UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

PIETERMARIZBURG

EXPLORING PRINCIPALS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONALISM: CASE STUDIES OF THREE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG REGION

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Master of Education: Education Leadership, Management and Policy

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on principals' understanding and their experiences of leadership and professionalism. The aim is to find out how principals' understand and experience leadership and professionalism in their schools.

Current South African education policy documents encourage visionary leadership, shared decision-making and devolution of authority.These policies focus on democracy and provide the enabling framework for the principals, School Management Team and School Governing Body. Despite these new policies and new structures, the schools are still controlled in a hierarchical top-down manner. The problem is whether these principals understand leadership, and what their view of professionalism entails.

The study is qualitatively designed. In-depth interviews and reflective journals were used to collect data. The analyses of the three case studies were interpretive. In this research, the goal was to explore how principals understood and experienced leadership and what their view of professionalism in schools entails. Purposive sampling was used to select participants in the Pietermaritzburg Region of KwaZulu-Natal.

The study revealed that leadership was understood as a participatory activity which involved others in decision-making. Principals act as facilitators, mentors, motivators and support structures rather than simply issuing orders and making demands. Principals linked professionalism to high personal and professional standards. The role of relationships, responsibility and professional knowledge were seen as important elements of professionalism.

DECLARATION

I, VALENCIA DAWN JAMES, declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own. References to work by other people have been duly acknowledged.

Signed: _____

Student

I declare that this dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval.

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Mrs V D James (209533772)
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Dear Mrs James

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1221/011M
PROJECT TITLE: Exploring Principals' experiences of leadership and professionalism: Case studies of three school principals in the Pietermaritzburg Region

In response to your application dated 10 November 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.
PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

cc Supervisor – Dr Iren Muzvidziwa
cc Mr N Memela

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I wish to acknowledge Almighty God for the power of his presence in my life. I believe that it is through his grace and guiding hand, that I have had the resilience to deal with the difficult moments of this research study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE-SLM	Advanced Certificate in Education – School Leadership & Management
AERA	American Educational Research Association
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
COP 17	The 17th Conference Of The Parties To The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
DOE	Department Of Education
HOD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management Services
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PMDP	Principals Management and Development Programme
SACE	South African Council of Education
SASA	South African Schools Act
SDT	Staff Development Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page (i)

Abstract (ii)

Declaration of own work (iii)

Ethical clearance certificate (iv)

Acknowledgements (v)

Abbreviations (vi)

Contents Page (vii)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Background 1

1.3 Focus and Purpose of Study 2

1.4 Rationale 2

1.5 Research Questions 4

1.6 Methodology 5

1.7 Theoretical Framework 5

1.8 Conclusion – Outline of Thesis 5

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 7

2.1 Introduction 7

2.2 Leadership 7

2.2.1 Defining Leadership 7

2.2.2 Key Assumptions and Characteristics of Leadership 9

2.2.2.1 Leadership as Influence, not Authority 9

2.2.2.2 Leadership Values and Morals 10

2.2.2.3 Leadership as Vision 11

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Transformational Leadership Theory 11

2.3.1 Transformational Leadership 12

2.3.2 Characteristics of Principals as Transformational Leaders 15

2.3.3 Transformational Leadership Theory links with Leadership 15

2.4 Principalship 17

2.4.1 Defining Principalship 17

2.4.2 The role of the Principal 18

2.4.3 Leadership versus Management 19

2.4.4 Principals as Leaders 19

2.4.5 Principalship links with Leadership 21

2.5 Professionalism 22

2.5.1 Defining Professionalism 22

2.5.2 Promoting Professionalism 23

2.5.3 Characteristics or Major Aspects of Professionalism 24

2.5.4 Professionalism Links with Leadership and Principalship 26

2.5.5 Professional Development 28

2.6 Contexts promoting and or inhibiting leadership and professionalism 30

2.6.1 Risk taking 30

2.6.2 Relational Trust 32

2.6.3 Collaborative Work Cultures 33

2.6.4 Professionalism links with Transformational Leadership 35

2.7 CONCLUSION 36

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 38

3.1 Introduction 38

3.2 Methodology 38

3.2.1 Research Design 38

3.2.1.1 A Qualitative Study 38

3.2.1.1.1 The Appropriateness of using the Qualitative Approach 38

3.2.1.1.2 Strengths of Qualitative Research 39

3.2.1.1.3 Limitations of Qualitative Research 41

3.2.2 The Interpretive Paradigm 41

3.2.2.1 Definition and how it works 41

3.2.2.2 The importance of the Interpretive Paradigm to this Study 41

3.2.2.3 Comparison between Interpretive and Normative Paradigms 42

3.2.3 The Case Study Method 43

3.2.3.1 Defining Case Studies 43

3.2.3.2 Appropriateness of the Case Study Approach 44

3.2.3.3 Strengths of Case Studies 44

3.2.3.4 Limitations of the Case Study Approach 45

3.2.4 Research Instruments 46

3.2.4.1 Interviews 46

3.2.4.1.1 Why Interviews? 46

3.2.4.1.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews 46

3.2.4.2 Other Research Instruments 48

3.2.4.2.1 Interview Schedule 49

3.2.4.2.2 Tape Recorder and Audio Tapes 49

3.2.4.2.3 Field notes 50

3.2.4.2.4 Reflective Journals 50

(a) Participants' Self-reflective Journals 50

(b) Researchers' Reflective Journal 51

3.3 Data Collection Procedures 51

3.3.1 Location of the Study 51

3.3.2 Sampling 51

3.3.2.1 What is sampling? 51

3.3.2.2 Purposive (non-probability) Sampling 52

3.3.2.3 The sample size 53

3.3.3 Permission to conduct research 53

3.4.4 Conducting Interviews 54

3.4 Data Analysis 56

3.4.1 Trustworthiness 57

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations 58

3.4.3 Limitations and Challenges 58

3.5 Conclusion 58

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS 60

4.1 Introduction 60

4.2 Profiles of the three principals 61

4.2.1 A biographical sketch and context of Mrs. A. 61

4.2.2 A biographical sketch and context of Mr. B 62

4.2.3 A biographical sketch and context of Mrs. C. 63

4.2.4 Summary of profiles 64

4.3 The principals understanding of leadership 64

4.3.1 Leadership as understood by Mrs. A. 64

4.3.2 Leadership as understood by Mr. B. 67

4.3.3 Leadership as understood by Mrs. C. 68

4.3.4 Summary of principals understanding of leadership 70

4.4 The principals understanding of professionalism 71

4.4.1 Mrs. A's understanding of Professionalism 71

4.4.2 Mr. B's understanding of Professionalism 73

4.4.3 Mrs. C's understanding of Professionalism 75

4.4.4 Summary of principals understanding of professionalism 76

4.5 Principals' experiences of leadership 77

4.5.1 Mrs. A's experience of Leadership 77

4.5.1.1 Leading informally as a teacher leader 78

4.5.1.2 The challenging role of leading as an SMT member 78

4.5.2 Mr. B's experience of Leadership 81

4.5.2.1 Leading through distribution 81

4.5.2.2 Disunity, tension and conflict versus autocracy 82

4.5.3 Mrs. C's experience of Leadership 85

4.5.3.1 Leading informally 85

4.5.4 Summary of principals experiences of leadership 88

4.6 Contexts supporting principals' take-up of leadership 89

4.6.1 Contexts supporting Mrs. A's take-up of leadership 91

4.6.2 Contexts supporting Mr. B's take-up of leadership 92

4.6.3 Contexts supporting Mrs. C's take-up of leadership 93

4.6.4 Summary 94

4.7 Contexts inhibiting principals' take-up of leadership 100

4.7.1 Contexts inhibiting Mrs. A's take-up of leadership 100

4.7.1.1. Stress 100

4.7.1.2 Lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers 101

4.7.1.3 Lack of professionalism of the SGB 102

4.7.1.4 Lack of commitment of the DOE 103

4.7.2 Contexts inhibiting Mr. B's take-up of leadership 104

4.7.2.1 Resistance to change 104

4.7.2.2 Lack of professionalism of teachers and parents 104

4.7.2.3 Lack of parental involvement 105

4.7.3 Contexts inhibiting Mrs. C's take-up of leadership 106

4.7.3.1 Sizes of schools 106

4.7.3.2 Limited physical resources 106

4.7.4 Summary of contexts inhibiting principals take-up of leadership 108

4.8 Conclusion 110

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 112

5.1 Introduction 112

5.2 Understanding leadership 113

5.2.1 Leadership as a participatory activity 113

5.2.2 Leadership is an action linked to values and ethics 115

5.2.3 The impact of communication skills in leadership 117

5.2.4 Leadership as influence, not authority or power 119

5.3 Understanding professionalism 120

5.3.1 Personal and professional standards in professionalism 121

5.3.2 Relationships and responsibility support professionalism 122

5.3.3 Professionalism and the role of professional knowledge 123

5.4 Leadership through teamwork 124

5.4.1 The importance of leading through teams to transform schools 125

5.4.2 The benefits of teamwork 126

5.4.3 Pre-requisites of collaborative cultures 128

5.5 Contexts supporting principals' take-up of leadership 129

5.5.1 Leading informally through Teacher Leadership 129

5.5.2 Professional development, change and risk-taking impact on school cultures 130

5.5.3 The link between leadership and professionalism 132

5.5.4 The influence of external contexts 133

5.6 Contexts inhibiting principals take-up of leadership 134

5.6.1 Stress as a barrier to leadership and professionalism 134

5.6.2 The lack of professionalism of part-time trained teaches 135

5.6.3 The lack of parent involvement as a barrier to leadership and professionalism 136

5.6.4 The lack of commitment of the Department of Education 136

5.7 Conclusion 137

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION 139

6.1 Introduction 139

6.2 Summary of the main findings 139

6.3 Key issues inhibiting the take-up of leadership 142

6.4 Significance of the study 144

6.5 Limitations of the study 144

6.6 Recommendations 145

6.7 Conclusion 146

REFERENCES 147

APPENDICES 161

APPENDIX 1: Permission from the DOE to Conduct Research 161

APPENDIX 2: Permission from the SGB to Conduct Research 162

APPENDIX 3: Invitation to Participant 164

APPENDIX 4: In-depth Interview Schedule 165

APPENDIX 5: Reflective Journal Writing Guide 167

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Several education policies with a focus on democracy provide the enabling framework for the principals, Senior Management Teams (SMT's) and School Governing Bodies (SGB's). Despite these new policies and new structures, the schools are still controlled in a hierarchical top-down manner. My probem is whether these principals understand leadership, and what their view of professionalism entails.

This chapter gives an overview of the study by discussing the backgroud, focus, purpose and the rationale.

1.2 Background

Transformation of our education system is following similar trends to those in the international arena. These change initiatives work from the premise that high quality principal leadership can make a positive difference to the achievement of desired transformation in education (Prew 2007). With the introduction of democracy in South Africa, it became essential for principals to change their leadership styles in keeping with the Constitution and the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996. This act advocated a shift from centralised control and decision making to a school-based system of education management. SASA aims at democratising the education system. Consequently schools would be transformed from historically, hierarchically structured institutions into democratic organisations that Senge (1990) terms learning organisations. Creating these learning organisations appears to be a complex task.

Current education policy documents call for a different understanding of leadership and professionalism (The Task Team Report, 1996; Norms and Standards, 2000; The South African Standards for Principalship, 2005; Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign, 2009). The implication of this change in

theory, on school principals, would be that it would assist them to accomplish their goals through participatory leadership, shared decision- making, and shared responsibility. This profound change views principals as visionaries and leading professionals who share leadership with members of the school management teams (SMT's), educators, school governing bodies (SGB's) and parents. Effective participatory leadership is paramount to the achievement of the transformational goals of the South African education system. This study aims to try and find out principals' understanding and experiences of leadership and professionalism.

1.3 Focus and purpose of the study

This study focuses on principals' understanding and experiences of leadership and professionalism. The purpose of the study is to explore principals' understanding and experience of leadership and professionalism and to find out their view of professionalism in schools.

For the purpose of this study the researcher has chosen to focus on the experiences of three primary school principals in the Pietermaritzburg region who have already completed the Advanced Certificate in Education - School Leadership Programme (ACE-SL) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This course has the purpose of equipping principals for the positions they occupy as professional leaders and managers of schools (Mestry & Singh, 2007).

1.4 Rationale

The motivation for this study comes from my interest as a principal. Having taught for more than thirty five years in three schools, two high and one primary, I witnessed leadership being practiced in many different ways. Schools ran smoothly. Principals led in a top-down autocratic manner. Teachers were passive receptors of the principal's instructions and decisions. The principal's position, control and delivery of expertise earned him or her respect. There was little emphasis on a commitment involving everyone in the school. A culture of constant control and supervision prevailed. Entrusting teachers, pupils and parents to work towards achieving agreed upon outcomes without constant supervision

was non- existent. Subsequently, I have been curious to know whether principals learn to be leaders by trial and error, initiation under fire, or from on the job experience (Mathews and Crow, 2003). In addition I wondered whether leadership comes naturally, is a passion, or is something one has rather than develops. Also, do all principals understand leadership to mean the same thing? What is professionalism and how is it understood? Are there factors inhibiting or enhancing the enactment of leadership?

As a level one educator in the mid 1970's, during the apartheid era, I observed how the principal and those with authority made all the decisions and simply handed down the outcome to the rest of the staff. At this time, administrative and management roles were the primary roles principals played. The principal seldom encouraged team work, rather we as educators worked in isolation in our specialised areas. The principal focused primarily on producing order and efficiency in the school. As a result, teachers' feelings and desires were seldom considered important. I often wondered whether the principal of the day, who operated solely as a manager, relied only on bureaucratic and national models of leadership or was there something else driving him or her?

In the mid 1990's as an SMT member, I witnessed the extent of the devolution of authority on the principal. His work load increased as he played multiple roles. He was now responsible for budgetary control, for purchasing and controlling resources, for hiring and firing staff, for overseeing admission of learners. Determining a language policy, making decisions around the school's curriculum, monitoring performance management of the staff were new roles imposed on him without any formal training. Greater autonomy appeared to come with greater accountability pressure (Christie, 2010). As an SMT member then, I did not realise that the devolution of authority and responsibility to others, needed a strong commitment from all parties concerned but more especially from the principal.

Several education policies with a focus on democracy provided the enabling framework for the principal, SMT and SGB. Despite these new policies and new structures, the school was still controlled in a hierarchical top-down manner.

As the deputy of a primary school at the start of the 21st century, I wanted to be part of promoting and embracing a spirit of transformation in a new school. I wanted to be part of a leadership system that saw the benefits of including everyone in the decision-making process, as well as distributing responsibility to others. As a deputy I worked directly with the teachers to bring about change. This required looking at their professional and leadership capabilities. We constantly struggled with the complexities of the education system bearing in mind that the new policy frameworks and regulations had changed the work of the principal in multiple and contextually different ways. The South African Standards for Principals: leading and managing schools in the 21st century (Department of Education, draft document, 2005) recognised the principal as 'the leading professional'. Effective leadership was considered critical to the achievement of the transformational goals of the education system (Department of Education, 2005). This link between the principal's role and leadership implies that the principal is a visionary who influences others in transformational ways (Christie, 2010, p. 698).

This view of a principal requires principals to be critically reflective, and to be focused on their own learning to improve the learning, leadership skills and professional development of others (Lunn, 2006). This served as my motivation to enrol for the Bachelor of Education (Honors) and subsequently the Masters in Education Leadership and Management (ELMP) Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. These courses of study in turn provoked my thinking and interest in exploring the interplay between leadership, professionalism and professional development in bringing about change within the quality of leadership in schools.

1.5 Research Question

The critical research question guiding this study was: What are the principals understandings of leadership and professionalism? The following primary questions supported the main research question:

1. How is leadership understood by principals?

2. How is professionalism understood by principals?

3. How do principals experience leadership in their schools?

1.6 Methodology

A qualitative case study design and methodology was chosen to investigate three primary school principals in the Pietermaritzburg Region of KwaZulu-Natal. The data from the interview transcripts and reflective journals were inductively analysed with the main aim being to generate themes.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study uses transformational leadership theory, within a culture of mutual respect, collaboration, shared vision, decision-making, and trust as its basic tenets. Bhagowat (2006) defines transformational school principals as those who:

- balance a variety of pressures, while never losing sight of mission, vision and societal values
- set direction, organize, monitor and build relationships with the school community

Thus, this study focuses on the understandings and experiences of leadership and professionalism of three primary school principals in the light of transformation in South Africa.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted a brief background to the study and the author's motivation. Chapter 2 will focus on the literature around leadership and professionalism. It provides insight into the differences between leadership, management and principalship. It further expands on the definitions and characteristics of leadership and professionalism and builds an argument for the need for a new direction in support of these two concepts. The environment needed for principals' and teacher leadership and professionalism to be developed and practised is also discussed.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, the method of data collection and analysis, the research process as well as ethical issues and the limitations of the study.

