sites, indicated that while the instruments themselves required minimum amendments, the process of completing them was going to be time consuming. I tailored down the teacher's questionnaire to capture mainly how teachers perceived and observed their principals as leaders of school transformation. The principal's questionnaire maintained its original form since the principal was the unit of my study and I required substantial information to make reasonable findings and conclusions.

A comprehensive questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to principals and a focused questionnaire (Appendix B) was administered to three level one educators in 20 percent of the schools in which principals completed Appendix A. Appendix B acted as a verification strategy. I wanted to examine whether the educators' impressions of their principals as leaders in transformation concurred or conflicted with that of the principals – this served to triangulate the data. To improve the reliability of the questionnaires, I included checks and balances in the questions. For example, not only did the questionnaire seek to elicit leadership roles, but also required respondents to discuss a recent project that demonstrated leadership qualities.

A purposive sampling procedure was employed to administer the questionnaires to principals and educators in the eThekweni Region. At this point I would like to declare that the eThekweni Region was targeted for practical reasons. Since I am based in this region it would be convenient to gain access to the principals. Secondly this region consists of schools ranging from the urban to the rural and from the well resourced to the under resourced, offering the diversity that I was seeking to highlight in my study. Finally the proximity to the participants, especially the life history participants, would enable me to develop the kind of rapport necessary to collate the rich data that would be necessary to write compelling narratives.

I negotiated with the Phoenix, KwaMashu, Durban Central and Pinetown circuit offices to distribute approximately 200 questionnaires to certain wards via their networks. Follow-up phone calls to principals indicated some of them had not received the questionnaires. I then resorted to distributing and collecting the questionnaires myself. However, after receiving 81 questionnaires from principals, no new data was forthcoming. Glaser & Strauss (1967 as cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) use the phrase *theoretical saturation* to refer to the point in field research at which the data becomes repetitive and no major new insights are gained. I also took cognizance of Cohen et al's (2001: 92) observation that "a sample size of thirty is held by many to be the minimum number of cases if researchers plan to use some form of statistical analysis on their data". Furthermore the 81 questionnaires (Appendix A) and 69 questionnaires (Appendix B) generated a field that allowed me to select the three principals to be my life history subjects.



I captured the data in Appendices A and B using the SPSS programme as I collected information. I also used the programme to generate the pie graphs and tables which were required for the data analysis. The responses that were more qualitative were categorized, coded or thematically based. Significant excerpts from Appendices A and B were demarcated and subsequently quoted to substantiate my findings and analysis.

Three short stories of principals as leaders in school transformation are cited as an introduction to **Chapter Four: Conflicting Views On Principals As Leaders**. These are the stories of principals who were rated by their teachers as follows:

- weak to satisfactory
- good
- excellent

The short stories preview how principals, who are undisputedly the designated leaders of schools, are responding to transformation. In accordance with research practice, the names and places of the personnel and schools were protected by using pseudonyms.

A detailed analysis of the baseline study emerged after the case studies. Data emanating from Appendices A and B were effectively selected to understand how principals were responding to the mammoth task of school transformation. Pie graphs and tables were used to illustrate findings and prompt analysis. Much of the analysis revolved around what principals perceived to be their roles as agents of transformation, as opposed to the roles they actually performed at the school site.

### **3.3 THE PRIMARY PLOT**

The primary plot, which assumed the form of the in-depth study, was undertaken for two specific purposes:

- to examine how three principals from diverse backgrounds are perceiving and constructing their roles as leaders of school transformation
- to explore how their family backgrounds, socio-political milieu, religious beliefs, educational encounters and other lived experiences influence their roles as leaders of school transformation

The instruments for the in-depth study (topical life histories) were as follows:

1. semi-structured interview schedule to collect information about the principal from the time she/he began schooling to the current period when she/he is occupying the position of school principal
2. mementoes, photographs and a cartoon depicting the life of a principal to stimulate the subject within the context of the interview
3. diagrammatic representation of an appropriate leadership programme designed by the participants
4. unstructured observation schedule to record aspects of the principal's behaviour in action, for example, conducting a meeting
5. unstructured observation schedule to record a day in the life of a principal by shadowing her/him for at least a day

In structuring the interview schedule, I took cognizance of Plummer (1983) who alludes to the following data collection strategies: (i) the rigidly designed questionnaire which concentrates on pre-selected issues to clarify the role of the subject and (ii) allowing the subject to respond spontaneously over a long period of time in the fashion of interactionism, to depict the diverse nature of his or her life. Noting that I was documenting topical life histories, within an interpretive paradigm, I struck a compromise between the two extreme styles of questioning highlighted above. I needed a focus in my interview schedule since I was interested in the career trajectories of my participants, but I could not exclude their lived experiences which have a bearing on their professional lives. Hence I opted for the semi-structured interview schedule which spanned experiences from being a primary school learner to being a school principal. While the semi-structured format of the interview schedule provided direction, it simultaneously permitted me to prompt and probe the interviewees to access in-depth information. "In fact, it is only in the context of non-positivistic interviews, which recognize and build on their interactive components (rather than trying to control and reduce them) that 'intersubjective depth'- mutual understanding can be achieved (and with these the achievement of knowledge of social worlds)" (Miller & Glassner, 1997: 99).

By punctuating the topical life history interviews with alternate data production strategies such as mementoes and a cartoon, I attempted to capture more than ‘a narrative of a “life lived” but of a life as “experienced” as well: of images, feelings, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it was exploring.’ (Pillay, 2003: 5). The ability of life history to focus on central moments, critical incidents and fateful moments that revolve around contradictions and challenges, offers more “rounded” and believable characters than the “flat”, seemingly linear characters from other forms of qualitative inquiry (Sparkes, 1994 as cited in Pillay, 2003).

The interviews yielded data that provided insights as to how and why the principals perceived and acted out their roles as leaders in school transformation, but I needed to access some evidence of their roles in action so I turned to the skill of observation. “One of the hallmarks of observation has traditionally been its non interventionism. Observers neither manipulate nor stimulate their subjects. They do not ask the subjects research questions, pose tasks for them, or deliberately create new provocations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 80). I entered the world of the principals in two situations, assuming the role of complete observer. In the first situation I sat amongst the teachers in the staff room to observe the principal chairing a meeting, while in the second situation I became the principal’s shadow for an entire day, being privy to all his encounters.

A life history methodology was employed in the in-depth part of this study since it captures the impact of experiences and situations of the past on the present and the future, and recognizes the ongoing nature of experiences and situations. Life histories, Goodson (1983 as cited in Cohen et al, 2001: 165) argues, ‘have the potential to make a far-reaching contribution to the problem of understanding the links between “personal troubles” and “public issues”, a task that lies at the very heart of the sociological enterprise.’ Their importance, he asserts ‘is best confirmed by the fact that teachers continually, most often unsolicited, import life history data into their accounts of classroom events’. In the same vein, principals may import life history data into their leadership roles.

The experiences of the principal cannot be underscored since principals in the South African context emerge from life in the apartheid era, which has had a profound influence on their lives socially, politically, educationally and personally - consequently shaping their roles as leaders of school transformation. It must be noted that the organization within which the principal operates also influences her/his attempts to perform as an agent of school transformation. "In a period when constant change is perceived as the norm and much organizational and management research is devoted to trying to understand it, life histories can provide a useful window through which to widen our understanding of the change process within organizations" (Musson,1998: 12).

The school is an organization that is created by people; one of the most influential is the educational leader who takes the form of the principal in this study. Her/his efforts to transform the school, has far-reaching consequences for the organization. The life history approach empowered the researcher to illustrate how the principal's values, attitudes, assumptions, motivations and socializing influences have a bearing on how she/he constructs herself/himself as an agent of school transformation.

As I composed the narratives of the participants I realized I was responding in the affirmative to the following question: "Aren't the most captivating stories exactly those which help us to understand better what is most common, most taken - for - granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly?" (Van Maanen, 1994: 19).

Although the baseline study was largely quantitative, the in-depth study was qualitative in accordance with the interpretive paradigm in which the study is located. Three in-depth studies of principals were conducted to explore how they lead the transformation of schools, in terms of their own life experiences and in terms of their sites. This study attempted to capture the mammoth challenges in addressing past injustices related to resources, contexts, learners, support structures and so forth, and how each principal was responding to these challenges. Although each participant emerged from a different background all their narratives reverberated with Atkinson's (1998: 76) assertion that "Each life story we hear or read tells us that no person makes

it alone through life. The individual is very much interdependent with others". Again I resorted to purposive sampling: my subjects were selected from the 81 principals who participated in the baseline study on the basis of their 'phase' (no of years) in the principalship, with special reference to transformation in education in the South African context. I wanted to create my own categories of principals within this challenging context. Considering the lack of South African studies which explored the role of the principal as an agent of transformation within the democratic era, I examined the fundamentals of the following theories:

Huberman's (1993) theory of stage development which expounds teacher development in the form of career stages:

- exploration (first few years - makes choices, investigates other professions and experiments with role/roles)
- stabilizing phase (makes a commitment to choice of career)
- diversification (experiments with alternatives/opportunities to develop)
- reassessment (if dissatisfied with the outcomes in the diversification stage)
- disengagement (accepts situation and disengages from teaching or disengages with bitterness)

A similar trajectory can be traced in principalship when one turns to Day & Bakioglu, (1995 as cited in Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997: 145).They

recognize four 'phases' of principal development in their research on secondary school principals in the Midlands of England. Principals of between zero and four years were deemed to be in an 'initiation' phase ; those between four and eight years of principalship were said to be in the 'development' phase; principals with more than eight years of experience were identified as being in an 'autonomy' phase; and a small number, who overlapped in experience with the 'autonomous' principals, but who displayed cynicism and negativity, were seen to be in a phase of 'disenchantment'.

While the above career delineations present an interesting framework to understand the taxonomy of stages in the life of a principal, it can be problematic when principals carve their own career stages by skipping a stage or not reaching a stage. This is especially significant in the context of transformation in South African education, which is creating distance from the discriminatory practices of the past and from the command control syndrome which has characterized education globally. This dual challenge creates a scenario that may not always resonate with the likes of a

disenchanted principal. A principal who has supposedly entered the disenchantment stage may feel refuelled by the current restructuring attempts.

Since my study is located in the transformation initiatives over the past decade, it can be considered a 'period piece', but in no way does it presume the grandeur of literary period pieces. Guided by my exploration of a period in South African education, my principal criterion for selecting my topical life history subjects became their experience in the principalship since the inception of transformation, which in effect is post 1994.

Drawing from Day & Bakioglu (1995 as cited in Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997) and Huberman (1993), I selected principals in the different stages of the principalship in light of transformation of education and categorized them in the following manner:

1. the **initiate** – one who entered the principalship when school transformation was in momentum – ie, the last 1-4 years
2. the **intermediary** – one who was involved in a major part of the implementation of transformation policies – ie, the last 5-8 years.
3. the **experienced** – one who has been at the school site since the inception of school transformation, involved in the development and implementation of policies – ie, nine years or more.

The primary factor for selecting the topical life history participants was their experience (number of years) in the principalship with special reference to school transformation. The secondary factors included her/his previous post level, REQV, gender, race, age and previous department of education. The contextual background in which the subjects are working, that is school location and phase of schooling, was also given cognizance. These respondents were selected from the field of 81 principals that was generated by the survey methodology in the initial stage of the study.

After much internal wrangling I selected my topical life history subjects in the hope of uncovering stories that would be diverse, distinct and distilling. The **initiate**, the **intermediary** and the **experienced** are represented below.

**Table 3.1: Variables that were included in identifying the topical life history participants**

EXPERIENCE IN THE PRINCIPAL-SHIP	PREV LEVEL	REQV	GENDER	RACE	AGE	EX DEPT.	LOCATION OF SCHOOL	PHASE OF SCHOOL
4 years	1	13	Female	African	55	DET	KwaMashu	Primary
6 years	2	16	Male	Indian	52	HOD	Newlands West	Secondary
10 years	3	15	Male	White	53	NED	Bluff	Secondary

Before commencing with any form of data collection, piloting of the interview schedule (the main data collection strategy) was conducted to improve reliability. The pilot study proved to be a valuable exercise in that it alerted me to the following:

- while the interview schedule would retain much of its original form – there were times the respondent could recall stories that were emotional and sometimes cathartic in nature;
- the respondent could go off on a tangent – journeying away from the format of the interview schedule. But this could be a defining moment in the life of the participant which could play a significant role in the telling of her/his life story;
- as a researcher I would have to be cautious about when, where and how I probed and prompted the respondent;
- the story that unfolded from the pilot study was so compelling that it had to be told - it was therefore placed as an introduction to **Chapter 5: The Topical Life Histories.**

Subsequent to telephonically confirming participation in the study, I held an informal meeting with each principal to negotiate all data collection visits at her/his convenience and to begin to develop some sort of working relationship between us, after all we would be seeing a lot of each other. Being fully versed in their countless tasks and responsibilities, we agreed on tentative dates for the interview sessions (3-4), the observation session and a day for shadowing. During these initial meetings I

attempted to get a sneak preview of the contexts in which each participant was working; I even managed to talk casually to a teacher or two - introducing myself and briefly explaining my presence. I suppose I didn't want to be viewed as a stranger who was invading their territory.

The interviews with the **experienced** and the **intermediary** spanned three to four sessions, with each one lasting approximately two hours. During the breaks I took coffee with either the principal in his office, or with the staff in the staffroom. These breaks allowed me the opportunity to build a rapport with the principal and staff. The interview with the **initiate**, however, occurred over one three-hour session, at her suggestion. During the break she took tea with her staff while I remained in her office. At the conclusion of the interview sessions, the **experienced** and the **intermediary** indulged me by discussing the experience and highlighting matters which were not captured during the interview sessions. Plummer (1983) views this post-interview session as an opportune moment to pay attention to the subject's feelings about the interview, determine whether they managed to convey what they wanted to say and make certain kinds of validity checks. I was not afforded this opportunity with the **initiate**, who at this stage decided to halt all data collection visits.

Everything considered, the study had to proceed and so it did - with the two remaining participants. The next phase was observing each one operating in the context of the teaching staff - conducting a staff meeting. By that time I had become a familiar face at their schools and felt welcome at the staff meetings. In fact my 'assimilation', to quote Wolcott (1973: 12), into this setting was accomplished. Perhaps they easily identified with me because I am an educator, who knows the language, concerns and challenges of the teaching profession. Data emanating from the interview sessions and the unstructured observation session were utilized as points for further interrogation, as to what informs each one's actions. Also, these data collection visits permitted me to develop a rapport with the subjects, setting the scene for the shadowing session. I shadowed each principal for an entire day to record a typical day in the life of a principal.



All interviews were audio-taped while the observation exercises were recorded in writing. Verbal and non-verbal data were noted. The next step involved painstakingly transcribing the numerous tapes that had been amassed. During the process of data organization I leaned towards Denzin & Lincoln (1998: 63) who maintain: “The qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data. The categories that emerge from the field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection”. Since the categories of analysis emerged from the data, it tended to gravitate towards the “grounded theory approach” as opposed to an “a priori analysis” where the categories are determined in advance of the data collection.

Analysis proceeded along with the data collection and organization but a significant part of the analysis was conducted after the data collection has been concluded. Plummer (1983: 85) advises that “although difficult, analysis of data should *always* accompany the research interviewing since accumulated data should shape the problems to follow. Writing up data will not necessarily come at the end, but may sometimes come during the course of the research as it can be a way of sharpening the analysis and planning – and preparations will inevitably be taking place constantly”. The data was then analyzed interpretatively to create descriptions and narratives of the principals as agents of transformation. Interpreting involves reflecting about the words and acts of the study’s participants and abstracting important understandings from them (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). In composing my stories I noted Van Maanen’s (1994: 21) view “that human science research as writing must indeed produce *oriented, strong, rich, and deep* texts - texts which invite dialogue with those who interact with it”. I attempted to create a ‘pathic’ (term that describes the invitational character of the world) (Strauss, 1966 as cited in Van Maanen, 1994) quality to the topical life stories.

The issue of ethics was respected by seeking formal consent from the appropriate authorities (Department of Education) before commencing with any form of data collection and reassuring all respondents that all data would be used only for the purpose of the study. Every effort was also made to negotiate all visits to the school sites. Anonymity of respondents and confidentiality was strictly observed, except in

the cases of the **initiate**, **intermediary** and **experienced**, all of whom expressed no desire to remain anonymous. Validity was enhanced by the subjects' autocritiques (Plummer, 1983): copies of narratives were submitted to the life history respondents, requesting them to comment on how realistically they had been portrayed and inviting them to add, delete or amend their stories. This respondent validation provided a more accurate scenario; the participants decided to retract nothing from their stories, but offered further information to fill any gaps they recognized.

On the point of validity, I took refuge in Atkinson (1998: 21), who regards a life story as a text "to be read, understood, and interpreted on its own merit and in its own way." However, in my concerted effort not to flout the rigours of research, interviewing, observation and shadowing techniques were used for data triangulation (Denzin, 1989). The 'hidden' data that emerged during my various visits to the research sites proved invaluable to the process of triangulation.

### **3.4 COURTING UNCONFORMITY**

I first identified the **experienced** then the **intermediary** and finally the **initiate**. When I contacted the **experienced** and the **intermediary** they expressed no misgivings about being involved in a study of principals and promptly consented to participating in my study. They actually viewed their participation as a professional responsibility to their fellow principals. The challenge was to find an **initiate** who was a willing subject! The first two **initiates** I selected from my baseline study 'led me on' for a few weeks and then decided I couldn't be accommodated into their hectic schedules. I bowed out respectfully.

The problem was that the **initiate** had to fit a particular profile because I was bent on addressing the diversity that exists at the school sites. After identifying an **initiate** with a similar profile, I made the call. She consented and I thought 'all's well that ends well'. Little did I realize, the worst was yet to come.

Knowing well enough how busy principals can be, I scheduled my initial meetings with each of my life history subjects to explain my study, the formats of the data collection exercises and to finalize dates for the data collection visits in consultation with each principal. I also explained that I would protect their identities and that of their schools by using pseudonyms. However, all three principals expressed no qualms about preserving their identities, so by mutual consent it was agreed that I would refer to the real names of the life history subjects and their schools in recounting their stories.

The first two principals pretty much kept to their schedules, with minor shifts due to work commitments. Disaster struck when the **initiate** decided to silently withdraw from the study. On three consecutive occasions I was turned away from the school gate because the '*principal had been called to an emergency meeting*'. My repeated phone calls were in vain, and finally I was informed that the principal was sick. What was I to do? Thus far her story had generated such rich data that it had to be told. After much personal deliberation and interaction with my promoter I decided to tell Thembi's story, incomplete as it may be. At the next seminar I presented my plan to use the genre of the novel to guide my thesis and would use Thembi's incomplete story as an anticlimax. In addition to telling Thembi's incomplete story where I would be aligning myself with Coetzee's 'Disgrace', I would be extending the boundaries of my story by theorizing about why Thembi decided to discontinue her story. To my amazement my lecturers and fellow students applauded my decision to plod ahead with my **initiate** in tow. I did just that! After all, she did not on any occasion recall her documents or photograph and gave me no indication that I was not to include her story in my thesis.

### **3.5 TELLING AN INCOMPLETE STORY...**

The following points urged me to tell Thembi's story, incomplete as it may be:

- As the story unfolded before me I became so intrigued and so involved that I felt a compelling need to share it.
- Thembi's tale illuminated another dimension to my study: the juxtaposition of

a woman oppressed by her country but liberated by her family of origin.

- Her personal and professional battles display courage and hope
- It is important to illustrate that after 10 years of democratic rule and the formulation of a myriad of transformation policies, a historically disadvantaged school continues to operate in abysmal and degrading physical conditions.
- I was hoping that the incomplete story would pique the curiosity of the reader.
- She consented to her incomplete story being told.

### **3.6 BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY ...**

Thembi's story is not just a tale of human suffering where the spirit endures. In fact it opened new avenues for my project because:

- It led me to a **road less travelled in research**: theorizing about why a subject, who had willingly participated in the study, decided that she wanted to discontinue her story.
- It also allowed me the opportunity to experiment with the telling of an incomplete story and in a sense push the boundaries of my methodology.

Theoretical implications about Thembi's story will be elaborated upon in the analysis chapter.

### **3.7 LIMITATIONS**

As a school manager, the researcher's role may be influenced and it could be difficult to separate these roles. It is significant to declare my position in response to Ary et al (2002: 472) who maintain: "Because the main instrument in qualitative research is the human instrument, it is important that the writer give some personal or professional information about him - herself that might be relevant to the inquiry." As the deputy principal of a large secondary school which has a multiracial learner population, I have my own perceptions of school leadership within the context of school transformation. Being a student in the discipline of educational leadership and

management exposes me to cutting edge issues in management and leadership, thereby influencing me to be critical about school leadership. As a researcher I undertook the study having my own perceptions and expectations of school transformation and was wary of perhaps being judgmental at times.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

In mapping out the planning and plotting of my story in this Chapter, I have attempted to declare the technicalities of moving from a broad scale scenario (educational transformational initiatives on a national scale) to a more focused one (educational transformational initiatives in the eThekweni Region), while fulfilling the requirements of research engagement. This exercise also served to identify the characters on a general level (principals and teachers who participated in the survey) and on a more specific level (principals who participated in the topical life histories). It also pointed a way for the construction of a primary plot and a secondary plot, and indicated ways of giving depth and momentum to the story by explaining my search for data in the field and the analysis of data which would rise to the impending theme and sub-themes. Finally, the chapter presents the challenge that I would encounter - which was, in effect, portending to an anticlimax of some sort.

Having determined how I was going to create the general tenets of my story, I moved the scenario to a more exact setting, eThekweni Region, but to more general characters, the participants of the survey, to grasp a sense of transformation within schools and to understand how principals are constructing themselves as leaders in transformation. This is the opportune moment to proceed to the actual setting of my story, details of which are given in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONFLICTING VIEWS ON PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS**

#### ***Casting the Themes and Motifs from an Analysis of the Baseline Study***

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to capture a cross sectional analysis of the general setting in which school transformation is occurring and to capture the role played by principals in certain schools in the northern part of the eThekweni Region. To determine a sense of school transformation I extracted data from both the Principal's Questionnaire (Appendix A) and the Educator's Questionnaire (Appendix B), which attempt to explore perceptions of both principals and staff on the principal's role in the transformation of schools, to obtain a two dimensional picture as to what is transpiring at these school sites. The data analysis attempts to encapsulate broadly the winds of change at the school and then specifically the evolving role of the principal as a leader in school transformation.

In analyzing the data I have leaned towards Wolcott (1994: 34) who draws attention to researchers being able to:

*Contextualize in a broader analytical framework.* Another way for the analyst to maintain control is to draw connections with external authority. Most often this is accomplished through informed references to some recognized body of theory in one's special field, or to its recognized classics, in the tradition of the literature review. More recently the researcher has been allowed, even encouraged, to make the connections personal or part of everyday experience-such as to one's own expectations, to experience, to conventional wisdom, to social norms.

In attempting to interrogate the responses to the questionnaires, I constantly found myself reflecting upon my own experience in education: as an educator, as a deputy principal, as a doctoral student and my own expectations of those tasked with leading transformation at the school site. For the major part of my life as an educator I

conceived of the principal as being the one who brandished the sword, the one who did not tolerate being challenged and the one who communicated with the all mighty department of education to spread its gospel. But in recent years I have begun to conceive of the principal differently; she/he is evolving to take cognizance of the fact that the school consists of human beings internally and externally who do have the ability to think and make valuable contributions.

To provide a glimpse of school transformation, this chapter is structured to maintain the essential style of the report, which conforms to the tradition of the narrative. Three short stories of principals (questionnaire respondents) which illustrate how they operate within their school contexts to approach school transformation are told to introduce the major theme of the chapter. The major theme is then explored in greater detail by engaging in a full scale questionnaire analysis (Appendices A and B) of the survey by focusing on the schools as sites of transformation, and then proceeding to the principals as leaders in school transformation. Analysis of findings will not be presented in a traditional style but will follow each of the subsections within Chapter Four and Five. At this stage it is imperative that I declare why I made a stylistic decision to intersperse the interpretative analysis with the presentation of findings throughout the analysis chapters. Firstly I thought it appropriate that as my narrative unfolded it should assume its own style and secondly it was a strategy to take my readers along with me on this journey, so that we would make discoveries and identify themes together.

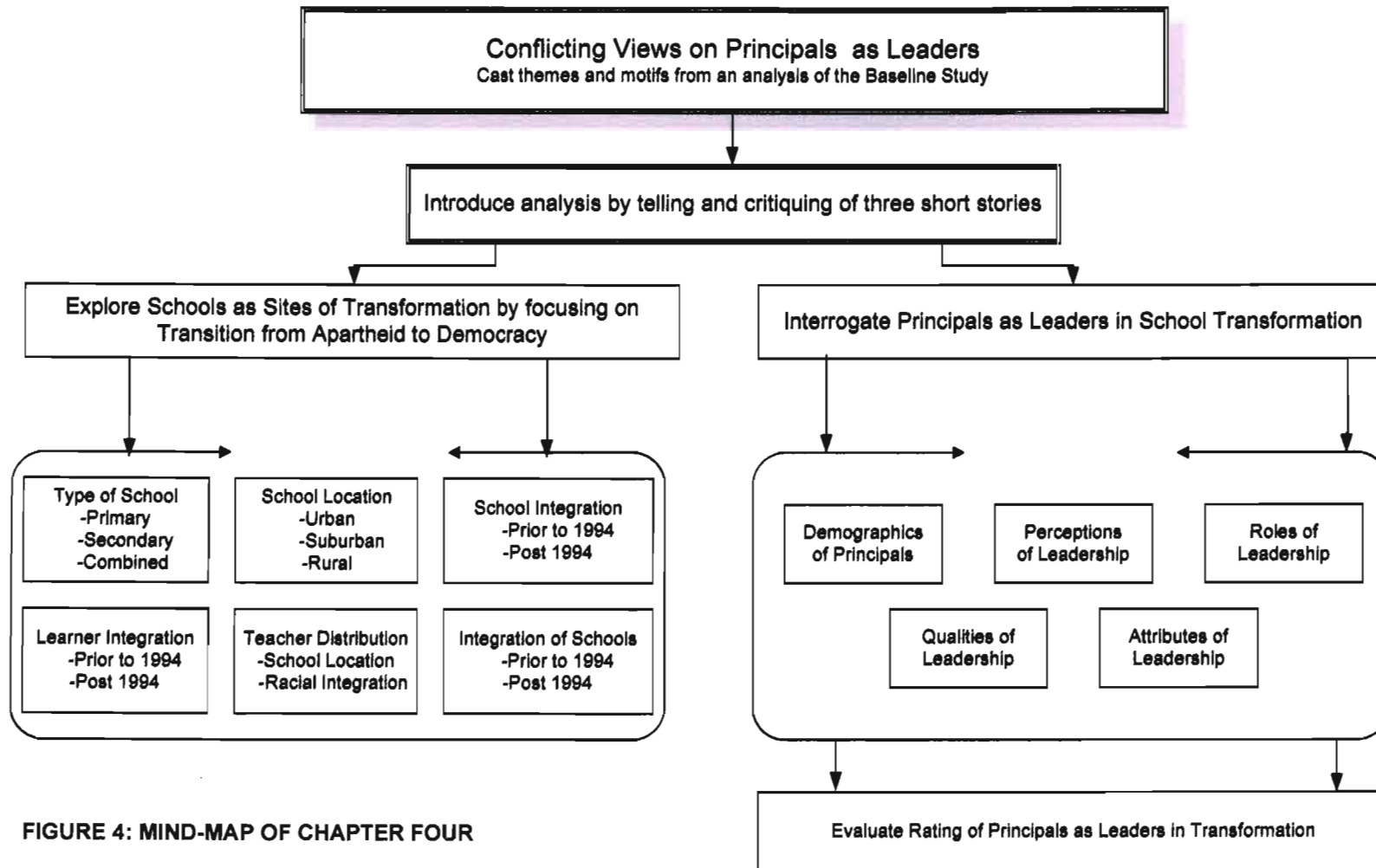


FIGURE 4: MIND-MAP OF CHAPTER FOUR



## **4.2 SHORT STORIES**

Being spurred on by my main research inquiry, that is the life history methodology, I introduce my analysis by exploring the most traditional, tried and tested way of illustration: that is the telling of stories. To create these short stories according to the world of research, I elicited data from responses to Appendices A and B. The purpose of telling these stories would be to briefly determine how the protagonists (principals) are approaching school transformation. To paint a diverse picture, I took my cue from a section of Appendix B which called for educators' assessments of their principals as leaders in school transformation and identified three principals who were rated as follows:

- weak to satisfactory
- good
- excellent

On the point of identity, the names and places of the principals and schools in the three short stories have been changed to reserve their right to anonymity. The principals whose short stories are about to be told are not the life history participants, whose stories are contextualized in **Chapter 5: Topical Life Histories**. While the educators' ratings was the primary criterion for the selection of whose stories to tell, it was important to locate each story in a different school setting to address the issue of school diversity, which remains a reality in the context of schooling in South Africa.

Each short story aims to capture in essence the impact of school transformation over the last decade. A glimpse into the school biography provides an exposé into changing patterns in learner demographics, staff demographics and infrastructure. The focus then leans towards the principal's biography to capture matters relating to gender, age, qualifications and experience. Thereafter her/his perceptions of leadership are highlighted against her/his actual practices of leadership. And finally attention is drawn to the educators' perceptions of the principal's leadership against their observations of the principal's leadership. Once again the data emanated from Appendices A and B. The purpose of presenting these case studies at this stage is to

showcase the role of the principal as a leader in school transformation and to set the stage for the emerging theme of the chapter.

#### **4.2.1 SHORT STORY : A “weak to satisfactory rating”**

##### **4.2.1.1 School Biography**

Mbeki High (a pseudonym) is a secondary school situated in an urban, largely Indian residential area. The population of 1151 learners comprises of 25 % Africans, 70% Indians, and 5% Whites. The staff demographics reflect a slower rate of integration, with 10% being African and 90% being Indian. A functional SGB and RCL are in place. The infrastructure of the school which was satisfactory 10 years ago has now deteriorated and requires major repairs such as *‘painting, maintenance, plumbing, carpentry and new window panes’*.

##### **4.2.1.2 Principal’s Biography**

Shiven (a pseudonym) is an Indian male between 46-55 years of age. His REQV is 17 and he has occupied the position of deputy principal prior to becoming principal of the school. Being in the principalship for the last 7 years, he has been witness to the process of transformation of education for a significant part of the decade.

##### **4.2.1.3 Principal as a Leader**

The principal appears to have a good perception of leadership and claims to be performing leadership duties all the time. However, when one compares the educators’ observation of the principal in action, they assert that they have not observed him playing any leadership role. They view a leader to be *‘proactive, informed, progressive, attentive and so on’* but do not see their principal in this light. The said educators also identified attributes of leadership that are important for a transforming school context, but once again did not recognize any of these attributes in their principal.

Contrary to the principal's claims of performing leadership roles all the time, the educators claim he gives precedence to his role as supervisor and finance officer, and sometimes or never acts as visionary, negotiator or strategic planner. They criticize his unquestioning serving of the department (*'don't become a mouthpiece of the Department'*) and claim he is not consultative (*'unilateral decision maker'*) and *'is very selective about what he wants to participate in'*.

The project that he discussed to demonstrate his leadership qualities, the provision of a support programme for refugee/indigenous learners, actually demonstrated his management skills since he talked about his organizational abilities.

The principal rated himself as *good* because he states *'there is room for improvement'*. The three educators of his school rated him as follows:

*'satisfactory - he has potential but because he doesn't know how to deal with some people who are strong headed, he chooses to ignore all issues even if very important.'*

*'weak - he does not have the qualities necessary for a good leader.'*

*'weak - he is a poor example to others - he is inconsistent.'*

#### **4.2.2 SHORT STORY: A "good rating"**

##### **4.2.2.1 School Biography**

Luthuli (a pseudonym) is a primary school in an urban African township. The population of 520 comprises of only African learners. The staff remains all African as well. A functional SGB is in place.

The infrastructure was poor 10 years ago: *'ruined buildings, leaking roof, no doors and no window panes, holes on the floors, no gutters and unpaved yard'*. Today there is satisfactory improvement due to the renovations undertaken – also *'the USA missionaries donated money to install electricity'*

#### **4.2.2.2 Principal's Biography**

Eve (a pseudonym) is an African female between 46 and 55 years of age. Her REQV is 16 and her previous post was that of deputy principal. She has been in the principalship for the last six years and is no stranger to the process of transformation in education.

#### **4.2.2.3 Principal as a Leader**

The principal perceives herself as a leader who is confidently leading by example by pursuing a shared vision for the school. She maintains that she draws stakeholders into the decision making process and works towards the development of learners and educators. She claims she is performing key leadership duties such as strategic planning, mentoring and coaching all the time. While the educators supported the notion that she is a *'team builder'* who is *'confident'* and seeks to *'develop others'*, they claim she *'does not consult staff,'* and *'sometimes keeps information to herself'*.

Although the principal has a good perception of leadership and has good intentions, she is wary of totally dispensing with her power - she wants everyone to know that she is in charge and that she will determine to what extent there is any kind of power sharing. The educators identified attributes of leadership in their principal: she is a source of *'inspiration and motivation'* and is focused on doing what is best for the school.

When she discussed the project that demonstrated her leadership qualities, she too like many of the other principals, focused on a project that called for organizational skills. The project under question was piloting OBE at the school site - which in effect was implementing another of the departmental policies.

The principal rated herself as **very good** *'because of the accomplishments I have achieved in moving the school from where it was to where it is'*.

The three educators from her school rated her as follows:

*'good - she is not a planner - she is very good, but usually she doesn't consult staff- she takes decisions on her own.'*

*'good – she sometimes keeps information that makes her inferior.'*

*'good – she is good but sometimes she takes her own decisions without consulting staff.'*

### **4.2.3 SHORT STORY: An “excellent rating”**

#### **4.2.3.1 School Biography**

Mandela (a pseudonym) is a primary school in an urban, largely White residential area. The population of 820 comprises of 5% African, 25% Indian, 15% Coloured and 55% White learners. The staff demographics reflect a move towards integration, with 18% Africans, 4% Indians, 3% Coloureds and 75% Whites. A functional SGB is in operation.

The physical infrastructure of the school 10 years ago was inadequate because of its *'poorly equipped specialist rooms, little office space, poor grounds and fence, small media centre and lack of computer room.'* Today the school boasts *two campuses, two media centres, two computer rooms, well equipped specialist rooms, improved administration area and good fencing.'*

#### **4.2.3.2 Principal's Biography**

Nelson (a pseudonym) is a White male between 46-55 years with a REQV of 15. He moved up from being HOD and has 14 years experience in the principalship. This means he has led the school in the apartheid era and in the democratic era, and in so doing has felt the full impact of school transformation.

#### **4.2.3.3 Principal as a Leader**

Being a seasoned principal, Nelson perceives his role to be an *'innovator and visionary who leads by example, inspires enthusiasm and delegates effectively'*. When it came to performing leadership duties, he didn't claim to be fulfilling all the

duties all the time, but indicated that he performed these duties at different times. The roles he did perform very often were that of visionary, strategic planner, motivator and team builder.

The educators who perceived leaders to be supportive individuals who have vision and drive, described their principal as one who realizes that *'individuals have strengths and weaknesses and links responsibility to strength'*, and who *'solves problems in a positive way'*. They see him as a role model who has the institution's interest at heart. His attributes as a leader allow him to *'adopt a positive approach where concerns are dealt with in a professional and supportive manner'* and to *'nurture parent, pupil and teacher relationships'*.

The principal rated himself a modest *good* because *'our school has reshaped itself so as to provide for our community. We were able to see the need and change where required'*. The educators rated him as follows:

*'excellent – there is clear evidence of constant transformation to improve the working environment so all benefit and are able to reach their full potential.'*

*'excellent – he is always looking ahead trying to improve wherever possible - present and future minded, always ready to accept change and improve.'*

*'excellent – he leads by example.'*

#### **4.2.4 CONCLUDING COMMENTS ON THE SHORT STORIES**

A critique of these stories/case studies under the lens of school transformation implies:

- that the principal is central to school transformation
- that the disjuncture/dissonance between principals' perceptions and their actual practices of leadership override the juncture/resonance between principals' perceptions and their actual practices of leadership
- that a degree of disjuncture/dissonance exists between staff perception of leadership and their observations of leadership in the principal.

These stories have set the theme for the remainder of the chapter, which is the disjuncture/dissonance that prevails between principals' perceptions and their actual

practices of leadership, and the disjuncture/dissonance that exists between staff's perceptions and their observations of leadership within the climate of school transformation. Furthermore, the disjuncture/dissonance between principals as managers and principals as leaders is constantly played out in this chapter. Various strategies are employed to demonstrate this pervading conflict. These strategies range from perceptions of what they do, to interrogation of projects undertaken by principals, to understanding the different attributes of leadership and management. Since leadership is context bound, let's proceed to the remaining school sites to observe tales of transformation emanating from the survey at large.

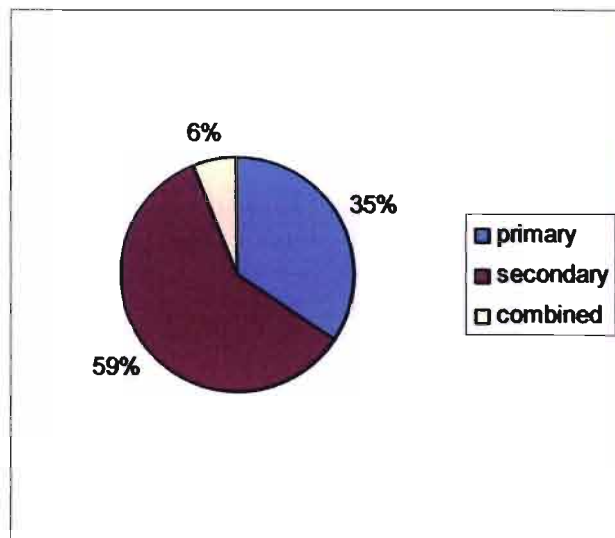
### **4.3 SCHOOLS AS SITES OF TRANSFORMATION**

Under the apartheid regime, the state perpetuated its separatist ideology through its education policies that provided unequal education for the learners of the country: the privileged white learners enjoyed superior education while the underprivileged suffered the brunt of inferior education. The white schools were more than adequately resourced while the non white schools ranged from having the basic to extremely limited resources in relation to both human and material resources. Figures released in 1991 by the South African Institute for Race Relations on per capita state expenditure on education indicate the following: white education R3739.00; Indian education R2659.00; Coloured education, R1983.00; African education, R930.00 (Alan, et al, 1993). But with the birth of democracy in our country, transformation policies sought to address such inequalities to provide schooling to learners irrespective of colour, creed or culture. After a decade of democracy, let us examine the changes that are occurring at the school sites in which my respondents are based.

These sites constituted 59.3% secondary schools, 6.2% combined schools and 34.6% primary schools<sup>1</sup> and were located accordingly: rural: 3.7%, suburban: 34.6% and urban<sup>2</sup>: 61.7% as reflected in figures 4.1 and 4. 2.

**Figure 4.1**

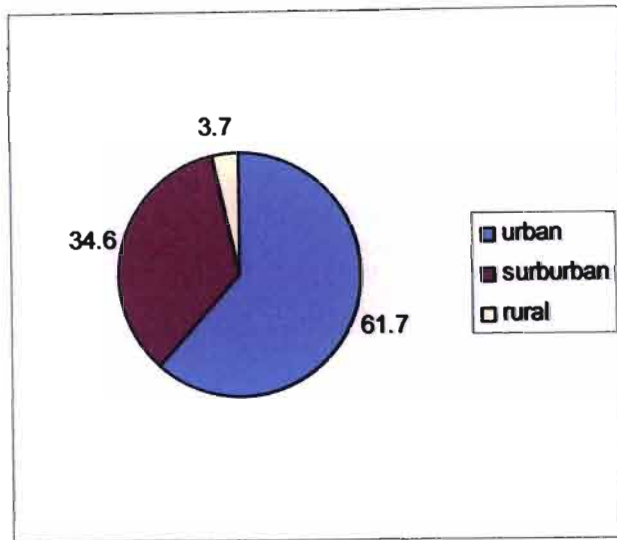
### TYPE OF SCHOOL



<sup>1</sup> primary school caters for Grades 1-7 learners, secondary school caters for Grades 8-12 learners and combined school caters for Grades 1-12 learners

<sup>2</sup> rural: 51 km from the city centre, suburban: 21 km -50 km from the city centre and urban: 0 km-20 km from the city centre

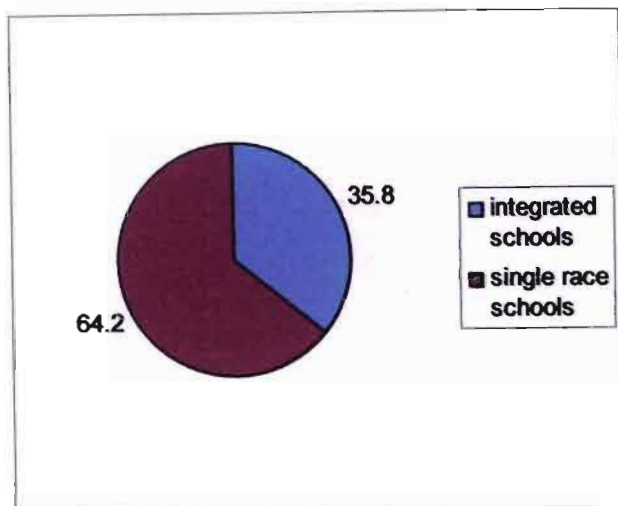
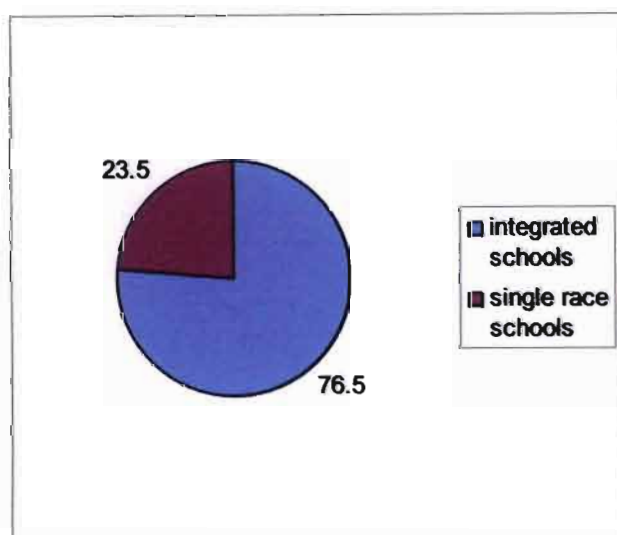


**Figure 4.2****SCHOOL LOCATION**

Historically, South African schools were administered along racial demarcations: there were four state departments for the provision of education:

- Department of Education and Training for African learners.
- Department of Education and Culture. Administration: House of Assembly for White learners.
- Department of Education and Culture. Administration: House of Representatives for Coloured learners.
- Department of Education and Culture. Administration: House of Delegates for Indian learners.

However, as the country's struggle towards a democratic state gained momentum in the 1980s, schools experienced a change in their racial composition. This was detected in the schools included in my study: the percentage of integrated schools stood at 35.8% while the single race schools stood at 64.2 % prior to 1994. With the country's metamorphosis to a democracy leading to the advent of a single ministry of education and the implementation of the South African Schools Act, a significant change can be observed in the racial composition of schools. The figures below indicate that the percentage of integrated schools more than doubled post -1994, with a significant decline of single race schools.

**Figure 4.3****SCHOOL INTEGRATION (BY RACE) PRIOR TO 1994****Figure 4.4****SCHOOL INTEGRATION (BY RACE) POST 1994**

If one examines the learner demographics in the sample schools as reflected in the charts 4.5 and 4.6 below, a particular kind of migration is emerging. Over a period of 10 years, the participating schools have experienced an overall increase of 21.1% of African learners, while they experienced overall decreases of Indian learners (17.3%),

White learners (2.1%) and Coloured learners (1.8%). This finding suggests that (i) learners have generally migrated from traditionally African schools to traditionally Indian and White schools and (ii) that there has been a movement of the more affluent learners to independent schools, considering that there has been an increase in the number of independent schools (1999 SNAP Survey indicates that there are 817 independent schools nationally).

The current study is unable to list any statistics regarding the movement to independent schools since it excluded independent schools from its sample; an exclusion that may provide impetus for further study in the area of school transformation in South Africa. However, there have been some significant changes to the learner demographics from 1994 to 2004. Former Indian and White schools experienced a substantial increase in African learner population. This suggests a migration pattern of African learners to other race schools while the migration of Indian, White and Coloured learners into former African schools are non-existent or minimal.

**Figure 4.5**

#### LEARNER INTEGRATION (BY RACE) PRIOR TO 1994

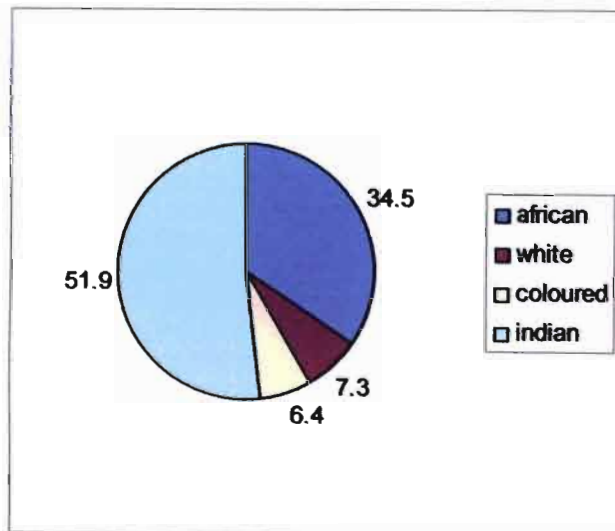


Figure 4.5 illustrates the demographics of learners across all the participating schools prior to 1994.

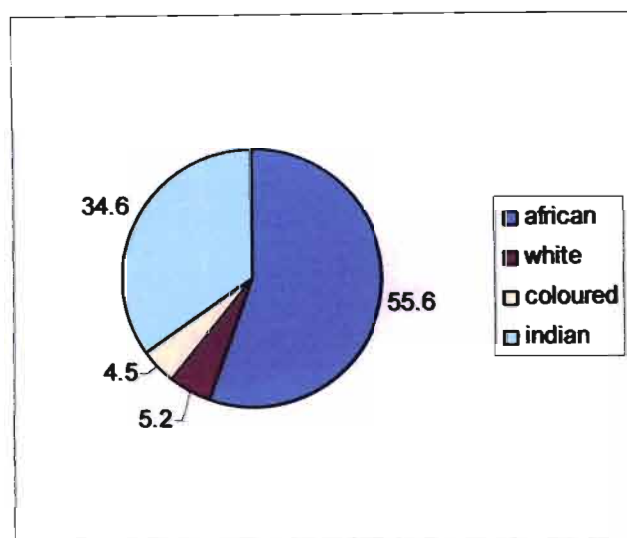
**Figure 4.6****LEARNER INTEGRATION (BY RACE) POST 1994**

Figure 4.6 illustrates the demographics of learners across all the participating schools post 1994.

The percentage of schools that have racially integrated since 1994 has increased in keeping with the transformation process in education. However, this type of integration is occurring mainly in the former Indian and White schools; not surprisingly, former African schools remain as single race schools. Due to the scant fiscal resources of the traditional African schools, their physical infrastructures were minimal and their human resources were limited.

This schooling context had two major implications: firstly it was not inviting to learners from more affluent Indian and White schools, therefore no migration patterns into former African schools were noted; and secondly, learners from former African schools sought better educational opportunities and, therefore, a prominent migration to former Indian and White schools ensued. So when the opportunity for better education surfaced, there was an exodus of learners out of the historically disadvantaged schools.

However, when one examines the staff demographics (Table 4.1), the process of racial integration is much slower. The greatest change is evident in the urban schools: 72% are integrated while 28% remain single race. In the suburban and rural areas the process of staff integration is occurring at a slower pace: 35.7% are integrated while 64.3% remain single race and 33.3% are integrated while 66.7% remain single race respectively. This is due to the divided practices of education that emanated from our apartheid past, when teachers of different races were appointed to schools designated for their race groups only and to schools they nominated themselves. This process of 'posting'<sup>3</sup> ceased to exist in the late 1990s and was replaced by redeployment and a new process of appointment.

However, due to limited vacancies, a moratorium on the employment (1997-2000) of new teachers imposed by the Department of Education (a process advocated by the Department to deal with the declared oversupply of teachers) and reluctance of teachers going to teach in townships and rural areas, staffing integration in suburban and rural schools were limited. The above reasons of staff profiles also contributed to all schools having a dominance of the racial profile of the apartheid intended groupings. For example, the former Indian schools have a dominance of Indian teachers.

My own experience and observation of the impact of transformational policies at the school site, indicate that a move towards racial integration of staff has been initiated by the implementation of the rationalization and redeployment policies, in accordance with Resolution No 6 of 1998 of the Education Labour Relations Council. The concept of rationalization and redeployment is located within the transformation agenda in education, whereby the Department of Education seeks to ensure equity in staffing and to address the teaching needs of all schools.

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<sup>3</sup> 'posting' refers to the process whereby the Department of Education appointed teachers to schools

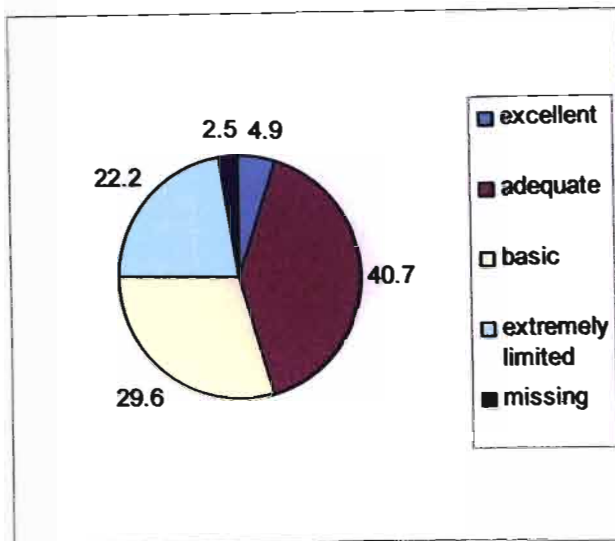
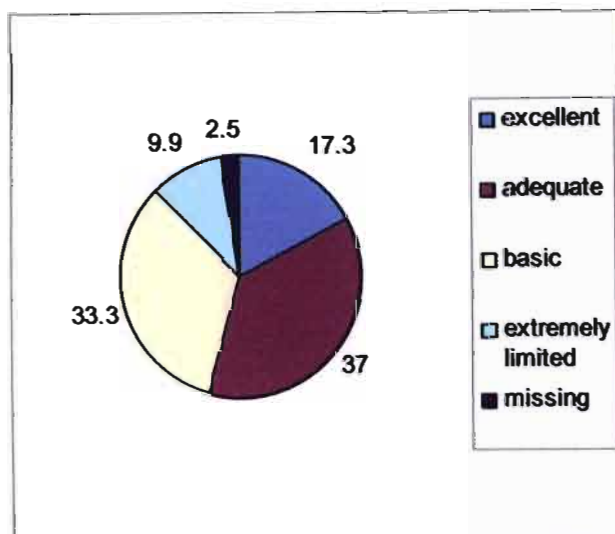
**Table 4. 1: Distribution of teachers according to school location and racial integration**

			current staff		Total
			SINGLE RACE	INTEGRATED	
School location	Urban	Count	14	36	50
		% within school location	28.0%	72.0%	100.0%
	Suburban	Count	18	10	28
		% within school location	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
	Rural	Count	2	1	3
		% within school location	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	34	47	81
		% within school location	42.0%	58.0%	100.0%

(To facilitate the reading of Table 4.1 the following example is provided: In the urban location 28% of the single race schools have single race teachers)

To take a brief look at how the sample schools are governed, once again we detect the implementation of the South African Schools Act - all schools have school governing bodies (Section 16 of SASA) and all secondary and combined schools have representative councils of learners (Section 11 of SASA). Since the governance of schools has been allocated to the governing bodies which comprise membership from the different stakeholder constituencies, the majority of which are parents, the emergence of the multiracial school is becoming increasingly evident. There is also a move by school governing bodies towards employing teachers from different racial backgrounds to fulfill the needs of the multiracial school, and to employ teachers on competency and merit irrespective of colour. This movement is given impetus by employment equity targets which give precedence to previously disadvantaged groups in the workplace.

At this junction I draw attention to the physical infrastructure of the school sites. Again the injustices of the past regime created schools that varied in infrastructure: from what can be deemed extremely limited to excellent. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate school infrastructure prior to 1994 and post 1994 respectively.

**Figure 4.7****INFRASTRUCTURE PRIOR TO 1994****Figure 4.8****INFRASTRUCTURE POST 1994**

The data reveals that noteworthy changes have occurred in the extreme cases regarding the physical infrastructure of schools. Schools that were extremely limited in infrastructure prior to 1994 have decreased by 12.3% post 1994, while the excellently resourced have increased by 12.4%. Schools that were basically and adequately resourced have had minor shifts of 3.7% post 1994. This indicates an

overall improvement in the physical infrastructure. To what is this transformation attributed?

To redress the infrastructural inequalities of the past, the National Norms and Standards for School Funding became national policy on 1 April 1999. Schools were ranked according to *'the physical condition, facilities and crowding of the school'* and *'the relative poverty of the community around the school'* (Norms and Standards for School Funding, Section 21). The Norms and Standards policy has serious financial implications for the school, schooling and educators. The funding formula is based on a resource targeting table which leads to the development of a resource targeting list, through which the funds available are targeted at the identified poor. The Resource targeting table is based on the 60:40 principle to ensure that 60% of funding be allocated to the poorest 40% of learners.

But cognizance must be taken of the fact that previously advantaged schools still have the edge – the conditions and communities in which they exist are more conducive to fundraising and paying higher school fees. They claim exorbitant school fees and enjoy parental support to a greater degree. The school governing bodies play a more active role and bring their expertise and skills to bear on the governance of schools. These schools and principals enjoy the financial stature to provide adequate human and material resources. For instance they are not bound to the post provisioning norm, they have the clout to make school governing body appointments as and when the need arises. Evidently the more affluent parents display a greater vested interest in the school.

The survey which I conducted in my baseline study indicated that the less fortunate schools that are allocated greater subsidies proportionally are either maintaining their resources or making progressive improvements, depending on their past situations and the principals who are leading them. The survey disclosed that certain principals are not overwhelmed by the condition of their school sites – they have used their power and influence to make significant improvements - a case in point being a principal who managed to secure funds to build the school. To the contrary there are those principals irrespective of their past situations, who display no inclination for progress and change but bemoan their challenges to head what can only be termed stagnant



schools. Why are these principals not responding to opportunities to transform their schools? Perhaps they are lacking in management and leadership skills pertaining to change.

After zooming in on the short stories and investigating schools as sites of transformation, I turn to the lessons that can be learned from engaging in these two exercises. Firstly leading transformation is a mammoth task in the context of South African education but not impossible. It is a social responsibility that must be undertaken with commitment and perseverance by the principal on a local level and by the minister of education on a national level. Secondly prevailing signs of transformation: the increase of racially integrated schools and improvement of infrastructure in some quarters indicate that the process has begun and is compelled to gain momentum.

But more congruent to my study is the role played by the principal as a leader in school transformation. When considering the transformation agendas for schooling in South Africa, it is imperative that the principal provides an environment that is conducive to quality education of all learners regardless of class, culture or colour. In addition to state subsidies, there are principals who are locating the much needed fiscal resources to provide the specialist rooms and specialist equipment. Schools that had adequate infrastructure have made technological advances in acquiring computer laboratories in the main and upgrading their other specialist rooms by networking, building partnerships and securing sponsorships locally, nationally and internationally to become excellently resourced. This is the appropriate time to visit these principals and to begin to understand who they are and why they do what they do.

#### **4.4 DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PRINCIPALS**

Before proceeding to examine how the principals are constructing themselves as leaders within school transformation, I think that this is an opportune moment to introduce the designated leaders of schools. This introduction assumes the form of a demographic profile in terms of age group, qualification, gender, previous post and experience in the principalship.

Table 4.2 below captures a profile of the principals who responded to the survey according to age, qualification and gender.

**Table 4. 2: Distribution of principals according to age, qualification and gender.**

Principal's gender				principal's qualification					Total
				M+3	m+4	M+5	m+6	m+7	
Female	principal's age	36-45 age group	Count	0	0	3	3	0	6
			% within principal's age	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
		46-55 age group	Count	1	4	2	5	2	14
			% within principal's age	7.1%	28.6%	14.3%	35.7%	14.3%	100.0%
		56+ age group	Count	1	1	0	2	0	4
			% within principal's age	25.0%	25.0%	.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total		Count	2	5	5	10	2	24
			% within principal's age	8.3%	20.8%	20.8%	41.7%	8.3%	100.0%
Male	principal's age	36-45 age group	Count	1	4	2	5	3	15
			% within principal's age	6.7%	26.7%	13.3%	33.3%	20.0%	100.0%
		46-55 age group	Count	1	5	7	14	9	38
			% within principal's age	2.8%	13.9%	19.4%	38.9%	25.0%	100.0%
		56+ age group	Count	0	0	0	4	0	4
			% within principal's age	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total		Count	2	9	9	23	12	55
			% within principal's age	3.6%	16.4%	16.4%	41.8%	21.8%	100.0%

Table 4.2 indicates that the majority of the principals (males: 58% and females: 65%) are in the 46-55 age group, pointing to the fact that the majority have been involved in the practice of education for a reasonable period of time and have been witnesses to the radical change in South African education. However, their formal training and previous experience which occurred in a different environment may have not necessarily trained them for the challenges of leading their schools in this period of rapid transformation (Pettit et al, 1992; Steyn & Squelch, 1994).

The younger principals (36-45 age group), however, tend to be more highly qualified. One hundred percent of the males and 66, 6% of the females are post graduates with a REQV 15 (M+ 5) and above. This may be due to one or more of the following reasons:

- this is the information age: there is an increase in researching education and an infiltration of theories from the business world to the education arena.
- the younger principal is more ambitious: she/he recognizes and exploits the opportunities available for lifelong learning.
- she/he identifies the need to acquire new skills and expertise: she/he understands that principalship is no longer protected by the system and that one needs to empower oneself to manage, drive and lead change in a dynamic and potentially conflicting environment.
- in recent years (post 1996) school governing bodies are making recommendations for the younger, more qualified principal since they believe that one needs to be energized; consequently those aspiring to the principalship have taken the initiative to empower themselves for the challenging task of leading schools in this turbulent time of transformation.

The appointment of younger (36-45 age group) principals with higher qualifications, points to the relationship between post graduate studies to scholarship. Further studies promote knowledge production by the processes of research and critique. These processes illustrate the emerging thinking about professional qualifications and academic qualifications (honours and above) among teachers. Instead of the continuing focus of producing teachers within South Africa, there is a movement towards a knowledge driven community (researching teacher education) to lead and

manage change in education. Academic qualifications enable teachers to inform their practice through knowledge. Caldwell (2003: 7) maintains: "Knowledge management should be an integral part of teacher education, but more particularly at the graduate or post graduate level, and especially for leaders and managers." This cohort of principals who have engaged in self development programmes will probably be capacitated in many ways to lead change at the school. Being involved in change empowers one to facilitate change. But their success stories will depend on a whole range of factors.

Women in South Africa continue to dominate the education profession, but not in positions of leadership and management (Truscott, 1994; Wolpe et al., 1997; Mahlase, 1997; Chisholm & Napo, 1999 as cited in Chisholm, 2001). In the past the secondary school principal was largely the domain of the male, while the primary school principal was largely the domain of the female. But there is the emergence of a deviation from this norm since the implementation of redress policies relating to school based promotions.

This study shows no significance in relation to gender and qualification. The majority of males and females have post graduate qualifications across all age groups. This could be attributed to the re-emergence of the reliance of higher education to lead transformation in schools. "The successful transformation of schools calls for a 'new professional' in which teacher's work is increasingly research-based, outcomes-based, data driven, and team focused at the same time as it is globalised, localized and individualized, with lifelong professional learning the norm for the specialist in school education as it is for the specialist in medicine" (Caldwell, 2003: 7). So when it comes to transformation at the school site, male and female principals are adequately qualified as professionals and their rates of success as agents of transformation will depend on factors other than qualification. These factors which include the personal, socio-political, socio-cultural and educational, among others, will be explored in the next chapter based on the edited life histories of the principals.

**Table 4. 3 : Distribution of principals according to age and previous post level.**

			principal's previous post level				Total
			level 1	Level 2	Level 3	other	
Principal's age	36-45 age group	Count	4	5	8	3	20
		% within principal's age	20.0%	25.0%	40.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	46-55 age group	Count	4	18	25	5	52
		% within principal's age	7.7%	34.6%	48.1%	9.6%	100.0%
	56+ age group	Count	1	2	4	1	8
		% within principal's age	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>		Count	9	25	37	9	80
		% within principal's age	11.3%	31.3%	46.3%	11.3%	100.0%

Table 4.3 reflects that in all three age groups, the majority of the principals: 40%, 48.1% and 50% respectively were promoted from level 3 to level 4. This finding supports the notion that experience in the various levels preceding the principalship is an important consideration for promotion to the position of principal.

But we cannot ignore another wave of transformation that is prevalent at the school site. The majority (20%) of the principals who have been promoted to the principalship, from level one hail from the younger age group of 36-45 years. Prior to the implementation of the South African Schools Act and the formation of school governing bodies, those aspiring to the principalship were compelled to go through the ranks. Since the penetration of democratic principles into the education arena which was cataclysmic to the revamping of the promotion process, certain younger principals with no prior experience in education management were promoted to the principalship. The educator armed with a REQV 13 (M+3) and five years of teaching experience became a contender for the level 3 principalship and the educator armed with a REQV 13 (M+3) and seven years of teaching experience became a contender for the level 4 principalship (School Based Promotion Bulletins released since 1998). Once again the transformation agenda in education is apparent: previously disadvantaged educators are given the opportunity to head schools.

To gain a better understanding of the transformation agenda as it relates to the appointment of principals, there is a need to reflect on the history of South African education which reverberated on all aspects of schooling, including school based promotions. During the apartheid era the appointment of principals was based on seniority and qualifications. Every educator who aspired to promotion was subject to progressing from one level to the next and the department was solely responsible for identifying personnel worthy of being promoted. There was no recourse for debate or dispute.

The early years of the post apartheid era witnessed a radical change in the practices and procedures of the appointment of principals. Since the main theme that prevailed during this period was redress, educators with a minimum teaching qualification of M+3, irrespective of their seniority, were promoted to the principalship. The policy to decentralize education to the school site: empowered school governing bodies to recommend educators to be appointed as principals based on the needs of the school and its surrounding community. Also, transformation practices enabled educators to declare disputes and lodge grievances with the appropriate authorities.

However, after a decade of democracy school governing bodies are cautious about who gets promoted to the principalship. There is a re-emergence of the criteria for promotion that was characteristic of the pre-democratic era: higher level qualifications and the experience of progressing through the levels are important considerations when making recommendations for promotion posts. This can be gleaned from Table 4.2, which indicates that 41.8% have a qualification of M+6 and 21.8 % have a qualification of M+7 and from Table 4.3, which indicates that 31.3% progressed from level 2 and 46.3% progressed from level 3 to the principalship. In theorizing about why this trend is resurfacing, I found myself reflecting on the mammoth challenges confronting the principal. According to Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991: 147): "The amount and number of areas of school expertise expected of the school principal – school law, curriculum planning, supervision of instruction, community relations, human resource development, student relations, administration - are ever increasing." The South African principal faces all this and more since she/he is also faced with the daunting task of dealing with the scourge of apartheid education. It is not surprising that the principalship demands the skills and expertise that emanates from

professional self development and lifelong learning. Not only does the principal have to be well versed in the wave of business administration sweeping across education administration, but she/he is compelled to market the institution and compete for learner enrollment.