In chapter 4 an analysis of the data is presented. It is an account of the principals' understandings of leadership and professionalism and their experiences as leaders.

In chapter 5 these findings are discussed thematically. It also considers the implications of these findings in the context of the literature review outlined in Chapter 2.

The final chapter provides the conclusions arrived at and recommendations for the promotion of leadership and professionalism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the literature on principals which will inform my study. Principals are the key holders of power and the focal point of school leadership. The principal is the one who enlightens and empowers others, who creates the context, who motivates and builds capacity in others. The principal's role suggests that power does not rest with him or her on the contrary it must be devolved to others in the school. In reviewing the literature on principals the focus was on the following components:

- Leadership
- Transformational Leadership Theory
- Principalship
- Professionalism
- Contexts supporting and or inhibiting leadership and professionalism

2.2 Leadership

2.2.1 Defining leadership

There is a wide range of different definitions of leadership and they differ because they focus on many different aspects of leadership. Pellicer (2008, p. 13) refers to leadership as an 'octopus'. The analogy is that it is much easier to recognise it when we see it, than it is to understand it or explain it to others. On the contrary Burns (1978, p. 19), in his book, simply titled *Leadership*, defines leadership as:

> "...the leader inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders, see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations''.

From this definition, it is clear that Burns believes leadership to be a moral act, and leaders to be virtuous people. The moral act implies that the leader is dedicated to the welfare of staff, parents and learners with the latter at the

centre. Burn's believes that only by seeing the interplay between ideals of service, purposes and practices can the professional understand the moral role

Similarly, leadership is defined by Christie (2010, p. 695) as a "relationship of influence directed towards goals or outcomes, whether formal or informal". This view is reiterated by Bolman and Deal (2001) who define leadership as a subtle process of mutual influence. Taylor and colleagues (2007, p. 404) have a similar view and believe leadership to be a "process involving fusing thought, feeling and action to produce a co-operative effort that serves both the leaders and the led". For these authors leadership is regarded as a process that taps the inner motivation, energizes the mental and emotional resources and involves the person enthusiastically in the work to be done. Likewise, Sergiovanni (2001. p. 343) believes that leadership is "a personal thing that begins on the inside and comprises three dimensions, namely one's head (theory of practice), one's heart (belief in vision) and hand (decisions and actions)". For Spillane (2005) leadership is regarded as a process that can be shared and dispersed across people and functions, thereby operating from the centre rather than from the top only.

While there are many commonalities used by scholars to describe leaders and leadership, there are also many differences. Welch (2005, p. 79) sums up the leadership equation as follows:

> And yet, good leadership happens – and it comes in all kinds of packages. There are quiet and bombastic ones. There are analytical leaders and more impulsive ones. Some are as tough as nails with their teams, others very nurturing. On the surface, you would be hard-pressed to say what qualities these leaders share. Underneath, you would surely see the best care passionately about their people – about their growth and success.

In defining leadership Pelicer (2008) considers it to be much more than a title or formal mandate to take charge of a particular situation, or the ability to perform a set of complex tasks. On the contrary he believes that the true essence of leadership is a directed 'group will' bound together by common needs, goals, beliefs and values. Thus, Pelicer (2008, p. 21) defines leadership

as “the ability to see and to help others see beyond the present realities, and to help them glimpse the unlimited possibilities in the future”. In this way leadership is no longer seen as the prerogative of the principal and the School Management Team (SMT), but is increasingly about individual responsibility. Since leadership is the capacity to influence followers, what then are the key assumptions and characteristics of leadership that principals need to be aware of?

2.2.2 Key assumptions and characteristics of leadership

Leadership may be seen as having three main characteristics:

- Leadership as influence
- Leadership and values
- Leadership and vision

2.2.2.1 Leadership as influence, not authority

According to Yukl in Bush (2008), most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves the social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to structure the activities and relationships in an organisation. Firstly, the central concept is influence rather than authority. Both of these are dimensions of power, but the latter resides in formal positions such as that of principals, while the former could be exercised by anyone in the school. Consequently, Bush (2008) asserts that leadership is independent of positional authority while management is an organisational concept that is linked to formal positions. Secondly, Bush (2008) says the process of leadership is intentional. The implication being that the person seeking to exercise influence is doing so in order to achieve certain purposes. Thirdly, Bush (2008) claims that influence may be exercised by groups as well as individuals. The implication is that leadership involves a group which is broader than the SMT since the principal is part of the SMT and if that team can share power I believe schools can succeed. Similarly, for Harris and Lambert (2003) leadership is therefore about learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively.

Moreover, these authors claim that 21st century schools require a redistribution of power in which principals release authority and teachers alternatively take-up power. This notion provides support for constructs such as teacher leadership as well as underpinning the notion of distributed leadership, both of which fall under the umbrella of transformational leadership and will be discussed later in the chapter. Even though this aspect of leadership is portrayed as a fluid process which makes it appear attractive, it tells us little about the nature and purposes of a leader's actions.

2.2.2.2 Leadership and values/morals

The literature reviewed reveals that leadership is also increasingly linked to values because it is directed towards achieving goals (Bush, 2008). The implication is that leadership is linked to emotional intelligence and self motivation. Furthermore, if leadership is values driven, then leaders should have a clear moral purpose that earns trust among the staff, learners and parents (Harris and Lambert, 2003). It is this moral compass that directs principals in rising above challenges created by the education system.

On the contrary, Christie (2010, p. 695) reminds us that leadership is "not necessarily moral (people may be 'led astray'), or effective (leaders may 'take people nowhere'), or even well done (the notion of bad leadership is not a contradiction in terms)". So, because leadership is associated with success rather than failure, it is 'values driven' leadership that is attuned to people's feelings and therefore moves people in a positive emotional direction. Consequently, if schools are to become professional places of teaching and learning, then as Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) argue, it is values driven moral leadership which is necessary to change the role of principals from commanders and controllers, to leaders who create skilful involvement.

Consequently, questions that should continually guide principals are: What does it mean to be a leader? What should I do to exercise professionalism? What are the contexts that support or inhibit my take-up of leadership? These are powerful questions that should be continually revisited to avoid the principal's role becoming "overloaded with emptiness" (Fullan, 2003, p. 20).

2.2.2.3 Leadership as vision

The literature associates leadership with vision since it is vision, as mentioned earlier, which is associated with achieving goals. Fullan (2001) postulates, that 21st century schools require visionary leaders who can transform schools into effective organisations. In addition Bush (2007), writing in the South African context, states it is transformational leadership that would set the stage for South African schools to change from the previous stratified system to a new framework that enables others to act, that models the way, that inspires a shared vision, that coaches and that stimulates others. This implies that not only is leadership complex but it comes from many sources, the mentor, the peer, the grade leader, the teacher leader, the local Union Representative or the Head of Department, since they are all leaders if they are working in a professional learning community (Fullan, 2001).

Therefore in dealing with transformation in the schools it is important to first target principals since they must create the context, empower everyone, enlighten the staff, build capacity and share ideas.

2.3 Theoretical framework: Transformational leadership theory

This research study is underpinned by the transformational leadership theory. In the rationale (chapter 1), I alluded to the need for the principal as an individual to influence others in visionary if not transformational ways. Hence this study is grounded in transformational leadership theory because I believe our country is still undergoing major social and political change. For principals to achieve the goals of social justice, redress and equity there is a need for principals to lead teachers, learners and parents with vision, trust, commitment, consideration, and inspiration, all of which are characteristics relating to transformational leadership theory.

This study works from the assumption that leadership focuses on the potential of all members in the organisation to achieve their agreed on goals. In addition, since the theory of transformational leadership contains elements of distributed leadership, participatory or democratic leadership and collegiality,

this study assumes that principals will perform their roles as change agents in a collaborative manner for the benefit of the organisation.

2.3.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership focuses explicitly on the role of the leader in developing followers. The term transformational leadership is believed to have originated with Downtown (1973) and conceptualised by Burns' (1978). According to Telford (1996), Burns made an enlightening distinction between two types of leadership, transactional and transformational, providing a major shift in the thinking behind leadership theory, particularly with regard to leadership and its connection with the moral dimensions. Burns (1978) claims the transactional is based on a 'bargaining' or 'reward/exchange' relationship between leader and follower. Thus, transactional leaders engage in exchanges with followers without any consideration for individual and/or organisational change and development. On the contrary, transformational leadership refers to the process whereby leaders engage with others in ways that enhance the creativity and motivation in the organisation of both parties (Burns, 1978). The theory of transformational leadership, as described by Burns (1978), was a dynamic vision and commitment of what can be achieved for an organisation.

Research by Bass (1985) expanded the original conceptualisation of Burns (1978) to extend the focus to followers by arguing that transformational forms of leadership can enhance transactional forms through their effects on follower motivation and creativity. Bass (1985, p. 20) argues that transformational leaders motivate followers by:

- raising followers' level of consciousness about the importance and value of specific and idealised goals
- getting followers to surpass their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organisation, and
- Moving followers to address higher-level needs.

From this it is clear that transformational leaders manage to motivate others to achieve more than originally planned or intended for the greater good of the organisation. Also, more responsibility is given to members of the team. The leader encourages new perspectives through innovation, exploratory learning and creativity. Transformational leaders act as change agents since they are likely to create a supportive organisational climate where trust and respect acknowledges individual needs and differences (Bass, 1998). Thus transformational leadership, contrary to transactional leadership, does not seek to maintain the status quo but provides a stimulus for change and innovation instead (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Sergiovanni (1990, p. 24) also regards transformational leadership as leadership that provides a stimulus for change. He claims that transformational leadership occurs when leaders and followers are united in creating higher level goals. The implication is that both leaders and followers want to become the best, and both want to lead the school in a new direction

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) are of a similar view and claim that transformational leadership works on the premise of a mutual relationship in which leaders have the ability to transform organisations by empowering followers simply by working on followers' value systems. Leithwood and his colleagues suggest SIX factors that make up transformational leadership behaviour:

- builds a vision and mission,
- provides intellectual stimulation to colleagues
- offers individual support,
- symbolises professional practices and values,
- demonstrates high performance expectations,
- develops structures to foster participation in school decisions

Many authors (Bass, 1985; Avolio, Bass & Jung 1999; Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003; Boehnke, Bontis, DiStefano and DiStefano, 2003; Bush, 2007; Birasnav, Rangnekar and Dalpati 2011) propose that only *FOUR* factors make up transformational leadership, commonly known as the four I's:

- **Idealised Influence –** refers to the actual leader behaviour in which leaders model the way through moral values and a sense of purpose. Through idealised influence, followers emulate the leaders. The leader avoids using power for personal gain.

- **Inspirational Motivation -** the leader inspires followers by providing meaning to their work through the development of a vision for the future. Team spirit is encouraged and the vision of the future is communicated.

- **Intellectual Stimulation -** occurs when leaders encourage creativity and innovation and question the existing state however, a supportive and positive environment prevails. New ideas and approaches are not criticised but welcomed even if different from that of the leader.

- **Individualised Consideration –** occurs where the needs of each individual are considered and where coaching and mentoring are the norm.

Together these four main dimensions of transformational leadership are interdependent, and they should co-exist as they are believed to have an addictive effect that yields performance beyond expectations (Kelly, 2003). This shows that transformational leadership can work well in the South African context where School Management Teams (SMT's) are emphasised more than principals. The flatter structures imply that leadership now comes from many points within the organisation and not only from the principal alone as previously happened. Hence the Report of the Task Team (1996) argues that working together, sharing information and expertise creates a strongly woven web of vibrant networks and partnerships that have the

breadth and depth to, nurture, drive and sustain the management of change in our schools.

2.3.2. Characteristics of principals as transformational leaders

In the process of reviewing literature on transformational leadership theory I cite a list of characteristics of principals as transformational leaders (Sindhrajh, 2007). The main characteristics are summarised as follows:

- Are change agents;
- Are willing to change themselves;
- Develop the capacity of others rather than self;
- Empower others rather than control them;
- Create a school climate that is conducive to change;
- Share leadership with others, rather than being self-centred;
- Encourage participatory decision- making;
- Inspire and motivate followers;
- Nurture a shared vision and mission;
- Lead by example whist maintaining high morals and values;
- Encourages a team spirit and enthusiasm;

2.3.3 Transformational leadership theory links with leadership

With the advent of school restructuring in North America during the 1990s, scholars and practitioners began to popularise terms such as shared leadership, teacher leadership, distributed leadership, and transformational leadership. The emergence of these leadership models indicated a broader dissatisfaction with the top-down policy driven changes that predominated in the 1980s (refer Bass, 1998; Howell & Avolio, 1993). Similarly, Hallinger (2003) regards transformational leadership as a reaction against the directive imagery encompassed in the instructional leadership model, which many believe

focuses too much on the principal as the centre of expertise, power and authority. The term instructional leadership gives priority to the role of the principal in directing schools towards effective teaching and learning, while the theory of transformational leadership emphasises the function of leaders as agents of social change.

In the South African context the Department of Education in its Management Training embarked on in 2000, alerts principals to the context within which the education department's change process is situated. It advocates a shift from traditional, hierarchical 'top-down' management to 'participatory' leadership which allows democratic participation of all stakeholders engaging in collective decision-making. However, Fleisch (2002) and Grant (2006) writing in the South African context, note that in a small number of South African schools, steep hierarchical authoritarian management structures persist. In addition, Prew (2007), cautions that the principal's resistance to change is not only common to South Africa but is a trend common to the rest of the world. Furthermore he notes that when change is accompanied by a fundamental change in leadership style, from an authoritarian style to one that is more inclusive and democratic, improvements in the schools functionality abound.

Transformational leadership may be viewed as distributed in that it focuses on developing a shared vision and shared commitment to school change. Thus distributed leadership assumes a division of labour within the schooling system and allocates functions according to where and by whom they are best performed rather than being reserved only for those in formal positions (Spillane, 2006). Similarly, Spillane et al (2004) refer to this distribution as being 'stretched over' people in different roles. It is this 'stretching' which Gronn (2008) highlights as a link between distributed leadership, democratic leadership, teacher leadership and transformational leadership. Gronn (2008, p. 154) describes the link as follows:

> "by de-monopolising leadership and potentially increasing the sources and voices of influence in organisations beyond just one, distributed

leadership has helped widen the span of employee and member participation".

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) on the other hand consider distributed leadership to be an extension of transformational leadership. These authors claim distributed leadership supports transformational leadership in its ability to empower others, but changes the focus to *how* leadership is actually practiced. Distributed leadership is thus about the "how" of school leadership and not the "what" of school leadership.

If as Pelicer (2008) argues, leadership is much more than principalship, how then is the concept principalship defined, what are the roles of the principal, and how does principalship link with leadership?

2.4 Principalship

2.4.1 Defining principalship

Principalship is an organisational concept because it designates a structural position which carries with it responsibilities and accountabilities (Christie 2010). Principal, Headmaster, Head Teacher, Head, Administrator and Manager are synonymous terms that make reference to the head of the school, a status that implies both power and authority. The principal was previously defined as the person responsible largely for teaching and learning of learners. This traditional definition has changed over time and no longer focuses on the administrative processes and functions that are emphasised for schools to work well. Sergiovanni (2001) claims that traditionally the effective principal was responsible for four aspects of schooling:

- Planning – setting goals and objectives
- Organising – bringing together human, financial and physical resources
- Leading – guiding and supervising subordinates

- Controlling – regulating and reviewing and evaluating

Defining the role of the principal in terms of the above outcomes tends to define effectiveness more in terms of what works than what is right and, according to Sergiovanni (2001) this tendency raises important moral questions. Hence there is evidence that the role of the principal is changing.

2.4.2 The role of the principal

The educational revolution, characterised by dynamic tendencies internationally, called for the role of the principal to be reconceptualised. Hence in South Africa the implementation of SASA in 1996 created an ever changing school environment which impacted the role of the principal immensely. Today the position of the principal is far more sophisticated and the job is far more complex than in previous decades. This complexity can best be seen in the incredible number of functions that principals are expected to perform daily and often simultaneously. In addition principals can no longer rely only on the bureaucratic direction as they did in the past. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that the effective functioning of a school greatly depends on the professional conduct of the school principal both as a leader with vision and as a manager who implements the school's mission (van Deventer and Kruger, 2003). In addition to these new responsibilities the principal has to contend with a highly demanding educational environment characterised by change and transformation.

What exactly do primary school principals do? Are they managers, are they leaders, or do they have to be both leader and manager?

2.4.3 Leadership versus management

The distinction between leadership and management is often made in the literature. This distinction is often simplified as the dilemma of principals choosing between “doing things right” (management) or “doing the right thing” (leadership). This dilemma is articulated in a field of school leadership known as ethical or moral leadership and increasingly there is an awareness of the ethics of school leadership in the literature (Sergiovanni, 2001). Although

Schon (1984) argues that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, he distinguishes between them in the following way:

> Leadership and management are not synonymous terms. One can be a leader without being a manager. One can, for example, fulfil many of the symbolic, inspirational educational and normative functions of a leader and thus represent what an organisation stands for without carrying any of the formal burdens of management. Conversely one can manage without leading. An individual can monitor and control organisational activities, make decisions, and allocate resources without fulfilling the symbolic, normative, inspirational, or educational functions of leadership (Schon, 1984, p. 36).

According to Omar (2009) this moral purpose and the dilemma of choosing between doing things right and doing the right thing occupy a paradoxical position in leadership. Campbell (in Omar, 2009, p. 43) writes "while it is clearly expected that school principals be ethical leaders, the conceptual complexities of translating theoretical prescriptions into practical action seem at times insurmountable".

A more useful distinction, made by Lingard et al (2002), is that leadership can be exercised throughout the school, by different people at different post levels. It is therefore not necessarily tied to a formal position or organisational role. Management, like principalship, in contrast is a structural position, which carries with it specific roles and responsibilities. The present study which focuses on principals is concerned with the leadership exercised from this position.

2.4.4 Principals as leaders

The principal's role as leader is brought sharply into focus in order to effect and manage change. This implies that fundamental to school management is leadership. According to Bennis (in Gerber et al, 1998, p. 287) principals as leaders are people who do 'the right things'. Therefore in 'doing the right things' as leaders' principals would:

- provide direction,
- offer inspiration,
- build teamwork,
- set an example,
- empower others by working with them,
- initiate and orchestrate change,
- show awareness of social and development issues, and
- demonstrate transmissible values to guide relationships

Bennis (in Gerber et al, 1998) claims that in this way principals contribute toward the effectiveness and success of schools of which they are members.

In my view in any school the quality of leadership of the principal determines the quality of what happens. Dean (2007) maintains that it is unusual to find work of quality taking place throughout the school unless the head is offering dynamic leadership. Similarly, society today demands a much higher calibre of leadership from principals than in former times (Cawood, 2005). The principal of today of necessity must bring strong leadership skills, positive attitudes and insights to enable him/her to meet complex challenges and demands. The principal therefore plays a strategic role in the initiation of change. Principals' must possess the ability constantly and actively to create change within his or her organisation.

Since change is complex (Fullan, 2001), the principal should ensure that the school organisational environment becomes one of continuous flexibility if change is to be accepted and implemented successfully. Permanence within an organisation therefore ceases to exist. In the words of Pelicer (2008, p. 90) "the need for principals to feel safe is very powerful, but the rewards that come with personal, professional and organisational growth are equally alluring". Effective leadership is therefore not only dependent on weighing up the balance of the potential risks versus the rewards, but more importantly

dependent on the kind of organisation around the leader that he or she has developed.

What is expected of the principal as passionate leader and role model will be to build trusting relationships within the organisation in order for members to make changes quickly and often (Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, Fullan (2001) argues and the researcher concurs that if the leader is not committed to this paradigm shift, these objectives may not be realised. How then is principalship linked to leadership?

2.4.5 Principalship links with leadership

The school principal, as the 'executive officer' of the school, is given authority by the head of the Ministry of education to enforce his/her authority in the school. In understanding the difference between authority and power Gerber et al. (in van Deventer & Kruger, 2003, p. 140) claim, "many people have authority (which is conferred), but not the power (which has to be acquired) to assert authority effectively". Power is therefore the basis of leadership. However, the power of leadership is expressed through influence whilst the power of principalship may extend beyond influence and consent to compulsion.

Similarly, Pellicer (2008) says that principalship refers to someone in a leadership role saying, knowing or doing things whilst leadership is about being, an intimate expression of who we are. In addition, Ibukun, Oyewole & Abe (2011, p. 248) believe that as the major agents in the promotion of school effectiveness, "principals are the pillars of the educational system especially at the second tier of the educational pyramid".

Leithwood et al. (2004) through his review on leadership and learning emphasises that the principal is the most influential source of leadership. Leadership has become the preferred term to describe the activities of principals. However, we should remember Leithwood's (1994) salutary comment, that the difference between leadership and management cannot be easily observed in the day-to-day practices of principals. Hallinger's (2008) belief is that a leadership perspective on the role of the principal does not

diminish principal's managerial roles' also holds true. What are the basic qualities of professional principals? What does it mean to be a professional and to exhibit professionalism in the field of education? What aspects of professionalism do ideal principals' exhibit?

2.5 Professionalism

2.5.1 Defining professionalism

Professionalism is defined in many different ways and it is used both descriptively and prescriptively. The South African Council of Educators (SACE, 2006, p. 1) states "there is a general agreement that the notions of professional autonomy, accountability, knowledge and professional ethics are central elements of professionalism". Hoyle (1980) describes professionalism as the quality of one's practice. This implies that the behaviours exhibited by a principal are what identify a principal's professionalism. Similarly, Hurst and Reding (in Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005) align specific behaviours with teacher professionalism, namely dressing appropriately, punctuality, use of proper language, building of strong relationships with colleagues. Morrow (1998) argues that professionalism is the degree to which one is committed to the profession and states that individual teachers/principals have varying degrees of professionalism. For example, a high degree of professionalism would include accepting responsibility for the way in which a job is done. Kramer (2003) argues that for a principal to develop a strong sense of professionalism, he/she must focus on the three critical elements of attitude, behaviour and communication. This implies that professionalism links with transformational leadership since principals, as transformational leaders, are constantly involved in influencing, motivating, encouraging and inspiring others. Hence by leading through example the transformational principal raises the level of motivation and morality of both leaders and followers. I therefore concur with her that these three broad areas cover a wide range of behaviours and characteristics that should be demonstrated in the professional lives of principals and teachers. The latter range from understanding learning

theories, to clearly, communicating with colleagues, parents and learners (Kramer, 2003, pp 23–25). In addition, Sockett (in Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005, p. 9) describes professionalism as:

> "the manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality, and their contractual and ethical relations with clients".

The prescriptive usage of the term professionalism occurs when the term is used as a means of achieving some desired state (Hoyle, 1982). For example, Hoyle (1982, p. 161) claims it can be used by "individuals as a token of their self esteem, by occupational elites as they seek to improve pay, status and conditions, and by governments as they seek to gain an occupations acceptance of a particular policy by appealing to its professional responsibilities". On the other hand, descriptive usage is based on the assumption that professions have distinctive characteristics which distinguish them from other occupations.

2.5.2 Promoting professionalism

According to Stronge (in Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005) professional behaviours and characteristics can be fostered by principals or the SMT through high quality and appropriate professional development activities. On the other hand, beginning teachers can be professionalised through receiving peer feedback, through observing other teachers, through creating collegial relationships and participating in lifelong learning experiences (Lieberman and Miller, 2004; Harris and Muijs, 2005). More importantly, Tichenor and Tichenor (2009) strongly believe that the success of any school is dependent on principals and teachers' understanding of professionalism, In addition, these scholars claim that if there is no common understanding of professionalism among teachers and principals, it is unlikely that professionalism will be recognised in the largely, public arena. Tichenor and Tichenor (2009) also argue that a common understanding of professionalism will allow teacher education programmes and school district authorities to develop programmes that promote higher levels of professionalism among all educators. Hence in the South African arena SACE (2006) has clearly outlined

the Code of Professional Ethics for principals' from general points to conduct between: the principal and the learner; the principal and the parent; the principal and the community; the principal and his or her colleagues; the principal and the profession; the principal and his/her employer as well as the principal and the council. Whilst every point is clearly outlined and understandable it is questionable whether the code of professional ethics is really being followed/and or applied by all educators and principals.

2.5.3 Characteristics or major aspects of professionalism

Tichenor and Tichenor's (2005) study used focused group interviews with in-service teachers at four professional development schools and found that teachers agreed that professionalism is displayed in creating a positive learning environment for learners. Also, that professionalism is displayed through personal virtues, such as patience, resilience, caring, flexibility, respect, in short through ethical behaviour. These virtues are also characteristic of transformational leadership. On the other hand, in Tichenor and Tichenor's (2009) study, a comparison of teachers and principals' understanding of the multiple dimension of teacher professionalism, found, as in their earlier study, that most teachers and principals agreed that certain characteristics and behaviours should be a high priority. However, their (2009) study showed significant differences between principals and teachers' understanding of professionalism.

Firstly, this study showed a disconnection between principals and teachers' perspectives on the basic concept of teaching as a career. Tichenor and Tichenor (2009) are of the view that it is important for principals to value and support the view of teaching as a life-long learner because it is only through adequate support of principals that teachers can dedicate themselves to teaching throughout an entire career. In addition, principals must be aware that commitment to teaching as a life-long career is a high priority for teachers.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the professionalism of novice teachers may be enhanced through regular observation of other teachers. However, Tichenor and Tichenor's (2009) study indicates that principals recognise the benefits of this activity more than teachers. Teachers' reluctance to regular observation on

the other hand, may be ascribed to a lack of time. Nonetheless the authors advise principals to structure regular opportunities for teachers to regularly observe best practises in teaching, as this could increase teacher recognition of the benefits of this activity.

Thirdly, the study revealed another difference between teachers and principals' understanding of professionalism, in that teachers do not view active participation on school wide committees and , school decision-making bodies as high a priority as do principals (Tichenor and Tichenor, 2009). This disjuncture between teachers and principals may be important in understanding why some teachers do not participate in school governance. Thus Sockett (1993, p. 8) clearly states that professionalism "requires that teachers go beyond classroom activity as descriptors of teaching acts to the complete and complex role a teacher fulfils". This implies that professionalism requires principals and teachers to undertake the demands of partnership with other professionals, of collaborative leadership, and of participation in a wider role within and beyond the school. Consequently, if a principal emphasises participation in school-wide committees and/or decision-making teachers, by taking by taking ownership of these activities, may be helped to recognise that professionalism involves more than simply classroom activities.

Lastly, the study showed that there was a large statistically significant difference between principals and teachers' views on engaging in teacher research or action research to improve a teacher's own practise (Tichenor and Tichenor, 2009). Whilst principals rated action research and reflective practise as a highly important indicator of professionalism of a teacher, the rating of teachers was significantly lower. These authors therefore advocate that principals must create the awareness of commitment to change and continuous improvement. The latter provides time for guidance and support for teachers. It also allows teachers to conduct their own action research. Teachers may actively seek these opportunities not only to grow professionally but also to participate in meaningful professional development activities, and so become life-long learners (Hargreaves, 2003).

Thus, the research literature on teacher professionalism (Sockett, 1993; Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005; Tichenor and Tichenor, 2009) categorises professional behaviours and characteristics into four basic dimensions namely:

- Personal characteristics
- commitment to change and continuous improvement
- subject and pedagogical knowledge
- Participation in educational activities beyond the confines of the classroom

How then does professionalism link with leadership and principalship?

2.5.4 Professionalism and the link with leadership and principalship

The link between principalship, leadership and professionalism is seen in the way principals lead their schools and the roles they perform. The adage that leadership is not merely a position but rather a function seems to justify the focus on the "practice" of leadership by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Task Force. The latter identified three core practices of school leadership, namely: setting directions, developing people, and developing the organisation (Omar, 2009, p. 49).

Lieberman and Miller (2004) claim that the demands of teaching in a new century includes shifts from the individual to professional learning communities, from teaching at the centre to learning at the centre, from technical and managed work to inquiry and leadership. How then do these shifts affect principals' professionalism?

Firstly, research shows that when principals view their work as taking place within and beyond their own offices and participate in professional learning communities leading becomes public and more open to critique and improvement. Moreover, Harris and Muijs (2005) argue that this shift

promotes an expanded view of professional responsibility and accountability. Secondly, research evidence shows that when principals and teachers shift from the act of teaching and managing to the process of learning, they corroborate for each other that one size fits few (Hargreaves, 2003). Consequently, this means that by working together, looking together and designing together principals, together with their team, gain collective knowledge. This shared leadership is characteristic of both transformational leadership and professionalism. Thirdly, Botha (2004) and Hargreaves (2003) believe this 'new professionalism' places principals, for the first time at the epicentre of change and development. These authors therefore suggest that principals will be:

- stewards of a new invigorated profession,
- advocates for new forms of accountability
- instigators of new ways of relating, working and engaging with others
- leaders of learning where their efforts build professional learning communities

How then, do new education policies and regulatory frameworks expect principals to work in democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure effective delivery of education?

2.5.5 Professional development

Harris and Muijs (2005) suggest that principals will need to act as catalysts in providing regular opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful professional development. The implication is that professional development should not be seen as attending once-off workshops and courses only but, rather that new habits of learning are developed. Professional development is far more likely to be powerful and beneficial if they are present day after day.

Hence Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 58) define professional development as "continuous learning that is the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced by teachers, often under challenging conditions". From this definition it is clear that professional development is distinguishable from related terminology namely, 'in-service training' and 'on-the-job training' which is more likely to happen at pre-determined times only. Rather professional development is linked to peoples' professional identities and roles and the goals of the organisation in which they are working (Harris and Muijs, 2005).

The literature reviewed reveals that the development of professionality (improvement of skills and procedures in the practise), in contrast to professionalism (improvement of status) is viewed as a way of re-professionalising teaching (Hoyle, 1995; Gunter, 2001; Sachs, 2003). Hence, current educational policy internationally and nationally expects principals to fulfil an extended professionalism. Principals could do this by emphasising teamwork, encouraging collaboration and responsibility between teachers and the SMT, and inviting teacher participation in schools decision-making process (Honingh and Hooge, 2009). By adopting a collegial approach new skills are developed and principals and teachers are re-professionalised as their levels of professionality are extended (Bush, 2003).

Harris and Lambert (2003) argue that professional development requires a collegial constructivist approach to learning where principals and teachers learn together and construct meaning from their interaction, discussion and professional dialogue. This approach to professional development and leadership creates the opportunities for teachers to enquire about new ideas together. Teachers are also given opportunities to do personal reflection and to make sense of their work in the light of shared beliefs and new information.

This collegial professionalism, according to advocates of professional learning communities (Sergiovanni, 2001; Harris and Lambert, 2003) allows teacher leadership to surface. Teacher leadership is an important element in making schools professional places of teaching and learning. Teacher

leadership according to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) should be viewed as professional learning communities since teachers lead formally and informally, whilst maintaining direct contact with the classroom. Furthermore, they claim that teacher leaders, as mentors, coaches, and staff developers, influence others towards improved educational practise. So in schools where this participatory leadership is exercised the professional principal would ensure that ethical behaviour is practised (Hall, 2001). Principals are reminded that "without ethics, there is no point to leadership" (Ramsey, 1999, p. 187). Ethical integrity, which uses values of trust, humility, honour, fidelity and public spiritedness as a moral compass, is what guides the professional and connects the practise to the wider picture of social and political change (Gunter, 2001). The literature reviewed, therefore shows the need for professional virtues to be practised and exhibited by professional leaders, since one's belief systems would impact on one's professionalism (Begley, 1999).

Bush (2008), Fullan (2003) and Harris (2007) consistently claim that the principal is the key to an effective school. These scholars believe it is therefore essential for authorities and educationists to develop training programmes for principals, so that they are able to manage schools effectively. On the contrary, Bush et al (2011) stress that, in times of change, the preparation of principals should go beyond training them to implement the requirements of the hierarchy. Rather, principals should be developed into rounded and confident leaders who are able to engage all school stakeholders in school improvement, a view with which the researcher concurs. What remains is to look at contexts that support or inhibit principals' take-up of leadership.

2.6. Contexts promoting or inhibiting leadership and professionalism

2.6.1 Risk taking

According to Pellicer (2008), leaders who build organisations where risk taking is encouraged and effort is celebrated and rewarded just as much as success are never leading single handed. Such leaders, he claims, build a safety net of mutual trust and respect that can sustain them should they fall. Hence it appears that risk-taking leaders are effective leaders because the organisations they lead are dynamic and vital and they encourage everyone to test their limits to the maximum as well as to experience success. On the contrary, leaders who build organisations where risk is not allowed are more concerned with safety rather than growth. More importantly, Pellicer (2008, p90) suggests that over time "the latter organisations become stagnant; they lose their edge and become boring and unrewarding places to work". This was confirmed through research conducted by him of high school principals and their schools in the USA. The findings show a clear relationship between risk-taking behaviours and school success. Also, that when principals, teachers and other staff members had "healthy appetites" for risk, schools were more likely to experience positive growth. Similarly, Preedy, Bennett and Wise (2012) assert that the best leaders take risks not because they are careless or foolhardy but because they are aware of the effect that risk-taking behaviours has on others. In addition, they believe risk-taking leaders are "thoughtful planners" who realise that a failure today doesn't rule out success in the future. On the contrary, failure to try surely precludes success in the present as well as in the future. So, Kouzes and Posner (1995) describe the effect of risk-taking behaviour on people and organisations as follows:

> "People are inspired by those who take initiative and who risk personal safety for the sake of a cause. Only those who act boldly in times of crisis and change are going to succeed. Without courage there can be no hope – and little chance of survival in today's highly volatile economic and social situations" (p. 77).