**Table 4. 4: Distribution of principals according to age and years in current post**

principal's age \* principal: yrs experience in current post Cross tabulation

			Principal : yrs in current post									Total
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	11	
principal's age	36-45 age group	Count	2	2	3	3	4	2	1	3	1	21
		% within principal's age	9.5%	9.5%	14.3%	14.3%	19.0%	9.5%	4.8%	14.3%	4.8%	100.0%
	46-55 age group	Count	3	7	1	5	7	15	6	3	4	51
		% within principal's age	5.9%	14%	2.0%	9.8%	13.7%	29.4%	11.8%	5.9%	7.8%	100.0%
	56+ age group	Count	0	0	0	1	3	0	2	1	0	7
		% within principal's age	.0%	.0%	.0%	14.3%	42.9%	.0%	28.6%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>		Count	5	9	4	9	14	17	9	7	5	79
		% within principal's age	6.3%	11%	5.1%	11.4%	17.7%	21.5%	11.4%	8.9%	6.3%	100.0%



While the majority of principals surveyed have five years or more experience in their current posts, a fair number are less than five years in their current post (Table 4.4). The latter finding may point to a high turnover of principals in schools. This finding may be due to principals opting to retire at an early age because they cannot cope with the challenges that accompany school transformation, or their opting for a voluntary severance package to seek greener pastures. The schools surveyed are in existence for many years (located in settled communities) and, perhaps the opportunity for transforming schools is available as new leaders are appointed to replace other principals.

#### **4.5 PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP**

As principals are the focal point of many efforts of schools, their perceptions are critical variables in the change process (Steyn & Squelch, 1994). But what the study intends to uncover is whether their perceptions of leadership are in sync with their actual practice.

After poring over the data on what principals perceive to be their roles as leaders in response to Question 1, Section C in Appendix A, I captured their responses as words that succinctly describe their roles. In other words I categorized their roles. I then recorded the number of times each principal identified the perceived roles to construct the schedule as reflected in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Leadership roles perceived by principals**

PERCEIVED ROLES OF LEADERSHIP BY PRINCIPALS	IDENTIFIED BY NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS
Manager	24
Motivator	20
Role Model	19
Capacity building	17
Team builder	17
Instructional leader	16
Visionary	15
Supporter	13
Planner	13
Guide	10
Human resource manager	10
Delegant	9
Professional development	9
Decision maker	8
Mediator	8
Counsellor	7
Director	6
Academic	5
Disciplinarian	5
Supervisor	5
Communicator	5
Participative manager	4
Resource manager	4
Moral leader	4
Community leader	4
Democrat	4
Initiator	4
Professional	3
Policy development & implementation	3
Policy implementation	3
Financial manager	3
Mentor	3
Progressive leader	3

Negotiator	3
Liaison	2
<b>Team leader</b>	2
Consultant	2
<b>Inspirational leader</b>	2
Entrepreneur	2
Provider	2
<b>Proactive role</b>	2
<b>Innovator</b>	2
<b>Transformer</b>	2
Protector	2
<b>Situational leader</b>	1
Whole school developer	1
Networker	1
<b>Nurturer</b>	1
Public relations	1

The literature on management and leadership draws a distinction between these two facets. Burn's (1978) theory of transformational leadership draws attention to a leader's ability to inspire, encourage and involve peers and subordinates, and to generate team work to fulfill a vision for the organization. Management theorists (Handy, 1985; Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1947 as cited in Bush, 1995), focus on managers being organizers, decision makers, providers, implementers and instructors. "Another way of perceiving the dimensions is in terms of management and leadership where management functions focus on organizational maintenance and leadership involves a proactive, visionary role" (Sergiovanni, 1997; Duigan, 1986 as cited in Duigan and Macpherson, 1992: 125). Leaders do the right thing; managers do things right is the maxim advocated by many management and leadership experts (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Maxwell, 2002; Reed, 2001). In essence management ensures efficiency while leadership ensures effectiveness.

Being guided by the theories of leadership and management, the roles perceived by principals in Table 4.5 can be categorized as leadership oriented or management oriented. To draw the distinction I have used bold font to illustrate the leadership roles and normal font to illustrate the management roles in Table 4.5.

In responding to the question on perceived leadership roles, principals in the survey identified 17 roles with a leadership orientation and 32 roles with a management orientation. Top of the list in Table 4.5 reveals that 24 of the principals (30%) perceived managing a school as a leadership role which supercedes all other roles.

To understand the tendency for principals to prioritize their management portfolio, it is important to consider the school context that derived from the decentralization efforts in education which gave rise to site-based management. Site-based management impacted on the principal's role in two different ways: firstly the responsibility of managing the school's fiscal resources, among other management functions which were traditionally the role functions of the Department of Education, were delegated to the principal and; secondly, the principal was expected to conduct added responsibilities in collaboration with the different stakeholders in education.

With the complexity of site-based management, came the reconceptualization of the principal's role. This is echoed by Steyn & Squelch (1994: 186): "It was felt that their role had changed from an 'instructional leader' to a 'manager' and said that this concluded the role of 'director' and 'financial expert'.... A greater need for accountability in all roles was identified and it seemed that while certain tasks might be delegated, they still remained the primary responsibility of the principal." In a similar vein James & Vince (2001) maintain that the head teacher's role shifted from being 'a people person' towards being 'more management oriented'.

The other roles perceived by a fair number of principals: motivator - 20, role model - 19 and visionary - 15 are more in keeping with the features of transformational leadership theory as espoused by Burns (1978); Bass (1985); Avolio (1999) and Northouse (2001). However, other important roles characteristic of transformational leadership such as mentor, inspirational leader, transformer are perceived by below 4% of principals. This can be attributed to the onslaught of management oriented functions that have impacted on the principalship. The majority of principals who participated in my survey are still in the process of dealing with the backlogs in material and human resources. Much of their time is spent on the design and development of the necessary systems and structures that are conducive to the functionality of the school. It is apparent from the survey, that they are prioritizing

their roles as managers of change since they are the chief accounting officers and have been tasked with creating and managing self reliant schools.

The responses from principals as indicated in Table 4.5 suggest that while principals perceive their roles to be leadership oriented, these perceptions are actually more management oriented. Yet again we see the impact of attending to the basic needs of the institution. Principals are so focused on fulfilling their vast array of management functions that they seem to construe these as leadership functions . . . or can we in reality separate management and leadership roles? What we detect here is the power of the organizational context – it is the context that is determining the direction that is taken by the principal. So while many of the principals have higher degrees and experience, their leadership abilities are curtailed by the needs of the institution which must be managed before it can be led. They realize that the proper structures and mechanisms have to be in place before they can lead the institution in transformation – it is a process not an event. The baseline study clearly illustrated this assertion since 37% of the principals who completed Appendix A, indicated that development of infrastructure was prioritized. This finding will be explored in greater detail at a later stage (Section 7) when the focus turns to projects completed by principals.

#### **4.6 LEADERSHIP ROLES PERFORMED BY PRINCIPALS AS IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS**

Principals were requested to record the frequency of various leadership roles they performed. Educators were requested to record the frequency of these roles being performed by their principals. Table 4.6 presents the roles that principals perform very often/ all the time as perceived by themselves and educators.

**Table 4. 6: Leadership roles performed by principals as perceived by principals and educators**

ROLES	FREQUENCY	PRINCIPALS	EDUCATORS
Visionaries	Very often/all the time	80.3%	62.3 %
Negotiators	Very often/all the time	84%	59.4 %
Strategic planners	Very often/all the time	83.9%	65.2%
Coaches	Very often/all the time	44.4%	40.5%
Mentors	Very often/all the time	74.1%	55.1%
Counsellors	Very often/all the time	76.6%	59.4%
Motivators	Very often/all the time	87.7%	66.7%
Team builders	Very often/all the time	87.6%	56.5%
Decision makers	Very often/all the time	86.4%	69.6%
Supervisors	Very often/all the time	79%	69.6%
Finance officers	Very often/all the time	75.3%	65.2%

Principals in the study maintain they are giving attention to the multifaceted roles that come with their job descriptions. However, the educators, who concur with the principals' perceptions that they are fulfilling these roles, claim that they are performing these roles to a lesser degree (Table 4.6). While principals' perceptions of performing these roles are predominantly above 70%, the educators' perceptions of them performing these roles are below 70%. Perhaps principals have misconceptions about their leadership roles or they are so inundated with their management functions that they truly believe they are in actual fact leading schools. It is important to consider that the manner in which teachers perceive these role functions may not always concur with the manner in which principals perceive them. These observations reinforce the disjuncture/dissonance that prevails between principals' perceptions and their actual practices of leadership.

Principals claim that they are acting as visionaries, coaches, mentors and motivators quite frequently. In this particular survey 86.4 % of the principals reported that they make decisions very often/all the time, suggesting that they still monopolize in which direction the institutions are transforming – perhaps it is their way of controlling the

power play. The same holds for the roles of supervisor and finance officer. The following reasons may explain why they hold on to the reigns in certain instances:

1. They have had their initial training and practice within the constraints of apartheid education. As Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) affirm, historically the authoritarianism of top-down control of all aspects of schooling remains embedded in the culture of most schools. Post 1994 initiated the move away from this culture; but remnants of this system are still in existence.
2. In spite of educational policies imparting power to the different stakeholders the principal is accountable for what transpires at the school site.
3. The principal is considered the 'gatekeeper' of change (Caldwell, 2003; Datnow & Castellano, 2001), but she/he must at the same time maintain order and stability at the school site.
4. The principal views her/his assigned position of power as her/his tool to rule.

To understand the concept of power within the leadership framework I refer to Northouse (2001: 11)

Related to leadership is the concept of power - the potential to influence. There are two kinds of power: position and personal. Position power, which is much like assigned leadership, refers to the power an individual derives from having an office in a formal organizational system. Personal power comes from followers. It is given to leaders because followers believe that it is something of value. Treating power as a shared resource is important because it de-emphasizes the idea that leaders are power wielders.

For years the education system advocated principals to subscribe to their assigned powers, thus they deemed themselves powerful by virtue of their positions. The Department of Education designed the policies and their officers at the school site, the principals, implemented them with no input from parents, teachers or learners. The principal's authority did not come under question since her/his power which derived from having an office in a formal organization was upheld by all stakeholders. However, the reconceptualization of the principal's role, which resulted from the transformation initiatives in education, expect the principal to extend her/his power beyond position power to include personal power, which comes from concerted efforts to collaborate and consult with the stakeholders in education. But due to traditionally deriving their power from their designated positions, principals who

participated in the survey continue to derive much of their power from their positions and are only beginning to develop a sense of personal power.

The idea of holding on to their position power has a bearing on how principals perceive their leadership roles. It can be concluded that since principals hold on to their position power, they desist from power sharing which is consistent with good leadership practice. Also, this explains why they tend to be management inclined but tend to perceive that they are leadership inclined, pointing to an assertion that there prevails a degree of disjuncture/dissonance between principals' perceptions and their actual practices of leadership.

#### **4.7 PROJECTS DISCUSSED BY PRINCIPALS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

To understand what defines leadership qualities I have extrapolated from the literature compiled by the leadership gurus such as Kotter (1996), Oakley & Krug (1991), Reed (2001) and Maxwell (2002). They associate management with planning, budgeting, organizing, resourcing, supervising and problem solving, whereas leadership is aligned to change processes, vision building and inspiring people to realize that vision. A leader, therefore, has to possess foresight, be open to change and be a source of inspiration. These qualities resonate with those espoused by transformational leadership theory (Burns 1978).

To gain some insight into their leadership role, principals were requested to discuss the successful completion of a recent project that demonstrated leadership qualities. After reading through their responses several times, I categorized their projects as reflected in Table 4.7 and noted the number of times each project was discussed.

At this stage it is important to note the following observation: analysis of data pertaining to projects completed by principals develops the recurring theme of the chapter, which is the disjunction between what principals perceive as leadership and what is regarded as leadership practice. There is a notion that there exists a



disjuncture between what principals report as leadership practice, through the projects they engage in, and how it is evaluated in terms of management and leadership theory.

In attempting to provide a brief exposé on the different projects completed by principals to demonstrate their leadership roles, the following points emerged:

- Principals believe that their management roles are in fact leadership roles
- Principals lack the capacity to express their leadership roles within their management functions
- Principals regard management and leadership interchangeably.

The above points are brought into focus by interrogating the projects that principals highlighted to demonstrate their leadership skills. They will follow the order that appears in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: Projects completed by principals**

TYPE OF PROJECTS	NUMBER OF PROJECTS
Development of infrastructure	30
Organization of programmes/ functions/conferences/projects	17
Implementation of policies	7
Improvement of grade 12 results	5
Development of staff	7
Creation of partnerships	3
Mediation and negotiation	3
Introduction of new subject	1

#### **4.7.1 Development of infrastructure**

Thirty of the 81 principals discussed the development of infrastructure as a project that demonstrated their leadership qualities. The activities within this category of project work done by principals ranged from the installing of a computer centre to

building new classrooms, libraries, assembly structures and providing safety and security. While some of these projects are major undertakings, such as the building of a school as discussed by one principal, the skills and expertise that were identified by many principals were more in line with the management function since they highlighted the organization factor, meeting deadlines, supervising, budgeting and maintenance.

Principals initiated these projects to develop the infrastructure of the schools to target the broader goal of providing quality education to all learners. As I alluded to earlier in Section 5, which explores principals' perceptions of leadership, principals are tasked with resourcing schools with the systems and structures appropriate for the functionality of the school, which in turn promotes effective teaching and learning. So while the act of implementing the infrastructure may be management oriented, the act of conceptualization and the process of securing the 'buy in' of the various stakeholders may have required principals to motivate, inspire and influence, thereby demonstrating leadership qualities. This explains why these principals considered the development of infrastructure to illustrate their leadership roles. "Louis and Miles (1990) make the distinction between leadership and management and emphasize that both are essential. Leadership relates to mission, direction, inspiration. Management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done with people" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991: 157). It is evident these principals are blurring the line between leadership and management, therefore they are more in sync with Louis and Miles rather than the leadership gurus who view leadership as a 'higher order' duty.

#### **4.7.2 Organization of functions and programmes**

Seventeen principals focused on the organization of events such as the deb's ball, prom, speech and awards and senior certificate examination, and the organization of programmes based on AIDS, safety and security and matters related to school management. Once again these are largely management oriented which require skills of organization and can be delegated. The following responses from different principals bear testimony to this claim:

- *'I personally trained all learners (90) on "complete" dance routine for the debs ball'*
- *'All stakeholders involved in prom function completed without any pitfalls'*
- *'Appointment of guest of honour and special awards chosen in consultation with all role players - the function culminated without any disputes'*
- *'My task as leader was mainly coordinating, supervising and monitoring the whole process to ensure that the examination ran smoothly'*

These duties can be distributed to personnel at different levels of the organization and calls for effective delegation by the principal. In actual fact, it is the responsibility of the principal to provide ample opportunities for teachers to empower themselves in the context of schools. By delegating the organization of functions and programmes to her/his subordinates, the principal is clearly sending out the message that she/he has faith in them. It takes a leader to recognize and encourage leadership at the various levels of the organization, but principals appear to be reluctant to dispense power by engaging in effective delegation and control.

#### **4.7.3 Implementation of policies**

The principal in her/his capacity is responsible for policy implementation; this is an administrative function whose success depends on managing and leading change. To ensure the successful implementation of policies it is imperative that the principal secures the support of the stakeholders, a task which can only be accomplished by the influential powers of a leader. However, the seven principals who discussed how the implementation of policies revealed their leadership, in effect illustrated their ability to organize and administer. The following responses by different principals support this notion:

- *'the school piloted Outcomes Based Education'*
- *'drove the Integrated Quality Management System'*
- *'launched a new Representative Council of Learners structure that replaced the outmoded prefect system'*

- *‘Revised National Curriculum – copious jargon was given to educators by the curriculum unit. I had to unravel the mirage and draw up schemes and plans for teacher - friendly usage’*

These statements are indicative of managerial responsibilities as alluded to by Kotter (1996) and Reed (2001), rather than leadership responsibilities. A concern is raised as principals are indicating leadership responsibilities while performing managerial responsibilities. Either the principals are unclear about what constitutes managerial functions as opposed to what constitutes leadership functions, or principals are unable to articulate the leadership role through the activities they discuss. Either way, these are important points to note.

#### **4.7.4 Development of staff**

The seven principals who chose to talk about projects that led to the development of staff displayed an interest in the school and personnel. As they discussed their projects I could detect how they worked to inspire, motivate and capacitate their teachers. The following quotations from different principals capture their enthusiasm to promote lifelong learning among the staff:

- *‘support staff in order for them to reach career objectives’*
- *‘the introduction of two Elsen classes and the training of eight educators who have successfully completed Module 1 of the Elsen Course’*
- *‘various workshops and staff development exercises held both at school and away from school.’*

These statements illustrate leadership qualities since they point to the fact that principals are taking cognizance of teachers’ needs and challenges and offering them the opportunities to engage in capacity building. Bass and Avolio (1994) maintain that leadership is observed when leaders develop colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and potential.

#### **4.7.5 Improvement of Grade 12 results**

At the end of every year the newspapers publicize the Senior Certificate results and many accolades are given to the top performing schools. So I was not surprised when five principals laboured on to discuss the interventions and strategies to improve their matriculation results. But they too focused on organization skills, yet again suggesting what competent managers they are by making statements like:

- *'In 2002, Grade 12s achieved a pass rate below 50%. With all stakeholders on board, possible weak areas identified and steps taken to rectify the problem areas. Through motivation and leading by example, the pass rate in 2003 was 97, 14%.'*

However, upon interrogation of this statement, elements of leadership can be detected. The principal, in a closing statement, indicated that it took motivation and influence to improve the matriculation results. According to Bass and Avolio (1994) leadership is seen when leaders motivate colleagues and followers to look beyond their interests, in this case towards the interest of the school.

#### **4.7.6 Creation of partnerships**

A minority of principals (three) revealed their capacity to spread their wings to create partnerships as far afield as the United Kingdom. One principal linked up with Bruntcliff High in Leeds and facilitated an exchange programme for two teachers and two learners to interact with the teachers and learners abroad. Another created a partnership between his school and the Strakosch Foundation in England - this generated a trust fund of R2, 037 million for the school. The final partnership was a home based one where the principal motivated for an ex-students society that has the interests of the school at heart. These principals realize the importance of pushing the boundaries to access resources from beyond the school. They realize that the school is no longer a self contained unit that can operate in isolation. Instead, its success is dependent on assuming its place in the global village. These principals are driven by a shared school vision that can only be realized by working with the different stakeholders.

Each of the three principals is involved in transformation in his own right. The principal who initiated the exchange programme across continents promoted cross-cultural learning, inspiring teachers and learners to new ways of teaching and learning in and out of the classroom. The principal who secured the generous trust fund, succeeded in equipping his school with the latest technology in various disciplines of science and technology. He also upgraded all existing facilities. This school boasts a population of well over a thousand learners from all walks of life and is in no danger of losing its more affluent learners to the former Model C schools which have good facilities. The third principal used his influence to reconnect the ex-students to the current population, but he made no mention of the consequences of this reconnection.

#### **4.7.7 Mediation and negotiation**

Three principals discussed projects relating to mediation and negotiation to demonstrate their leadership qualities. Their write-ups were as follows:

##### ***4.7.7.1 'Re-launch of Sadtu (South African Democratic Teachers Union) branch at school:***

- *Apathetic and indifferent staff - no structure for years*
- *Requested Union Branch to address matter*
- *Spoke to staff about Branch and value of Union*
- *Site committee formed – functioning well*
- *Used committee to discipline educators who fell foul of the Educators Employment Act - proof that unionism can enhance professionalism'*

In re-launching the Sadtu site committee, the principal acted as a proactive problem solver. After assessing the problem, he called in Sadtu officials to address the matter. Thereafter he used his own influence to motivate the staff to form the site committee which he subsequently used to 'discipline teachers'.

***4.7.7.2 'On arrival in May 2001, staff morale was very low, fragmented and disunited – was able through skillful means to unite the staff and eradicate all misconceptions. Today we boast of a staff of united team players which benefits the***

*school as a whole. There was distrust between the School Governing Body and staff. All these negative factors were overcome by ensuring that staff and School Governing Body met often in a relaxed way (outings, get togethers)'*

By uniting the staff and encouraging them to improve relations with the SGB the principal values team spirit and understands that stakeholders need to work in collaboration and share a common vision for the school. The principal in this instance portrays traits of leadership as articulated by Kotter (1996), Northouse (2001) and Maxwell (2002).

**4.7.7.3 'Macroplanning for school at Embezwini Conference Centre involved all stakeholders - learners (RCL), SGB and staff. Got each educator to present topics e.g. Learner motivation, Role of sports, Fundraising etc. Topics also presented by SGB, e.g. effectiveness of their role.'**

This principal employed an effective strategy to bring the stakeholders together on neutral ground to engage in the process of school planning. By listening to the different stakeholders, members of the school community were in a position to view the school as a whole and from each others' perspectives. It's clear that the principal aimed at creating a mission and vision that was shared by the educators, learners and school governing body. What we see at work here are Bass and Avolio's (1994) constructs of leadership, viz.

1. Stimulating interest among colleagues and followers to view work from new perspectives and
2. Creating general awareness of the mission and vision of the team and organization.

#### **4.7.8 Other projects**

Of the remaining principals, one discussed the introduction of a new subject to the curriculum which relates to managing the curriculum. Another principal stated that he delegates all duties. Is this not tantamount to abusing the principles of delegation to perhaps abdicate his duties? After all, a leader engages in effective delegation and control to empower her/his followers and not to disengage herself/himself from participation. As a role model the principal has to assume certain role functions. Two talked about future projects and five simply did not discuss any project. The principals

who I have focused on in this paragraph fit the profile of assigned leaders who have no concept of 'personal' (Northouse, 2001) leadership. By virtue of their posts as principals they assume leadership positions but they appear not to possess the personality or the leadership skills to lead their schools. These principals display signs of indifference and complacency, while the principals who came under discussion in Sections 4.1 to 4.7, are attempting to different degrees to manage and lead their schools in this climate of transformation.

When the data relating to the completion of projects (Table 4.7) was correlated with the data captured relating to leadership roles (Table 4.6), it appeared as though there was a discrepancy between what principals claim they do and what they actually perform. According to the data reflected in Table 4.6, 80.3% of principals act as visionaries very often/all the time, 44.4% act as coaches very often/all the time, 74.1% act as mentors very often/all the time and 87.7% act as motivators very often/all the time. But evidence of acting in the aforementioned capacities was not forthcoming in the projects completed by principals. Instead their projects highlighted their roles as planners, decision makers and finance officers in the main. So while principals may perceive that they are leading transformation at the school site they are largely managing the process. This may be attributed to the fact that with decentralization in education resulting from the implementation of the South African Schools Act, the role of the principal was reconfigured to include multiple responsibilities which revolved around managerial functions.

Also, with the implementation of evolving policies and practices in education, the principal's role has reinvented itself from that of instructional leader to educational manager. Principals are so inundated with their management profile that they have little or no time to dedicate to leadership. Considering the multiplicity of their roles, managing the large number of policies for implementation and enabling change, principals are confronted with a 'tall order'. The question is which function do they prioritize? They are treading cautiously by prioritizing management functions, but the epic changes of the last decade in South African education calls for the principal's role to redefine itself to become that of transformational leader.



#### **4.8 ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERSHIP CONSIDERED IMPORTANT WITHIN A TRANSFORMING SCHOOL CONTEXT**

The principals and the teachers identified a range of attributes which leaned towards two broad categories, which I termed 'professional' attributes and 'humanistic' attributes. Skills and expertise aligned to the job, such as being able to communicate and display foresight, were collapsed under the category of professional attributes. Skills and expertise aligned to human relations such as being fair and tolerant were collapsed under the category of humanistic attributes. The pre-democratic system of education demanded that a principal be a professional - she/he was expected to know her/his job description and conduct herself/himself in a professional manner. The human dimension was simply diminished. But the role of the principal is evolving with the transformation process in education, and the impact of the new leadership theories which bring into focus the humanistic side of leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994). If anything it is the humanistic attributes that transform a professional into a leader.

It was interesting to note that although the respondents listed more professional attributes than humanistic attributes, they rated the humanistic attributes as more important for a transforming school, as per Table 4.8. To compile lists of the 10 most highly rated attributes considered important for a transforming school by principals and educators, I listed all the responses to the relevant questions from Questionnaires A and B. Thereafter, I tallied (i) the number of times each attribute was listed by the principals (ii) the number of times each attribute was listed by the educators and (iii) the number of times each attribute was observed by the educators. Finally, I extracted only the 10 most highly rated attributes by both principals and educators and the 10 most highly rated attributes observed by educators to compile Table 4.8, reflected below.

**Table 4.8: Ten most highly rated attributes considered important within a transforming school context by principals and teachers**

ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED BY PRINCIPALS	NO OF RESPONSES	ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED BY EDUCATORS	NO OF RESPONSES	ATTRIBUTES OBSERVED BY EDUCATORS	NO OF RESPONSES
Fairness	21	Foresight	14	Communicative	12
Flexibility	18	Fairness	13	Foresight	9
Communicative	17	Communicative	13	Fairness	8
Foresight	13	Team spirit	7	Team spirit	7
Tolerance	12	Assertiveness	7	Empowerment	6
Transparency	11	Caring	7	Transparency	5
Honesty	10	Open mindedness	6	Tolerance	4
Empathy	8	Empowerment	6	Assertiveness	3
Sensitivity	6	Tolerance	5	Caring	3
Firmness	6	Transparency	5	Open mindedness	1

Table 4.8 clearly illustrates that the principalship is being viewed by both principals and educators as a role that needs to be more humanistic in nature. This is demonstrated by the fact that of the 10 most highly rated attributes by both principals and teachers, the humanistic attributes are dominant. Transformational leadership involves assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and meeting them as full human beings (Northouse, 2001; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

The 10 most highly rated attributes identified to be important in a transforming school context by principals are indeed necessary to implement change. Being fair, flexible and communicative are important to gain the trust and confidence of stakeholders. These attributes would allow the principal to involve people, making the process of transformation a shared one. This assertion is strengthened by Blasé & Blasé (1999: 369) who claim that their findings “echo research that discusses long-understood fundamental human needs for trust, support, and professional interaction (Herzberg, 1996; Maslow, 1954)”.

Having foresight is imperative: one needs to have a vision which serves as a driving force. However, only 16% of principals and 20% of teachers identified it as an

important attribute. This does not resonate with the claim made by 80.3 % (Table 4.6) of principals who stated that they were acting as visionaries all the time/very often, once again supporting the theme that there exists a disjuncture between what principals perceive as leadership and their actual practice of leadership. The attributes of honesty, empathy, sensitivity and firmness have been identified by 10 and less principals. This is an indicator that at least approximately 8 % of the principals are beginning to understand that the concept of leadership is increasingly calling for leaders to understand they need to be humane to lead humans. As Duignan and Macpherson (1992) so aptly articulate, principals require the capacity to empathise with the disorientation of colleagues, students and parents during times of reorganization.

The 10 attributes identified by educators to be important in a transforming school context are equally important, but below 20% of educators identified them. Of greater significance is the finding that educators observed below 15% of principals illustrating these attributes while leading schools, supporting the notion that there exists a dissonance between educators' expectations and observations of the attributes considered important in a transforming school context. This finding can be explicated by the notions that (i) teachers and principals may not share similar interpretations of the attributes and (ii) teachers may not appreciate the attributes of principals of which they are unaware. However it is important to be cognizant of the dissonance between teachers' expectations and observations of the attributes perceived or actual.

It's important to note that educators rated foresight as the number one attribute required to transform schools. This means that they look to the principal to be a visionary who can provide direction for the people and the organization. They also expect to be treated fairly and to be kept well informed about changes or impending changes. The rest of the attributes, such as being able to generate team spirit, being caring, open minded, empowering, tolerant and transparent, while at the same time being assertive, signifies that while educators want to be respected and capacitated they also expect the principal to lead the process of change. In the words of Maxwell (2002: 35): "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Leadership begins with the heart, not with the head. It flourishes with a meaningful relationship, not more regulations."

The above findings display an inclination to the school reform literature, which highlights how the principal as a transformational leader is gradually evolving to assume not only the professional attributes but the humanistic attributes (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992). However, an important point to consider is that certain attributes, such as self confidence, that are evident in the literature on transformational leadership, do not feature in Table 4.8 which ranks the 10 most highly rated attributes considered important in a transforming school context. This would be an appropriate time to pause and take cognizance of these attributes. The ability to influence is akin to being able to lead (Maxwell, 2002; Northouse, 2001).

“The school reform literature delineates the need for creative and innovative leadership for transformations to occur, a violation of the traditional rules that tend to the status quo” (Akerlund, 1988; Johns & Moser, 1989; Barth, 1990; Bennis, 1990; Sarason, 1991; Ellis & Cranshaw, 1992 as cited in Cline & Nechoche, 2000: 154). “The dynamic creativity that is required of deep school transformations necessitates an energetic principal that serves as a maverick leader” (Cline & Nechoche, 2000: 154). The above mentioned attributes introduce a third dimension to the attributes necessary for a principal to lead school transformation which can be regarded as creative. To lead transformation at the school site principals are required to explore their professional, humanistic and their creative attributes.

Having explored the attributes of principals that propel them to act as change agents at the school site, it is time to evaluate (i) how principals rate themselves as leaders of school transformation and (ii) how educators rate their principals as leaders of school transformation.

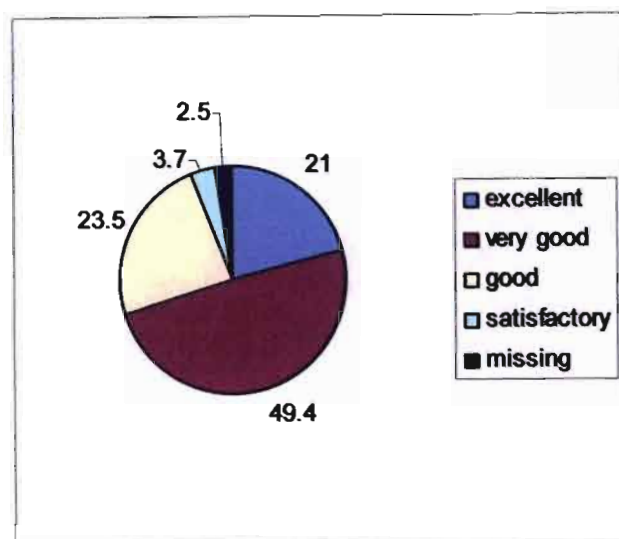
#### **4.9 RATING OF PRINCIPALS**

The intention to engage principals in a process of rating themselves as leaders in school transformation was twofold: firstly, it was hoped that principals would reflect on their successes/failures and, secondly to ascertain whether they are in sync with the transformative agenda of the country or whether they are driven by their own agenda.

Principals were requested to rate themselves as either weak, satisfactory, good, very good or excellent, with sound reasons to support their ratings. The data that emanated from the relevant question is reflected in figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9**

**PRINCIPAL'S SELF RATING AS A LEADER**



Twenty one percent of the principals rated themselves as **excellent**. In supporting their rating, principals:

- explained how they had triumphed against adversity: *'I know I have done things despite the numerous thorns in my flesh and the backstabbers I am challenged to work with - the school has improved in leaps and bounds.'*
- quoted their efforts to transform: *'I achieved complete transformation in the ethos, staff relations, community relations and school governing body relations.'*
- highlighted their dedication: *'because I put my heart and soul in everything I do.'*

An interrogation of the responses provided by principals to account for their **excellent** rating suggests that they are hardworking, persevering and remain committed to their positions. In other words they are 'doing things right' (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Maxwell, 2002; Reed, 2001), which shifts the emphasis of what the principals claim

to be doing to managerial tasks. However, to accomplish the tasks alluded to in the above quotations, the principals would have had to use their powers of influence and motivation to “do the right things” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Maxwell, 2002; Reed, 2001), which introduces dimensions of leadership in everything they do. This supports the notion that every management function demands a degree of leadership and vice versa; more explicitly, the functions of management and leadership are interdependent within the principalship.