However, Pellicer (2008, p92) assures us that risk-taking leaders understand that taking risks is part and parcel of "soaring with the eagles". In addition, these leaders know that risk-taking makes them vulnerable to the criticism and second-guessing of those with less stout hearts. Nonetheless, Pellicer (2008) says if leaders set the example of risk-taking then others in the organisation

are more likely to take risks, too, thereby leading to significant and satisfying growth experience for the organisation.

Unfortunately, the literature reviewed shows that true risk-taking behaviour is rare. Patterson and colleagues (in Fullan, 2003) strongly believe that principals who remain dependent on the education system to correct its "wrongs" are in fact inhibiting forward movement in their schools. Moreover, they argue that it is not that principals' complaints are illegitimate, but rather that principals assume the system must get it's 'act together' before principals can do their work. On the contrary, Fullan (2003) suggests that principals must be innovative in finding solutions to problems thereby breaking the bonds of dependency on the system. Thus, by transcending 'if-only dependency-thinking' principals change the system that contains them by immediately changing the context in which they work. In addition Fullan (2003, p. 19) strongly believes and the researcher concurs that principals who fail to do so "will always be buffeted by the system" because they do not use an internal or moral battle to overcome an external one

Leadership roles today appear not to be for the faint-hearted because of the inherent dangers of high-stakes testing and the extraordinary challenges imposed by sweeping legislative mandates. Consequently today's schools need more principals and SMT's who can be true risk-takers. But, more importantly, Pellicer (2008, p. 92) reiterates "we need people in leadership roles with the courage of their convictions who will risk everything to live by their principles". From this it is clear that schools need more leaders who can find the courage and the confidence they require from their colleagues and themselves to breathe new life into highly bureaucratic organisations that tend to be inflexible and resistant to change. More importantly schools need leaders they can trust.

2.6.2 Relational Trust

Fullan (2003, p. 12) suggests that the combination of moral purpose and relational trust generates "the wherewithal to go the extra mile thereby making a complex, difficult journey worthwhile and double". Similarly, Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that a context characterised by high relational trust

provides an answer that foments a moral imperative to take on the hard work of reform. The latter, according to Bryk and Schneider (2002) requires leaders to engage with colleagues in planning, implementing and evaluating school improvement initiatives and at times confronting conflict. Furthermore, Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) have suggested that "to build trust, we need environments where people feel free to voice dissent; where people are rewarded for disagreeing; where innovation and failure are built by leaders who display four characteristics. According to Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) the characteristics are as follows:

- The leader has competency. The foundation of leadership is built on the belief that the leader has the capacity to do the job.
- There must be congruity. The leader must be a person of integrity with values to match actions.
- People want a sense that the leader has constancy and is on their side.
- A leader is someone who is caring and trusted, who is genuinely concerned about the lives of the people served.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) have a similar view and assert that an ethos conducive to trust is likely to emerge if principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others. The implication is that principals are expected to actively listen to the concerns of others, avoid arbitrary actions, advance the school's vision and competently manage the day-to-day affairs of the school. The implication is that principals should take the lead and extend themselves by reaching out to others. In addition these authors assert that principals should also be prepared to use coercive power to change a dysfunctional school community around professional norms. However, Martin (in Fullan 2003) is of the view that principals should not resort to 'all-or-nothing' thinking when it comes to leadership and responsibility. As he observes there are two aspects to the responsibility virus namely, over-responsibility and under-responsibility. So according to Martin (in Fullan 2003) principals who work in isolation to solve problems are being over responsible. This over-responsibility he believes and

I concur, breaks down the relational trust and shuts out followers who then abdicate their responsibility subsequently leading to failure. Similarly, Fullan (2003) cautions that it is not only one, but both responsibility aspects which result in ineffective leadership at a time when mobilising people in numbers to work together in addressing complex problems is necessary.

Preedy Bennett and Wise (2012) state that the notion of trust is not new and that educational reform is doomed to fail unless trusting relationships are present amongst all in the school. For these authors trust enables schools to draw on the untapped resources of communities. Hence this idea of trust is strongly an underpinning element of transformational leadership and the new leadership alluded to in the introduction of this chapter.

2.6.3 Collaborative work cultures

Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) claim that leadership preparation should go beyond training principals to implement the new requirements of the hierarchy, to developing rounded and confident leaders who are able to involve all stakeholders for the benefit of the organisation. Fullan (2003) and Bhengu (2005) have similar views and argue that leaders have a special responsibility to establish shared cultures with a supportive base of teachers, parents and community members to mobilize initiative. Hence research findings indicate that principals who reach out to teachers, parents and community only strengthen the ties between local school professionals and the clientele they serve. Bhengu (2005) is also of the view that principals who work to expand the professional capacities of individual teachers, by promoting the formation of coherent, professional, learning communities succeed in building collaborative work cultures.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) in their study of professional learning communities in 16 high schools in California and Michigan, talk about the "pivotal role" of principal leadership in the success or lack thereof of these professional communities in schools. According to these scholars the utter absence of principal leadership is a strong frame for the weak teacher community in some schools. Conversely, strong leadership is central to developing and sustaining these school-wide teacher learning communities

(McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001) in which teachers meet "to plan, learn together and review progress on an ongoing basis" (Fullan, 2001, p. 129). Research shows collaboration is powerful. Also that it can be powerfully bad as well as powerfully good. So, as Fullan (2001, p. 134) says "we cannot assume that autonomy is bad and collaboration is good".

Day, Harris, Hadfield, Toley and Beresford (2000) in their research in 12 schools which were considered improving schools, found that collaborative work cultures flourish in schools where the heads promoted 'democratic principles'; focused on 'professional standards'; were 'outwards looking in', and monitored school performance. This once again shows the link between leadership, professionalism and principalship. In addition there was evidence of leaders working within a clear collegial value framework. Day and his colleagues (2000) also found a strong emphasis upon teamwork and participation in decision-making (though Heads reserved the right to be autocratic).

Similarly, Newmann and his colleagues (King and Newmann, 2000; Newman and Sconzert, 2000) speak of principals building "school capacity" rather than simply focusing only on professional learning communities. According to Newmann and his colleagues (2000) 'school capacity consists of teachers' knowledge skills and dispositions, professional community, program coherence, technical resources and principal leadership. Newmann and his colleagues caution that building school capacity requires not only additional resources but more importantly it requires quality leadership. Leadership which, according to Fullan (2003), is not only confined to principals alone but, also filters through to all levels in the school. This implies that leadership is a team sport and should be practised collectively by the principal, SMT and teachers alike.

So as Elmore (2000, p.15) so aptly puts it, the role of the principal is to "hold the various pieces of the organisation together" so that school capacity can grow. Revamping school principalship is the key to greater performance on a large scale because it is the principal as leader of leaders who is the one person who should guide, cultivate and confront a collaborative culture. Similarly

Hesselbein (2002, p.39) also cautions principals and states that by "not taking charge of their own learning and development they cannot become a pressure point for positive change". Thus the expectations of a principal have greatly increased from being a manager of teachers and learners to becoming a leader of leaders. The literature reviewed shows that the role of the reformed principal has become in many ways a task too big for one person (Grubb and Flessa in Hemmen et al, 2009). All of this seems to call for new, radical forms of school leadership.

2.6.4 Professionalism links with transformational leadership

The main job of the transformational principal is to enhance the skills and knowledge of the people in the organisation, use those skills and knowledge to create a common culture of expectations, hold the organisation together in a productive relationship, and hold individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result (Elmore, 2000). Thus, the top-down model is ineffective and too unprofessional because it inhibits the development of collegiality (Bush, in Coleman, 2003). Stated differently, the author reminds us that authority in collegial structures is based on professional expertise rather than position.

Similarly, Prew (2007) postulates that leaders who distribute leadership across the school's stakeholder group's also foster professional competence amongst teachers. This links with the transformational model which assumes that the principal alone does not provide leadership but that leadership may well be shared, coming from teachers as well as from the principal. In support of this view Barth (1990) argues that leadership can come from principals who empower teachers to become leaders and from teachers who collectively take responsibility for the well being of the school. This collaboration could ensure relationships are professional since these are less structured, good ideas are applauded, and self-esteem is nurtured. This implies that the accumulated leadership experience of all persons in the organisation will no doubt be of immeasurable benefit to the school.

Consequently, this study used transformational leadership as its basic tenet to explore principals' understanding of leadership and professionalism in South African schools. However, Leithwood et al (2004) conclude that transformational leadership can play an important role in school improvement, that such leadership may be widely distributed throughout the school, but that hierarchical and distributed forms of leadership both have important roles to play.

2.7 Conclusion

The literature reviewed reveals a growing body of evidence which shows that in many countries including South Africa the type of leadership and professionalism displayed by school principals is dependent on their understanding of these terms. Also that principals as leaders will have to change the way they lead in order to manage the complexity of 21st century schooling and to ensure that schools become professional places of teaching and learning. The DOE (1996, p. 28) states that "the extent to which schools are able to make the necessary changes largely depends on the nature and quality of their internal management". This implies that principals who develop leadership in others, who enlighten and empower others, who create the context, who motivate and build capacity in others are likely to make change happen. On the contrary leadership remains absent in those schools where principals fail to heed the call.

Literature shows transformation is not easy. It would therefore be naive to ignore the major structural, cultural and micro-political barriers operating in schools that could make transformation difficult to implement. Of critical importance is the fact that transformation is not for the other person to do, but for every principal to take personal responsibility to help create new futures, to take risks, to trust others, to work collaboratively and to make a difference. Transformation must occur first in principals, and then, in organisations.

The following chapter will describe the research process in depth, including the research design and methodology to be followed in this case study research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLGY

The more ways we look at a problem, the more voices we listen to and actually hear, the more eyes beyond our own we use to see with, the greater the depth of understanding – Christopher Hodgkinson (Begley, 1999, p. xiii).

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed literature surrounding the research done on principals' leadership, transformational leadership and professionalism that was used in my research. In this chapter I discuss the methodology used in gathering the relevant data that assisted me in answering the research questions. White (2005, p.80) claims that research methodology includes:

- the participants (population and sample)
- a description of the research design
- measuring instruments (data collection methods)
- data analysis

The first section elaborates the methodology of the study. This section is concerned with the choice of a research-design and the research paradigm and the specific characteristics that such an approach offers to this study. The second section looks at the actual data collection processes. This section discusses the location, sampling and the ethical issues as well as the ways in which I tried to make my research credible, trustworthy, sound and justifiable. Finally, the manner in which data was analysed is explained.

3.2 Research design and methodology

The research design served as the "architectural blueprint" (Bickman et al., 1997, p. 11) of research, as it is the plan of how the researcher systematically collected and analysed the data that was needed to answer the research questions.

3.2.1. A qualitative study

Qualitative is the design chosen for this study. Qualitative research according to Merriam (1998) employs an inductive research strategy, is humanistic, is a craft, usually involves fieldwork and is descriptive. It focuses on process, meaning and understanding of a particular phenomenon. In qualitative research words and

pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what a researcher has gleaned about the phenomenon. To support this view Merriam (1998, p. 8) states that:

> "there are likely to be researcher descriptions of the context, the players involved and the activities of interest.....data in the form of the participants' own words, direct citations from documents and excerpts of videos are likely to be included to support the findings".

3.2.1.1. The appropriateness of using the qualitative approach

According to Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007) qualitative data are collected when depth is required. For example, in this research study I was not concerned with numbers or physical objects, but I was concerned with human behaviour. This interest in human behaviour necessitates the use of a qualitative approach. For Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 124) a qualitative approach involves getting rich descriptions of principals' experiences of leadership and professionalism through "reference to meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities". Since this research study is exploratory the researcher found that the use of a qualitative approach was the most appropriate in generating data of principals' behaviours, feelings and experiences. More importantly, Rule and John (2011, p. 61) argue that it is the criterion of "fit-for-purpose" that guides a researcher in the choice of either a positivistic, quantitative, or qualitative tradition. Fitness for purpose means that the methods of data collection must match up to the kind of data the researcher wants to collect. I believe I worked to achieve this.

3.2.1.2 Strengths of qualitative research

Terre Blanche, Durheim and Painter (in Rule and John, 2011, p. 60) express similar views to Maree (2007, p. 50-51) and state that "a qualitative approach offers the following strengths:

- It involves the collection of rich, descriptive data.
- It is concerned with understanding the participants' behaviour, thoughts, feelings and experiences.

- It aims to understand and make sense of participants' feelings, experiences and social situations as they occur in the real world, and therefore to study them in their natural setting.
- The focus is on studying and interacting with people and phenomena and then describing what is observed".

These strengths therefore signify that qualitative research can be viewed as rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context. In addition, for Maree (2007), the strength of a qualitative approach is its ultimate goal of deepening our understanding of complex phenomena rather than making simplistic predictions or "yielding comparatively superficial information" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 96). Similarly, Mwingi (2000, p. 38) in her study of female school principals' perceptions of leadership states:

> "In the educational field research can no longer afford to be entirely quantitative reducing experiences, meanings and viewpoints to impersonal statistical figures because people are in constant interaction with the world they live in, and from their engagements conceive attitudes and viewpoints, and hold values and beliefs".

Eisner (2000, p. 67) is also complementary of the strengths of qualitative research and says that qualitative researchers pay attention to "the nuanced quality of the particular and not the general". The suggestion made by Eisner (2000) is that by paying attention to particulars qualitative researchers slow down the predisposed human perceptions and invite human exploration.

3.2.1.3 Limitations of qualitative research

Quantitative researchers regard the subjective nature of qualitative inquiry as its major fault. On the contrary, Stake (2005, p. 45) believes "that subjectivity should not be seen as failing needing to be eliminated but that subjectivity is a essential element of understanding". This is so because personal understanding is in any event 'misunderstanding' by the researcher and by the reader. Stake (2005) argues that this misunderstanding will occur because the researcher-interpreter is unaware of his/her own intellectual shortcomings and because of the weaknesses in methods that fail to eliminate misinterpretations. Another limitation of

qualitative research according to (Stake, 2005) is that the ethical risks are substantial. For example the participant's right to privacy is always at risk. Cohen and colleagues (2007) are of the same view and remind the reader that the individual's 'right to privacy' is usually contrasted with the public's' 'right to know'. Lastly, the cost in time and money is extremely high in qualitative research hence my decision to focus on a small-scale study which could be completed in a prescribed time period and which is less labour intensive. In addition the findings of this small-scale study should signal the views of the three principals around leading schools to ensure that these are professional places of teaching and learning. The use of a qualitative-interpretive approach therefore aims to begin with individuals and tries to understand their interpretations of the world around them.

3.2.2 The interpretive paradigm

3.2.2.1 Definition and how it works

Cohen et al (2007) define the interpretive paradigm as one that strives to understand the subjective world of human experience. This implies that human life can only be understood from within. Hence Henning (2004) regards the latter as gaining insider knowledge. This research study was interpretive because it strived to make sense of how principals in their natural settings comprehended and responded to the concepts of leadership and professionalism and how they experienced leading in their schools.

3.2.2.2 The importance of the interpretive paradigm to this study

This study is cast in a qualitative-interpretive frame. Morrison (in Coleman and Briggs, 2003, p.18) believes that the interpretive paradigm is an appropriate approach in educational research as "...all educational research needs to be grounded in people's experience". For interpretive researchers, the core task is to explore the 'meanings' of events and phenomena from the participants' perspectives". Since I was the primary 'instrument' of data collection my goal was to interpret the understanding of the principals in three primary schools around the areas of leadership and professionalism. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) assert that the best way to explore the subjective experiences and thinking of principals is

through an in depth, contextually based interpretive design. The reason for this was because the main interest in the interpretive paradigm is to gain understanding through interpretation.

3.2.2.3 Comparisons between interpretive and normative paradigms

According to Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007) there are two main approaches to the study of behaviour; normative and interpretive. The normative paradigm has two main underpinning ideas; namely "that human behaviour is essentially rule governed, and secondly, that it should be investigated by methods of natural science" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 21). The interpretive paradigm, in contrast, is characterised by a concern for the individual. Cohen et al (2007) argue that the normative positivist approach encounters many difficulties in a school:

> "Where positivism is less successful, however, is in its application to the study of human behaviour where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world. This point is nowhere more apparent than in the contexts of the school where the problems of teaching, learning and human interactions present the positivistic researcher with a mammoth challenge" (p. 11).

Hence, an anti-positivist approach is preferred to the positivist approach. Cohen et al (2003) refers to the anti- positivist approach as constructionist-interpretive. This is so because in the interpretive paradigm the researcher is involved in intensive reading and interpretation of text. The latter is paramount in order to understand the viewpoints of those being researched and to construct a new understanding and meaning of those viewpoints. In addition, Cohen and his colleagues (2007, p.19) argue that anti-positivists believe that "an individual's behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference, hence understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside". Therefore, in this research study, the in-depth interviews between the researcher and the principals' on experiences of leadership and professionalism allowed for interaction and understanding of their views, beliefs, feelings and opinions. For Cohen and his colleagues (2007) the main aim of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of

human experience. The implication is that to retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated, efforts have to be made to get inside the person and to understand him/her from within.