The majority (49.4%) of principals rated themselves as **very good** because while they achieved success in different facets of school life, they indicated there was room for improvement:

- Again there were those principals that worked against the odds: *‘There was a serious division in the staff prior to my arrival. Staff now work very well together.’*
- Principals who referred to their efforts to transform: *‘Self transformed-passionate about change - others’ cultures, values and racial integration of the school.’*
- The conscientious principal featured here as well: *‘I am totally committed to my job. I undertake the responsibilities with a passion. I want the best for my pupils and the staff.’*

The **very good** principals also focused on their ability to work hard to achieve their goals. Inadvertently they highlighted their managerial accomplishments when requested to comment on their leadership skills. However, one cannot deny the subtle indications of leadership traits, such as inspiring team spirit and making opportunities available for developing others.

Those principals who rated themselves as **good** (23.5%) supported their rating by:

- claiming they initiated the process of transformation but *‘a great deal remains to be done when time permits’*.
- describing themselves as *‘democratic and transparent’* and believed that *‘in the current era of self-reliant schools the principal, of necessity, has to be at the interface of change.’*

- inferring that he *'was always learning from his mistakes'*, while
- confessing to being *'an average person, therefore an average leader.'*
- remarking that *'legislation, red tape and numerous constraints militate against one's own vision of transformation'*.

The **good** principals were cautious about evaluating their leadership in this trying time of transformation. They settled for maintaining that they have initiated the process, but have much progress to make in this regard. The main theme emanating from their responses is that they are inundated with duties, once again pointing to their overload of management functions that leave them with little or no time for leadership functions.

The 3.7% of principals who regard themselves as **satisfactory** leaders in school transformation indicated that they are aware of the challenge of transformation and have either initiated the process or are *'in the planning stage'*. This is a clear indication of principals not having begun to explore their leadership since they are still concentrating on managing transformation at the school site.

Not one principal rated herself/himself as weak. To what can we attribute this finding? Perhaps it human to disassociate with weakness or that in actual fact, principals believe they are making some impact on school transformation. This argument would be revisited at a later stage when the educators' ratings of their principals are considered.

Conclusions that can be drawn from what principals are saying about their ability to lead, supports the main theme filtering through this chapter and that is that they are prioritizing their roles as managers of school transformation and are only beginning to emerge as leaders of school transformation. The notion of conflicting views of leadership has reared its head constantly. Principals have repeatedly demonstrated that there exists a disjunction between their articulated and actual practices of leadership. While it may be their best intentions to lead transformation at the school, they actually manage transformation at the school, echoing a theme that has been developed over the preceding pages.

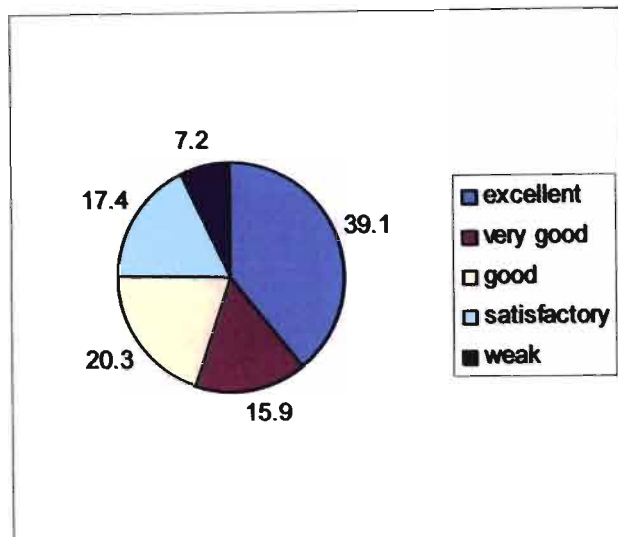
However, the interpretation of certain management functions may be viewed as leadership functions, thus supporting the claim that principals are beginning to emerge as leaders of school transformation. Perhaps principals should seek some guidance from Marsh (1992 as cited in Marsh, 2000), who proposed that educational leaders progressed through three stages to become strong educational leaders:

- Stage 1: Getting started where the focus is on the development of management skills
- Stage 2: Doing the pieces of educational leadership where the focus is on developing fragmented views of leadership
- Stage 3: Understanding the whole of educational leadership where the focus is on honing in on leadership skills and transforming the school in relation to vision.

At this point it is significant to note that a degree of dissonance prevails between teachers' and principals' perceptions and practices of leadership, which highlights the conflict on which the major theme of the chapter revolves. This matter will be elucidated in the following section which examines the teachers' ratings of principals.

The intention to engage educators in a process of rating their principals was also twofold: firstly, to determine how educators evaluated their principals as leaders in school transformation and, secondly, to provide principals at large with an exposé on how some of their counterparts are rated. Educators were requested to rate their principals as weak, satisfactory, good, very good or excellent with sound reasons to support their ratings. The data that emanated from the relevant question is reflected in figure 4.10.



**Figure 4. 10****EDUCATOR'S RATING OF PRINCIPAL**

Twenty three of the 81 principals were rated by three educators in each of the sampled schools. Approximately a third of the principals were rated because the questionnaire (Appendix B), which was administered as a verification strategy, was only distributed to 23 schools. Seventy six percent of the educators concurred generally with their principals' ratings, which ranged from good to excellent. The remaining 24% rated their principals from weak to satisfactory. A striking observation is that in the weak, satisfactory and excellent categories, educators' ratings exceeded that of the principals' self ratings. No principal rated herself/himself as weak, while 3.7% of principals rated themselves as satisfactory and 21% rated themselves as excellent. Yet 7.2 % of educators rated their principals as weak, 17.4% of educators rated their principals as satisfactory and 39.1 % of educators rated their principals as excellent. There was a marked difference in the "very good" category - 49.4% of principals rated themselves as very good as opposed to 15.9% of educators who rated their principals as very good. On a positive note, while only 21% of principals saw themselves as excellent, 39.1% of educators rated their principals as excellent.

Principals believe they are making efforts to lead transformation so none of them

rated themselves as weak and only 3.7% rated themselves as satisfactory. Also, a conservative 21% of principals rated themselves as excellent because the majority believes that there remains work to be done in the area of transformation. Educators on the other hand were more forthcoming in their criticisms – they identified 7.2 % of principals as weak and 17.4% as satisfactory; they were just as forthcoming with their praise – they rated 39.1 % principals as excellent. Perhaps the difference in ratings can be attributed to the fact that it is easier for someone else to rate an individual.

To solicit why educators rated their principals ranging from excellent to weak, I extracted the responses of two educators from different schools.

Educators rated principals as **excellent** because:

- *‘Mrs R is imbued with a strong character and always exemplifies humility and dignity. Her inner qualities of patience and kindness draw all stakeholders to seek her wise counsel. Mrs R’s capacity to relate to people in a warm, positive way, her efficiency and productivity, her dedication to the culture of learning and teaching, all combine to make her worthy of emulation.’*
- *‘The principal has taken on his duty with ease and sincerity. He has the best interest of both the learners and educators at all times. He has never prejudiced any educator in his capacity as head of the institution.’*

The **excellent** principal’s profile tends to include the humanistic and the professional dimensions of leadership. She/he was considered to be fair, committed and caring about the institution and its people.

Educators rated principals as **very good** because

- *‘He has the vision of leading the school in terms of the provision of high quality education and excellent service delivery.’*
- *‘A transforming school presents many challenges. Often just to be able to keep the school functioning displays great resolve. This school seems to not just be functioning, but is making strides and has thus far attained many successes.’*

The **very good** principal was identified to be one who is responsible for the efficient and effective functioning of the school, displaying a combination of the professional and humanistic attributes.

Educators characterized the **good** principal as the one who is making an effort but who has a way to go:

- *‘There are visible indications of transformation at our school, however much still needs to be done in order to reach a state of excellence because transformation is not an event but a process.’*
- This point was supported by another educator who maintained: *‘Whilst there is sufficient evidence of a person who is adapting to changes, there are still further opportunities to transform.’*

The **good** principal is the one with potential: she/he has initiated the process but has much progress to be made.

The **satisfactory** principal seems to be lacking in human relation skills, among others. Educators explained:

- *‘A leader must have interpersonal relations and acknowledge at all times that we are human.’*
- *‘The desired results solely achieved by staff members themselves - very little or no assistance/intervention from principal or management .’*

The **satisfactory** principal is certainly lacking skills and expertise expected of the principalship and therefore has little or no potential to transform the institution.

The **weak** principal seems to be overwhelmed by this whole process of transformation:

- *‘Transformation is necessary and is taking place at all institutions. Many see it as a way forward in terms of service conditions. Sadly this is lacking at this school.’*
- *‘He is a poor example for others. He is inconsistent.’*

The **weak** principal makes no effort to transform the school: she/he is incapable of earning the respect and confidence of followers and appears to be ineffective personally and professionally.

The foregoing discussion implies that while teachers do acknowledge the professional attributes of principals, they do sound the need for school leaders to develop the humanistic attributes. It is apparent that there is a measure of discordance between principals' practice of leadership and teachers' observation of such leadership, which intensifies the theme of conflicting views on principals as leaders.

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

The baseline study set out to capture a general sense of how certain principals in the eThekweni Region are leading their schools in transformation. While there is evidence that the policies which seek to address the injustices of the past and to create a system of education that is quality driven for all learners have been implemented, the principals in the study are approaching the process of transformation at different tempos. What has emerged is that there are differences in what they perceive to be their roles, what roles they claim to be performing and the roles they are actually performing as leaders. This finding indicates the contradiction of the perceptions of principals being leaders.

The macro level changes occurring over the last decade has resulted in micro level changes at the school site. And the person responsible for implementing these changes is none other than the principal, but she/he has to accomplish this task in collaboration with other stakeholders in education. In effect, not only the role function of the principal has to be reconfigured, but the power and authority, once the domain of the principal, has to be shared. So the principal has to assume a multi-dimensional role and to work in collaboration with educators, parents, learners, superintendents and community members. The baseline study indicates that not all principals are rising to this enormous challenge of leading transformation at the school. There appears to be a continuum from ensuring that the school merely continues to function to ensuring that

the school is functioning effectively. In other words, principals fall broadly into one of the following categories, which have been ranked with the majority of principals falling within the first category and the minority falling within the fourth category:

1. overwhelmed by change and going with the flow
2. maintaining stability
3. managing change
4. leading change

Those who are overwhelmed by change are simply going with the flow; they don't have the capacity to lead the transformation process or the power to reject the infiltration of the transformation policies, so they withdraw and allow the process to take its course. Other principals do their utmost to maintain stability. They are aware that they are accountable for what transpires at the school site, so all they do is ensure that the existing structures are in place and do not allow the boat to be rocked.

Then there is another cohort of principals managing school transformation. They are working towards providing new and improved infrastructure in the areas of material and human resources. Many have upgraded existing facilities and installed new ones. They have worked towards implementing policies in relation to site-based management and governance and the overall efficient operation of the school. The final category of principals is not only managing the transition at the school site, but is leading the process by inspiring stakeholders to share the vision for the institution based on the principles of equity and redress. In addition to ensuring an environment conducive to education for all, irrespective of colour, creed or culture, they view their colleagues and governors as human beings with potential and capacity to actively engage in transforming the school.

By means of the baseline study, I have explored the extent to which certain schools in the eThekweni region are being transformed and how the principals in these schools construct themselves within this context of school transformation. Principals' construction of themselves as leaders has a major implication in terms of the transformation agenda of schooling. Their construction of leadership could actively promote, slacken or hinder the process of transformation. Hence, in understanding school transformation it is important to also understand the principal who shapes

transformation at school and more importantly the conflict situations that she/he confronts in her/his professional capacity. The findings of this investigation identify the following conflict situations that come to bear on the principal:

1. past oppressive system with the present democratic system
2. decentralization of education while maintaining core elements of centralization
3. stakeholders that support school transformation and those that resist it
4. roles of management versus roles of leadership within the principalship

In respect to my report assuming the narrative form, this chapter has made strides in developing three important features of the genre of the novel:

1. Firstly, the major theme which revolves around the conflict between management and leadership roles.
2. Secondly, the whole notion of conflict which is experienced by principals who are conflicted about their roles as leaders.
3. Thirdly, the background and setting which reveals the different tempos at which school transformation is occurring.

The next chapter will explain in detail through life history narratives how principals construct themselves to shape transformation at the school. The canvass that I have landscaped in this chapter sets the tone for the background, setting, theme and the notion of conflict for the stories of my three life history participants which unfold in **Chapter Five: Topical Life Histories.**

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **TOPICAL LIFE HISTORIES**

#### ***Developing the themes and motifs***

##### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

To make sense and meaning of a story, a narrator is compelled to create a backdrop or setting against which to tell the story. The setting for my three life history narratives took form in the preceding chapter, where I attempted to create a general setting in which school transformation is occurring, and the role played by the principals in the sample schools. In creating the setting (school transformation) and characters (school principals and teachers), the major theme revolving around conflict emerged, casting another feature of a good story. Principals appeared conflicted about their roles as leaders of school transformation. Their perceptions of leadership did not resonate with their actual practices of leadership: they claimed to be performing leadership roles when in fact they were performing management roles which sometimes translated into leadership roles. To explore this theme in depth, this chapter explains through life history narratives how three principals in particular, construct themselves to shape transformation at the school.

To compile their stories I collated data using varied data collection instruments, chief among them being a comprehensive, semi-structured interview schedule. The other instruments included mementos, photographs, a cartoon, diagrammatic representations and unstructured observation schedules which were discussed in **Chapter Three: Designing A Methodology**. The wealth of data derived from these data collection strategies empowered me to compose the stories of three principals who hail from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. It is the intention of this chapter to focus on the stories of these three principals and in so doing to develop the theme of conflict emanating from the concept of leadership, in a climate of large scale school transformation. The chapter assumed coherence, development and structure by looking at insights into the following features:

- pilot study

- framework for exploring the lives of principals as leaders in school transformation
- stories of life history participants
- analysis of data
- emerging issues

After expounding the timeless value of story telling and making a case for the inclusion of the pilot study, this chapter is presented in four distinct sections. Each of the first three sections attends to a different principal: the **initiate**, **intermediary** and the **experienced** respectively. Section one describes the school environment in which each works. Section two portrays the topical life history of each principal from primary schooling. In section three the narrative deviates to critique each portrait with the express intention of understanding how and why each principal engages in the process of school transformation. The fourth section interweaves the themes of the stories emanating from the topical life histories to highlight experiences/influences that have a positive impact on how the **initiate**, **intermediary** and **experienced** execute their duties as principals.

## **5.2 STORY TELLING**

From time immemorial stories have been related to inspire and teach. This genre transgresses all boundaries of colour, class, creed and culture. Atkinson (1998: 2) so aptly writes: “In traditional communities of the past, stories played a central role in the lives of people. It was through story that the timeless elements of life were transmitted. Stories told from generation to generation carried enduring values, as well as lessons about life lived deeply.” Stories continue to touch us; sometimes one comes across a story that is so awe-inspiring that it cannot be contained; it is so compelling that it must be captured and shared.

When Tina, the subject of my pilot study consented to be interviewed I had no idea that the data would unfold into an amazing story of courage and determination. I had anticipated that the pilot study would enable me to refine my interview schedule, but



when I listened to Tina's metamorphosis from being literally blind to being visually empowered, I wanted everyone to share my privilege of having had an exposé into her life. So here goes...

### **5.3 THE BAT EVOLVES**

Today I interviewed Tina. She was just what I needed! The 'tonic'- that re-energized me to persevere with what is proving to be a daunting data collection process. Being armed with the perfect plans A, B and even C only seems to guarantee that the plan is not going to guarantee the desired outcome without unrelenting dedication to the research project.

Tina is a mother, wife and educator; although her husband likes to think that she is married to her profession. I must confess I could see his point as the interview progressed. She described him as doting but stifling at times since he demanded that she share his past times such as watching wrestling on television. Tina has served time: 18 years as a teacher, two years as a head of department, one year as a deputy principal and four years as principal – all at her current school. But she does not see herself as an inmate! In fact she has never once entertained the thought of exiting the profession. Her engagement in the masters programme in educational management has certainly been an empowering experience that gives her a well-defined edge in leading a school which presents several challenges.

Sensitivity, compassion, diplomacy, morality and spirituality are what Tina values; which I discerned throughout the interview sessions. But don't be fooled, she can be quite assertive and firm when the situation demands. What's more is that she is passionate about her pursuits and unwavering in tapping the potential of her staff and learners (the majority of whom she intimated hail from underprivileged homes). This is probably due to the fact that she spent her schooling years blind as a bat. While her family valued education and made incredible sacrifices to send her to school, they were financially crippled to provide her with the resources to combat her blindness. She plodded through school by pushing the boundaries of her hearing faculty. She honed this skill to such an extent that her position in class did not go beyond 5<sup>th</sup>.

Some of her leadership positions in school included being class monitor, prefect and coordinator of various activities in arts and culture. When I requested her to recall the people who impacted on her as a pupil, she promptly related to two teachers in particular, one who taught her about positive reinforcement and another who taught her about meticulousness - qualities that she religiously adopts to this day. She then emerged quite animated and enthused about her mentor in high school who encouraged her to express herself through drama. She developed new insights which created a distance with her bat status. Her love for drama grew in leaps and bounds and she infused this technique in her learning and subsequently in her teaching, managing and leading.

When Tina entered the Springfield College of Education (former teacher training institution) she literally entered a new world, one in which she could see through her first pair of lenses. But alas, this very aid distorted her looks and she became self-conscious. Being the consummate, level-headed, rational person she capitalised on her powerful dramatic skills and earned the respect of her peers and colleagues. In fact she bowled them over to such an extent during initiation<sup>1</sup>, that she co-ordinated the initiation programmes for the following two years. With her confidence level peaking, she frequently organized various cultural (dance, music and drama) activities to raise much needed funds for the community. She derived immense pleasure from leading others to help the indigent. When she was elected to represent her class in her first two years, she fought endlessly for their causes. In a manner of speaking, her ultimate leadership position came when she became a member of the Student Representative Council in her final year and she mobilized all her resources to do justice to her position. Typical of Tina! She does possess the morals and ethics so essential for leadership roles at any level.

As we proceeded to the subject of mentorship, Tina displayed mixed emotions: the individual who inspired her, the one she stated was *'like a father'* had obviously disillusioned her. To shorten a long story, he had supported all their projects and enriched their lives with fervour, but when their biggest project which entailed journeying to India was in its culminating stage, the funds had vanished. Tina felt like

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<sup>1</sup> initiation: a process of introducing students to the college by engaging in a series of activities

she was betraying her mentor when she was called to testify against him. But as always, she was guided by her morals and ethics to do the right thing. A few years ago she experienced closure on this sad issue when she sobbed her heart out at his funeral.

It was heart wrenching to witness Tina in tears (for the second time) when I asked her to recall her first graduation. I assumed it would be a joyous occasion. But to the contrary, this was indeed a sad day. Her mother, who had been her support system, was deceased and her father couldn't afford to take the day off. To make matters worse, those dreaded spectacles couldn't be discarded, leaving her emotionally and physically in pain. However, the graduate wasn't fated to be alone; her knight in shining armour presented himself at a social gathering and hasn't left her side since. Also, she took consolation in the fact that teaching was going to give her tremendous respect - after all, that's why she chose this vocation.

As a newly qualified teacher, Tina experienced an urge to practice her craft. But to her dismay, she encountered a draconian principal who had no reservations about embarrassing her in the presence of learners or teachers. During many a break, Tina and two of her colleagues would seek refuge in the toilets and let loose those tears. In spite of some nerve wracking and humiliating encounters, the subject of my story persevered to be an effective teacher. Fortunately, all miseries run their course and Tina was transferred to her current school, where she received a new lease on life and, more significantly, new mentorship.

She was actually blessed with two mentors who exposed her to all facets of school. Tina voraciously took it all in and organised activities in the school and the region, covering issues from the curriculum to the cultural. One of her highlights was having her learners placed in the KwaZulu-Natal musical festival. It is apparent that this enthusiastic teacher never lost sight of the learners and constantly searched for ways to foster their growth and development. As she progressed to management, she capacitated the teachers with the same verve and vigour.

It was inevitable that this determined, highly driven, compassionate and committed individual be promoted to the principalship. Equipped with invaluable experience, a

strong work ethic and a masters degree in educational management, she was poised to lead the institution in the process of transformation. She welcomes the concept of site-based management and enjoys a healthy working relationship with the members of the governing body, but is quick to point out that all is not smooth sailing as all stakeholders have much to learn. As a joint working force, they have achieved many of their goals, such as providing a reading room and a computer laboratory, and have received approval of the building plans for a hall.

On the issue of transformation, she perceives her role to be one of catalyst of change, of changing herself and working proactively with all stakeholders. She describes her greatest strength as being blessed with the patience to listen and observe people. This is her way of tuning in to the needs of the members of the organisation and the members of the community. I suspect that this attitude led to the germination of the school's vision, one which is evidently shared by the learners, educators and community. While Tina enjoys the support of the staff and the parents, she is openly critical about the lack of support from her immediate superiors.

As an agent of transformation, she has ensured that the school welcomes learners of all colours and does not tolerate any discrimination based on academic ability or background, but is committed to work as a team leader to provide an educational setting that is nurturing to each learner. I'm more and more convinced that this is her mission in life. In line with the school's vision, she is promoting a flatter management structure. Ongoing staff development, mentoring and effective delegation facilitates the functioning of the school. However Tina gave me the distinct impression that she persists in remaining involved - she seems to need personal assurance that all goes as planned – perhaps the remnants of the bat's phobia.

Some of the major projects that have been concluded include: the ELSEN (Education for Learners with Special Education Needs) project, an enrichment programme, a computer literacy programme, a feeding programme, a housing assistance programme and a diversity of arts and culture programme. Tina's journey has been an extraordinary one, steering herself through the trials and tribulations of life and basking in its jublations, she has come full circle by reaching out to the underprivileged children with whom she never fails to identify.

A close examination of Tina's story indicates that as human beings we can identify with a part or some parts of her life. It also has the power to resurrect our own challenges and triumphs. Similarly, the three life history participants have had their trials, tribulations and triumphs. But before moving on to their stories I would like to briefly illuminate how I came to write 'The Bat Evolves' by reflecting on my interaction with Tina and the complexities that I interrogated to inform the telling of the story.

I must confess that Tina was deliberately selected to participate in the pilot because she had completed her masters in education a few years ago, and I had the pleasure of briefly interacting with her during a few modules that we had taken together during the masters programme. During these times I found her to be a critical student who displayed a passion for her job as a school principal. I had approached her with the intention of refining my interview schedule, but she exceeded my expectations by arming me with the data to generate a rich and rewarding story of hope and perseverance, a conclusion that I reached at the end of the interview session. This conclusion was repeatedly reinforced during the long hours of transcribing the tapes and poring over the transcription, to engage in the process of inductive analysis (elaborated in **Chapter Three: Designing A Methodology**) to generate categories and themes which were then interrogated to tell Tina's story.

During the process of composing Tina's story, I grappled with the following complex issues which resurfaced during the composition of the stories of the **initiate**, **intermediary** and the **experienced**:

- the authorship of the stories
- the voices present in the stories
- data selection to develop plot, theme and character
- prompting participants to relive painful experiences

As I began to collate and analyze data pertinent to the research questions, stories of a co-constructive nature began to materialize, after all the participants had invited me into their world and to be privy to their experiences, without which there would be no stories. My task was to select critical points in their lives and their lived experiences, to tell their stories. And so the shaping of the stories and the perspectives from which

the stories were told were in part determined by my experiences and my belief system. So while each topical life history narrative became a co-construction between the researcher and the respondent, I became aware of the dominant role that I played in generating the form, style and shape of the narratives.

The voices that resounded throughout the stories were once again that of the researcher and the researched. The principals' voices were evident in the content and the researcher's voice is evident in the commentary and data analysis which reverberated at critical stages in the telling of the story.

On the point of data selection, the principals volunteered the data, but it was the researcher who engaged in the process of data selection; including and excluding data to shape the theme, plot and character. Although I was guided by my research questions to include or exclude data, I often wondered whether the stories discarded any form of authenticity. However, this concern was brought to closure after the member checks were completed.

But all in all the greatest complexity I confronted was when my interview questions led my participants to recall and sometimes relive painful memories which they were so forthcoming about. I did encounter a few intense moments that sometimes became emotional, which out of respect and concern for my participants I chose not to include in my data selection and analysis.

After engaging with the above issues, I anticipated the telling of the three topical life histories to be a challenging but rewarding experience. To tell these tales, I looked to the themes that can be detected in 'The Bat Evolves', which can broadly be identified as follows:

- *family background*
- *educational background*
- *values, morals and ethics*
- *challenges and obstacles*
- *mentorship*
- *self motivation and drive*

- *changing contexts*
- *attitude to transformation*
- *courage and commitment*

All of the above categories/themes contributed to the formulation of the framework (**Exhibit 5.1: Framework For Exploring The Lives of Principals As Leaders In Transformation**) which facilitated the telling of the stories of the principals as leaders in transformation, once again illustrating the significance of stories and story telling.

#### **5.4 TELLING THE STORIES OF PRINCIPALS AS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS**

Each of the following stories is meant to stand alone. However, in keeping with the interpretive paradigm in which my study is located, I designed a framework (**Exhibit 5.1**) which originated in Tina's story, '**The Bat Evolves**'. The framework was further developed while I pored over the numerous pages of transcriptions of my life history participants, and finally consolidated by drawing from the work of Kotter (1996), which demonstrated the relationship of lifelong learning, leadership skills and the capacity to succeed in the future, and the work of Avolio (1999) which proposed that:

- One's leadership development is affected by the life experiences accumulated.
- Specific life experiences appear to be linked to the development of transformational leadership.
- What you model as a leader can determine what you receive in return from your followers who can either enhance or inhibit your development as a leader.

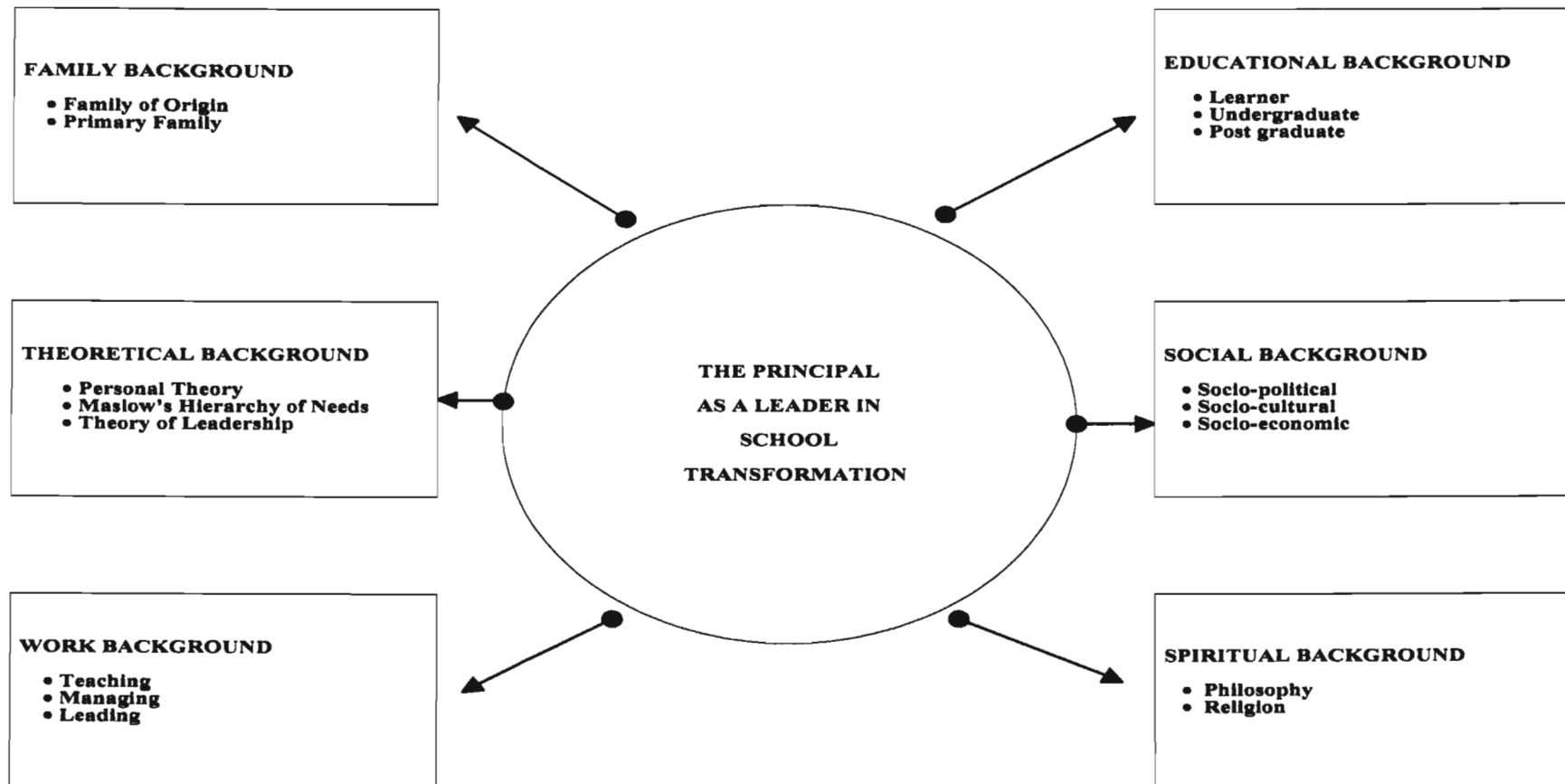
The purpose of designing this framework was to facilitate moving into the varied experiences of lives lived to understand lives being lived and lives to be lived. My purpose in doing so was to analyse how the life experiences of the life history participants have a bearing on how they construct themselves as leaders in the context of school transformation.

The critical thrust of the sampling procedure in identifying the participants who feature in this chapter was their experience as principals of schools since the country's transition to democracy. The subsidiary variables which were considered to portray the diversity in schools and schooling have been fully illustrated in **Table 3.1, Chapter Three: Designing A Methodology**. In accordance with the conventions of logic, coherence and development in story telling, the stories of the **initiate**, the **intermediary** and the **experienced** (defined in **Section 3.3, Chapter Three**) will be narrated respectively.

Before turning to the stories I would like to explain why I adopted the role of the first person narrator in the first and second stories and then changed to the role of the third person narrator in the third and final story. It started out as a stylistic device to include variety in my writing. But as the stories progressed I noted the **initiate's** intensity and pain and the **intermediary's** drive and enthusiasm and believed that the first person narrator would be able to capture these strong feelings. The **experienced** on the other hand was more in control and emitted a sense of quiet confidence which I believed would be captured by the third person narrator.

At the conclusion of each story I journeyed beyond the narrative to make sense of the stories. Finally, there was an attempt to interweave the themes of the stories to discern any trends and to make sense of the stories. So let's meet the three major characters of my story, the **initiate**, the **intermediary** and the **experienced**.