3.2.3 The Case Study method

3.2.3.1 Defining Case Studies

Merriam (2001) defined the case study as an intense description and analysis of a bounded system used to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. For example this study was a bounded system of three principals' of three primary schools in the Pietermaritzburg region. The information gleaned from these principals allowed readers to understand the principals' views more clearly than merely presenting readers with abstract theories or principles which were not easily understood. According to Cohen et al (2007, p. 254), "case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' of participants lived experiences". This means that this study involved looking at the phenomena of leadership and professionalism in their real life context by employing in-depth interviews and reflective journal writing to obtain rich data. 'Thick description' is described as a "commitment to catch the diversity, variability, creativity, individuality, uniqueness and spontaneity of social interactions" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 169). The latter assists the researcher because the data speaks for itself rather than being largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher. This, Cohen and his colleagues (2007, p. 254) says, can be likened to "a television documentary" in which the viewer rather than the producer interprets, judges and evaluates the documentary. Gaining the principals' descriptions was a crucial part of the study and the researcher therefore worked to achieve this as it is the thick description that bridges the gap between theory and practice (Merriam, 2001).

3.2.3.2 The appropriateness of the Case Study approach

Separating the phenomenon under study from the context of a specific school was not ideal, hence the choice of qualitative case studies in the interpretive paradigm. The case studies set out to describe, interpret and explain the manner in which

participants made sense of situations and the way meanings were reflected in their actions (Cohen et al, 2007). Also the researcher chose to do a case study research because she regarded research that analyses personal, individual experiences in the field of education as a vital way of learning about experiences of principals in the field.

3.2.3.3 Strengths of Case Studies

The case study research was chosen because it has the following strengths:

Firstly, according to Babbie & Mouton (2006, p. 81) the defining feature of case studies is the emphasis on the individual. This feature allowed the researcher to examine a phenomenon in a great deal of depth rather than looking at several units superficially. Rule and John (2011, p. 7) support this view and state that a case study design, unlike a survey, is intensive as "it focuses on the complex relations within the case and the wider context around the case as it affects the case". In addition the intensity of the case study would allow the researcher to reach conclusions by examining only one small sample whilst a survey would require gathering data from a large sample.

Secondly, Rule & John (2011, p. 8) write "the singularity of focus of the case study makes it more manageable than a large scale survey study especially in research situations facing constraints of time and resources". Thus this singularity helped me as a novice researcher to identify key sources of information to complete the research in a set timeframe.

Thirdly, Cohen, Mannion & Morrison (2007) suggest the insights of a case study are that it provides a wealth of descriptive material, is generally easily understood and that it presents research in an easily accessible form. The researcher concurs with Cohen and his colleagues' view because the data were gathered systematically and rigorously through in-depth interviews, reflective journals and field notes. In addition the language and presentation of case studies were accessible to many audiences as less specialised interpretation was necessary and as such it could easily be put to use.

Fourthly, case studies are noted for flexibility (Rule & John, 2011, p. 7). In this research study several methods were used, both for data collection and for data analysis.

Lastly, Maree (2007) argues that the case study design allows for original ideas to surface from vigilant and detailed observations.

3.2.3.4 Limitations of the Case Study approach

Even though case studies are descriptive in nature and provide rich information, they do have limitations. According to Cohen et al (2007, p. 256), case studies are not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective. The researcher concurs with this view because as the primary instrument of data collection, I was solely responsible for selecting the area of study and selecting materials to present in the final report. Hence, there is always the danger of distortion. Thus critics of case study methodology argue that case studies are prone to observer bias (Cohen et al, 2007). However, I engaged in techniques such as triangulation, respondent validation and reflexivity to minimise my own personal bias.

Another criticism of case study methodology was the fact that generalisation is not always possible from case studies (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2002) "except where other readers or researchers see their application" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 256). The lack of generalisability should on the contrary be seen as positive rather than a limitation because it was not the purpose of this case study research to generalise. Rather, the researcher supports the view of (Rule and John, 2011) that it is the uniqueness and rigour of case studies that makes the findings of qualitative studies dependable.

This study was particular to the specific context of the principals in three Pietermaritzburg primary schools. Data was collected using mainly in-depth interviews. Reflective journals were used to supplement data collected from the interviews, so as to get more in-depth information.

3.2.4 Research Instruments

3.2.4.1 Definition of Interviews

Interviews involve the collection of data from structured conversations between the researcher and the participants. According to Tuckman (1978) the purpose of an interview is to find out what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).The purpose of interviewing, then, was to allow me to see things from the other person's perspective (Patton in Merriam, 2001). So, if well designed and well conducted, interviews can provide in-depth information which reflects what people believe and do, and I believe I worked to achieve that.

3.2.4.2 Why interviews

In this research study the face-to-face interviews on principals' life experiences served as the most important aspect of data collection. This study used in-depth-interviewing which was characterised by open-ended questions (see Appendix 4). Studying principals' experiences through these interviews gave useful insight into the principals' own choices that informed their core practices, beliefs, understandings and their approaches to leadership and professionalism. Patton (in Merriam 2001) highlights that it is important to listen to the voices of participants which can convey tone and feeling in the way they speak Since the researcher was not able to observe the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of principals that occurred at some previous point in time, it was assumed that for the researcher to fully understand the experiences of the principals' role, "personal testimony" (Nelson, 1992, p. 168) was needed. The interviews allowed the researcher to enter into the participant's perspective. Hence this key characteristic was the reason why the study used interviewing as a primary research tool for obtaining data.

3.2.4.3 Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

The interactive nature of interviews was an advantage because the researcher was present with the participants, and so could clarify questions, use follow-up questions, prompts and probes to find out more information when the respondent

had not really given sufficient detail (Webber and Byrd 2010). Asking for clarification increased the chance of obtaining valid information from the participants (Cohen and Manion, 1997). On the contrary, questionnaires did not offer this flexibility and would not have allowed the researcher to collect such detailed and descriptive data during the tape recorded interview, hence my decision for choosing in-depth interviews.

In addition conducting in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to observe and record the expressive and emotive nonverbal responses of the participants. So, seeing principals' reactions influenced the researcher to probe further. Maree (2007) argues that in-depth interviews enable the researcher to gain interviewees co-operation by establishing a relationship with them, which therefore facilitates the production of high response rates. Since the researcher had a close relationship with the participants it enabled the researcher to gain more information and generate more data (Rule & John, 2011, p. 64).

Another advantage of the interview was that it allowed the respondents to express their opinions and ideas in their own words (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). In this way the interviews enabled the respondents to shape the content of the interview, because the participants told their stories in their own words. Since this is a good feature of qualitative research the interviews also helped the participants to raise and reveal issues that the researcher had not previously thought of when planning the study. Unlike questionnaires which are often shallow and fail to dig deeper for more information the interviews on the other hand allowed for greater depth and yielded more complete data. In this study the researcher required personal data in order to understand how principals could lead schools better to ensure they are professional places of teaching and learning. Consequently, in terms of the latter the interviews were advantageous because they enabled principals' to talk freely about themselves.

However, interviews do have some potential disadvantages. The interview's adaptability gained through the interaction between the interviewer and the participant may have led to subjectivity and possible bias. This bias may have resulted from aspects such as the eagerness of the participant to please the interviewer, or the tendency to seek out answers that supported certain

preconceived notions. As a result, validity of answers from interviews relied on the skills of the interviewer.

Another disadvantage of the interview is that it is time-consuming. Interviews generated large amounts of textual data when transcribed. This required the researcher to have a very clear idea of how she was going to analyse the data. Therefore the number of participants from whom data could be obtained was limited. This was overcome by having a limited sample in this case study research. My view is that despite all these limitations, interviews, if well done, provide detailed, in-depth information which cannot be obtained using other instruments like questionnaires.

3.2.4.4 Other research instruments

In order for the research to take place I used several instruments to collect data. These varied from an interview schedule, voice recorder, audio tapes, field notes and reflective journal entries. This section gives the reader a detailed description of the instruments themselves, how they were utilised, and appropriateness or not to the study.

3.2.4.4.1 Interview Schedule

An interview schedule is a well structured list of questions that were asked during the interview, to ensure the interview ran smoothly (Opie, 2004). The interview schedule was designed and constructed using the guidelines from the literature on how to design and conduct effective interviews and what steps should be taken to improve on the rigour of the research.

Designing the interview schedule was followed by face validation by another principal. The purpose of the face validation was to check whether the instruments were likely to get the data they were intended to get, as advised by (Gall et al., 1996). Face validation was also used to see if questions were worded clearly using language respondents would understand, and to check that questions were sequenced in a logical way. By checking on the validity and reliability of the

instruments I was able to ensure rigour in the research that would assist in providing trustworthy results.

The interview schedule (Appendix 4) was used for all interviews which comprised the major data collection method. The questions in the interview schedule explored the principals' understanding of leadership, their experiences of leading and the contexts that support or inhibit the take up of leadership in their schools. Also included were questions on their understanding of professionalism as well as their experiences.

3.2.4.4.2 Tape recorder and Audio Tapes

A tape-recorder and four audio tapes were used to record the interviews which were later transcribed for analysis. The interviews were recorded, with the permission of the participants, to make sure that all the information was accurately captured. Tape recordings were also done so that the flow of the interview was not interrupted by the researcher taking notes, a problem which Fraenkel and Wallen (1990) remind us of.

According to the literature, tape-recordings have an advantage over note taking. In this study tape-recordings reduced the interviewers' bias or tendency to make an unconscious selection of data that she favoured (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990). In addition transcribing the recordings and returning these to respondents for verification allowed a second person to check the accuracy of the transcription, thus increasing validity (Gall et al., 1996).

As indicated earlier in cases of non-verbal data that were not captured by the tape recorder, field notes were used.

3.2.4.4.3 Field Notes

The study also made use of some short field notes which described the setting and the respondents where necessary. Field notes were also used in cases of data that could not be captured by the tape recorder, such as body language.

3.2.4.4.4 Reflective Journals

(a) Participants' Self-Reflective Journals

In order to substantiate the in-depth interviews the respondents were requested to participate in reflective journaling. The content focus of these journals was to engage with experiences and reflections around leadership and professionalism in the South African context in general as well as transformational leadership which includes distributed leadership and teacher leadership.

The three respondents were asked to make four structured journal entries to record their personal views on certain issues (Appendix 5). They were provided with a guide for the journal entries. The respondents were told to focus on the quality rather than quantity of answers. Through these journals the researcher gleaned more in-depth information. For example information that was of such a nature that the respondent did not freely offer it during the interview (Rule & John, 2011). The researcher therefore used the reflective journal entries to cross-check information in the interview transcripts. The respondents were required to make entries from April 2012 to June 2012. Simple questions were posed on various issues for participants to reflect on. The participants were given the opportunity to describe, interpret and express their understandings freely as their anonymity was protected (Cohen et al., 2007). These journals also offered an opportunity for the participants who did not find it easy to respond orally to reflect on their experiences as the journals centred on the same themes as those of the interviews.

(b) Researcher's Reflective Journal

This research study was primarily interview-based and the researcher was the main instrument of data collection. I kept a reflective journal in order to eliminate the problem of bias and to make the process of data analysis as visible and transparent as possible (MacNaughton in Ortlipp, 2008). Secondly, Ortlipp (2008) claims that by keeping journal the researcher "makes his or her experiences,

thoughts, opinions, and feelings visible and an acknowledged part of the research process" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695).

Listening to and studying principals' stories in this particular research was not only beneficial to the researcher, but also to the principals' themselves since they were able to reflect on their own practices.

3.3 Data collection procedures

This section outlines the procedures that were followed to enhance the process of data collection.

3.3.1 Location of the study

The study was located in the Midlands Circuit of the Pietermaritzburg Region.

3.3.2 Sampling

3.3.2.1 What is sampling

Sampling involves making choices about which people, settings, events or behaviours to observe. White (2005) describes a sample as a portion of the elements in a population. A sample involves the selection of a small group of people from the larger population to be studied. The logic behind this is that information collected from the smaller group of people possessing the information the researcher wants will be representative of the larger population from which they were drawn (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

3.3.2.2 Purposive (non-probability) Sampling

Purposive sampling was used because the researcher made specific choices about the three principals that she needed to include in her research. Purposive sampling was chosen because the researcher wanted to access "knowledgeable people" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 114) or people who had in-depth knowledge about

leadership and professionalism in primary schools. Similarly, Cresswell (in Maree, 2007) argues that in qualitative data collection, purposive sampling is preferred over random sampling. Thus in this small-scale research study the researcher was not interested in representativeness of the sample which allows researchers to make generalisable claims (Rule & Vaughn, 2011, p. 64). On the contrary the researcher was interested in the sample's ability to generate data which allowed for a full, in-depth and trustworthy account.

Purposive sampling is also referred to as convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is often used in educational research because of its practical benefits, as it is seldom feasible to get access to the theoretically ideal sample, so researchers "often need to select a convenience sample or face the possibility that they will be unable to do the study" (Gall et al., 1996, p. 228). A convenience sample according to Cohen et al. (2007) is also the sampling strategy selected for case studies. This sample was therefore appropriate, as this small scale qualitative study opted to use the case study approach to collect data from three primary school principals in the Midlands Circuit of the Pietermaritzburg Region. There were consistent claims from numerous stakeholders that principals in this circuit were highly effective, transformative and successful change agents. Principals frequently appeared in the local media celebrating the work and achievements of their staff, children and the parent community. Consequently this purposive sample was attuned to the view of Stake (2005) namely, that researchers should choose case studies from which they are able to learn the most. The researcher could not therefore use random sampling as randomisation would not guarantee the desired respondents for this particular study. In addition, convenience sampling makes no claim that the sample is representative of the population, and therefore has limitations in terms of generalisation of the results from the sample to the population it represents (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

3.3.2.3 The sample size

There is no clear-cut answer to the question of sample size, since it depends on the purpose of the study. The size of the sample is also determined by the data collection method and style of the research.

Subsequently, in selecting participants the researcher selected three primary school principals who had completed the ACE-SL programme. They were the people who should have the relevant training, knowledge, and experience in relation to leadership and professionalism.

The sample of this study included:

- Three principals' from schools in previously disadvantaged areas
- One principal from a very poorly resourced rural school and two from better resourced urban schools
- Two female and a male principal of primary public schools in the Midlands Circuit of the Pietermaritzburg Region.

3.3.3 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

In research access to the participants has to be negotiated and formally communicated as it exemplifies good ethical practice. Thus Cohen et al. (2007, p. 55) claim that "investigators cannot expect access to a...school...as a right....rather they have to demonstrate that as researchers they are worthy of being accorded the facilities needed to carry out their investigations". In addition achieving goodwill and cooperation were especially crucial in my access as this research was conducted over a six month period.

Formal permission was first sought from the Department of Education to conduct research with the principals of primary schools under its jurisdiction (Appendix 1). Access was formally communicated with the three principals for their informed consent (Appendix 2). Liaising with the principals was not difficult as they were well known to the researcher. The first session to discuss the purpose and aim of the study was arranged telephonically. During this twenty minute session, outside teaching hours, I presented my research plan and explained that participants would be invited to in-depth interviews (Appendix 4) and be expected to complete reflective journals (Appendix 5). As most research entails some risks the researcher proffered participants conditions and guarantees around

confidentiality, beneficence and withdrawal from the research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The research itself did not have anything to do with either the school itself or the teachers, nonetheless I sought the consent of the School Governing Body (Appendix 3) because I believed that the information gleaned through this study related to school matters. The participants further explained to the SGB that the interest was not on the school as such, but on the principal who happened to be an ex-student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In general, School Governing Bodies' (SGB) were found to be cooperative and all interviews were held on school premises.

3.3.4 CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

I conducted in-depth interviews with each of the three principals focussing on the topic of leadership and professionalism. The interviews provided the principals with an opportunity to express themselves and to have their views listened to.

The three respondents were provided with the interview schedule in advance. The reason for this was twofold. Firstly, it was to give the respondents an opportunity to think about their responses beforehand. According to Opie (2004) this can be a bias since studied responses may lead to lack of validity, but he warns that care should be taken in the asking of questions to ensure that respondents do not give what they believe the researcher wants to hear. However, where it was felt that such responses were given, I probed to seek more valid responses. Secondly, providing the respondents with the interview schedule beforehand was intended to help the researcher get well thought out, genuine responses that were not prompted by the pressure of the interview or by the idea that specific responses were desired (Opie, 2004).

The interviews were conducted at the respondents school's during the holidays which gave us more time, and at other times at times when convenient for the principal. The purpose of the interview was explained to the respondents. The interview schedule (Appendix 4) comprised simple, open-ended probing questions

which allowed respondents an opportunity to relate their experiences clearly. The interview schedule served as a guide. As the interviews progressed I listened to how and what respondents were saying. The questions therefore changed as the researcher probed to get rich, thick data and to understand principals' experiences, behaviours and perceptions of leadership and professionalism. During the interviews I listened attentively and reflected on responses and clarified issues by rephrasing questions. This served not only to enhance content and construct validity but also to ensure that my core research question was answered.

The interview sessions were all allocated ninety minutes each, none of them took the exact allocated time because the questions were open-ended. This did not however, have a negative effect on the quality of the data collected because the researcher was in control of the interview, and she used probing questions in order to clarify and verify uncertainties.

All the interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the respondents and there were four audio tapes in all. The interviews were later transcribed and then printed out in order to enhance data analysis.

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic process of making sense of the collected data (Merriam, 1998) so that what is learned can be communicated to others (Hatch, 2002).This process took place as soon as the research commenced but was ongoing. This implies that the researcher analysed data as it was collected to allow questions to be refined and new avenues of inquiry to develop. Ongoing analysis also helped in narrowing the scope of data collected.

The tape recorded data were transcribed in preparation for the analysis process. The transcripts were checked by the respondents and cleaned. The reflective journals were also transcribed. Through this I tried to improve the credibility of the research. Once this was done the transcripts were then ready for the coding process.

The data were analysed inductively because it was qualitative and descriptive hence the aim was not to test existing theory but to generate theory from the case (Rule and John, 2011). Reading the transcripts was a labour intensive task that had to be done in order to make sense of the data collected. Knowing the data well also enhanced the quality of the research (Rule and John, 2011). The thorough reading of the transcripts helped in eliciting codes, patterns and emerging themes around which to categorise data into meaningful categories of information.

An open coding system of data analysis was developed in order to organise the data. Cohen and Manion (1997) define open coding as a complex process by which the researcher labels units of meaning or categories according to a system of codes. This process required a close and thorough reading of the data as indicated above. Topics covered by the data were searched for. Open-coding also involved asking questions about the data (eg. what is the main idea in this paragraph?), and then developing a category that captured that. This also demanded that the research made comparisons with other parts of the data to see if the category fitted elsewhere. These coding categories were therefore used as a means of sorting the descriptive data that had been collected into separate but related topics.

Codes such as "Understandings of leadership" were covered and under this topic there were categories which covered all the relevant information. These categories included leadership as a participatory activity, leadership as linked to values, leadership and communication, and leadership as influence not power or authority. Categories were further developed from these and tally marks were used in order to find the prevailing categories of the principals' understanding of leadership. Other codes under which the data were classified included "Principals Understanding of Professionalism", which covered categories such as professionalism as an exhibition of personal and professional standards; professionalism is upholding professional relationships; and professionalism a way of improving professional knowledge. The same procedure of tally marks was followed for all the themes in order to determine the frequency distributions of categories, which enabled the researcher to draw conclusions on how principals can lead schools better to ensure they are professional places of teaching and learning. Other categories that emerged included "Leadership through Teams";

"Contexts Supporting the Principals' take-up of Leadership" and "Contexts Inhibiting the Principals take-up of Leadership". The same procedure of analysis was followed as before.

Categorising and coding helped in extracting information relevant to the study, and for creating themes, with the purpose of answering the research questions. The codes were only used during analysis and not for reporting data. The results of this analysis are presented in the next chapter.

3.4.1 Trustworthiness

As mentioned earlier the purpose of case study research is the generation of in-depth, holistic and situated understandings of the phenomenon, consequently a case study is not fit for the purpose of statistical generalisation (Rule & John, 2011, p. 105). Triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods to collect data and confirm findings, was used to increase the trustworthiness of the data. In addition, Cohen et al (2007) suggest that triangulation can also incorporate the use of multiple informants as in this study. Triangulation reduced the chance of researcher bias and increased the trustworthiness.

3.4.2 Ethical considerations

My responsibility as a researcher was to endeavour to adhere to ethical principles and standards guiding research because conducting research in an ethically sound manner enhances the quality of research and contributes to its trustworthiness. In addition I was open to, and able to care for and care about the participants. I was honest with, the principals and disclosed fully the purpose of my research. As a novice researcher I avoided doing harm to individuals involved in this study, as well as avoiding harming the educational system. Anonymity of participants and their context were guaranteed by using pseudonyms. In addition, I used randomised responses as suggested by Mouton (2001) to assure participants of my respect for their confidentiality.

3.4.3 Limitations and Challenges

Firstly, the issue of power could have been at play between the researcher and the researched. To counteract this, I explained to the principals that I chose them for their expertise in leadership and professionalism. Secondly, as mentioned earlier the deliberate choice of a small sample was a trade off to save cost and time. This was so because in-depth interviews yielded rich data leaving the researcher with multiple pages of interview text to analyse. Thirdly, being a principal, I was aware of my own preconceived assumptions concerning leadership and professionalism. However during data collection and analysis I tried to look at the information through unbiased lenses, letting the phenomena take their own shape and speak for themselves. Fourthly, since I was the primary instrument of data collection and my goal was to interpret the understandings of others I was aware that in this situation authenticity can be skewed. To overcome this I had to have follow-up interviews as these allowed for further discussion with participants. In addition they ensured that the meanings gained were those intended and also provided me with an opportunity to gain deeper insights into the information.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology adopted for this research study. It has provided an in-depth discussion of the research design, research paradigm, methodology employed, the instruments used to gather data, and the selection of principals. In addition, a thorough description of the ethical issues and challenges that accompanied my research study was provided.

In the next chapter I present the findings of this research study to the reader.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings and try to make meaning from the data. In the preceding chapter, I indicated that the data collected were qualitative in nature and consisted of three interview transcripts, three reflective journals and the researcher's field notes. I present the data in the form of descriptions. Quotations from the raw data are also used to illustrate and substantiate the assertions made. The aim of the chapter is to present the data to the reader as convincingly as possible from a qualitative perspective hence the use of quotations from the transcripts. The quotations serve to bring the reader close to the respondents and reflect not only on what was said but also how it was said.

Biographical profiles of each principal will be provided to help contextualise each case. This will then be followed by a description and presentation of the findings under the headings:

- Principals' understandings of leadership.
- Principals' understandings of professionalism.
- Principals' experiences of leadership.
- Contexts supporting the take-up of leadership.
- Contexts inhibiting the take-up of leadership.

It is hoped that the above categories would directly address the research questions and provide the essential contexts of understanding how principals could lead schools better to ensure that they are professional places of teaching and learning

4.2 Profiles of the three principals

A brief biographical overview is given to describe the context.

4.2.1 A biographical sketch of Mrs. A

Mrs. A is the principal of a primary school ranging from Grade R to Grade seven. She has 26 years teaching experience and this in only two schools. She has served as Head of Department (HOD) in school A for ten years, acting principal for one year and has been a principal for two years.

She is in her forties, married and the mother of two children. Mrs. A has a Teaching Diploma, a Higher Education Diploma, an Advanced Certificate in Education for School Leadership and Management, and a Bachelor of Education Honours. She is currently completing the Principals Management Development Programme (PMDP). Besides being the principal of the school, she was also the site-steward for the Teacher Union for the past six years.

The school has less than 400 learners and a staff of 17 teachers, one secretary, 3 general assistants and a cook for the school's nutrition programme. There were sufficient classrooms, a library with lots of books, furniture, and a well equipped kitchen for the nutrition programme. Some classrooms were not utilised thereby indicating that the school could accommodate more learners. Over the years the school has established a good reputation in the academic, artistic, environmental and sporting fields. Numerous trophies and certificates reflect this and adorn the principal's office.

Although, classified as quintile 5 with section 21 status, the school served a learner population who came from a wide range of backgrounds. The majority came from poor socio-economic homes. The financial assistance received from the Department of Education was insufficient to meet the needs of running a school aimed at providing good public education. Between 35 and 40% of the parents paid school fees yearly. The huge challenge of raising funds was therefore left to the staff and the School Governing Body (SGB).Community involvement was visible in the improvements around the school such as the play area for Grade

R which the principal says was due to the efforts of the staff, school community and private enterprises.

4.2.2 A biographical sketch of Mr. B

At the time of the study, Mr. B was in his 50's, married and a father of two. Teaching became his career because prospective teachers were offered a bursary and his family would not have been able to put him through university. This 'Hobson's choice' worked out well for him because he really enjoys teaching and strongly believes that the rewards outweigh the challenges. He believes that he still has so much to give children and adults alike.

Mr. B's Professional qualifications include a Post Graduate Diploma in Education, ACE-SL, B. Ed and M.Ed. He is currently completing the PMDP. In his 36 year teaching career, he moved through the ranks from a level one educator to a principal and this across 3 schools. He served as a deputy for more than 12 years before being appointed as principal in school B two years ago. He serves on the executive of the Pietermaritzburg Branch of the Teacher Union. Mr. B also holds a position of leadership in the local Community Police Forum.

School B was located approximately 5 kilometres from the city centre. It had more than 1000 learners and a staff of 35 teachers, a secretary, 3 general assistants and a cook for the school's nutrition programme. The prefabricated school building was run-down.

The school had access to hockey, soccer, rugby and cricket fields as well as the local swimming pool. It had recently returned to active participation in athletics and the learners had already made their presence felt. Several certificates and trophies reflecting the schools achievements were visible in the foyer.

Like school A, it was classified as quintile 5 and therefore received minimal funding from the DOE. There was also a poor culture of school fee payment from a sector of parents who lived in close proximity to the school. Private enterprise involvement was evident in improvements around the school for example the new shelter which the principal claims was donated to the school by a local company.

The principal also indicated that an ex-pupil had initiated a project to rebuild the school and a trust fund had already been established to administer funding.

4.2.3 A biographical sketch of Mrs. C

Mrs. C is in her early forties, married and the mother of two children. Mrs. C grew up with the church as her father was a religious minister. Being socially responsible, and taking action to create a better schooling environment for her learners, is attributed largely to her upbringing.

Mrs. C is a professionally qualified teacher. In addition to her teaching diploma, she has a Diploma in Educational Guidance, a Certificate in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) School Leadership and Management.

Principal C started her teaching career at her former school where she was a level one educator for 16 years. She has served as principal of her current school for more than 3 years. She heads a very small multi-grade rural school on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. It is a public school on private land. The school has less than 40 learners from Grades R to Grade 6. There are 3 teachers as well as a cook for the nutrition programme. The school lacks basic facilities, such as electricity and running water.

The learners were mainly from poor families and this was reflected in the way some learners were dressed. According to the principal the school was surrounded by an uneducated community which did not see the benefit of this being the only school in the area hence they did not see the importance of sending children to school daily. Unlike Schools A and B this school was a quintile 2 school with section 20 status which meant it was a no-fee paying school. All the learners were part of the nutrition programme. The involvement of private enterprise was evident from the new kitchen that was built.

The area had some busses running for public transport which was also used by teachers who lived away from the school. The principal lived in Pietermaritzburg and had to travel to the school daily by private transport. The dirt road to the

school, which was impassable during rainy weather, was approximately 3km from the tarred road.

The sample of schools contained in the study was of functional schools. Despite the deprivation, particularly at school C, the schools were fully operational. Even though the schools themselves were not under study, this picture of the schools was important to the study. This picture reflects the context under which principals exercised their leadership.

4.2.4 Summary of profiles of principals

The biographical data shows that two of the three respondents were female. Their ages ranged between 45 and 59 years. All the respondents met the requirements of having the minimum qualifications to be appointed as a principal. Their teaching experience ranged from 19 years to 37 years. Their experience of principalship at their schools was less than four years. Based on their experience and the contexts within which they functioned one can infer that they were in a good position to provide data that could assist in answering the research questions.

What follows is a description of the principals' response to the first question put to them. In this question I was interested in knowing their understanding of the concept of leadership.

4.3 The principals' understanding of leadership

4.3.1 Leadership as understood by Mrs A

Mrs. A highlighted the importance of understanding leadership within the broader context of educational change. For her, leadership should always be understood against the backdrop of democracy emerging from our country's apartheid history. According to her, she underwent schooling during the apartheid era. She subsequently grew up with the idea ingrained in her that leadership is a top-down approach. This she says is power controlled and exercised from the top trickling down to lower levels and then to the bottom. For her communication was seen as being only a one way process and instructions were given and had to be followed with no questions asked. She notes:

> *I viewed leadership as that, but that concept actually changed. As the paradigm shift started to take place, I started to see leadership as much more. The paradigm shift that saw leadership as being transformational and democratic took some getting used to. Today, my understanding of the term leadership has broadened* (Interview, p. 2).

Mrs. A now understands leadership to be 'an art that relies on intuition and personal judgement that is flexible, rather than following established procedures' (Interview, p.2). She elaborates on her new understanding by saying:

> *if you look in the school …. I will give you an example from the education scenario. Leadership is not just about one person, it is a team. To let a school move forward, I cannot just sit in this chair and say I, I, I or my. That is not leadership* (Interview, p. 2).

Mrs. A is strong in her belief that leadership is a participatory activity and not an autocratic approach. She clarifies this by saying:

> *You have an SMT (Senior Management Team), all your staff members, and all their input is really very, very important. Yes, I look at leadership as a participating activity* (Interview, p. 2).

In her view, leadership as a participatory activity, is more progressive and involves setting goals, hence she says "*goals are a team effort for the organisation*" (Interview, p. 2). Mrs. A believes that leaders should be visionaries thus she says "*you need to see and plan you can't just be stuck in a rut*" (Interview, p. 3). For her, leadership is about having a vision and enacting that vision. When asked to explain the latter she said:

> *Leadership is about having a plan, knowing the plan, seeing it, knowing what to do, informing others of the plan and leading them to get things done* (Interview, p. 2).

Mrs. A also understands leadership as a way of communicating which also requires listening to other people. She defines leadership as the ability to listen accurately to others. She clarifies this by saying "*don't only listen to your voice the voices and views of others are very, very important in making an important judgement*" (Interview, p. 2). Mrs. A also saw a link between listening and being perceptive. She is of the opinion that leadership is about being perceptive which according to her would involve knowing when to push and when to hold back.

Another way in which leadership is understood by Mrs. A is by seeing it in terms of values. These values, she says, are directed towards achieving goals. She therefore notes that leadership is also about authenticity and says, *"...you need to relate to people, people need to trust you, to know that what you say is what you mean and that what you do is what you truly believe in*" (Interview, p. 4). For her, leadership is values driven and should have a clear moral purpose that earns trust. She highlights other values, besides trust, that leaders should possess. She highlights this in her own words and said:

> *When you're a leader, you should have the values of compassion, humanity, open-mindedness, and a positive outlook. Leadership is drawing positive strength from what is coming from people around you* (Interview, p. 4).

Lastly, leadership is defined by Mrs. A as the ability to influence, inspire and sometimes to persuade others to implement plans despite the difficulties, discouragements and setbacks. She strongly believes that leadership is about knowing what to do and influencing other to get it done. She elaborates this point by stating that "*it does not matter who the person is that is influencing others. What is important is that the influence exercised is of a positive nature"* (Interview p. 2). She implied that leadership can be exercised by anyone and not only by the principal.

For Mrs. A, leadership is defined and understood in many ways. She claims that her understanding of leadership has influenced the way in which she leads.

4.3.2 Leadership as understood by Mr B

Mr B understood leadership as being a discipline that goes beyond management. He remarked, "*It is one word but it encompasses very much*" (Interview, p. 1). He understands management as being concerned with the day to day things that have to happen. On the contrary he believes leadership comes into play when decisions have to be made. For him leadership leads to movement and growth in an organisation whereas management creates stability.

Mr B also understood leadership as being a visionary, thus he believes principals as leaders have to foresee possibilities and look ahead. He says principals have to determine possible outcomes and plan the direction to achieving the said outcome. He elaborates further by saying:

> *You've got the good and you have to sell the ideas, you've to got to take ideas from people … good ideas that you may not have thought of and mould them to this vision for the school. You've got to ask, what do you want for the school?* (Interview, p. 2)

This quotation illustrates that principals' as leaders are not only visionaries but they should communicate the vision to others so that all can own it.

Leadership is also seen by Mr. B as an activity that involves others and is not only the domain of the principal alone. Mr B substantiates his view when he claims that stakeholders in a school have the same ideals but that they have different ways of achieving their outcomes. He says "*leadership is a team effort, my job is just to guide the process*" (Interview, p. 3). For Mr B collective decision making is a simplistic approach that is more beneficial than decisions taken by him alone or by him and the deputy alone.

Leadership was also understood as an action that was linked to values that are directed at achieving goals. He says:

> *For me leadership has to do with total commitment. You have to be there for the school. I think the school, eat the school, drink the school, and sleep the school … it seems like it's been said before*

> *(smiling) but I now experience what it's all about (laughs)* (Interview, p. 2).

Mr B adds to his understanding of leadership by seeing it as being an enactment of values. He believes that leadership is about celebrating people's success and acknowledging them. He says, "*but... to acknowledge them, the staff are 100% with you. And to me that is leadership*" (Interview, p. 2). Similarly, he feels that principals as leaders should also acknowledge their failures.

The respondent claims that principals use most of their time speaking and listening to people. He therefore understands leadership as the ability to listen accurately. He supports his view by saying:

> *As a leader I have to listen accurately to people. Listening is hard work. I cannot only listen with my ears. After listening I have to counsel, chastise or agree with people. Yes, for me leadership is about listening* (Interview, p. 3).