**EXHIBIT 5.1: FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLORING THE LIVES OF PRINCIPALS AS LEADERS IN TRANSFORMATION**

### **5.4.1 THE INITIATE**

#### **5.4.1.1 THE LADY WHO BEARS THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID IN ALL ITS FORMER GLORY**

##### ***The woman at the helm***

*Thembi is an African, Zulu speaking woman of 55 years. She had 6 children (3 are now late) and 6 grandchildren for whose upbringing she is responsible. Widowed in 1994, she lives in Inanda New Town. Religion appears to be the inspiring force in her life, so she attends church regularly.*

*Her schooling commenced at St Camel Primary in Cato Manor, thereafter she went to Phakama Higher Primary and Isibonelo High in KwaMashu. Later she attended St Chad's College in Ladysmith to complete her schooling. As an unqualified teacher she studied part time at Umlazi College, Vista and Lyceum to obtain a teaching qualification. Thembi was promoted from being a teacher to being a principal at Bhekilanga Primary School.*

*While she holds no other posts in education, she works unrelentingly in the community.*

**The school**

*Bhekilanga Primary is situated in K Section of KwaMashu, a township which continues to be largely populated by economically disadvantaged and poorly educated African people. The school comprises of 12 classrooms, the principal's office (furnished by one table and a few wooden benches), no specialist rooms such as a library, no administration area and is not equipped with electricity.*

*Communication between the school and the outside world is facilitated by a call box. The stark absence of any form of technology even the most rudimentary is blatantly present throughout the school. There are no proper playgrounds, no sports fields, poor ablution facilities and inadequate fencing. Criminal elements have invaded the school more than once, exposing the learners and educators to constant danger.*

*The school has a population of 641 African learners ranging from Grade 1 to 7 with an all African teaching staff. The cleaner who doubles up a security officer is African. The school governing body is an all African team which has the interests of the school at heart but does not possess the necessary skills and expertise to propel the school to new heights.*

*When asked to comment on the development of infrastructure over the last ten years the principal replied, "There is no change-the school is still the same. Nothing has been done to improve the infrastructure."*

***Roles for life***

*I am principal of Bhekilanga but that's only part of my life. At fifty six, most people are free to pursue their own pleasures and leisure. But this is not the case for me. My husband died in 1994, leaving me to be the sole supporter of my two sons, daughter and six grandchildren.*

*Nobody else works but me. So my responsibilities extend to the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. It is so difficult, but I'm not complaining, I've accepted that it is my culture, it is my fate in life, God has a plan for everyone.*

*As a mother I've experienced the greatest of tragedies, two of my girls died and one of my boys passed away this year. But I have to persevere for my surviving children, grandchildren and the community. I cannot, dare not fail them. The ailing mother next door has been cruelly deserted by her children, so I have taken her under my wing. I am eternally grateful to a friend, a retired principal who attends to her while I am at school. In the afternoons I go to her and remain until 9 in the night, bathing her, clothing her, preparing her food and talking to her, she desperately cries out for companionship.*

*We have formed a kind of women's union where we focus on basic life skills: how to earn money and how to budget for everyday needs. Our union also attempts to reach out to the community. Religion entered my life at an early age, since my father was a reverend. Being a devout Christian I attend church on Saturdays and Sundays. My singing in the choir gives me immense joy and I feel fulfilled when I sing the lord's prayers. My deep sense of spirituality urges me on day after day. God has granted me the grace to be a kind hearted person and to be able to forget and forgive and for that I'm grateful.*

***Lifelong learning***

*Thanks to my family I began my long and arduous road to education. It all started at St Camel Primary in Cato Manor. Thereafter I attended Phakama Higher Primary*

*and Isibonelo High in KwaMashu. The two years I spent as a boarder in St Chad's College in Ladysmith proved to be challenging in every sense of the word. In my later years I studied part time at Umlazi College, and engaged in correspondence studies through Vista and Lyceum. So it was a long and hard road to obtaining a teaching qualification, one that I have not yet received because of outstanding fees. These fees are currently being deducted from my salary. I am eagerly anticipating the day that I am presented with my teaching diploma.*

### ***My brother, my teacher, my mentor***

*I owe it to my brother that I entered the teaching profession and am a principal today. He was my guardian angel but a rigid one at that. Being a teacher himself he valued the power of education and its liberating force. Even though the apartheid education was inferior, it was better to receive some education than nothing at all. My brother taught me to make something of my life and the only way to do that was to educate myself. He wanted me to understand that my family would not be around forever and that I must be independent and self sufficient. It would be degrading and humiliating to be wanting one day. I was compelled to receive an education because that was the one thing that nobody could rob me of: **'it's yours, nobody, not even your child can take it away, so it's with you forever,'** was my brother's chant. So while many of my contemporaries were not expected to be educated, well they couldn't afford it anyway, I was fortunate enough to have a brother who insisted that I attended school. He even tutored my best friend Ruth and I after school hours.*

*Again it was my brother who ensured that I was a disciplined and organized pupil. Being a pupil at his school didn't allow me to shirk and mess around. When I reached home at 3 0' clock the timetable which hung on the side of wardrobe guided my activities: by 3.30 the dishes had to be washed and by 5.00 the supper had to be prepared, thereafter I buried myself in my school books. My day began at 5 am when I cooked porridge for the elders and the young ones. After doing the dishes I would make my way to school. In a manner of speaking I had been an apprentice in motherhood, very early in my life. Perhaps this was an experience which reinforced my inner strength and resolve.*

*The first year at St Chad's College was so daunting that I wanted to quit. In fact some of my friends couldn't cope, so they packed their bags and departed. It was tempting to follow suit but my brother entertained no such idea, so quitting was not an option.*

### ***The good, the bad and the ugly***

*My family provided a support system. Although my brother was a harsh disciplinarian he nudged me in the right direction. My father, being a man of the church showed me the righteous direction. Also prayer was a way of life for us. So I was prepared for anything.*

*Life at St Camel was good; I didn't have to earn the respect of my peers, after all, my brother was a teacher at the school and a confirmed disciplinarian at that. Furthermore I was a prefect in forms one and two and then graduated to deputy head prefect in form three. At Phakama Higher Primary life continued quite uneventfully.*

*But life took on new meaning at Isibonelo High, I once again had a kind of personal tutor. A teacher from the school resided opposite my home; she would help me with my homework and acted as my support system. Mr Dumisani, my music teacher had me enthralled. He nurtured my love for singing. He was so talented that he conducted the Amazulu Choir. Being in the school choir gave me the wonderful opportunity to travel to Mafikeng, a rare experience for an African scholar. I mean going on school excursions was just unheard of in our community-we simply couldn't afford it.*

*Teachers always make impressions on pupils: some good, some bad. Strangely I only remember those teachers who were positive and inspirational. My Zulu teacher, Mr Ngcobo, my domestic science teacher, Miss Cain and my English teacher, from Johannesburg were my role models who perhaps unwittingly reinforced my desire to become a teacher. When I saw them teaching I knew that someday I would be out there teaching my very own classes.*

*And then there was Ruth, my high school friend who became my lifelong friend. She spent many afternoons at my home having fun, doing homework, sometimes being*

*tutored by my brother. In fact our friendship has weathered many a storm, she was there at my side when I lost each of my children; she continues to be there for me. It's no surprise that she chose a caring profession. Ruth holds the position of matron at Baragawanath Hospital.*

*PHOTOGRAPH OF THEMBI AND RUTH IN CLASS*

*It was time to embark on the next phase of schooling. Being transferred to St Chad's College, a boarding school in Ladysmith piqued my curiosity and created some anxiety. I took comfort in knowing that I had progressed in my schooling career and resolved to continue in the same vein. But life threw me a curve ball at St Chad's College.*

*In my first year I was elected as prefect and accepted the post with much zeal. After all I had been a prefect and deputy head in primary school, so the prospect of leadership at this level was quite appealing. But the older girls, who towered over me, treated me as an outcast and resorted to calling me 'pussycat'. I was the foreigner who had invaded their territory and they were not going to accept me under any circumstances. In fact they insisted that I, 'pussycat' return to my town to live with*



*the other 'cats'. More than thirty years later I still hear their taunting: 'we can't listen to you, you're young, where you're coming from and your town, here is Natal and Transvaal eh it is in between, so we can't listen to you, you must go and live with the other cats there, don't come and live with us here, we're human beings and you're an animal'. These so called human beings discriminated against me because my hair made me look Coloured. This created a well of sadness within me because I was an African and proudly so. Armed with my proud African heritage and my spiritual faith, I completed my two year stint at St Chad's unarmed.*

### ***Against all odds***

*In the early days, the Department of Education and Training permitted individuals with no teaching qualifications to join the teaching fraternity. What's more I had been appointed to Khuphukani Lower Primary in C Section, KwaMashu the area I lived in. I was on cloud nine. I had realized my lifelong ambition of becoming a teacher and made my family proud. My brother was over the moon. But this immense joy which engulfed my very being was soon extinguished.*

*I thought I done it all in the field of education. But something was lacking. I was a teacher, but not a certified one. I certainly couldn't afford quitting my teaching post to engage in a full time study programme so my only option was to study through correspondence. The odds were stacked against me: I was a full time worker with no financial aid and an unsupportive husband. One day while I was preparing to go to the examination centre he gathered my books and made a bonfire out of them. This was no surprise; he did not support my career and did nothing to conceal his jealousy. But I was on course and nothing or nobody was going to stand in my way. So after overcoming many hurdles and plodding through various modules at Umlazi College, Vista and Lyceum I ultimately earned a teaching qualification.*

*Most teachers of my generation recall their first principals as being autocratic, inflexible, dictatorial or even tyrannical. But Mrs Pongola deviated from this stereotype; instead she was cold and reticent. In short she maintained a distance physically and emotionally. Amazingly enough, her sterile attitude invaded the staff,*

*because nobody threw me a life line. Whenever I sought her advice or assistance professionally or personally she remained aloof. So I was a novice teacher left with my own devices to either sink or swim. Naturally I chose to swim. And while braving stormy waters for a few months, I chanced upon an island. Mrs Pongola informed me that I had been transferred to Bhekilanga.*

### ***My career takes off***

*I assumed duty at Bhekilanga on 25 March 1974. On the career front, fortune favoured me since I had a supportive principal in Miss Shelembe, so I quickly immersed myself in the school activities. My teaching spanned all the subjects in the curriculum. We escorted the pupils to places like Pietermaritzburg, to play soccer and basketball. We accompanied the choir to Umgababa. These outings were welcomed by both teachers and pupils. They created the most wonderful memories. Feeling enthused by my experiences at Bhekilanga, I embarked on my correspondence studies which proved to be a painstakingly long but fruitful venture.*

*The next principal, Mrs Dduli continued the support provided by her predecessor, but it was the third principal, Mrs Zulu who went the extra mile. She stood by me during my worse periods, there were times when I didn't have the money to buy basic necessities but there she was offering me financial assistance. What's more she was a true confidante; she never divulged my problems to other staff members. She was always there motivating me: one day she presented me with a merit award for maintaining the best classroom. We were not privileged enough to enjoy the human and material resources to have fully equipped classrooms. As teachers we had to motivate our pupils and work with them to ensure the appearance and cleanliness of our classrooms. So I would say without any shadow of doubt that Mrs Zulu was a kind of mentor to me during my teaching years.*

*I have no reservations that working under the leadership of Mrs Zulu inspired me to become a successful teacher. In spite of the absence of basic resources like electricity, I persevered to become an exemplary teacher, by reaching out and motivating the children. They believed in me and respected me deeply. Some of them pursued*

*careers in teaching, one pursued a career in engineering and others went abroad in search of lives free from oppression.*

### ***Upward bound***

*The simple truth is that I had no aspirations to become a principal. Interacting with children at the classroom level created a sense of fulfillment and joy - this was what I did best!*

*But again God had other plans in store for me. In June 1997 my health suffered a setback causing me to spend a period of recuperation at home. About this time I received a call from the principal who indicated that she needed me to return to school. Although her voice conveyed a sense of urgency, I promptly informed her that my doctor advised me to resume duty in July. Nevertheless she persisted so there I was the following day. That morning the principal indicated that she was retiring: 'I am leaving tomorrow so here are the keys, being the most senior person on staff I've been advised to call on you to run the school,' and so I did.*

*In 2000 the position of principalship was advertised; I had no intention to apply. The staff rallied together to advise me to apply because they were happy to work with me and were anxious about an external candidate filling the post. I took their advice and to my surprise was appointed.*

### ***The difficult road to transformation***

*However it's been an ongoing battle. Firstly the school is in dire need of resources- the oppressive force of apartheid has made its mark everywhere. The school building is incomplete: there is no proper administration area, staffroom or library. The conditions of hygiene are rapidly deteriorating: ablution facilities are poor and water is seeping from the building. There is no parking lot, no proper fencing and no electricity. Criminals have invaded the school more than once in the last few years. It's difficult to get projects off the ground because the community is economically*

*disadvantaged and have pinned their hopes on the school to provide for their children's education. The governing body tries their best but they too need parental support. We have one cleaner who doubles up as security but he has not been paid for the last year.*

*Although the school policy admits learners of all races, the learner demographics do not change. The staff complement also remains all African. I am constantly motivating the staff to work as a team to improve the quality of learning and teaching. This is no easy task, considering the circumstances under which we work. But I make the time to listen to them. We also attempt to include the parents and learners in vision building. My leadership approach is democratic; I support a climate that encourages the inputs and views of parents and teachers. I have managed to solicit the support of the community to fight against crime. My role is a far cry from that of my predecessors: it extends beyond supervision to include planning and financial management. I work under challenging conditions but I am no stranger to hardship, if anything the one constant in my life has indeed been hardship so I will endure...*

### **5.4.1.2 BEYOND THE NARRATIVE**

#### *Through stormy waters*

“First impressions are lasting impressions’. How true when I consider my encounter with Thembi. The first thing that struck me was that she was shrouded in an aura of sadness. The reason soon became clear. Hardship had been her constant companion since childhood, but losing three children has penetrated the very depths of her being. I scanned for signs of bitterness but only sadness prevailed. Yet she manages to extend herself physically, mentally and emotionally to others: family or not. Evidently her piety gives her the courage to go on; she attends church regularly. *‘I go to church on Saturdays and Sundays, at 3 o’clock on Saturdays and then 9 o’ clock on Sundays.’*

What fortified Thembi to take on life? Well, her family, especially her brother and father who were quite progressive considering the socio politics of their times. I mean society in general and African society in particular did not recognize the need for girls to be educated. The politics of course suppressed the education of Africans period.

Thembi settled into school life. In fact she was soon initiated into school leadership when she was elected by the teachers to be prefect and later to be deputy head prefect. However she doesn’t recall much of her primary school years. Even though she was expected to go to school and become *‘independent’* she was not released from her chores. After all she was a young girl and all girls need to clean and cook irrespective of their aspirations to enter the world of work. So she chose to be organized and disciplined to manage her school work and her domestic duties; learning important skills that she brings to bear on her role as principal at the school site.

While the thread of hardship spun its web throughout Thembi’s life, another kind of continuity was presenting itself: a positive one emerging in the form of a support system that extended beyond her family to include her best friend, certain teachers and certain principals. She alludes to them in the following ways:

- *‘Ruth was my best friend, we spent a lot of time together, doing homework and other things. She’s still my friend.’*
- *‘There was a teacher who lived opposite us, she helped me a lot with my homework and other things’.*
- *‘I sang in the school choir. Mr Dumisani, my music teacher took us to Mafekeng. I enjoyed music and I’m still enjoying it.’*

Other teachers also impacted on her and I suspect she began romanticizing the teaching profession. *‘When I saw my teachers, I liked what they were doing. I wanted to stand in front of the class and talk to the children’* (she demonstrated with great enthusiasm). It appears as though some of her happier times were spent in high school.

Predictably harder times were ahead. Her most humiliating experience as a scholar must have been at St Chad’s College. It was at this boarding institution that she became the object of ridicule and discrimination. It was painful enough being treated like a pariah by the other race groups but to be ridiculed by your own ...Even her prefectship didn’t give her any respite if anything it antagonized them further. Thembi’s tolerance and endurance were put to the test, but she could not yield because of her brother. *‘My brother was so harsh. And I prayed, God please let me present something from my family to my children, my neighbours, my relatives.’* So the constant interplay between the painful and the pleasing punctuated Thembi’s life.

As a full time teacher she pursued a part time teaching diploma. She couldn’t possibly resign to become a full time student, teaching was her only form of income and created a critical means of stability in her life. Her various attempts at correspondence studies proved to be a long and lonely road. The apartheid regime made no attempt to upgrade its unqualified African teachers; in fact it promoted the ideology of inferior education for the African people. With the odds stacked against her, Thembi remained resolute. To exacerbate matters, her husband was quite the chauvinist who constantly threatened her career: *‘My husband was very jealous, because one day he burnt my books while I was preparing to go the examination room, so I didn’t go...’*

But life went on and so did the novice teacher. At her first school she felt like a fish out of water. Her principal ruled by keeping her distance and expecting the teachers to perform under any circumstances. She was an autocrat not so much by action but more by attitude: *'Mrs Pongola didn't talk much. If you explained a problem to her she would just look at you. You didn't know whether she accepted your reason or not... I didn't know whether I was troubling her. I didn't know whether she was sick...'* Such indifference would certainly send everyone scattering for cover. As can be expected team work was non-existent because teachers felt secure working in isolation. If one examines Thembi's leadership, it's clear that she makes a deliberate attempt not to emulate such inhumanity for obvious reasons, supporting the theory that there's much to be learnt from bad practice as there is from good practice.

Things took a turn for the better at her next school. There she had the opportunity to better her practice. The teachers were prepared to assist; the principals were supportive, encouraging and motivating. One principal in particular took her under her wing personally and professionally: *'If you told her, you have no money to buy food she would give you the money. Also she never told others your problem.'* This principal also motivated Thembi by acknowledging her work and presenting her with merit awards. So in spite of the appalling conditions of the school site the teachers did the best they could.

Feeling inspired, Thembi took on leadership roles by organizing all kinds of extra-curricular activities for the pupils. If one looks at Thembi, the principal today, she does emulate the compassion and caring of her former principal. Her attitude demonstrates the power of modelling good practice.

### ***Hurdling To Transformation***

When it comes to leading transformation at the school site she is tasked with steering away from the iceberg (gigantic impending danger). Admittedly, leading change in any institution is a mammoth task but what does one do without the basic tools for change. The site remains in an abysmal state with minimal learning materials. Some learners in South Africa are surfing the net while the learners at this institution

haven't had exposure to a simple overhead projector – there is no electricity! Thembi believes that it is the Department's responsibility to provide the basic physical structure that is desperately needed. After 10 years of democracy is it too much to ask for a disadvantaged school to be granted its dues? Transformation policies advocate self reliant schools. But can this historically disadvantaged school suddenly become self reliant and operate like a business? We would be deluding ourselves if we responded in the affirmative.

Thembi's initiative to bring on board the different stakeholders, is making limited progress. Yes, there is a governing body in operation but their involvement with the school is limited. The general parent body chooses to sustain a safe distance. The difficulties are that many live below the bread line and the illiteracy rate is high.

However Thembi claims to be transforming in other areas: she adopts a democratic leadership approach. She encourages and values the inputs of all stakeholders. Decision making is participative – she maintains that by allowing staff to be involved in the decision making process they will take ownership of the tasks at hand. However due to the data collection visits being terminated prematurely, I was unable to ascertain details concerning these efforts to transform.

Coming from a difficult background Thembi identifies with the community and the teachers. Some of her struggles have been their struggles so she easily sympathizes and often empathizes with them. She believes that it is important to listen to their problems and help them find solutions. She has this to say about her job: *I'm enjoying it. I like it here. I'm enjoying the community.'*

### ***The Initiate Disembarks***

Thembi who had been a willing participant up to the point of sharing the difficulties of her life both personally and professionally decided to disembark at this stage. She maintained that she was not in a position to comment on how she was attempting to lead transformation at her school. Details of her withdrawal have been captured in **Section 3.4, Chapter Three: Designing A Methodology**. But just to recap briefly,



the main reason for her discontinuation was attributed to her being affected by a bout of illness.

But on a positive note Thembi consented to her story being told and for this I am eternally grateful to her. In theorizing about why further data collection of this principal was not possible the following issues surfaced:

- ***What emerged as a cathartic effect developed into a traumatic encounter.***  
 As I interacted with the **initiate** during the interview I sensed that she was experiencing a kind of release- she seized the opportunity to get things off her chest and there I was a most attentive listener, listening to her pour her heart out. But it seemed that all this emotional outpouring soon opened too many old wounds causing trauma and in order to block out the pain, she chose to terminate the interview.
- ***Since the subject had been forthcoming about her experiences up to the point of being appointed principal she obviously didn't want to comment in detail on this part of her life.***  
 Thembi was clearly inundated with the difficulties of heading a disadvantaged school located in a poverty stricken community. She gave the distinct impression that she was barely managing to keep her head above the water - a subject that she obviously didn't want to elaborate on. Anyway how does one come out and admit that one's ship may be sinking?
- ***The promotion to the principalship raised some questions which the subject assumed would have to be answered if the interview sessions continued.***  
 As I recall the **initiate** mentioned three things that had a direct bearing on her being appointed to the principalship: firstly she mentioned that she was recalled from sick leave by her principal at the time to act as principal; secondly she admitted that she had no intention of applying for the post of principal but she was influenced by the staff to submit an application and thirdly she wasn't very explicit about her qualifications.
- ***Having the odds stacked against her for periods in her life she felt she didn't have to open herself to any form of investigation.***  
 Thembi's life thus far had been painful; she constantly grappled with difficulties and didn't want to open herself to any more pain. She was entitled

to this decision so I retracted.

- ***While she didn't mind telling her story she preferred to maintain her professional silence (revolving around her role as principal) lest she might be judged.***

It was apparent that Thembi wanted the world to know her as a person but she didn't want the world to know her as a principal. It may be that she is so overcome with the challenge of transforming her school that she didn't want to be judged. However by telling her story she could be signalling for assistance. Her life history indicates that she is no stranger to confronting challenges but she feels powerless in her position as principal and is perhaps signalling for assistance

- ***In the final analysis she wanted part of her story told because she constantly alluded to the difficulties she experiences as principal, and her responses were punctuated with some of the efforts she was making to lead her school in transformation.***

It appears as though the **initiate** wants to share her story because she wants the world to know that in spite of her challenges and obstacles she perseveres and remains committed to her job as principal and again would appreciate a lifeline in the form of some kind of support system.

In closing it is important to examine the ramifications that the above mentioned issues have on the constructions of leadership. Leadership theorists (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Maxwell, 2002) claim that leadership depends on the context and the people and that it takes place in groups and that it involves risk taking and vision building. In analyzing Thembis' story in the light of leadership, it can be concluded that Thembi feels limited by her own lack of skills and expertise, the lack of support from the community and from the department. Therefore she constructs herself in the only way she knows how, she treads carefully by keeping the school functioning at its current rate and hopes that things will sort themselves out. Throughout her life she had to put out the fires and she continues to be doing so as a principal.

## **5.4.2 THE INTERMEDIARY**

### **5.4.2.1 THE MAN WITH A MISSION**

#### ***The man in the cockpit***

*Farouk is a 52 year old Indian man who speaks English and Urdu. He is married to Ayesha who teaches at Crescent Girls High. They reside in Parlock. Their only son recently qualified as a doctor. In his capacity as Chairman of the Parlock Madressa, for the past 20 years he teaches religious education to pupils in the area. Being once a teacher of English, he still enjoys a good read. He unwinds by reading the Sunday papers on the beach and keeps fit by walking.*

*His schooling began in Pietermaritzburg, resumed in Durban at Orient Primary School and culminated at Sastri College. His tertiary education spanned the Universities of Durban Westville, South Africa, Natal and Herriotwatt in Edinburgh, conferring on him: BA, UHDE, BA (hon), B Ed, M Ed and M Sc.*

*Farouk is the treasurer of the South African Principals' Association and the recipient of the Principal's District A ward (2003).*

**The school**

*New West Secondary is situated in Newlands West, a suburb which is populated by working class Indians and a scattering of working class Africans. The school comprises of 28 classrooms, a fully furnished administration area with internet facility and staffroom, a hall, a computer room, a computer laboratory and various specialist rooms.*

*Security is provided by perimeter fencing, an electronic alarm system and a 24 hour guard. All visits by parents, officials and others are placed on record.*

*The school has a population of 1468 learners whose demographics reflect Indian: 73%, African: 26% and Coloured: 1%. The teaching staff has begun to be integrated with 4% Africans and 96% Indians.*

*A fully functional governing body comprising of professionals and artisans provide a good support system for the school. The representative council of learners is in operation and is being capacitated to play a more active role in the effective functioning of the school.*

*When asked to comment on the development of infrastructure the principal responded, "The infrastructure has been maintained. However, as a result of a large pupil population (1468 in a school built to cater for approximately 1000) every available room including the library is used as a teaching room. Six classrooms are on the cards. The typing room was converted to a Computer Lab (with 42 computers) in 2002. Hotel keeping kitchen - on the cards. Upgrade of Admin Block completed. Hence, improvements made."*

**Reflections...**

*'A contented man is a perpetual feast'. This is who I am, a man who has led a rich and rewarding life. Yes tragedy did stare at me but fortune also smiled upon me. At the tender age of 10 I lost my dad. But my mother's strength and elder brothers' guidance protected and nurtured me. In later years, Ayesha my soul mate became the source of inspiration and purpose in my life.*

*On the career front I am poised on the pinnacle: being a principal of a secondary school can be daunting at times and dynamic at others but I wouldn't want it any other way. Passion drives me to work everyday; it's where I want to be, what I want to do. It all began when...*

**Attempts To Be A Model Pupil**

*Our family business was declared insolvent. So my family migrated from Pietermaritzburg to Durban because dad was looking for new prospects. I was seven years old. I adapted to the change with ease and continued my education at Orient Primary. My first major academic achievement came to fruition when I was presented with a meritorious primary school certificate. Hence my quest for education intensified and I secured a place at Sastri College, an institution that attracted only the top students.*

*High school was not what I expected it to be: my performance was always above average and life progressed in quite a mundane manner. But salvation came in the form of one or two teachers of English who instilled in me a love for English, especially poetry. And teachers in those days were 'characters', they had certain quirks, idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. In fact my friend Raj and I took the privilege of teaching our matriculation class English because our teacher, who was on the verge of resigning was on a go slow mode. Mathematics on the other hand was a living hell, thank God I'm mathematically sound today.*

*I was not going to let my senior years pass me by; so I took the bull by the horns by vigorously participating in sports. With much perseverance I landed a place in the school soccer team and even went on to play for the Durban U19 team. While I was not appointed captain of the soccer team at school, I constantly organized games during the breaks. On the academic front I also took an active role creating resources and assisting my peers. But I wasn't designated with any leadership position such as the prefectship - I think my shyness was my undoing.*

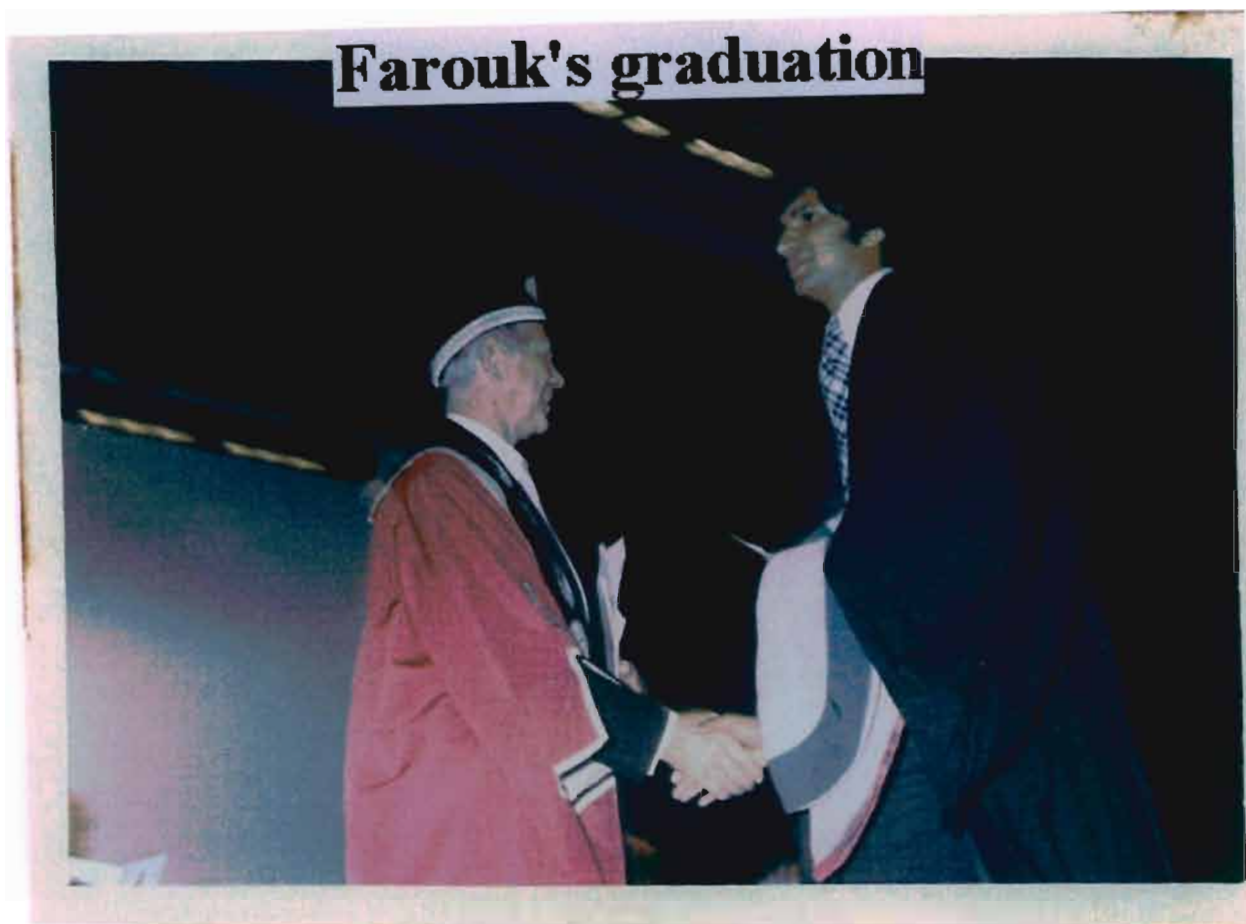
### ***Debut Into The Real World***

*School life drew to a close. Armed with a matriculation exemption I was ready to conquer the world. Off I went to Salisbury Island to attempt the B Sc as a passage to medical school. Within six short months my world came crashing down, I didn't have the aptitude for the sciences so instead of drowning in this mire I joined the ranks of the employed. The following year I resurfaced to enroll for a BA degree and was relieved that I had found my niche. To my amazement, my education of the real world began...*

*The seventies witnessed a period of boycotts on the Westville campus. For me, this was an awakening to the atrocities of the apartheid regime; all my life I had been naïve politically, sheltered from the real politics. But now the activists of the day were exposing me to reality and the one individual that impressed me was Zack Yacoob (today he is Judge Zack Yacoob), a blind law student. His commitment was unfaltering and his actions were so influential that I willingly joined all boycotts. On the contrary the lecturers were so uninspiring, predictable and closed minded. So we plodded through the curricula, figuring out things for ourselves. Somehow my love for poetry sustained me during those years.*

*Then Ayesha came into my life and we were betrothed by the end of our third year. The final year passed quickly catapulting me into my first post at P R Pather Secondary. On graduation day I was overcome with pride, so many people, especially my mum had been rooting for me. She was always there, not as a matriarch but as a supportive parent. She was delighted that her youngest son was the only one who had*

*become a professional. My brothers who were my financial pillars were just as chuffed*





### ***Becoming A Teacher In The True Sense***

*1 January, 1975 marks my entrance into the teaching fraternity. P R Pather Secondary proved to be a good training ground; one becomes a teacher in the classroom. This was undoubtedly my calling in life: I love it and I love the children. The teachers embraced me and in spite of their pecking order I soon became a team member. But the principal was a kind of slave driver and a no nonsense man. Rules were not meant to be broken! If you were a minute late then you had to bear his wrath. On the up side, Mr Naidoo was an excellent administrator who capacitated me tremendously in this regard.*

*As fate would have it, my English teacher was the senior assistant, so we related immediately. Being an excellent teacher he motivated me to develop my own style. Eager to develop myself professionally I completed my honours in geography. However I never taught the subject. My forte was English. Even those so called ogres from the department (subject advisors) were pleased with my work. Being elected secretary of the English Department opened up new avenues; in fact with the constant change of HODs, I took it upon myself to manage the department. By my fourth year I was allocated a matric class, a rare opportunity in those days. My transition to being an established teacher was complete.*

*After a five year stint, I transferred to a school closer to home, Lakehaven Secondary. Again I effortlessly immersed myself into the school life: taught English at senior level, became a member of the timetable committee, took over the cricket team, edited the school magazine and initiated a super c sports competition. My love for cricket, for sport in general got me integrated very swiftly. All the while I was imbibing the different facets of school - I always wanted to learn something new.*

### ***Scaling New Heights***

*By 1988 I was promoted to HOD. Being au fait with the administration procedures, we HODs practically ran the school. The acting HODs were under my wing so my mentoring potential was unleashed. It was satisfying to empower people be it learners, teachers or HODs. In conjunction with the subject advisors we assimilated guides for teachers of English; it was important to venture into territory beyond the confines of the school. These advisors made a huge impact on my life as an educator: they forced me to reflect on my practice and to seek new ways of teaching. Soon enough my restless spirit sought new challenges, so I seized the opportunity to be transferred to New West in 1989. To my disillusionment this school was stuck in a routine mode and change initiatives were taboo.*

*Identifying a need to capacitate myself in the field of management, I engaged in the M Ed programme at University of Natal which I completed cum laude in 1991. Subsequently I applied to do the M Sc at the University of Herriot Watt in Edinburgh. I motivated to the appropriate authorities for funding. Having secured a place and the funding from the Strakosch Memorial Trust, I spent an awesome year overseas satisfying my voracious appetite for learning both formally and informally. When I returned to school I strengthened my relationship with the Strakosch Memorial Trust and developed a partnership between the administrators and New West.*

*My next venture was as part time lecturer to B Ed and M Ed students at the University of Durban Westville (1993-1997). In addition I consulted and wrote manuals on school governance for MANCOSA<sup>1</sup>. My role as facilitator of workshops extended from Durban to Johannesburg. In the meantime the Sir Henry Strakosch Trust funded our major projects, one of which was building our hall. Then things took on a new turn at school.*

*The principal opted for the voluntary severance package leaving me to act from July 1997. It was policy for the most senior HOD to continue in the leadership role.*

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<sup>1</sup> Mancosa: The Management College of Southern Africa

*So I minimized my external pursuits in the field of tertiary education and resolved to implement the changes that my predecessors had resisted. But fate stepped in and education was thrown into the throes of crises, making me lean towards my colleagues for advice and sometimes even a shoulder to cry on.*

### ***In The Driver's Seat***

*At the risk of sounding like an autocrat who discovered a hiatus in the school management and leadership, I felt that I could take the school to new horizons. This was my focus at the interview for the principalship, if anything the governing body had a foretaste of my boundless energy and the changes that would be implemented. My appointment was announced in 1998, the sheer dedication had paid dividends but in a way it marked another type of beginning. With the recent implementation of the South African Schools Act, I entered the principalship at the time of its initial redefinition. What followed was a plethora of policies, introducing unprecedented change in education.*

### ***School Governing Body***

*Giving parents a voice in education got my vote. While there are reported cases of school governing bodies which are incompetent, our governing body which comprises educators, entrepreneurs and others is effective. We enjoy a good working relationship and share mutual respect; they respect my professional role and I respect their governance roles. As can be expected we don't agree on everything but we attempt to work through our differences. However, certain members of staff have their grievances about the operation of the governing body but I suppose we are on a steep learning curve.*

*While we have not instituted any capacity building programmes for our governing body, they have attended departmental workshops. They do have access to a manual on school governing bodies which I compiled. We hold regular meetings and*

*members are free to visit me, they also check in on the progress of projects related to material resources. They do not infiltrate the classroom, if they are alerted to problems related to learning and teaching they refer such problems to me.*

### ***Leading Transformation***

*One of the things that attracted me to the principalship was that my predecessor was a regulator not an innovator. Entering the principalship during a period of radical change demanded one to be innovative, proactive and open to transformation, qualities which I espouse. We went to work by formulating a vision and mission for the school. Thereafter we redesigned our admission policy to admit learners of all colours. New subjects like travel and tourism and hotel management were introduced. A computer laboratory was set up and the computer room was upgraded. Our financial management system was computerized. I'm sure you're wondering how these mammoth projects were accomplished. Well it was serendipity! Remember the Sir Henry Strakosch Trust? In 1999 they invited me to motivate for a trust fund to be established for New West. I promptly responded and the school received a trust fund to the value of R2, 037 million!*

*When it comes to the parents, teachers, learners and the community I encourage participative decision making where possible. This is proving to be a challenging task. Stakeholders are reluctant to project a voice; they are so accustomed to being directed by the principal. Parents on the governing body are actively involved but the others steer clear from school matters. Teachers are so confined to their territorial classrooms that they are hesitant to step out; learners have been socialized to accept the status quo so they are battling to emerge.*

*I do practice delegation but I am limited in certain areas. We have approximately 25 sub- committees that execute duties relating to the different components of school life. There are certain role functions such as financial management, marketing and planning that no one else can facilitate. They just don't have the capacity. When it comes to the academics, the HODs have things under control leaving me just to*

*oversee that part of school. Sometimes, some staff members perceive my management as top down, but not everything is open to negotiation. We cannot amend policy decisions taken at departmental level, any way I am passed trying to please everyone all of the time. You know Richard Olivier wrote a book, 'Inspirational Leadership' where he maintains that in any institution you will not be able to take 10% of the people with you so why spend 90% of your time trying to change their minds and yes I concur with him.*

*While there is a need to engage in staff development, there just doesn't seem to be enough time. Teachers feel burdened by their job descriptions, which is increasingly bombarded by policy overload and with teachers conducting continuous assessment moderation, staff development has gone on the back burner. They do however attend departmental workshops and are expected to cascade the information to colleagues. One or two are engaged in post graduate studies.*

*At New West we believe that our learners have a significant voice in education and we are nurturing this potential via the Representative Council of Learners. They receive guidance from their Teacher Leader Organiser and attend various leadership programmes away from the school site. So they are breaking out of their shells.*

*Well New West is making strides in the transformation process, not without its turbulent moments. But we have our moments of triumph. With more and more stakeholders buying into the vision, we are emerging as a community that provides quality education for children irrespective of colour, creed or culture.*

### **5.4.2.2 BEYOND THE NARRATIVE**

#### ***In full flight***

Farouk is travelling at rapid speed. He is energetic, focused and has mapped out his destination. It is evident that he is bent on his school becoming a model institution preparing learners to find their way in the outside world. He adopts a '**hands on approach**', leading major projects and admits to '**taking over to a large extent**' when things are not going according to plan. This reaction is a recurring pattern in his life:

- '**But always took the lead in academic stuff at primary school.**'
- '**My friend and I were actually teaching our matric English class because our teacher was about to resign and decided to take things easy.**'
- '**Our HODs would come and go, so essentially I was holding the English Department together. To all intents and purposes I felt I was the HOD.**'
- '**As principal I was able to implement changes that my predecessors were a bit reluctant to implement.**'

His tempo increases when relating his successes but decreases when recalling his failures or tragic moments. The philosophy that underpins both his personal life and professional life is to make the best of opportunities, but more importantly to create opportunities. Upon erring, he doesn't succumb to failure but redirects his course of action.

#### ***Roles In Transformation***

To introduce this section, I thought it appropriate to insert the following excerpt from the transcription of his interviews which effectively captures the roles that Farouk performs as an agent of transformation. The excerpt has been entitled "Chief cook and

bottle washer” because that is how the principal views his role in the light of school transformation.

*‘Chief Cook And Bottle Washer’*

*An Interview Snippet*

**Researcher:** What leadership roles do you perform as an agent of transformation? What additional skills and competencies are required of principals today?

**Farouk:** *I think that the principal’s skills and abilities are completely varied, I use the words ‘chief cook and bottle washer’ in other words you need leadership ability in the academic field, you got to be the professional leader, you got to be in the admin field, the pastoral field. Now we are looking at resources and finances, with a big school like ours, the budget is a million rands. Now you got to have financial savvy- how to bring in the money and how to spend it judiciously. Now, I’m finding that finances, management and resources are areas that need real attention because it can haywire not through fault but through lack of knowledge.*

*The other bit that is my ‘baby’ at the moment is strategic planning because you got to be one step ahead all the time. The marketing aspect is important - if you look at an organization the CEO has a head of marketing, head of planning, head of resources, head of human resource management. In the school situation we are all of that. I find that besides one or two members of my management, one or two of the staff, not many can slot into any of these positions - so that we can say ‘you slot into this role. Can you be the finance manager? Can you be the marketing manager?’ There needs to be capacity building for the management team so that I can say these are the areas and these are the people.*

In terms of transformation, Farouk perceives his role to be a combination of administrative, management and leadership functions. He identifies himself as '*a neatness freak*' who probably fashioned himself on his father, who coordinated his clothing to the last detail. By Farouk's own admission his wardrobe is '*colour and style coordinated*'. It is important that all aspects of administration and management are well organized to facilitate the efficient and effective operation of the organization. Provision of resources takes priority; all departments are considered and resourced according to needs of the institution as a whole, which signifies the principal's leaning towards the systems approach. During critical moments in the interview he alluded to the need for stakeholders to hone on to the '*global picture*' of the school.

Among other things, Farouk manages the school's finances, markets the organization and develops partnerships because of '*a lack of capacity*' within the management team or the staff at large. This problem will not rectify itself because '*staff development has gone on the back burner*' because of various constraints, such as '*policy overload*'. It is apparent that delegation is occurring on a cautious level in certain areas and on a more vigorous level in other areas.

A typical day in the life of the principal (as reflected below) is a whirlwind of activities ranging from a multitude of meetings to a mountain of administrative work. On the day I shadowed Farouk he was all systems go: he performed approximately 30 activities which comprised of 15 meetings, 8 administrative tasks (paperwork), 5 phone calls, a walk around the school and shepherded the laggards to class. It is apparent that he values his visibility and interaction with the different stakeholders. As can be expected all activities revolved around ensuring the efficient and effective operation of the school. During this hectic day which commenced at 7.10 and concluded at 15.40, Farouk took the time to talk to the reprographics assistant about a personal matter. In spite of his concerted effort to complete his paper work, at the end of the day he still had not completed his day's work so he took it home.



**Day in the life of Farouk the principal...****2004: 05: 10**

- 7.30 *Interacted with relief team.*
- 7.40 *Engaged in staff briefing – focused on activities planned for the next few days.*
- 7.50 *Attended Grade 9 assembly.*
- 8.00 *Returned to office. Discussed misdemeanour and disciplinary hearing with parent. Technician entered to check on malfunctioning computer.*
- 8.25 *Typed letter concerning another disciplinary hearing which was forwarded to secretary for faxing.*
- 8.40 *Attended to correspondence. Requested that secretary distribute certain circulars. Made a phone call.*
- 9.00 *Took tea in office. Communicated with secretary on matters relating to a disciplinary hearing, a stationery order and approved of the distribution of stationery to the teaching staff.*
- 9.20 *Met with representative from Fastrack (toiletry company).*
- 9.45 *Two principals from neighbouring schools called to pick up circulars while a representative from Copytype Electronic called to discuss payment for duplicators.*
- 10.15 *Took tea with school management team*
- 10.30 *Walked into the blocks, especially around the tuck shop area.*
- 10.45 *Observed learners returning to class and urged them to be prompt.*
- 10.55 *Responded to message that a parent is waiting to see him to discuss a stabbing incident. While addressing the matter a teacher called but was requested to call back later*
- 11.35 *Phoned the Promotions Section concerning a teacher being offered two posts. Attended to matter by writing a letter which was personally taken to the teacher to append his signature and returned to the office to arrange the faxing of the letter.*
- 11.55 *Signed cheques.*
- 12.10 *Interviewed a teacher for the Woodwork post with the deputy principal sitting in.*
- 12.30 *Attempted to sort out paper work.*

- 12.40** *Received phone call from a member of the school's trust fund and subsequently spoke to various individuals to sort out documents relating to the trust fund.*
- 13.00** *Whilst at lunch approached by a teacher to discuss a proposal. Advised her to return with a proper 'business plan' and then re-approach him.*
- 13.25** *Discussed the SAPA Conference with a fellow principal on the phone.*
- 13.30** *Teacher called at the office with a discipline problem. Principal personally located the accused in Block A with the assistance of a teacher, after spending 35 minutes with him to no avail, he was handed a letter calling for his parents.*
- 14.30** *Brief meeting with three teachers regarding the Grade 11 meeting.*
- 14.35** *Discussed personal matter with reprographics assistant.*
- 14.55** *Made a phone call to arrange bags for SAPA Conference.*
- 15.15** *Discussed furniture requirements with a HOD.*
- 15.40** *Departed for home with some paper work in tow*

Emerging from a background of constant change and defining moments : *his father's death, the move to Durban, the change in his career choice, his political awakening, his mother's death, his brother's move to Pakistan, the promotion posts and so forth*, he embraced the transformation process in education. But it's a long haul bringing the different constituencies on board. Anyway, Rome wasn't built in a day!

The past practice of autocratic decision making which he was exposed to as a student and a teacher are not allowed to shape his decision making in all matters of schooling. Alluding to his encounters under the headship of his autocratic principals he affirms: *'coming out of that, where you're not given freedom, you realize that when you are in this leadership position, you need to work with people with the freedom of ideas moving backwards and forwards.'* However there are decisions that he has to take as the positional leader of the school and he does so without any qualms or fears. So the process as elucidated by Farouk is: *'Participatory to a large extent. It's on a continuum between autocratic, participatory and democratic.'* One can detect the influence of situational leadership theory.

Another strategy that is being used to transform the institution is team building. He's no stranger to team work: *playing soccer and cricket as a pupil and a teacher, working in various committees as a teacher and a community member, being a member of the SMT ...* Herein exists another challenge; some individuals imbibe team spirit while others evade it.

Farouk's mentoring initiatives began when he was HOD when he would guide the acting HODs. According to Maxwell (2002) the Law of Legacy is learnt by a minority of leaders. The principal under question was quite emphatic that the institution would not collapse with his departure; he did infer that someone in the school would be able to take the reigns. Understanding that mentoring is not the domain of the principal, he encourages it at other levels

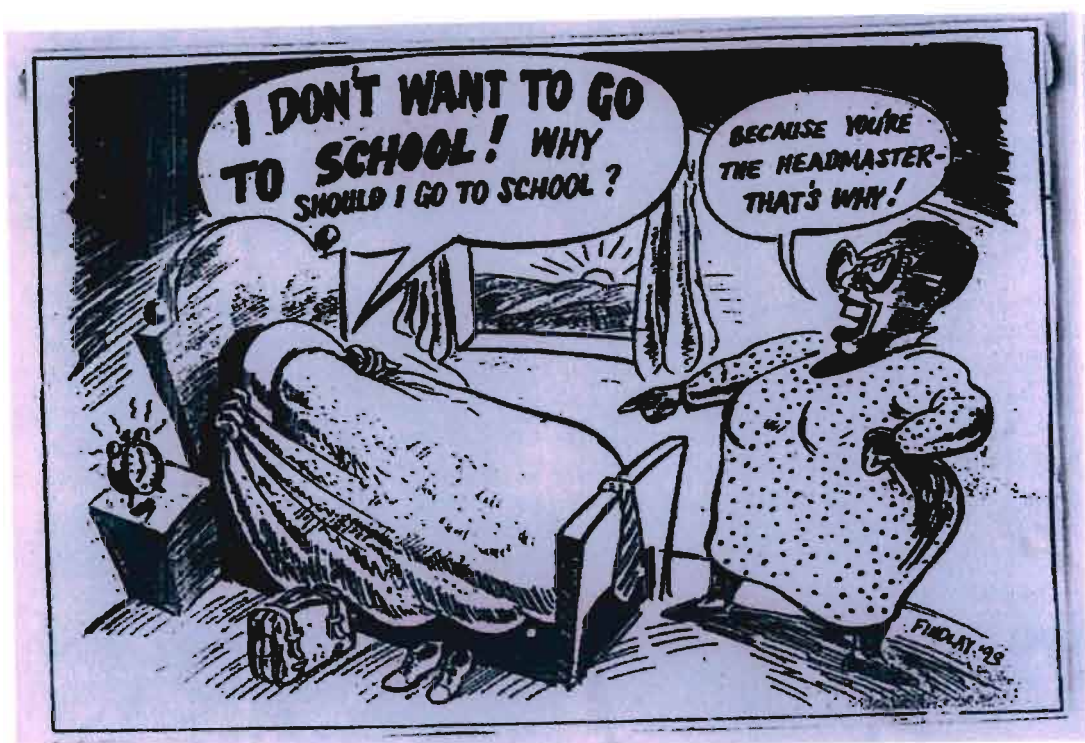
This attitude is in sync with his description of his strengths as a leader: *'proactive, want to get things done...'* and *'I've people skills as well to a large extent'*. A theme which impacts on his leadership approach: *'I think sometimes I'm two steps ahead of everybody else in school and proactive in that sense and try to bring everybody in. It's a mixture of democratic and I wouldn't quite say autocratic but I make my point of view strongly...'* Well it's evident who's in control. But surprisingly he confessed to being a *'softie sometimes'* a *'personality trait'* he is coming to terms with. Like any good leader he does not dwell on it. However the forces of conflicting emotions that Farouk occasionally experiences emanate from operating in a dynamic context, often fraught with uncertainty. It is no secret that when the chips are down the leader is called to stand tall.

He argues that his positional leadership gives him control of the transformation process. But he is realistic about the rocky road ahead:

- *'I've got two African teachers. In terms of staffing, this school historically had Indian teachers, there's a need to become more racially diverse. It probably won't happen in the next five years.'*
- *'when it comes to the formation of sub committees, 80% to 90% quite happily get on board, then you get the detractors...'*

- *‘Community- the governing body is involved but the community in general is not’*
- *‘KZN is lurching from one policy and crisis to another policy and crisis and from one minister to another.’*

But being a believer in the transformation process in education he engages in various activities to be empowered. He keeps up to date with the growing literature on leadership, he networks with colleagues who are members of SAPA (South African Principals Association), attends conferences (attended the international principals conference in 2003) and takes a keen interest in strategic management. He is convinced that planning is the way to go! I’m sure the strategic planning experts would concur.



### **5.4.2.3 RESPONSE TO CARTOON**

*'This is my 30<sup>th</sup> year as an educator; started teaching in 1975; HOD (English) since 1984; Acting Deputy Principal for six months (January to June 1997); Acting Principal (1 July 1997- 31 July 1998) and then Principal since 1 August 1998.*

*I have always looked forward to coming to school every day in the last thirty years-borne out by my attendance record. When the VSP was offered, I did not even consider it although I had a job with MANCOSA lined up and ready-with more benefits. I have been at school every day well after everyone leaves, spent Saturday mornings sorting out my work and also holidays at school with the various projects that were being completed. In fact, my wife said that the only way I would not go to school is if I were over 100 km away from Durban!*

*However, there came a time somewhere towards the end of the first term this year when things came to a head. The following perhaps contributed to my feeling down for a few weeks – so much so that I did not want to get out of bed and go to school:*

1. *There were a number of instances where pupils were getting into fights on a daily*

*basis - boys and girls. These were largely issues that emanated outside school, and culminated in some sort of verbal and physical altercation in school. I reached a point where the entire school was called to assembly and the pupils were told that any fight would lead to a three-day 'cooling-off' period, irrespective of who started the fight, etc. I immediately had two sets of pupils suspended for three days. The breakdown in discipline amongst a handful of my charges affected me as I felt I was in loc parentis and that I had failed them and their parents somewhere.*

2. *At the same time, there was some dissension amongst some members of the management staff. This led to two members not taking tea with the other six of us. There was a perception that some were doing more than others, ie. some members were going the extra mile whilst the others were doing the bare minimum. In this instance, there were HODs who were too busy 'defending their own turf'- whereas they should be seeing the global picture. However, nobody said anything neither openly to each other, nor to me directly. But the matters were alluded to in conversations and discussions (informally) with the two Deputy Principals. I let it ride for a while and then had a meeting where the issues were aired. I raised the issues openly; I realized that there were some areas where I had erred. I admitted my shortcomings openly, but at the same time appealed to all to see the global picture. Six of the seven have now returned to our once strong and unified management team - the seventh is still aloof. I hope that we would be able to get him on board again soon.*
  
3. *At about the same time, I received an unsigned memorandum from the SADTU members raising some concerns-I am also a SADTU member. The issues raised centred around decisions being made by the SGB, especially the use of funds from the NWSS - Sir Henry Strakosch Trust. Together with this, the other matters raised were: change of Friday times (school day extended from 13.00 to 14.30); relocation of classroom-based educators; creation of sub-committees; hand picking of certain level one staff to do management functions; relief teaching; invigilation of standardization tests; ground duty; allocation of subject grades; optional teaching.*

*The memorandum was delivered to me on 30 March 2004-hence there was no time to respond immediately. I have invited the SADTU members to meet me some time ago - the meeting is now scheduled for 13 May 2004.*

*I feel that I can respond to all these issues with educationally sound reasons.*

- *The projects are decided at SGB level where the staff has representation - incidentally, one SADTU and one APEK representative. The staff was invited to serve on the sub-committees - in this case the Finance and Facilities Management Sub-Committees. However, there were no volunteers. The terms of the Trust are that the Trustees approve*

*the projects; SA Schools Act gives the SGB the responsibility over these issues. Most importantly, the members of staff are informed at staff meetings of proposed projects, and their comments are invited.*

- *Friday times were changed for two reasons: high pupil absentee rate; also many staff members did not utilize it for the SD purposes. Many sought leave; did not attend Subject Committee or Staff Meetings; and one or two even 'absconded' at times!*
- *Sub-committees are necessary - they have successfully organized activities and functions.*
- *Other issues are 'necessary evils' – relief teaching is brought about by absent teachers, etc.*

*However, I hope that I can make the membership see the 'global picture'.*

*I have in the meanwhile felt renewed and reinvigorated and am again looking forward to being in school everyday.'*

**Farouk.**

### **5.4 2.4 RATING AS A LEADER IN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION**

Unbeknown to Farouk he was highly rated as a leader in school transformation by the three educators who responded to the Questionnaire: Appendix B. The extracts pertaining to his ratings are as follows:

<b>RATING</b>	<b>REASON</b>
1. <i>Excellent</i>	<i>The principal seems open to suggestions and encourages holistic development of pupils. Always makes the time to listen to educators' personal and professional queries. Aware of trends in education.</i>
2. <i>Excellent</i>	<i>My principal's effervescent nature spells sunshine and cheer to those around him. 'Born leader'.</i>
3. <i>Excellent</i>	<i>He shows respect for all. He fulfills all his tasks with pride and dignity. He is tolerant and kind. He has good leadership skills and he displays commitment to serve learners and educators.</i>

Farouk's rating of himself as a leader in school transformation (extracted from Questionnaire: Appendix A) reads as follows:

<b>RATING</b>	<b>REASON</b>
<i>Very good</i>	<i>There has been curricular transformation since 1997 at a very high level. However, I feel that there is scope for more transformation - can be achieved if there were more on board from staff who could translate vision into action.</i>





DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# District Teaching Awards

*This is to certify that*

**BAYAT MF**

*has received an award in category 4:  
EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AT  
SECONDARY LEVEL*

*Narend Singh*  
MEC, Education

Date: 23. 10. 200

*[Signature]*  
Head of Department



### **5.4.3 THE EXPERIENCED**

#### **5.4.3.1 THE CONSERVATIST TURNED PROGRESSIVE**

##### **The man in the driver's seat**

Joppie is a White Afrikaner. He is 53 years old. His wife of 28 years teaches at Werda Junior Primary. Their daughters have flown the nest in pursuit of careers: one is an intern pharmacist and the other is a B. Com student. Joppie lives in Queensburgh.

Sport plays a critical role in his life: now more as an organizer and a spectator. Being fanatical about rugby he is an ardent Sharks supporter. These days he walks in the hope of living a long and healthy life. His education commenced at Seaview Primary, continued at Saamwerk Secondary and concluded at Potchefstroom University, which conferred on him the following: B A, UHDE, B Ed and M Ed. Joppie is Chairman of the Natal High Schools Rugby Association, member of the South African Schools Rugby Selectors Committee, Chairman of the Craven Week organizing committee and Chairman of Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (teachers' union).

**The school site**

**Durban Academy (formerly Dirkie Uys) is situated in the residential section of Bluff, which houses mainly working class Whites and minority groups of Indians, Africans and Coloureds. The school consists of 30 classrooms, a fully equipped administration area and staffroom, two halls, a computer room, a library with internet access and a host of specialist rooms. Perimeter fencing and an electronic alarm system serve as security measures.**

**The school has a population of 773 learners whose demographics reflect White: 70%, African: 25%, Coloured: 4% and Indian: 1%. The teaching staff comprises 90% White and 10% Indian. A functional governing is in place with the chairperson devoting much of her day to assisting the principal and staff.**

**When asked to comment on the development of infrastructure the principal responded: “The building needs attention. No funds are available.”**

### ***On Being A Student***

Joppie was raised in a humble home: his pa worked for the Railways and his ma was a housewife. They were a conservative Afrikaans family who were God fearing. Everyone knew their places: pa was the head and breadwinner of the family, ma was the caregiver and Joppie and his siblings went to school to make something of their lives. They respected their parents and were expected to respect their wishes. Discipline was the order of the day in this household. Joppie was grateful for his family and the opportunities they presented, so off he went to school.

***‘Those days if it rains, shoes came off in school; if it rained hard enough we were sent home. We had the opportunity to go home for lunch and come back to school.’*** Joppie recalls this memory with much relish and boyhood charm. Being a resident in Seaview, afforded him the opportunity of attending Seaview Primary, a parallel medium school<sup>2</sup>. When he graduated to high school he was delighted to be attending Saamwerk, a new school and to be part of its history. Saamwerk unleashed a world of opportunities: exciting train journeys to Port Shepstone and Empangeni to play sport, being a school leader receiving addresses on ***‘communism and all the isms of the world’***, revelling in *volkspeeler* on Friday nights and being head boy in 1967. Smoking and alcohol were off limits; so it was a time of good clean fun and serious work. But there were the odd moments. On one occasion he was on board a ship where an atmosphere of revelry reigned because they had just beaten rugby teams in East London and Port Elizabeth, so the coach popped open champagne to celebrate their victory.

High school provided a kind of apprenticeship in leadership for Joppie: he captained the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> rugby teams, captained the first team cricket squad, achieved the highest accolade in ‘voortrekkers’ (scouts) and headed the prefects. His greatest fulfillment derived from playing sports: ***‘I was never a great sportsman but I loved sport. My dad would go to a cricket test for 5 days and it rubbed off on me. He always supported my cricket matches.’*** Living life to the fullest was his philosophy.

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<sup>2</sup> parallel medium school: a school which employs two languages, in this instance Afrikaans and English as media of instruction in the classroom

Then tragedy struck. During Joppie's matric year his pa died, leaving him with '*no real father figure*'. Fortunately his elder brother, a teacher stepped in as a role model. The other individual who made quite an impression on him was his mathematics teacher whom he described as, '*a very neat man who thought he was always right; he was a wonderful man.*'

The scene moved to Potchefstroom for the next four years. They were quiet years; Joppie concentrated on completing his degree and although he played rugby and cricket for his hostel he distanced himself from any leadership position as such. He focussed on the fact that he was indebted to the department: '*Those were difficult times, if the department didn't give me money to go to varsity I would never have become a teacher.*'

The young graduate did not have the finance to attend the graduation ceremony so he had no photographs of this momentous occasion. Nevertheless he conveyed a sense of pride and joy at becoming a qualified teacher. It was fait accompli.

### ***On Being A Teacher***

Several reasons influenced Joppie to enter the teaching profession. His brother was a teacher; he held his own teachers in high regard and did not have the finance to pursue any other career. But life presented a few unanticipated challenges to the novice teacher. Being posted to Saamwerk posed a problem; it took some effort to make the transition from subordinate to equal with the staff. Then to make matters worse some of his pupils failed putting an end to some of his idealistic notions about teaching and learning. But all was not lost. The staff shared a strong bond and an inspiring team spirit that soon embraced Joppie. Once again he played cricket and this strengthened his bond with his colleagues. As time progressed he felt blessed to have found his calling in life.

As can be expected Joppie aspired to teach the matric class but there was an obstacle: his brother was the senior history teacher and there was no way that he would usurp

his brother's position. At that period only the senior teacher was allocated the matric class. So after 8 years he transferred to Werda to seize the opportunity to teach at matric level. It was important to him because, ***'if you teach matric you make progress and others accept you as a senior teacher.'***

Support came in various forms during his years as a teacher. There was his brother, his colleagues, leadership of the teachers' union and leadership of the Teachers Federal Council. In addition to being a classroom teacher, Joppie developed children on the sporting field. Being in charge of the prefects, he would accompany them on various leadership camps which also gave him the opportunity to interact with colleagues from other schools. What gave him immense pleasure was being the first team rugby coach ***'because when you coach the first team you are the lead coach'***. On the academic front he acted as subject head. As a young teacher he also joined the ranks of the union executive.

Considering his diverse contribution to education, he declares that he could have done more. He insists: ***'But I could have been better, I think we all can be better.'*** The guiding principle is his teaching was and continues to be ***'to touch pupils and develop them'*** not to saturate them with meaningless facts and figures.

### ***On Being A Principal***

After moving through the ranks: HOD (1984 - 1988 at Werda); deputy principal (1989-1992 at Dirkie Uys), Joffie realized his ambition of becoming a principal in 1993 at Dirkie Uys. He asserts that these administrative posts provided him with invaluable training for the principalship.

When Joppie applied for the principalship he had a dream. He believed that he had the ***'qualities to make this a big school. In those days, 1993, this school was a small Afrikaans medium school and I thought that it had the potential to get bigger and better.'*** But the country's transformation to democratic rule urged him to create a new dream, a profound dream.

After 1994 the roll dropped rapidly and they were edging on to permanent closure. *'We're realized that we were going to bleed to death like Saamwerk did.'* Joppie considered a few options that were not workable so he realized that he would have to change strategy. After consulting with the governing body and the department it was decided that the school would convert to parallel medium. Although he confronted a lot of opposition and negativity from certain stakeholders, Joppie took the risk and saved the jobs of the entire staff and made the school accessible to all. A name change was next on the agenda. After seeking the services of marketing consultants, who advised, *'change the name cos' it's a new product'*, Dirkie Uys became Durban Academy giving birth to a new ethos in the spirit of integration. The principal is adamant that *'if we didn't get the support of the staff and parents it would never have happened - it was a learning curve'*.

One needs to constantly empower oneself to meet the demands of transformation. The principal in this narrative does just that; he exposes himself to literature on leadership that focus on issues like conflict resolution and motivation, he attends all meetings of principals of Afrikaans medium schools and is never afraid to consult colleagues.

*'I will easily pick up the phone and say, Chris, please give me some advice, I wasn't shy. I 'm not shy to do that. Some people try it - on their own and fail - I use everybody around me.'*

When the school converted to a S4 status he revisited the entire process of applying for the principalship and subsequently *'went through the whole scenario again, sitting for the interview...'* After his appointment his ranking increased to level 4.

By this time the school demographics (learner sector) reflected racial integration. Although the staff was mainly White *Afrikaner*, the majority joined forces with the principal to make Durban Academy a better school for all its learners. Joppie describes his strength as, *'being a good motivator'* and makes an attempt to *'smile every Monday morning when he goes into the staffroom.'* He believes that his weakness is that he is too trusting but is working on it. These days he tends to address issues by saying, *'I trusted you and now you have done this and I want you to know that was wrong.'*

There are clear signs that the governing body is working with the principal and staff towards a shared vision. Their involvement is active; they bring their expertise to bear on the school. They manage the financial aspect, maintain the school building and assist with discipline among other functions. Sometimes problems do arise for instance a parent may comment on teacher matters but Joppie diplomatically intervenes to set the record straight. All in all the governing *'has a wonderful relationship'* with the principal. While there are no internal workshops for the SGB they are encouraged to attend departmental workshops.