Lastly, but not least, Mr B's understanding of leadership is that of influence and not authority or formal power. He claims that the influence extended to him by his previous principal is standing him in good stead as a new principal. Leadership, according to him has to do with influencing others to use their expertise for bringing about change or growth in an organisation. In addition he believes that principals wield enormous power and it is therefore unprofessional to use this power to stunt educational growth in organisations or schools just to get even with people.

4.3.3 Leadership as understood by Mrs C

Mrs C, like Mrs A, highlights the importance of understanding leadership in the context of educational change. She notes that leadership should be understood as a process of change. For her, leadership is understood as how you lead your

people. She remarked "*when you are an agent of change you have to change things. I have changed so many things at school C. I call myself … I am a leader*" (Interview, p. 3).Her courage and awareness to transform her school into a better place of teaching and learning is further echoed by Mrs C when she says:

> *I came to school C and there was no kitchen. They used to cook in the classroom which of course was very dangerous for the children. I used my contacts from my previous school and they came to see what they can do for us at school C. They roofed an existing structure, put in doors, windows, a sink and a table for us. I am a leader in that way* (Interview, p. 3).

From the above it is clear that Mrs C regards a leader as a person who uses his/her initiative and is courageous enough to make and see change happen.

The respondent also understood leadership as being a discipline that goes beyond management. For her, leadership leads to movement and growth whilst management creates stability. This differentiation was clearly stated as follows:

> *For me, as a manager, the principal makes sure that things are being done everyday … like the food is cooked for the nutrition programme, that lessons are being done, that the forms are being filled in for the Department of Education (DOE), late comers are checked on, that kind of thing. The leader is the one that is going to go a step further … go the extra mile that is going to bring about the change, like with the kitchen, the toilets and the uniforms. But, the manager makes sure there is stability and structure and that the day to day things are done* (Interview, p. 5).

This clear understanding of leadership and management could probably be ascribed to her being an academic.

Leadership was also understood in the context of being a shared experience. She claims that leaders should lead by example. According to Mrs C, she is the first one at school every day and the last one to leave every afternoon. Since she also

teaches, her work is also subjected to monitoring, evaluation, and assessment by one of the team. She claims that by doing this she leads by example, and implies that this is what is expected of leaders.

Mrs C's response to her understanding of leadership shows that she views leadership as an activity that is practised by more than one person. She remarked:

> *I am not the only one who knows things. I don't know everything (stated slowly and clearly). There are things that the staff, do know more, of than me. I allow them to give their own views, and in fact I value their views* (Interview, p. 6)

The respondent also claims that by involving staff in the decision- making process of the school they are encouraged to take ownership of their school. She thus believes that through sharing, leaders develop a common vision for the school. Mrs C was aware of the fact that leadership is not only exercised by those in formal positions, for example principals. She spoke about all the committees in her previous school that she led and served in. According to her the participatory leadership style of her previous principal, that created different committees, afforded her the opportunity to become a teacher leader. The latter subsequently prepared her for her current formal leadership position as principal.

4.3.4 Summary of principals understanding of leadership

From the above description of participants regarding the principals' understanding of leadership, it shows that the respondents understood leadership in various ways. The responses revealed that leadership was understood as a bottom-up approach, rather than a top-down approach characteristic of the of the apartheid era in our country. All three principals indicated that leadership is a participatory activity involving others, and therefore not the prerogative of the principal alone.

The responses also indicated that leadership is a discipline that goes beyond management. The responses of two principals showed that they understood leadership as being a process that leads to movement and change within an organisation, whilst the other principal understood leadership and management as

being interchangeable concepts. From the responses, it was also clear that two respondents understood leadership as a process that uses communication skills and strategies to capacitate others. These two principals spoke of the importance of using both verbal and nonverbal communication to develop and lead others.

All three principals linked leadership to values. They mentioned values of trust, compassion, humanity open-mindedness, positivity, commitment and acknowledgement. The respondents linked these values to the creation of collaborative cultures within schools. Lastly, the respondents also understood leadership as influence and not authority or formal power. They claimed that the ability to influence others was an art. Thus, they responded that leadership was an art.

The key issues emerging from the principals responses regarding their understanding of leadership are that:

- leadership is a participatory activity
- Leadership is an action linked to values
- leadership is a process that uses communication skills and strategies to capacitate others
- leadership is about influence not power or authority.

Having an idea of the principals' understanding of leadership I was now interested in their understanding of professionalism and the question put to the participants was simply how they understood professionalism.

4.4 The principals understanding of professionalism

4.4.1 Mrs. A's understanding of Professionalism

Professionalism was understood by the respondent as an exhibition of her personal and professional standards. She believes it's the entire person in totality. In her words she says:

> *It's your whole being. It's your mannerisms, your values, your work ethic, your willingness to take on and do things* (Interview, p. 15).

The above sentiments were also echoed by Mrs A in her reflective journal. This in her view implies that dress influences behaviour. Mrs A's understanding of professionalism is clearly outlined in the Code of Professional Ethics as outlined by the South African Council of Educators (SACE). She says that this code of professional ethics should be used as a yardstick for our general conduct towards each other, towards learners, towards parents, the community, the Department of Education and towards the Council. For her, professionalism is not only the spoken word but also the unspoken word portrayed through attitudes and behaviours.

Mrs A feels that professionalism is about trusting and respecting others. In giving an example of a professional relationship, she had to develop in her school she says:

> *We had parents just, just walking into the school and not following certain rules and regulations … but now it's different. We had instituted, and I have informed the parent at a parent meeting that the school is an organ of the state and if ever we have to do things it must be done correctly … professionally. We have now agreed to introduce a visitors' book. They have to come to the office and sign in and sign out when they are done. This has definitely brought in order and stability* (Interview, p. 15).

From the above, it is clear that for her professionalism is understood as a relationship of trust and respect which creates order and stability. She substantiates this by adding "*it's about courtesy and etiquette*" (Journal, p. 8) ….and "*it's about treating each other as equals*" (Interview, p. 15).

The respondent is also of the view that professionalism is about one's level of commitment towards one's profession. She believes that she is committed to anything that she does whether at school or personally and remarks, "*I don't know if I can say that that is one of my flaws, but I give it 100%. Even being a mother*" (Interview, p. 7).

4.4.2 Mr. B's understanding of professionalism

Mr B understood professionalism as a personal or professional standard that has to be upheld. During the interview he stated his understanding as follows:

> *For me, it is that you personally have to maintain a certain standard and you have to work at not becoming complacent. These standards involve the cordial things, the greetings, and asking to help others. There's the thing like punctuality which you cannot compromise on. Things... that work hand in hand like absenteeism. Being at school is important because it has a ripple effect* (Interview, p. 15)

The respondents understanding is clarified in that he regards professionalism not only as the internal interaction teachers have with children, parents and colleagues but also that his interaction is of a high standard.

Mr B also understood professionalism as the development of professional relationships. He believes that trust and respect are earned by developing professional relationships. Mr B feels that professional relationships have a lot to do with showing signs of being humane. He relates this as follows:

> *You know, you can link to two little things like, do you phone a parent to ask 'how is your child? I heard he/she was in hospital' … or phoning a teacher who is ill to find out how they are* (Interview, p. 16).

To clarify, his understanding of the concept professionalism, he gave an example:

> *At the end of last term, the Deputy and I visited a teacher in hospital. The teacher got the fright of her life when we walked in, but she was*

> *also very pleased to see us when the shock had worn off …. That on breaking up day we found time to come and see her. That's the time that you really don't want to leave your office because so much is happening. But we did go and see her. For me, that is professionalism* (Interview, p. 16).

From the above it is evident that Mr B views professionalism as a relationship of care, concern, and respect for others. He notes that professionalism is also about showing others that little 'empathy edge' especially when things go wrong in their personal lives.

Mr B also saw professionalism as the culture that a school portrays. This view was captured very vividly by the respondent. He believes that on entering a school a visitor must be able to feel, hear and see that he/she is in a professional institution. According to him, professionalism refers to the manner in which people that are known, and more importantly, unknown are treated. He states:

> *It starts with the face that you see at your reception … to treating every visitor as the most important person for the day. So you must afford everyone that respect. For me, respect is one of the key things* (Interview, p. 14).

In addition, the respondent believes that professionalism is reflected in the 'working buzz' in which people interact in an orderly manner which is so different to the absolute silence of a doctor's reception room for example. According to Mr B, the working culture of a school, the evidence of teaching and learning taking place and the way one deals with people are all reflective of the level of professionalism in a school.

The respondent also views professionalism as the extension of one's' knowledge base. He says "*it follows that the true professional will be well informed and be in a position to advise others responsibly*" (Journal, p. 6). For him, professionalism embodies "*studying further, empowering oneself, having the academic backing, you know... you talk about the discourse*" (Interview, p.18). It is clear from the latter that Mr B understood professionalism as keeping abreast of educational trends and development. The respondent also believed that this newly

acquired knowledge needed to be shared with the rest of the team through the establishment of professional learning communities or through staff development.

4.4.3 Mrs. C's understanding of professionalism

The respondent understood professionalism as the way one spoke, behaved, acted and dressed. She remarked that teaching as a profession expects teachers to maintain a certain standard. She explained it as follows:

> *How I speak to teachers, learners and parents shows my professionalism. As a professional, I must be polite and pleasant … I must respect others for them to respect me. A professional will act in a dignified way … Oh yes … dress. A professional won't wear denims to school. … If we teachers wear denims, we are not an example to our children* (Interview, p. 12).

Mrs C elaborated on the point of dress by making reference to the fact that a uniform was established for the learners, hence the importance of teachers dressing correctly. For her, professionals should always lead by example.

Mrs C spoke of professionalism as being a display of personal virtues like confidentiality, patience, co-operation, and empathy. She believes that these personal attributes reflect the high level of professionalism expected of principals. She feels very strongly that these personal virtues build strong professional relationships. Mrs C said:

> *I believe professional relationships are not negotiable. We are building this into our vision. By having the vision as a guide we will know what kind of relationships we value. We can then develop this vision amongst ourselves, the children but more especially with the parents who are our greatest challenge. (Interview, p. 13)*

This quotation reflects the respondents need to develop professional relationships within the school. According to her, professional relationships play a part in the professional culture of the school. Thus Mrs C said:

> *I think that if you are not professional then things won't happen in the school. If I was not professional towards the teachers, parents and business community I don't think we would have had a kitchen for the nutrition programme, better toilets for us all, and proper uniforms for our children. I feel a professional approach builds a strong school culture. Together we have to build school C into our school that we can be proud of, otherwise it will just be a school* (Interview, p. 14).

From this it is clear that Mrs C believes that professionalism impacts directly on the culture of the school.

Lastly, but not least, the respondent feels that improving one's qualifications and content knowledge are necessary for maintaining one's status as a professional and this was commented on by her in this way, " *completing the ACE-SL course has gone a long way in preparing me for my position of leadership as a principal*" (Interview, p. 7). According to her principals and educators in general should keep abreast and be informed of current trends in education because she says, "*we are supposed to be lifelong learners*" (Interview, p. 8).

4.4.4 Summary of principals understanding of professioalism

The participants' description of their understanding of professionalism revealed that professionalism was understood in various ways.

All three principals understood professionalism as being a personal or professional standard that should always be upheld. According to them, these personal and professional standards involve a person's attitude, behaviour and communication.

Two of the three principals linked professionalism to values and personal virtues of care, concern, empathy, patience and co-operation. They believe professionalism is simply about being humane.

All three principals' responses revealed that professionalism was understood as the development of professional relationships of trust and respect, which they say creates order and stability in schools. Similarly, the respondents, responses showed that leadership was also understood as the culture that the school portrays. They claim that the culture and hence professionalism relates to the relationships amongst staff, the level of responsibility of the staff and the commitment of the staff to maintain these professional standards.

Lastly, but not least, the responses of all three principals showed that they regarded professionalism as the extension of one's knowledge base. For them, professionalism is about studying further. Their responses also show that professionalism is about sharing knowledge, either through teams or through the establishment of professional learning communities and/or on-going staff development.

The key issues emerging from the participants responses to their understanding of professionalism is as follows:

- professionalism is an exhibition of personal professional standards
- professionalism is upholding professional relationships
- professionalism is improving professional knowledge

The principals' responses to the question which guided my interest in the respondent's' experiences of leadership and professionalism in their schools, follows.

4.5 Principals' experiences of leadership

4.5.1 Mrs A's Experience of Leadership

4.5.1.1 Leading informally as a Teacher Leader

Mrs A believes that she experienced leadership early in her career because leadership has always been part of being a teacher. She claims that as a professional teacher she functioned as a leader. She notes that she did not equate leadership only with principalship and therefore acknowledged that as a level one educator, she was placed in a position of leadership. She says:

> *I led in the classroom by teaching and always striving to improve my teaching. I also led outside the classroom as a grade leader, sports administrator for the junior classes, fundraiser and Union representative. As the grade leader I enlisted the help of my peers in planning for the curriculum, assessment and administration. We also networked with neighbouring schools* (Interview, p. 4).

From the above it is clear that Mrs A was afforded the opportunity to exercise her professional leadership role within and beyond her classroom. She claims she was therefore able to draw on this leadership experience when stepping into formal leadership positions as Head of Department (HOD), Acting Principal and Principal.

4.5.1.2 The challenging role of leading as an SMT member and Principal

Mrs A is of the strong belief that the effective running of a school goes hand in hand with shared leadership. The implication is that conflict causes undue stress. She believes her challenge as a HOD was to build harmony within a department characterised by cliques, disharmony, disillusionment and a tense atmosphere. According to Mrs A her challenge was to transform the culture of the department/phase from disunity into a collaborative one. How she did this is illustrated in the following quotation:

> *I had to tread very, very carefully. I had to find a way, like a common ground to walk in order to keep a team spirit. I would say for a period of 6 months I had to inspire, motivate, and encourage the educators to work as a team* (Interview, p. 4).

The above quotation shows that whilst Mrs. A understood leadership to be a shared activity involving others her experience of leadership revealed that it was not so. According to her, conflict amongst colleagues forced her to transform the culture from one of disunity into one of unity and collegiality.

The respondent also recognised that in her efforts to build a team spirit within her phase she had to distribute leadership. According to her she did this by drawing on the expertise of the previous HOD and working with her rather than against her to lead the department forward. Distributing leadership to others including those who are disillusioned and or have conflicting views proved to be a solution for Mrs A. She stated this as follows:

> *And, yes after 6 months, she somehow simmered and she saw me for the person that I was ….and not a threat. And together with the rest of the educators we set out goals for that department* (Interview, p. 6).

Mrs A believes that by sharing leadership rather than working in isolation her team was able to "*move forward by using their combined creative ideas.....I always believe that teamwork makes an organisation successful* (Interview, p. 5).

In addition to teamwork, the respondent believes that building a trusting relationship with colleagues helped her as acting principal to exercise her leadership role. She claims that in stepping into her new role she focused on building trust, positivity and equity in leading school A. Mrs A also noted that being decisive and remaining focussed helped her in dealing with the insults and confrontation she endured from a colleague. According to her, her ability to separate the person from the problem made it possible for her to resolve the conflict. She says:

> *I would still go to the individual when I needed assistance, and we would interact. I did not get sucked into the messiness of a dispute but I stuck to the facts. I did not draw the staff into the dispute … it wasn't their issue, and that was how I was able to move forward* (Interview, p. 7).

Once again this quotation implies that Mrs A's experience of leadership namely one of conflict, differed from her understanding of leadership as a shared experience. Mrs A claimed that by leading in a caring, open, and honest way she gained the staff's respect when she was permanently appointed as principal. Mrs A believes that as a principal, she is not an autocrat nor is she a dictator. For her, the school comprises a 'trio' of teachers, learners and parents and the input and involvement all three are needed for both the smooth functioning of a school and for its growth and development. In this regard she says:

> *As a principal, I need the support of the 'trio'. I do not sit in an ivory tower saying I, I, I and only giving instructions. No. I let others take ownership of the school. In this way they are empowered to lead and to show whether they care, respect and support others. Oh, yes … I lead with others rather than only having followers. Leadership is not about 'my school' rather it is about 'our school'. It is a group effort* (Interview, p. 7).

From the above quotation it is clear that Mrs A leads by involving others rather than by leading alone. She also focuses on leading in a caring, honest, respectful and transparent way.

The essence of Mrs. A's experience of leadership as a primary school principal is a sense of conflict. On the one hand, there was concern over the obstacles and challenges the school faces which range from minor to very serious. On the contrary, she has positive expectations of her role as principal of school A. She perceives herself to be a leader who is transformational, who believes in participatory democracy within the school and, who is proud of her achievements in the school thus far.

Since her understanding of leadership differed from her experience she was forced to transform the culture of the school. According to her the old autocratic style had to change to make way for a new democratic approach which is participatory. Her understanding of leadership is that of a principal leading in a caring, honest, respectful and transparent way. She claims she tried to achieve this.