A great deal of disciplining occurs when it comes to the pupils but with a different approach of course. Joppie adopts a warm, loving, concerned approach towards the learners. He makes an effort to treat all learners in the same way but admits to making mistakes sometimes. Placing value on their views he encourages their input via the RCL and SGB. They are empowered by attending departmental workshops and union organized workshops and are taken to leadership camps.

The majority of the staff has changed their mind set. Some are so embedded in the past that they are making slow progress. The principal works with the staff and includes them in decision making most of the time. Sometimes teachers are given a period to weigh a situation before reaching a decision. Delegation is an important part of the leadership which promotes democratic principles. Staff development takes the form of departmental workshops but when the need arises experts are consulted. Joppie is always willing to listen and practice new ideas, *'if people come with a proposal and they want to change something by all means we will attempt it,'* but reserves the right to reject a venture that doesn't work for the institution.

How does the department come to his assistance? They create policies for change but do not assist much in the way of implementation. The workshops that he attends are sometimes capacitating but often presenters read from manuals that are distributed anyway. So there's not much forthcoming from the department.

In the process of leading transformation he has become more of a motivator, a mediator, a listener, a team leader, a networker and a democrat that is open minded.



Together with the staff, learners, parents and the community, Joppie envisions a school **'where every learner in the community feels safe and receives quality education'**.

### **5.4.3.2 BEYOND THE NARRATIVE**

#### **On The Right Track**

He emits nuances of charm, a definite sense of humour, quiet confidence, a spirit of optimism and a good measure of composure. Meet Joppie the ‘experienced’ principal who affirms, *‘I’ve got a personality that attracts people.’*

I must confess that the prospect of interviewing a White Afrikaner principal had me wondering whether I would be able to establish a rapport that would generate rich data. But that was soon put to rest. After our initial telephone conversation and our first meeting, we established a rapport that grew with each data collection visit. Furthermore an inviting atmosphere prevailed in the school: the staff welcomed me and the management team embraced me.

Joppie’s ability to focus on the positive and downplay the negative in his personal and professional life is consistent. When he talked about his family he said; *‘I’m very pleased and thankful for two wonderful daughters. The elder one is a diabetic from the age of 9... It became a way of life for all of us’*. As a pupil he knew some of his teachers to be *‘military men and women’* but went on to explain, *‘Then you take the positives from those people and the things they do.’* When he was promoted to HOD he identified a need to implement some changes but his enthusiasm was stifled: *“Then if you want to change ... the headmaster will say, ‘no! you can change it when I retire.’ Although it was a negative from him it helped - I took the positive - I’ll never be like this.”* And there is sufficient evidence to corroborate that Joppie has embraced change.

It’s no surprise to discover that Joppie’s occupation of leadership positions has a history. He’s always been in charge, motivating, supporting or changing strategy with his cricket and rugby teams, his prefects and his fellow teachers. What’s more he is quite comfortable with being the team leader and a team player, once again drawing from his long involvement with sport. It was interesting to note that when he alluded

to the efforts to transform, he often said *'we did it'*, *'we were open-minded'*, *'we influenced one another'*. He is very influential and makes a point of knowing the strengths of his staff, which he constantly harnesses to promote the transformation process. I detected a sense of camaraderie at the staff meeting which was cast against a background of interaction and consultation. Joppie's skill of delegation and resultant capacity building was apparent when members from the different levels took centre stage by providing updates on their specific projects. Incidentally the principal is on a first name basis with his staff.

It's important to note that this 'experienced principal' projects no grand delusion about being a 'one man band', instead he nurtures the concept of shared vision building: *'I think if they know that this is where we want to go and this is what we are aiming for and this is the way we want to do it, then to get there we get a good response'*. This is where his ability to plan also comes into play: issues regarding *'battling, Integrated Quality Management System, Continuous Assessments meetings, the ten year democracy celebration, the Open Day and exams'* were addressed in April in consultation with the staff. Joppie's sense of direction is endorsed by an educator's response (accessed from Appendix B) who maintains that he is **'clear about what he wants and how to get there and knows how to get there - to be reasonable, fair and open to suggestions'**.

Humans have defining moments in life but whether they choose to acknowledge them is another issue. In the initial part of the interview Joppie informed me that the number four was significant in his life and he proceeded to explain. Hence, I decided to identify four defining moments in his life:

- the death of his father when he was in his final year of schooling which aroused a deeper sense of responsibility in him
- the awarding of a bursary from the department without which he *'would never have become a teacher'*
- his marriage which spans 28 blissful years
- his promotion to the principalship which challenged his entire ideology

It is no secret that major change calls for courage. Fortunately Joppie had a constant supply of support in his life coming from his family members, his teachers at school, his colleagues, his union executive members and *'a minister or two.'* But his older brother was his role model. Not only did they share a room they later shared a staffroom. In his own role as principal he employs a supportive approach to the learners, parents and teachers but is quick to point out that *'they support each other'*.

But this supportive climate can be threatened by resistance and conflict. How does the principal react to such realities? The following encounter illustrates his attitude to resisters: *'One teacher came to me the other day and said that as soon as the percentage of African learners is greater than the White learners she is going to leave, so I said that's fine – then you leave but it doesn't bother me at all and I'm not going to convince you to stay.'* In an early episode of the interview he mentioned that the only sport he disliked is boxing, so I'm not shocked that he tends to shy away from conflict situations. The staff has brought to his attention via the grievance box that he should *'talk to the individual or individuals when problems arise not generalize at the staff meeting.'* He is experiencing difficulty in approaching individuals directly because, *'people will hold it against you forever', 'people may dislike you' and 'you've got to continue working with that person.'* This issue reared itself again in one of the educator's responses to Appendix B, when he commented that the principal **'could be more direct with respect to addressing problems with respect to individuals'**. But like certain members of the staff pointed out conflicts must be resolved not evaded.

Conflict situations with the governing body are minimal. There were a few instances when teachers were up in arms because of certain allegations made by some governing body members but that's history due to the principal's intervention. What helps is that the different constituencies know their functions. While Joppie welcomes the assistance provided by the parent component he's made it clear that professional matters is his jurisdiction: *'But they must stay out of the classrooms - they appointed me so they must trust that I will manage the school or lead the school the best way I can.'* He values their inputs on financial management and building maintenance especially since he admits to be lacking in these areas. *'I'm glad there's a governing*

*body that can look after the financial side of the school, otherwise I would have spent everything every month*'. This is an aspect of site-based management where resources are accessed from the community. During many of my data collection visits I encountered the SGB chairlady who spends much of the school day assisting with the discipline issue by interacting with parents. On the day that I shadowed the principal she met with him briefly to discuss the matter of the missing wallet: Joppie's wallet had mysteriously disappeared a few days ago! Also it assists in the time management of the principal, allowing him to focus on the professional matters of the school.

This highlights another way in which the principal leads transformation at the school site. It's important to acknowledge that a principal may not possess all the expertise and skills needed to lead a school but the question is whether he or she is accessing them from appropriate sources. Well Joppie certainly does! He is open - minded about seeking assistance from the different stakeholders in and out of the institution. He displays no qualms about *'bouncing things'* with fellow principals. In order not only to survive but to flourish, principals need to be able to discuss promising school practices without fear of violating a taboo; they need to learn to share problems without worrying about appearing inadequate (Barth, 2000).

I suppose it takes confidence to motion for assistance and not to pretend to know it all which can have disastrous consequences for the organization. Learning from other people and their experiences has been a theory of natural progression for Joppie:

- *'I was a junior teacher in charge of prefects and I accompanied them on workshops - there were HODs from other schools - I learnt a lot from them.'*
- *'people rub of things on you and some of those things you will use later in life'.*
- *'I think as a young teacher one must look at the seniors around you and pick up things that you can try in class.'*
- *'I was a counsellor for 2 or 3 years- I interacted with counsellors across the colour line at workshops - it was an opportunity to work with these people.'*

He reacts to his headmasters with mixed feelings. When he recalls his days at Saamwerk he wanders whether the headmaster was in any way responsible for the strong team spirit that existed amongst the teachers. At Werda the principal vehemently opposed any form of change and the head of Dirkie Uys *'was a rule or book man - he did everything by the book and it irritated me tremendously in the beginning. But I got used to it and learnt how to deal with it.'* These days Joppie leans towards a democratic style of leadership and is primarily guided by what is good for the learners.

I suppose that's why he chooses to teach. His teaching approach is thought provoking because he prefers his learners to be *'actively involved'*. Even as a classroom practitioner he serves as a role model; he has a passion for teaching and doesn't expect the educators to do more than he does. He places great faith in the power of discipline; it's apparent that his disciplined upbringing has made an indelible impression on him. It is one of the most important guiding forces in his role as principal. His anecdote at the staff meeting about his young African charge exemplified his point that children flourish when their achievements are acknowledged. He maintains that *'discipline has a huge role to play and love which is in a way discipline.'* Joppie is always on the lookout for positive ways of disciplining the learners and condemns negative approaches: *'But we still get our hyenas. A teacher said that she knew the instigator of a problem was in grade 8, that's not why she's here, she's here to teach.'* He laments the lack of discipline in kids today and lays blame on society and parents who have abdicated their duties. *'We start the year by telling the kids that we love them... they have a right to education but we've got the right to teach'*. Recently all stakeholders worked on a long drawn out process revamping the entire discipline system. Since the formulation of the system was shared, staff and learners took ownership of the implementation process.

Joppie never loses focus of the children. Actually he seized every opportunity during the interview sessions and our informal conversations to direct attention to the children. He is bent on them learning to appreciate and celebrate their diversity and bringing on board the African learners. *'To celebrate 10 years of democracy I've*

*gone to the Black learners to come up with ideas because for the White or Afrikaans learners the last 10 years were like the 10 years before that – they had all the facilities at schools.*’ According to Hart and Bredeson (1996, as cited in Jason, 2000) the principal’s roles as celebrant and mediator can serve to unify schools. Thus, “as a celebrant the principal focuses on legitimating the value of differences to enrich educational experiences of all learners. However, the principal is also a mediator who reconciles sources of conflict embedded in coexisting values, traditions, and mores” (Jason, 2000: 281). He is of the firm conviction that maintaining constant contact with the learners is essential for him to lead the school. So his typical day commences with him addressing the assembly each day and in addition to his teaching commitments, he regularly traverses across the classroom into the sporting fields.

I could detect a deep sense of pride when he talked about the African girls who took the initiative to cheer the rugby boys and the African boy who captains *‘the first rugby team of 11 Whites’*. Although the learners elect the school leaders the principal ensures that there’s representation of all race groups. While there is progress to be made there is the distinct feeling that efforts are being made to transform the school.

What’s helping is that Joppie tends to reflect on the transformation process that’s in momentum. There were many references to not always using the correct approach especially when it came to the integration of the learners: *‘But may be we made mistakes, may be we should have sat down and discussed things with the African learners as soon as they came in - but we’re getting there...’*

It is no wonder that the one aspect that filters through the daily life of a school is the all important process of decision making. Invariably it is the principal’s task to ensure that the climate that prevails is one that is conducive to effective decision making. In this regard the experienced principal is under no delusion that all is well, if anything he is candid about the challenges surrounding decision making. The response below gives a glimpse of how decisions are taken at Durban Academy.

*Decisions, Decisions...**An Interview Snippet*

**Researcher:** Discuss the type of decision making that is practiced at your school.

**Joppie:** *We have a current system that we work with. I think that a lot of the decisions that we make - we don't get time to think it over properly - we sometimes have to make a decision in a moment or in an hour. And when it comes to discipline I think one makes decisions very quickly and sometimes we make the wrong decisions... we tend to be very disappointed in the learner and the only thing you can think about is to send him home and sometimes that's the wrong decision.*

*Otherwise when it comes to organization of things within the school we do take time to think about it – things that the staff would like to table at the governing body meeting or if there's a change in uniform - somebody might come in here and say, 'Sir, but why are we still getting a blazer, it isn't really necessary.' We will not make a decision, we will take time, we will take it to the governing body meeting. Sometimes I will ask the staff to think about this and I will ask you about it at the end of the term. Eh, at end of the June exam we might say to one another to write until the very last day is not good because we have to mark during the holidays and then we do not make a decision immediately - we will think about possible changes so that we don't have to do so much marking within the holidays.*

*But unfortunately most of the decisions are made as quick as possible because people need answers - you know there's a sale at Adams and the librarian will ask for money today and the finance meeting is only on Monday so you got to make the decision, usually we go to the budget to see if there's money budgeted to buy new books, then by all means we will allocate money. If there's changes in sport - people want to change their dress code for hockey – the skirt of the hockey team or the dress of the netball team or they want a new rugby jersey for the first team, things like that takes time we will never make a ad hoc quick decision just to please people - no that's not it...*



This would be an appropriate time to mention that Joppie's practice of an 'open door' policy became apparent on the day of my being his shadow. Refer to *Day in the life of Joppie the principal...* as reflected below.

**Day in the life of Joppie the principal ...**

**2004: 04: 19**

- 7.00 *Informal discussion with management team.*
- 7.45 *Addressed the Grades 10/11/12 at assembly.*
- 8.00 *Returned briefly to the office.*
- 8.15 *Taught Grade 12 history.*
- 9.05 *Teacher entered the office - interacted with the principal briefly in Afrikaans. Chairlady of the School Governing Body soon entered and discussed the matter concerning the theft of the principal's wallet - the learner who had allegedly stolen the wallet.*
- 9.10 *Acting HOD discussed a matter concerning a learner discipline problem.*
- 9.12 *Principal telephoned the bank to check if his stolen credit card was used on 16 April, the day it was stolen.*
- 9.14 *Acting HOD returned to enquire whether the principal could meet with him and the teacher who encountered the learner discipline problem during the first break to act as mediator.*
- 9.15 *Jackie (teacher) entered looking dreadfully sick - principal responded with sympathy. Then he checked on her timetable. After she departed to the sick bay he expressed his concern about her recent bout of illness and mentioned her exceptional teaching ability.*
- 9.20 *Principal worked on school newsletter (filled me on the Afrikaans and English versions). Began translating newsletter into Afrikaans.*
- 9.35 *Hotel keeping teacher came in to check whether the principal would be interested in the food that was to be prepared by the students – to display his support of them. He responded in the affirmative.*
- 9.40 *Received a telephone call. (Afrikaans - personal call)*

- 9.45** *Piet, the acting HOD reappeared to discuss the ambulance service for the rugby.*
- 10.10** *The meeting concerning the discipline problem was convened – the teacher that experienced the problem felt that it was a sensitive issue and preferred that I be excluded from the meeting.*
- 10.30** *Joppie informed me that the problem was resolved. He continued with some paper work.*
- 10.35** *An educator wanted him to append his signature on some documents.*
- 10.40** *Received a telephone call.*
- 10.50** *An educator and the deputy principal called to discuss some matter pertaining to teaching.*
- 11.05** *An educator entered to discuss a document relating to the Open Day - principal checked the invitation which was in Afrikaans. Enlisted my assistance in translating the letter into English.*
- 11.30** *Joppie reported to a batting class.*
- 11.45** *Raised the issue that the school needed two teachers but these posts were not advertised in the Open Vacancy List.*
- 11.55** *An educator presented a letter.*
- 12.00** *Made a phone call.*
- 12.05** *Made a phone call.*
- 12.15** *Made an announcement.*
- 12.20** *Informal meeting with deputy principal.*
- 13.00** *Joppie interacted informally with teachers in the staffroom.*
- 13.30** *Taught a class.*

While we were in his office his encounters were as follows:

<b>Individual/s</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Educator	Academic
Chairlady of SGB	Learner discipline
Acting HOD	Learner discipline
Educator	Personal
Educator	Supporting Hotel keeping learners
Acting HOD	Rugby
Acting HOD & Educator	Learner Discipline
Educator	Administration
Educator	Open Day
Educator	Correspondence
Deputy Principal	Routine Matters

All of these individuals were accommodated when they appeared at the principal's door without any form of announcement. These interactions were multiplied when he taught for two periods and served relief for one. This is a typical day for the principal!

Being left to his own devices he has seized the gauntlet to lead the school in transformation by '*motivating the staff, having a positive influence on the school as a whole and serving the community*' ( extracted from Appendix A). To glean the roles Joppie plays at the school from another perspective, I examined the data that emanated from the responses of the 3 educators who completed Appendix B. The following were identified unanimously:

- *visionary*
- *director*
- *communicator*
- *consultant*
- *expert*
- *democrat*

While the principal values the impact of staff development programmes he confessed that due to '*time constraints and the heavy work loads of teachers*' the school does

not have *'a specific programme'*. *'Also a negative vibe'* is generated when a workshop is scheduled for a Friday afternoon. However teachers who are capacitated through departmental and union workshops cascade the information to the staff at large. But when a need is identified experts from the outside are consulted: *'The change in the discipline system actually started off in that way - we had somebody from the company called Crisp.'* Interestingly enough Joppie has immense faith in the teachers, he maintains: *'I believe my teachers are qualified to teach and they are disciplined.'* Being the eternal optimist he says: *'but there's positive reaction - if you are going somewhere with what you are doing'*

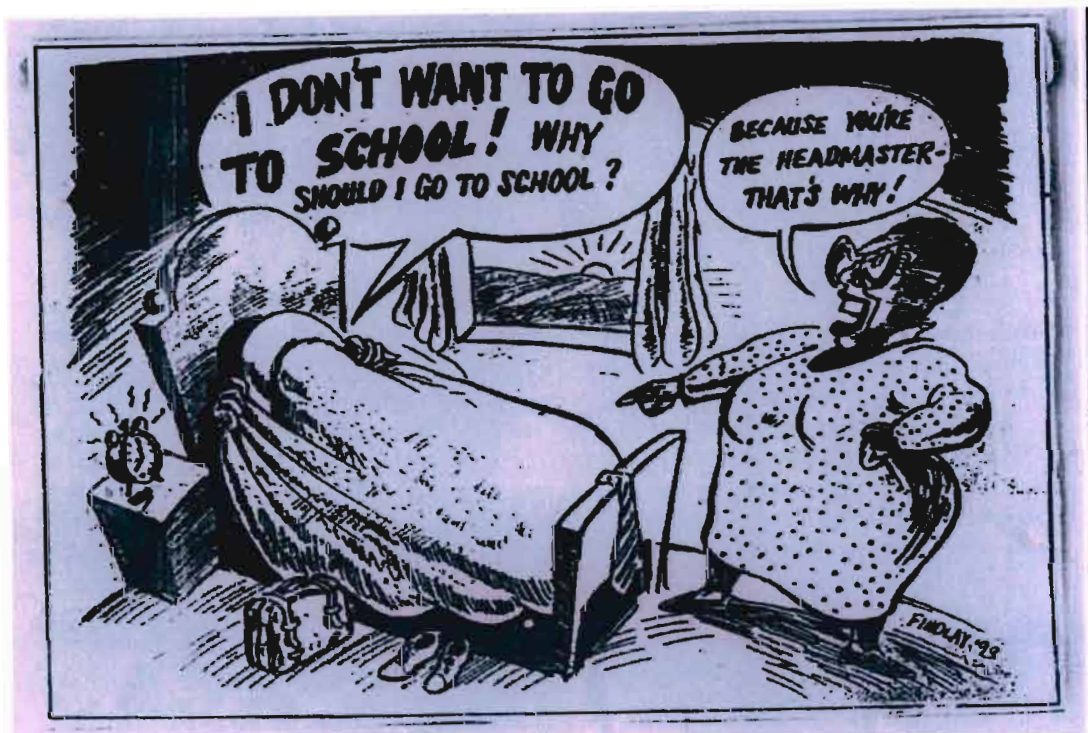
When asked to comment on his own empowerment through departmental workshops he remarked that *'they need a major overhaul - there's a tendency to distribute manuals which are read - there's no real opportunity to workshop, exchange ideas etc.'* Therefore he states: *'I don't want to sound negative but there's very little that helped me from attending departmental workshops.'* Furthermore he's reluctant to use his teaching time to attend workshops; he's of the firm conviction that principals should be taken away from the school site for a period over the vacation: *'I was privileged to attend the headmasters' workshops - I think the old Natal Education Department, had a week, when they would take all headmasters...'* He also pointed to the unions to take responsibility: *'Then off course professional development - our unions got to play a role - a bigger role - the professional leg side can help our headmasters'*

What we have here is a principal trying to compensate for the injustices of the past. But his past sometimes comes back to haunt him. This surfaced when he related how he inadvertently discriminated between two girls one White, one Coloured. But all in all the man declares: *'We ruled the country for 40 years - the Whites or the Afrikaners for that matter. But after 10 years things have changed and we have taken in the changes.'*

These changes have been set in motion by going parallel and creating a new vision and mission based on the principles of democracy. It took the conviction and the commitment of a principal to lead such transformation. It was a risk considering his

own conservative background and the conservatism of the community but one cannot underestimate the power of good.

Contrary to Huberman's (1993) theory of stage development that educators become disenchanted in the later years of teaching, Joppie's enthusiasm for his job remains unwavering. His response to the cartoon below bears testimony to this.



### **5.4.3.3 RESPONSE TO CARTOON**

*'I never feel like the guy in the cartoon. I don't have a problem getting out of bed. During the tough times by that I mean - when there were serious discipline problems, sometimes I would stop under the tree in the mornings and ask myself, do I really have to get out today, but then I get out. Because I think I was born an optimist - I can smile on a Monday morning, I can crack a joke. I like my job. I try to be positive. I tell my staff that it's important to have a passion for what you do.'*

**Joppie**

#### **5.4.3.4 RATING AS A LEADER IN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION**

Unbeknown to Joppie he was highly rated as a leader in school transformation by the three educators who responded to the Questionnaire: Appendix B. The extracts pertaining to his ratings are as follows:

<b>RATING</b>	<b>REASON</b>
1. <i>Excellent</i>	<i>He is highly motivated and positive. He knows what is happening with respect to transformation and in that sense makes us feel more secure. He knows the road. We follow.</i>
2. <i>Excellent</i>	<i>Often observed his actions behind closed doors in confidential situations and this was consistent with his philosophy - that all doors should be open and open to everyone.</i>
3. <i>Very good</i>	<i>A relatively high level of academic achievement was maintained within the context of multicultural integration. Learners are well motivated and the rate of transfers are low (pupils prefer to remain at this school until matric).</i>

Joppie's rating of himself as a leader in school transformation (extracted from Questionnaire: Appendix A) reads as follows:

<b>RATING</b>	<b>REASON</b>
<i>Very good</i>	<i>The school has been multi-cultural since 1997. Transformation – no serious problems. Learners of all cultures work and play together</i>

The following article extracted from the Sunday Times dated 29 June 2003 resonates with the work that Joppie has accomplished and continues to accomplish at the school site. Like the principal of Sarel Cilliers High, Joppie did not permit the conservative background of the school to hinder the process of transformation which occurred gradually. As I perused the article I recalled parts of my interview sessions with Joppie, especially the comments about the children being treated as children and being given the opportunity to develop educationally, culturally and socially.

## **Former white conservative school champions transformation in KZN**

### **SUTHENTIRA GOVENDER**

A FORMER white high school in a conservative northern KwaZulu-Natal town has been declared one of the best transformed in the province by the education department.

Sarel Cilliers High in Glencoe received the accolade after a department investigation into transformation at schools in the province.

Dr Michael Lotter, chief director of education management for the province, who took part in the investigation said he was impressed by what he found at Sarel Cilliers High.

“This school is located in a town that has a conservative Afrikaans community, yet the principal, Dr Tinus Neethling, knew that he had to move quickly to correct the injustices of the past,” said Lotter.

“There is transformation across the board. It is evident in the school governing body, which is no longer all white, the staff and among the pupils.

There are black teachers sharing their knowledge and expertise in the classroom. The mutual respect between teachers and pupils was also something that struck me.

I found that the children especially share a good rapport irrespective of the colour of their skin. I have been to a number of schools, but Sarel Cilliers stood head and shoulders above the rest. There is no window dressing here. Genuine transformation has taken place.”

Neethling said transformation has not taken place overnight at his school.

“It was a gradual process that started in 1995 when the school first admitted black learners. When I took over as principal in 1998, we took a more aggressive approach to bringing about transformation. I received strong support from the parents and pupils,” he said.

“The kids are happy. Our motto of playing together on the sports field and learning together in the classroom has encouraged pupils to develop strong bonds and respect for each other.”

Neethling said he had already received 100 applications for enrolment next year.

“A large portion of the applications are from black pupils. Since we are a boarding school, Sarel Cilliers is in big demand from pupils living in Gauteng, Durban and other parts of KwaZulu – Natal.”

He said that being transparent had helped the school on the road to transformation.

“Here a kid is a kid. There is no such thing as black, white or brown. When there is a scuffle between a black and a white child, I never label it as a racist incident. It’s just a case of children being children.”

Last year one of the school’s black pupils was the victim of a racial incident at an inter - school rugby tournament hosted by the Vryheid Landbou Agricultural College.

Neethling said the incident did not bode well for nation – building.

Grade 12 pupil Nonhlanhla Nkabinde said the school “certainly deserved the award.”

“There is no such thing as different races at Sarel Cilliers . We are united inside and outside the classroom. Relationships don’t end at school. Many of the children socialize on the weekends as well,” she said.



### **5.5 INTERWEAVING THE THEMES OF THE STORIES EMANATING FROM THE TOPICAL LIFE HISTORIES**

Each of the life history subjects generated rich data that told tales revolving around their journey into the field of education from varying perspectives of learner to principal. While the **initiate**, **intermediary** and **experienced** encountered unique experiences in their own social-political and social-cultural milieus which impact on the manner in which they construct themselves as leaders within school transformation, they did share some common elements in their lives.

All three life history subjects had supportive families of origin, emerged from religious backgrounds and challenging socio – economic conditions. The continued support of the family structure and practice of religion contributed to the success factor in each of the principal's lives. In the **initiate's** case it was the discontinued support of the family structure which was problematic, but her piety infused her with the strength to go on.

In each of their lives parents played a role but it was the siblings, particularly the older brothers who played the more prominent role. The lack of powerful parental influence can be attributed to the fact that the interviewees' parents had terminated their formal education at the school level. In fact the role models in each case were older brothers – pointing to the responsibilities played by older siblings in families and the influence they have on the younger ones. But the important point is that each of the subjects had supportive families who motivated and steered them in the right direction. Each of their families prioritized education and monitored their progress vigilantly. However they employed varied strategies: Thembi's brother used stern measures, Farouk's brothers set expectations and Joppie's brother showed him the way. Whatever the strategy, the goal was to acquire an educational qualification as a way forward. But on the point of career choice family did not make a significant input, except in the case of Thembi who followed in her brother's footsteps to pursue a career in teaching. Joppie's decision to enter the field of education was based on the fact that he received a bursary to become a teacher. His family's frugal finances did not permit him to even consider any other career. Farouk on the other hand discovered

his niche by trial and error: initially he pursued a career in medicine but the following year he redirected his studies to the teaching profession which he soon realized he was born to do. The powerful appeal of the continued support of education is ever present in the lives of Farouk and Joppie. Both of them married teachers who provided unwavering support systems. Their belief in the value of education infiltrated their children who in turn pursue/pursued university degrees. Unfortunately Thembi's support system crumbled – this resulted in her confronting her battles single handedly. Her husband proved to be the biggest stumbling block in her struggle for education and thus far none of her children have pursued tertiary education.

In addition to their families acting as the guiding force in their lives, each family nurtured a spiritual side to my life history subjects. Joppie and Thembi are devout Christians while Farouk is a practicing Muslim. During their interviews each of them made reference to the significant role that religion has and continues to play in their lives. This aspect of their lives comes to bear on their roles as principals. They all capitalize on the power of religion to instill discipline in their own lives and the lives of the learners at school. Thembi talked about attending church regularly and in spite of her difficulties and tragedies she extends her support to the needy in the community in which she resides. She intimated that God never fails her so she could not fail him. Farouk teaches religious education at a local madressa after school hours, something he has done for the past 20 years. Although he described himself as '*moderately religious*', it was clear that religion played an important part in his life. Joppie commences each school day on a religious note by reading a carefully selected scripture from the Bible. Being religious empowers one with a wholesome value system that is moral and ethical. Such a positive value system is imperative in a leader because it enables one to lead fairly and transparently and to look out for the interests of the institution and its people. Farouk and Joppie seem to demonstrate these qualities in leading transformation at the school site. Since Thembi was not forthcoming in completing her story I hesitate to band her with the latter two principals.

Finally I allude to the social background and the impact it has had and continues to have on the **initiate**, **intermediary** and **experienced**. Since each of the subjects

belong to different races, their social backgrounds portray more contrasts than similarities due to the discriminating policies of the apartheid regime. All three subjects hailed from working class backgrounds – but in South Africa the term working class includes a whole spectrum of people from the lowly paid to the relatively well paid.

Thembi grew up in KwaMashu amongst the Africans, Farouk grew up in Umgeni Road amongst the Indians and Joppie grew up in the Bluff amongst the Whites. So each one was exposed to a separate socio-cultural milieu and interacted mainly with her/his race. They were educated in racially based institutions where the harmonious mingling of people of colour was not part of the agenda. The law of the country dictated separatist beliefs and my subjects had no choice but to comply. However Farouk reported a spate of radicalism in his university years when he had the honour of being led by some great stalwarts in the liberation struggle. But when he graduated he returned to ‘normal’ because his circumstances launched him into a working career. Joppie relocated for four years to pursue a teaching degree at Stellenbosch University since his first language is Afrikaans. He reported no political meanderings. Since the education department permitted Africans to teach without a teaching qualification, Thembi redefined herself from pupil to teacher and pursued her teaching qualification through correspondence and on a part time basis.

All three respondents were socialized in totally varied environments and situations. But as they emerge from this discriminatory past into the liberated present, it is their responsibility as principals of schools to lead schools in transformation with the critical focus being equity. Herein lies a challenge - principals shrouded in their racial backgrounds, immersed in their own cultures and traditions, socialized in their own communities, educated in their racially based institutions and working in such institutions have been called to rise to the challenge of transformation in education. How exactly did my subjects born and raised under totally different social conditions respond to a new social order emanating from school transformation? I begin with Thembi whose involvement in school transformation spans the shortest period of four years. When she made her entrance into the principalship school transformation policies were already implemented by her predecessors. However the physical

infrastructure of the school remains dysfunctional post 1994: the school has no electricity and running water and the learners have no ablution facilities. Thembi inferred that when she took over the reins she made several appeals to the department to resource the school with the basic facilities but to no avail. So all she does is to ensure that the school is up and running so that the children in the area have a place to receive an education. The reality is that they cannot afford any better. Coming from the community Thembi understands its social tendencies and its limitations and doesn't impose on its members to participate any more than they are capable of. So while she is doing her utmost to implement the transformational policies it is apparent that she is barely managing to keep the school running.

Farouk, the intermediary has been principal for the last six years so he has been involved in the transformation process for a relatively longer period of time. His social background apparently classed him as a second class citizen; a feeling that all non whites in South Africa could identify with during nationalist rule. Having emerged from this second class citizenry, Farouk is bent on closing the gap between the previously advantaged and the previously disadvantaged and this is clearly evident in his jurisdiction, the school site. As the principal of New West, a school located in a historically Indian residential area he is on a mission to ensure that this school is highly equipped to provide quality education to all its learners. His guiding philosophy is to make up for losses incurred in the past and to be on par with any advantaged school. He is so committed to this vision that he has already transformed the school to include high standards of infrastructure, aspects of which I have alluded to in my discussion of Farouk as the intermediary principal.

Joppie was the subject who never ceased to amaze me. He went to Afrikaans medium schools, attended an Afrikaans university and taught for most of his working life in Afrikaans medium schools. His social background was conservative by all means. But when the chips were down and Joppie's school was facing closure, he made an important decision to convert the school to parallel medium which he has honoured at the risk of being castigated by some of his colleagues and members of the community. Being a man of integrity he has done everything in his power to open the school to non Afrikaans speaking learners. Currently the school has a multiracial and

multilingual population of learners. This is an area that Joppie aligns most strongly with in transformation in education - throughout the interview sessions he alluded to the school becoming an open one which is equity driven and caring towards its learners. At times he extended himself by prioritizing the needs of the African learners because of their disadvantaged educational backgrounds and their need to make up for lost time. At times he is criticized for his accommodating attitude towards the learners of colour, but he is of the firm conviction that he is doing the right thing and doesn't allow such criticism to forfeit the vision for the school.

The foregoing discussion illustrates the impact of the past and the present on the lives of all three participants. Their lived experiences influence how they respond to change and in this case their response to school change. For Thembi, being an African and a woman at that, life has been and continues to be a struggle, both personally and professionally. It appears as though the odds are constantly stacked against her but her experiences as a survivor, enables her to persevere, to be active. Farouk's life as an Indian from the working class has been challenging but he has risen and continues to rise above these challenges. His life experiences and his innate qualities have equipped him with the skills and spirit to acknowledge his problems and to find the best solutions to them. Joppie's life as an Afrikaner white has not been a bed of roses, but his life history suggests that he accepted his lot in life and made the best of what life had to offer him. While Thembi is active Farouk and Joppie tend to be proactive.

In the process of interweaving the themes emanating from the three life histories, I discovered that certain experiences/influences have had a positive impact on how the **initiate**, **intermediary** and the **experienced** perform their duties as principals. However it must be noted that each participant is an individual, so the impact noted in the opening sentence of this paragraph applies to each principal to varying degrees. The factors that have contributed to the participants becoming effective principals, relatively speaking can be summarized as follows:

- *strong religious views/beliefs provided guidance, direction and a sense of moral grounding which allow the principals to embrace transformation in the spirit of social justice*

- *family support nurtured a sense of support and caring which enabled the principals to aspire towards their goals and to provide a sense of support and caring to others*
- *mishaps in life created opportunities for early maturation and assuming responsibilities which in turn developed coping skills*
- *multiple leadership roles taken while growing up imparted skills ranging from operating within teams to being a source of inspiration*
- *sense of reflection led to learning from experience and making more informed decisions*
- *personality and charisma enabled the power to influence, to bring out the best in people*
- *establishing a vision and mission and working towards them in collaboration with other stakeholders*
- *ability to take on multitasks which are diverse and capacitating*
- *moments of radical change in their lives and how they responded to this change*

While the above list is by no means exhaustive it does provide food for thought, perhaps some kind of catalyst that can engage principals in reflecting on their own experiences and influences, in order to foster professional development. The vast array of literature on learning cites reflection as crucial to the learning process.

In interweaving the themes of the three life histories I was reminded that all good stories have a moral/point, an aspect which I now turn to. At the risk of quoting a cliché, the moral/point of my narrative is that “life isn’t easy” but it is how you grow from these difficulties to build character is what gives meaning and value to life. After all, in the words of the great English novelist, Charles Dickens: “Character is fate” (The Mayor of Casterbridge). These words of wisdom, might I say truth, have resounded in the works of Chaucer to Shakespeare to contemporary writers, like our very own Coetzee and Poland. But of what significance is the quotation to the three principals? It means that it is their characters that will determine the manner in which they implement the process of transformation.

In closing this chapter I reiterate the fact that the main characters of my story have been challenged and continue to be challenged. On the professional front they are charged with conflict situations:

- past oppressive education system with the present democratic education system
- decentralization of education while maintaining core elements of centralization
- transforming the institution while maintaining stability
- stakeholders that support school transformation and those that resist it
- roles of management versus roles of leadership within the principalship

By virtue of their positions principals are tasked with negotiating and resolving these conflicts. In approaching these responsibilities principals draw from their life experiences, skills and expertise but principals need to become lifelong learners in order to attain high levels of success, a matter which will be addressed in the final chapter of the thesis. To complete my narrative I attempt to find some kind of resolution to my story in **Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations** which presents the prologue.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Epilogue**

##### **6.1 SUMMARY**

In reflecting on the compilation of this research report I take cognizance of my journey to this point. I set out to compose a narrative to tell the story of principals as leaders in school transformation. The setting constituted an exciting time of phenomenal change in South Africa, the post democratic era, specific to schools as sites for change. The lead characters of the narrative were the chief architects of policy implementation at the school site; with the spotlight zooming in on their perceived roles, their actual roles and their constructions of leadership. The plot originated with the baseline study creating a general sense of transformation of certain schools in a local region. Thereafter the plot thickened with the in-depth study generating topical life histories of three principals.

After exploring the terrain of school transformation within the larger domain of political and social transformation in the country and the manner in which the central characters (principals) are constructing themselves, the elements of conflict and tension surfaced. The articulated voices gave rise to the tensions inherent within the role of the principalship while the inferred voices gave rise to the tensions within the systems of school and education at large. In the tradition of the narrative my thesis engaged with the conflict with a view to reaching a resolution and it is to this feature of my story that I now turn.

Evidently the principalship is charged with conflict in relation to policy implementation, evolving role functions, instituting change and professional capacities. These specific areas of conflict are explicated as follows:

- decentralization offers a measure of autonomy yet curriculum matters, funding of resources and teacher assessments continue to be determined by national



bureaucracy

- added responsibility, accountability, role functions which demand new skills and expertise
- the principal is tasked with implementing change while ensuring the stability of the institution
- principals claim they are leading transformation while they are managing transformation
- socially and politically principals hail from a background that is vastly different from the one they currently work and live in

In seeking to understand how principals are coming to terms with their conflict ridden roles I find some kind of resolution to my story. In spite of the varying tempos in which principals are approaching transformation within schools, the study has indicated that they are beginning to break the bondage with the apartheid education system. The process of transformation ushered in by SASA is taking root in schools; to sustain the metaphor it must be noted that the tree is growing at different rates because its nourishment varies from site to site. While the majority of principals in my study are assuming the role of managers (given impetus by decentralization in education) there are those who don the robes of managers and leaders to lead the process of transformation in collaboration with other stakeholders. In so doing they are not averse to the added responsibilities and extended roles that the principal of the 21<sup>st</sup> century faces. These are the characters that bring a ray of hope to our schools.

In revisiting the critical questions I found that in the light of leading school transformation:

- principals perceive themselves as leaders but in essence act as managers
- principals are inclined to play roles that are management orientated
- principals are constructing themselves mainly as managers of change

Bearing the above findings in mind I like to shift focus to the world of business and industry where the following scenario is prevalent. While leadership relates to people and their potential and management relates to structures and their efficiencies, there exists a state of interdependency between the processes of leadership and

management. There is also the need to move away from bureaucratic structures to flatter structures which recognize, acknowledge and encourage leadership at different levels of the organization (Oakley & Krug, 1991; Kotter, 1996; Wells, 1997). Theoretically this study has pushed the boundaries in this regard by critiquing how the school principal who is consistently engaging in management functions claims to be engaging in leadership functions. In actual fact this observation indicates that differences between leading and managing are arbitrary: if anything these two processes are interdependent, since management functions require leadership to varying degrees and vice versa. This theme of interdependency is illustrated by Wells' model of *The Roles of the Value – Driven Leader* which he maintains is not about being a leader versus a manager. Instead he views each role as “the intersection of a leadership process (creating order, inspiring action, or improving performance) and a focused content of management (systems, people or work)” (Wells, 1997: 4). This notion of intersection of roles is illustrated in the following exhibit extracted from Wells (1997: 5).

#### Exhibit 6.1: Leading – Edge Manager Roles

##### Principal Leadership Process

Principal Focus of Managing Effort	Creating Order	Inspiring Action	Improving Performance
<b>Systems</b>	<b>Sage</b> Designs Strategy	<b>Visionary</b> Innovates The Future	<b>Magician</b> Orchestrates Change
<b>People</b>	<b>Globalist</b> Bridges Cultural Differences	<b>Mentor</b> Motivates Development	<b>Ally</b> Builds Partnerships
<b>Work</b>	<b>Sovereign</b> Empowers Decisions	<b>Guide</b> Achieves Goals	<b>Artisan</b> Pursues Excellence

Wells (1997: 9) shows

how an individual manager moves among different roles. The three roles in each column have a leadership process in common, and the three roles in each row have a managing focus in common. Each of the nine roles has its own unique combination of one focus of managing effort and one leadership process. For example, the sage role is the most effective choice when a manager faces circumstances requiring the creation of order (leadership process) for systems

(focus of managing effort); a strategic design is the order needed for systems. As the circumstances change, the demands are different, and that same manager will need to be in a different role to maximize effectiveness.

There are so many unanswered questions about why principals approach school transformation, with such differences – some of which can be answered by refocussing on the life history participants. On one level it is the context of their working environments and on a more profound level it is their experiential lives: lived, living and to be lived that guide their roles as principals who manage/lead their schools in transformation. This finding brings to attention the relationship between experience and leadership, supporting the contention that people can develop and learn leadership skills. By reflecting on the short stories one notices how Farouk and Joppie took opportunities from an early age to practice leadership, much of which bears fruition in their roles as principals. While all three participants are in their fifties and have vast experience in education, their working experiences have been gained in vastly differing contexts. Also their personal lives are different: differences abound in their races, cultures, education, home languages, family lives and in their personalities and philosophies.

The different lives that the **initiate**, **intermediary** and **experienced** have lived, impact on the ways in which they approach school transformation. Thembi struggles to manage school transformation; her immediate focus is to create the basic resources which her school has been denied due to the oppressive forces of the past regime. Farouk is an ardent manager/leader of school transformation who works tirelessly to ensure that his school has resources par excellence which has been denied once again due to the oppressive forces of the past regime. Joppie tends to be a manager cum leader of school transformation. While his initial motive was to save the school from being closed down, he now has a new vision which is to provide all learners (African, Indian, Coloured and White) with quality education and equal opportunities.

Although each of the life history participants encountered trials and tribulations they did not submit but grew from these experiences to become stronger characters. Each of their stories bears testimony to the fact that their lived lives determine how they view school transformation and how they manage/lead the process.

## **6.2 CONCLUSIONS**

In locating my work amongst the research surveyed in **Chapter Two: The Principals**, my study extended the boundaries by drawing attention to the construction of the principal as a leader in school transformation within the South African context, which is currently undergoing social transformation of mammoth proportions. The thesis introduced a new dimension in the construction of the topical life histories by exploring the relationships and connections between individual principals, their approaches to leading transformation and their personal backgrounds and life histories.

Methodologically it employed a mixed paradigm approach drawing from the quantitative and qualitative approaches and experimented with the techniques of using stories within a story and the telling of a compelling yet incomplete story. Various methods were experimented with: among others the use of a visual stimulant that is a cartoon and the use of project analysis, whereby projects completed by principals were analysed to determine their leadership skills.

Theoretically the study postulates advancements in the *contextual*, *conceptual* and *practical* domains. The contextual domain relates to the transformation of schools, the conceptual domain relates to the manner in which the principal constructs herself/himself as a leader in school transformation and the practical domain relates to how the life histories of principals can be utilized to develop and empower principals to become effective leaders. The following paragraphs attempt to capture the developments in each of these domains.

*Contextual*: rapid school transformation is occurring in terms of structure, infrastructure, governance, management, curriculum, material and human resources, funding and demographics of learners. These changes are driven by policies which are formulated in the name of equity and redress. But in turning to the personnel responsible for implementing these policies in the context of the study, I draw attention to the findings of the baseline study based on the survey data:

- the majority of principals ( 65%) reflect a sense of maturity: they fall under the

46-55 age category and have years of experience in education

- the majority of principals (76%) hold post graduate degrees, ranging from honours to masters levels
- the majority of principals (88%) have occupied previous management posts in the schooling system

It can be concluded that successful school transformation is largely dependent on principals who profile maturity, experience in education, qualifications and previous management experience. In other words school transformation is triggered off by policies but expedited by experienced principals.

*Conceptual:* firstly the degree of dissonance that exists between principals' constructions of leadership and teachers' perceptions of leadership is a consequence of how principals and teachers experience the effects of leadership and management through the process of school transformation. On this note the study advances theoretically by advocating Wells' model of *The Roles of the Value-Driven Leader* (discussed in **Section 6.1**) which illustrates the interdependence of leadership and management. Secondly the study indicates that the attributes considered important for a transforming school context favours a humanistic orientation; in other words the principal must be fair, flexible, communicative, tolerant, sensitive, honest and so forth. This highlights the importance of how principals engage with people to facilitate change, reiterating the point that policies are not the dominant way of transforming schools but it's actually the leadership of people that put these policies into practice.

*Practical:* relates to the importance of doing life histories with a view to nurture and develop leadership in principals. Exposing principals to the life histories of their colleagues has the following implications:

- in reading the narratives principals may reflect on their own lives and reach an understanding of how they construct themselves as leaders in school transformation
- in critiquing the narratives principals may gain knowledge and insights about persevering in the face of difficulty to facilitate school transformation, in other words life histories can be used as a teaching tool

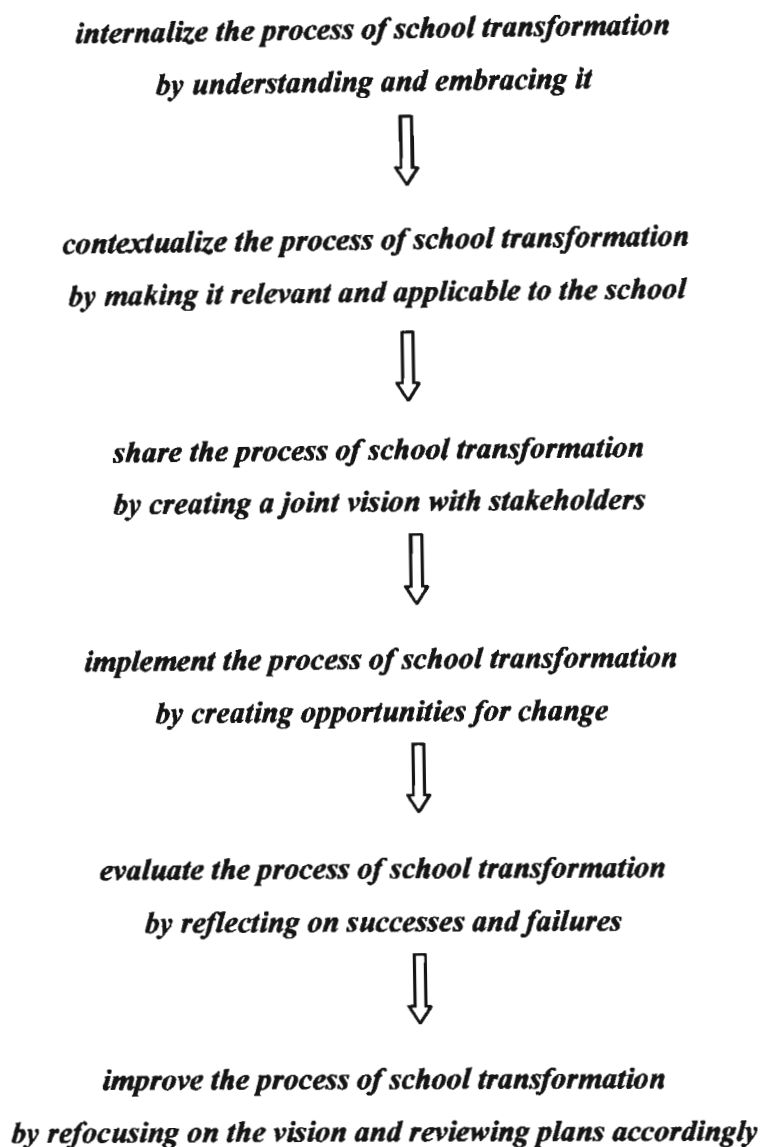
In light of these implications, I draw attention to Plummer (2001: 246) who comments: “Life histories have a strong affinity with education, teaching, learning” and goes on to explain that “There are many ways that life stories can be put to good use in education. Written biographies of others and students can become organizing points in a course; research projects can gather a life story (again, of themselves or others)”.

In respect to my study, the topical life histories indicated how leadership develops over a period of time by drawing on experiences lived and living. The stories of the **initiate**, **intermediary** and the **experienced** illustrated how the following factors contributed to them becoming effective leaders (to varying degrees):

- supportive families in the form of parents and siblings
- guiding force in life provided by religion
- challenging socio-economic forces that unleashed the potential to overcome obstacles
- leadership roles assumed in the different phases of life strengthened the ability to lead
- reflecting and learning from experience
- working towards a vision both personally and professionally
- managing diverse multitasks
- adopting a proactive stance to change be it personal or professional

In light of the practical domain, the study propose that life histories be used a teaching tool in respect to the training and development of principals.

The study also generated an outline of a **conceptual model for leading school transformation** as follows:



Finally the study can be viewed as a catalyst to explore the following areas in school transformation:

- response of independent schools to transformation with a focus on migration of learners to and from these schools
- response of a greater number of rural schools to transformation with a focus on their attempts to cope with backlogs in human and material resources
- extent to which principals are collaborating with stakeholders in attempting to

practice site-based management

- schools as organizations with a focus on the dynamics of the different systems that are at work at the site
- the micro-politics of schools with a focus on the power struggles and underlining currents that invade the school community at all levels
- how designated leaders (principals) develop leaders at different levels in the organization to capitalize on the potential of members be they learners, teachers, heads of departments or deputy principals.

Returning to the current study brings me to the point of policy and practice an area which will be given attention in the following section on recommendations.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The role of the principal in the context of the macro change in education calls for reconfiguration in order to survive its incremental demands. Principals are grappling to come to terms with their multifaceted roles; they are no longer confined to being educational leaders but need to extend themselves to become chief executive officers tasked with leading transformation at the school site.

Principals in general tend to manage the change process to varying degrees. They are accessing the human and material resources, encouraging multiracial learner profiles, bringing on board school governing bodies and representative council of learners, implementing policies and developing improvement plans. But if we want to redress the inequalities of the past and provide quality education to all the learners of the land, principals need to make the transition from managers of change to leaders of change.

*'The job of management is not supervision but leadership...The required transformation of the Western style of management requires that managers be leaders.'* (W E Deming as cited in Reed, 2001: 33).



In light of the findings of this investigation the chapter discusses the following recommendations:

1. Development programmes
2. Creative leadership teaching methods
3. Principal centres
4. District principal forums
5. Sharing success stories
6. National certification programme
7. Post graduate studies in educational management and leadership
8. Reclaim the right to educational leadership
9. Engaging the services of consultants
10. Reviewed promotion procedure and process

Thus far principals have relied largely on experience to assume their roles. While experience cannot be discounted, continued development programmes can only empower principals to become leaders in school transformation. It would be rational to identify the challenges facing the principals and then design appropriate development strategies to combat them. For instance principals for decades worked within the context of their own races and cultures. Smith (1996) refers to the need for administrative training that would lead to promoting a more humane environment responsive to the ever changing demographics of schools. She maintains that ‘many leaders who are products of the 1950s through the 1980s did not obtain an understanding of or proficiency in multicultural principles (as cited in Jason, 2000: 3-4). This is one of the bigger challenges facing principals in this era of school transformation in South Africa.

Creative methods should be used to teach leadership. On this point I would support the idea of drawing from the classics of literature to teach leadership skills and strategies as advocated by Blackwell (2003) and Olivier (2001). This approach would enable the principals to get into character and critique the leadership portrayed by both fictional and non fictional characters. “What makes the characters of great literature worthy of note is that they are learning how to be positively assertive in the midst of the difficult situations from which they cannot escape.” (Blackwell, 2003: 465). Classical works ranging from Homer to Shakespeare and beyond have a range

of lessons on leadership to be learned. Olivier (2001) used Henry V, who he considers to be Shakespeare's greatest leader to write an entire book on inspirational leadership.

Due to trends in education internationally, universities in America and Australia have established principal centres: Principals' centre at Harvard (Barth, 2000) and Victoria's Australian Principal Centre at the University of Melbourne (Caldwell, 2003). Caldwell also supports the idea of a model for a national approach following the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England. Since South Africa has adopted a national system of education based on the principles of democracy and transparency, it would be most appropriate to develop principal centres at universities following a national model. This principal's centre would provide assistance to principals, from helping them cope with the reality of school change to exploring new conceptions of leadership.

On a local level districts should form principal forums which are innovative and supportive. These forums should entice principals to reject their modus operandi of working in isolation and to mingle with principals to share their success and horror stories, to form meaningful networks and to foster partnerships. These forums must be structured with personnel taking the responsibility to schedule regular meetings, seminars, workshops and not just react to crises. It should become an extension of the principal's life.

Since the early 2000s the department has awarded certificates from the district to national levels to teachers and principals. This is a good move, however the process can be extended by inviting the awardees to the principal forums at all levels to motivate and inspire their colleagues.

The national department of education in conjunction with the universities should introduce a National Certificate Programme for Principals. Those in the principalship would have to complete an in service training programme which could be held over 6-10 weekends in the year. Each weekend should focus on one crucial aspect of leading transformation at the school site. Experts in the field of educational leadership should be invited to participate as facilitators in this programme. National certification as proposed by Bowles (1992) should be governed by a national board of standards for

educational administration, which should be largely composed of representatives from colleges and universities, teacher unions and the department of education.

In view of my studies, I strongly recommend that principals engage in post graduate studies on education management and leadership in order to interrogate cutting edge research issues. This exercise will undoubtedly empower principals by encouraging them to reflect on their practice more critically.

Since managerialism has infiltrated the field of education, principals have been expected to give precedence to management roles at the expense of their roles as educational leaders. It is highly recommended that principals are given the opportunity to reclaim the right to educational leadership.

This is an opportune moment to bring in the consultants. It is time that the department of education invested in creating a cohort of educational consultants who can be called in to assist principals in leading effective schools. When a business is failing analysts are consulted but when a school fails it has no recourse.

When it comes to the appointment of principals I propose that the process of selection be reviewed. While school governing bodies have an important role to play in school based promotions, I am of the firm conviction that the department of education needs to initiate the process by shortlisting competent candidates using a generic set of criteria. In light of its findings this study proposes that the criteria take cognizance of experience (in the field of education), laddering (that is moving through the ranks in the schooling system), qualifications (in relation to management and leadership) and ongoing professional development (in relation to pertinent and cutting edge issues in education). Thereafter the school governing body makes a nomination, taking into consideration the needs of the school. The period of interaction between the selection committee and the candidate should extend beyond the interview to include some practical exercises.

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) maintain that the primary criteria for promotion to the principalship should be knowledge and ability as facilitators of organizational change. We are engulfed in an era of change that infiltrates all spheres of life, so it is in our

best interest to embrace change and acquire the skills and competencies to implement change. In addition to identifying an applicant who possesses the necessary experience, qualifications, expertise and competency, selection committees should be on the look out for someone who is committed to transform the institution to provide quality education and training to all its learners. After all if our country wants to realize its vision of equality and a better life for all its citizens, then what better place to start than the school?

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**APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE TO PRINCIPALS**

**PURPOSE:** To collect information on principals as leaders in school transformation as a baseline study.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** The identity of all respondents will remain protected at all times.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Please respond in the spaces provided.
2. If alternative responses have been provided please tick the appropriate one.

## **SECTION A: SCHOOL BIOGRAPHY**

1. Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

2. School location:

Urban (0 km - 20 km from city centre)	
Suburban (21 km - 50 km from city centre)	
Rural (51 km+ from city centre)	

3. Total population of school: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Learner demographics: prior to integration (in percentages):

African	
Indian	
Coloured	
White	
Other	

5. Learner demographics: current (in percentages):

African	
Indian	
Coloured	
White	
Other	



6. Staff demographics: current (in percentages)

African	
Indian	
Coloured	
White	
Other	

7. Does the school have a functional School Governing Body? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Does the school have a functional Representative Council of Learners? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Description of school infrastructure: 10 years ago:

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10. Description of school infrastructure: current:

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**SECTION B: PRINCIPAL'S BIOGRAPHY**

1. Age:

26-35	
36-45	
46-55	
56+	

2. Race:

African	
Indian	
Coloured	
White	
Other	

3. Gender:

Female	
Male	

4. REQV:

13	
14	
15	
16	
17	

5. Previous Post:

Level 1	
Level 2	
Level 3	
Other	

6. Number of years in current post: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION C: PRINCIPAL AS A LEADER**

1. What do you perceive to be your roles as a leader?

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2. How often do you perform the following leadership roles?

	All the time	very often	often	sometimes	never
Visionary					
Negotiator					
Decision maker					
Strategic planner					
Supervisor					
Coach					
Mentor					
Counsellor					
Motivator					
Team builder					
Finance officer					
Other:					
Other:					

3. Discuss the successful completion of a recent project that demonstrated your leadership qualities.

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4. What attributes of leadership do you consider important for a transforming school context? Why?

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5. How would you rate yourself as a leader in school transformation on a scale of 1-5 ( 1: excellent 2: very good 3: good 4: satisfactory 5: weak)

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

6. Why have you given yourself such a rating?

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**PLEASE NOTE:**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. No responses have been inadvertently omitted.</li><li>2. The completed questionnaire must be returned by<br/>to</li><li>3. Your participation and cooperation is sincerely appreciated</li></ol> |
|---|

**Purpose of Research:** To explore the role of principals as leaders of transformation within the school.

**Research Title:** The principal as a leader in school transformation.

**Researcher:** Mrs L Bhagowat (Marge)  
University of Kwazulu Natal  
Tel: 031 5631735 (H) / 031 5391490 (W)  
Cell: 0844631735

**APPENDIX: B**

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO EDUCATORS**

**Purpose:** To collect information on principals as leaders in school transformation as a baseline study.

**Confidentiality:** The identity of all respondents will remain protected at all times.

**Instructions:** 1. Please respond in the spaces provided.  
2. If alternative responses have been provided, please tick the appropriate one.

**SECTION A: EDUCATOR'S BIOGRAPY**

1. Age:

26-35	36-45	46-55	56+
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2. Race:

African	Indian	Coloured	White	Other
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3. Gender:

Female	Male
--------	------

4. REQV:

13	14	15	16	17
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5. Teaching experience in years: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Current school: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: EDUCATOR'S PERCEPTION OF THE PRINCIPAL AS A LEADER**

1.1 What do you perceive to be the roles of a leader?

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1.2 Which of these roles did you observe your principal playing?

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2.1 What attributes of leadership do you consider important for transforming school context?

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2.2 Why?

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2.3 Which of these attributes does your principal display?

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3. Below are some leadership qualities. How often does your principal display these qualities?

	All the time	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Visionary					
Negotiator					
Decision maker					
Strategic planner					
Supervisor					
Coach					
Mentor					
Counsellor					
Motivator					
Team builder					
Finance officer					
Other:					
Other:					

4. How would you rate the principal as a leader in school transformation on a scale of 1-5 (1: excellent 2: very good 3: good 4: satisfactory 5: weak) ?

1	2	3	4	5
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5. Why have you given the principal such a rating?

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**YOUR PARTICIPATION IS SINCERELY APPRECIATED.**

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

#### **Part 1: To learn or not to learn?**

1. At the outset I would like to develop some kind of profile of you, perhaps on two levels: the personal and the professional. On the personal level you may want to talk about your home and family life, your interests, hobbies and your personality.
2. Moving into the professional level let's look at your educational qualifications, your teaching post, your administrative post/s and other posts in education. Would you say there has been some kind of correlation between your post graduate studies and your career progression?
3. I am now going to ask you to please take a walk down memory lane. To begin with let's focus on you schooling years. How would you describe this part of your life? Tell me about the people/events that influenced you significantly during this period. Let's focus on your leadership positions: those that were designated to you and those that you initiated.
4. Now let's turn to your tertiary education years. Can you comment on this part of your life? Who/what made an impression on you during this period? Once again can we reflect on any leadership positions you may have held?
5. During our initial meeting I asked you to please bring along a memento that would be of great significance to you during your years as a full time student. Thank you for indulging me. Why did you select this \_\_\_\_\_?

#### **Part 2: To teach or not to teach?**

6. Looking at a photograph of the subject's first graduation. What emotions did feel on the day?
7. Why did you become a teacher?
8. After graduating from college you assumed a teaching post. Elaborate on your experiences as a teacher. You may want to reflect on your first few years, then a kind of settling in period and finally extending yourself in the field of education.
9. Did you ever consider exiting the teaching profession? When and why?



10. Who/what would you say has made the greatest impact on your life? Perhaps you may want to tell me about your role models or mentors.
11. Leadership exists at all levels in an institution. Tell me about your leadership roles.
12. Would you say that you were a successful teacher? Why?

### **Part 3: To lead or not to lead?**

13. What motivated you to apply for the principalship?
14. What capacity building programmes did you engage in to prepare for the post of principalship?
15. Take me through the details of your being promoted to the principalship.
16. Identify your greatest strength and your greatest weakness as a leader? How do you deal with your weakness?
17. The South African Schools Act advocates site-based management in the form of school governing bodies. Express your views on this kind of stakeholder participation in education? Discuss the type of working relationship you share with the other members of the governing body at your school.
18. In your capacity as principal you are responsible for leading transformation at your school. How do you perceive this role?
19. What leadership roles do you perform as an agent of transformation? What additional skills/competencies are required of principals today? Explain.
20. How did the authority figures in your life shape your views on leadership?
21. How would you describe your leadership approach? What motivated/influenced you to adopt this approach?
22. Would you say that your leadership approach impacts on the way you promote transformation in your school? Can you elaborate?
23. In transforming the organization, you have to accomplish certain goals, tasks projects and so forth. How do you approach such challenges?
24. As a leader you probably experience supportive and unsupportive systems. How do you cope with the latter?

#### **Part 4: To empower or not to empower?**

25. What do you find satisfying about your job?
26. Discuss the type of decision-making that is practiced at your school.
27. Can you discuss the staff development programmes that are implemented at your school? How are they received by the educators?
28. Are there capacity building programmes for other stakeholders such as the School Governing Body and Representative Council of Learners? Provide some details.
29. As the principal you are required to attend workshops and other such activities organized by the Department of Education. Do these exercises empower you as a leader to promote transformation at your school? Explain.
30. Discuss the kinds of support you receive from the Department of Education/ staff/learners/community/others in relation to school transformation.
31. Tell me about your efforts to lead transformation in this particular institution. Please refer to specific examples.
32. Discuss the vision for this organization. How was it created?
33. Comment on the fact that formal education and training in management and leadership is not a prerequisite to being appointed to the principalship.
34. If you are requested to make an input on an education management and leadership development programme for principals, what would you include?







Address:	Truro House	Private Bag:	Private Bag X54323	Telephone:	(031) 360-6911
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				Fax:	(031) 3321126
Enquiries:	Examinations and Assessment	Reference:	15/2/13/1	Date:	30 JUNE 2003
Imibuzo:	S.P. GOVENDER	Inkomba:		Usuku:	
Navrae:	031 - 3606249	Verwysing:		Datum:	

Mrs L. Bhagowat

Dear Mrs Bhagowat

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH : eTHEKWINI REGION**  
Student No. 7608655

- I. Your letter dated 25 June 2003, received in my office today, refers.
- II. You are hereby granted permission to conduct research along the lines of your proposal, subject to the following conditions:
  - A. No school/person may be forced to participate in your study;
  - B. Access to the schools you wish to utilise is negotiated with the principals concerned by yourself;
  - C. The normal teaching and learning programme of the schools is not to be disrupted;
  - D. The confidentiality of the participants is respected; and
  - E. A copy of the findings should be lodged with the Regional Senior Manager on completion of the studies.
  - F. You accept that as a serving educator in the employ of the KZNDEC, you may not utilise official time to conduct research.
- III. This letter may be used to gain access to schools.
- IV. May I take this opportunity to wish you every success in your research.

Yours faithfully,

Mr SP Govender  
Regional Co-ordinator: Research  
or Regional Senior Manager