4.5.2 Mr B's Experience of leadership

Mr B's experience of leadership was characterised by conflicts, confrontation, disunity, non-professionalism and distributed leadership.

4.5.2.1 Leading through distribution

Mr B describes his leadership experience in school B as that of "not taking a back seat but rather of farming out leadership as in distributing it" (Interview p. 3). According to him he distributes leadership both formally to the SMT and informally to the other member of staff. Mr B feels that the latter has led to the practise of teacher leadership in school B. This he claims is evident for he says:

> *...there are other leaders because I can sense it and I can see it by them coming to me and saying, 'Sir don't you think we should/could do it this way or like this'. Those people I tend to … be giving them direction and they go with it, and I follow up to see that they are actually going where we are hoping to be heading whatever the issue may be* (Interview, p. 4).

According to Mr B, the practise of distributed leadership was working very well in the Foundation Phase. He says:

> *...that ship is sailing very well despite their little conflicts that they have. I can rest assured that more than the run of the mill things are happening in this phase* (Interview, p. 5).

He recognises that through the support of the SMT and the teachers' leadership is happening at different levels in this section of the school. There appears to be consensus between his understanding, and his experience of leadership.

4.5.2.2 Disunity, tension and conflict versus Autocracy

Mr B's experience of leadership at school B has also been of managing, mediating and resolving tensions in the Senior Primary Department. He believes that one of his roles as principal is to ensure the establishment and maintenance of an effective leadership culture. He believes very strongly and says:

> *...not all confrontation is bad, and even though there are fairly militant members of staff who are misguided by Union affiliation, I will not resort to leading dictatorially* (Interview, p. 5).

On the contrary he believes that he has to be assertive without being aggressive. This is clear from the manner in which he dealt with the disunity within the Senior Management Team (SMT). He made an example by saying:

> *We have for instance taken some decisions, and then an SMT member would come and say 'don't you think that was wrong?' Then I say to the person 'but why didn't you speak to me then because we had a meeting and it's a bit late now to come to me to have it solved immediately, but in future we will take note of that* (Interview, p. 5).

He elaborated further on the disunity by noting the unprofessionalism of some SMT members by saying: "when we, the SMT, have discussions I do sense a holding back sometimes it's from very senior members of the SMT" (Interview, p. 5).

Mr B feels that the disunity on staff is not always on a professional level. Thus he says:

> *Sometimes it's because of personalities and the limitations that some personalities come with. Sometimes it's limitations for the core duty of a school ….teaching and learning* (Interview, p. 5).

Mr B believes that the school inherited a strong contingent of teachers who were transferred in by the Department of Education (DOE) rather than these teachers being appointed willingly by the school. He believes that these teachers actually mirror their unwillingness in their attitudes within the school. He says:

> *...they are not the easiest people to get on with. In addition their unprofessional behaviour such as absenteeism, punctuality, poor discipline and poor work ethic are causing tension and conflict within the Senior Primary Department of the school* (Interview, p. 6).

When asked what caused the unprofessionalism Mr B remarked that the academic performance of these teachers was a bit substandard and that that could probably be ascribed to the inequalities of the past. He did not believe that long distance learning was a contributing factor and he clarified this by saying:

> *What I am saying is that there are differences within the colleges in that it reflects in the way that a teacher carries himself or herself within the school. I could forgive the person who probably studied part time and did not have much contact time. But, for those who went to colleges and spent more time in the classroom there are some distributing habits that we are battling with* (Interview, p. 6).

In attempting to resolve the conflict Mr B is of the opinion that he has to remain focussed. He feels that listening as well as trust and respect for each other must be exercised. According to him the entire team should reflect on their core purpose of teaching and learning which is, the child. He says he frequently asked his staff the question:

Are we doing what we should be doing for the child? Are we taking the child to that level and are we taking the team along, that included the parents (Interview, p. 5)?

Mr B acknowledges that his task as principal and as a member of the SMT is to manage, correct and capacitate staff in an attempt to resolve the tension, disunity and unprofessionalism of some staff. When asked how he is attempting to resolve the conflict he remarked:

The reluctance, the reluctance of some members of staff to actually put their differences aside is really a stumbling block for us. I did not want to introduce a motivational talk earlier because who am I to come here as the doctor and say fix it. This is what we are going to do. But time has gone by and I am now part of the staff. So not being viewed as an outsider I believe the timing is right now to get a motivational speaker. Also in attempting to build capacity and create a collaborative culture we as the SMT would have to use Education Department policy, the South African Council of Educators (SACE) prescripts and school policy as guidelines to develop staff. Yes conflict has the potential to split the staff, it is good leadership that controls the conflicts allowing it to run its course but within the rules of engagement (Interview, p. 17).

Mr B believes that a controlled conflict allows people to state their views on issues and ultimately "through good leadership often the best outcomes for the school unfold" (Journal, p4). When questioned what he understands by 'good leadership' the respondent answered by saying:

I mean that I cannot address the lack of accountability or the values conflict on my own. On the contrary, changes could occur if staff were to buy in to an interactive, collective leadership approach. If we can be successful in building trust then we should be able to discuss problems and possible solutions with each other (Interview, p. 17).

Mr B firmly believes that should they fail to do this the challenges will continue and the school could fall into disarray. However, he says very confidently, "*I remain hopeful*" (Interview, p. 17). Mr. B can be described as highly principled and stands firm in this resolve as a professional as he laments, "I want to be a part of reviving those areas in the school that may have faltered and extending those areas that are our strengths" (Interview. p. 17). The essence of his experience as a principal of a huge urban primary school is that of unhappiness about the lack of staff unity caused by past conflicts and irreconcilable differences. This is juxtaposed against the passion he has to transform the school to be among the best, as this school, according to him, does have committed, resourceful, knowledgeable and highly qualified teachers.

4.5.3 Mrs C's Experience of Leadership

In response to this question Mrs C described her experience of leadership as one of comparisons, contrasts and adjustments between leading informally in a very, very big urban school as compared to leading formally in a very, very small rural school. Mrs C has taught only in these two schools and during the interview her responses clearly showed a contrast between the two schools. She therefore used her previous school as a yardstick in relating her leadership experience.

4.5.3.1 Leading informally

Reflecting on her leadership approach and previous leadership influences, Mrs C shared her thoughts by saying:

> *I gained lots of knowledge and had wonderful experiences of leadership at my previous school. The visionary leadership of my previous principal motivated me to lead informally within my own classroom* (Interview, p. 5).

She elaborates further by saying, "*I am a professional teacher, I have to function as a leader*" (Interview, p. 8). The respondent believes she was the best teacher she could have been and was therefore a good role model. Mrs C was of the

opinion that her classroom practice encouraged the development of informal leadership as a teacher leader.

The respondent claims that as a teacher leader she realised that leadership happens at different levels in the school. Secondly, she reported that she also led informally outside her classroom. Mrs C says:

> *My previous principal gave us opportunities to work with our strengths and interests. We could join the committees we were interested in. I chaired several committees like exam, fundraising, bereavement, entertainment and norms and standards. I was also a member of most of the other committees. There were also different codes of sport, but I coached netball* (Interview, p. 6).

According to Mrs C she recognised the benefit of her previous school having many leaders at different levels within the school. She claims that this empowered her and motivated her to achieve her potential in a leadership role. The respondent also expressed the enjoyment she felt in taking on extra responsibilities and roles. She recognised that her previous school was keen on teachers taking ownership of the school by taking on extra responsibilities. When asked if all teachers at the school seized the chance to lead outside their classrooms, Mrs C replied:

> *A few only led in their classrooms. I respect that because we are all different. Those teachers enjoy just being classroom teachers. But for me, I think the more empowerment I have the better. I like challenges and change* (Interview, p. 7).

For the respondent being a teacher leader laid the foundation for the formal leadership position of a principal. According to Mrs C she recognised that leading formally required much more responsibility and accountability. She once again made a comparison between her current and previous school in order to illustrate

her point that leadership in a big urban primary school is not the same as leading in a small rural farm school.

> *The work is too much in school C unlike my previous school. This school is a small school. I have to do all the work. I don't have a clerk. My previous principal had 2 deputies and 4 HOD's and a clerk to assist her in leading and managing the school. I have to do everything. If something has to be submitted, I have to rush and do the work (Interview p. 1).*

From this quotation it is clear that in a small school the roles of leadership and management are two roles that are usually fulfilled by the principal alone since there is no SMT. Mrs C claims that in a small primary school, like school C, the leadership role is also combined with an administrative role as there is no administrative person to support the principal. Mrs C believes that it is more difficult to separate management issues from leadership issues since there are fewer people, three as compared to forty one, to whom to delegate tasks. Mrs C stated that she initially devoted more time to management and administrative tasks than to leadership tasks.

She believes that the ACE-SL course empowered her and she has now learnt that in a small primary school, such as school C, it is possible for the roles of leadership and management to work alongside each other in a complementary way. Mrs C believes that even though they in school C are only a staff of four teachers, she is now learning to distribute management tasks and to share leadership tasks. She clarified this by saying:

> *I now involve them with some of the administrative work just as I involved them in the staff meeting. I do realise that this cannot be to the same degree as in the schools that have more staff and learner* (Interview, p.5).

For the respondent being a teacher leader laid the foundation for the formal leadership position of principalship. Mrs C recognised that leading formally required much more responsibility and accountability.

4.5.4 Summary of principals experiences of leadership

The above descriptions revealed that principals' understandings of leadership differed from their experiences.

All three principals' responses revealed that working collaboratively in teams required building relationships of trust, positivity and equity in order to quell stress and conflict. In addition, it was evident from their responses that a caring, open and honest leadership style was a pre-requisite to gaining the respect and trust of others. Two of these principals also stated that attempting to transform the culture of their schools from one of disunity to a collaborative one requires a great deal of motivating, inspiring, challenging, guiding and mentoring. Hence, Principal B's firm belief that if past conflicts and irreconcilable differences are left unchecked, they could fester and destroy the culture of the school. Both principals feel that anger, resentment and selfishness could be transformed into respect, appreciation and inspiration by developing collegial working relationships in schools.

Two of the three principals experienced leadership informally as teacher leaders earlier in their teaching careers. Consequently, they claim that they led within and beyond their classrooms and subsequently do not equate leadership only with principalship. Whilst the other principal did not relate his own experience of being a teacher leader, he believes that he is growing teacher leaders by distributing leadership to others in the school.

From their responses, it was clear that all three principals acknowledged the importance of sharing leadership with the SMT, teachers and parents in an effort to transform their schools. They claim that instead of working in isolation, they had to involve others by working as a team. However, one principal remarked that distributing leadership in a small rural school with only three educators is not the

same as distributing leadership amongst a large school with say 42 teachers. She claims that whilst it is possible to distribute leadership, this cannot be done to the same degree in a small rural school.

The key issues emerging from the participants' responses, in respect of their leadership experiences were that their experiences differed from their understandings. Hence, they highlighted the following:

- pre-requisites of collaborative cultures
- leading informally through teacher leadership
- the importance of leading through teams to transform schools.

Thus the participant's responses to their experiences of leadership and professionalism yielded rich data. What follows next are their responses to the question enquiring about the contexts supporting their leadership.

4.6 Contexts supporting principals take-up of leadership

4.6.1 Contexts supporting Mrs A's take-up of leadership

According to Mrs A, there are both internal and external contexts that support her in the take-up of leadership in school A. The first of the internal contexts mentioned was the dynamic team of experienced staff. For her, she works together with a group of people who are equally committed towards a common goal. She believes in teamwork and for her having the cooperation and support of her fellow colleagues as a team means that she does not lead alone and subsequently her load as a principal is much lighter. The respondent claims that the schools motto 'let there be light', as well as her philosophy 'action speaks louder than words' and the strong work ethic of staff helps her as a leader to lead the team of teachers, non-teachers and learners.

Secondly, Mrs A recognises that her professionalism has played a major role in her take-up of leadership. She says:

> *...the way I relate to people, the trust I have for people and the trust they have in me, and my understanding of myself and others are very important to me. These virtues make me a professional and keep me grounded in leading the team at school C* (Interview, p. 9).

According to Mrs A "*the success of any school lies in the professionalism of the staff but mainly the example set by the principal*" (Interview, p. 9). Mrs A strongly believes that as a lifelong learner she has had to create the opportunities for others in the school to learn. She says, "*...change was being gradually introduced and one had to tread carefully so as to get to the best from everyone*" (Journal, p. 6). In addition, the respondent views, "*a harmonious working environment*" (Journal, p. 6) as being the key element for promoting effective teaching and learning.

The third factor supporting Mrs A's take-up of leadership is her own professional development and that of her staff. She once again feels that the principal must lead by example and thus she inspires, motivates and encourages her staff to study further. She believes that studying further has helped her and has been beneficial. She states:

> *....what have also helped me in a positive way, to be a good leader are the various leadership courses that I have undertaken. Most recently was the ACE-SLM course and I am currently completing the PMDP. These sure saved me from being thrown into the Deep End* (Journal, p. 7).

In responding to the SMT's role in the professional development of the staff, the respondent acknowledged the role played by the SMT in the professional development of the staff. According to her, professional development begins within the school as the SMT initiates, oversees and supports teachers in their teams to plan, discuss and work together in grades and then as a phase. She says:

> *They have weekly and monthly meetings for this, sometimes more. We also sit as a staff with the Staff Development Team (SDT) and we*

look at areas that need development … and from the staff you can draw on brilliant ideas (Interview, p. 11).

For her professional development and team work go hand in hand. She says:

> *to develop teachers' means empowering them and growing them to achieve more. I cannot assume what their area of growth is. This will come out when we sit as a team to discuss strengths and challenges. This way, I believe, you get more than what you had pictured or envisioned. We work as a team* (Interview, p. 12).

This quotation clearly indicates that collaboration and collegial working relationships are part of this school's culture.

In responding to the professional development of new entrants to the profession Mrs A responded that the SMT does have an induction and mentorship programme. She acknowledged that she does the preliminaries with respect to the welcome, a walkabout of the school and general information. She claims that most of the professional development with respect to curriculum teaching and learning is coordinated by the HOD, the grade leader of an experienced member of staff in the phase. She concluded by saying, "*however my door is always open to the newcomer*" (Interview, p. 12).

Lastly, Mrs A recognised the support of the SGB in her take-up of leadership. According to her, the relationship between the school and the SGB has always been a supportive and cordial one. She notes the role of the SGB in school based management as she says:

> *...parent members in school governance are also team players in the 'trio'. They have always taken an active role in fund-raising although this is mainly done by the staff* (Interview, p. 12).

With regard to the external factors supporting her take-up of leadership, the respondent acknowledged that not much support was received from the Teacher Union however the support from the private enterprise has been overwhelming. She ascribes this to building professional relationships or links with other organisations and says, "*...that is where … I suppose cooperative governance*

comes into play" (Journal, p. 7). She claims that various members of staff not only herself, have been responsible for forging links with various Non-Government Organisations (NGO's). According to her Government Departments have also readily offered services and helped to uplift education at the school. She says:

> *Some of these are the Department of Environmental Health which extend the school an invitation to the COP17 Conference. The Department of Environmental Agriculture assisted us with the establishment of our school garden. The Department of Social Services assists us in accessing social grant for the indigent an orphaned learners in the school. The Department of health offers help with the referrals of learners with special education needs (LSEN). The Department of Transport also helps in helping to overcome late-coming as many of our learners also commute to school daily* (Interview, p. 13).

This principal strongly believes that it is within this culture of participation, sharing, discussing and learning that staff especially became more supportive, committed, influential and collaborative. She adds, "*I am a very positive person and positivity such as I have mentioned now builds trust, loyalty and respect within the team*" (Interview, p. 13).

Mrs A is of the view that achieving a collaborative working culture rests largely with her. Thus she claims she must constantly offer support, inspire, involve, motivate challenge and stimulate her team to achieve their best.

Mrs. A ascribes her success as a leader to her personal professional growth, a supportive staff, her commitment to others and believing that leadership is about knowing what to do and getting things done. Her philosophy is that "*action speaks louder than words*" (Interview, p. 4).

What follows next are Mr B's responses.

4.6.2 Contexts that support Mr B's take-up of leadership

Mr B, like Mrs A, also spoke of internal and external factors supporting his take-up of leadership. He confidently spoke of the many internal contexts from which he draws his support. Firstly, he believes that one of his core roles as a principal is to be an example to others thus in his view a principal has to give support in order to earn support. Mr B writes:

> *...teachers', support staff, learners and parents are assured of my support within reason and on many levels. When I am required to I give, emotional support, material support and moral support to the 'school community* (Journal, p. 5).

Secondly, Mr B acknowledged the influence of continuing professional development in his take-up of leadership. He believes that improving his qualifications has not only extended his knowledge base but that this is an indication of his professionalism as a teacher and a leader. He also claims that his improved qualifications have shown that he is a lifelong learner. He says:

> *...this new found subject and pedagogical knowledge have been beneficial to me personally in my position, as principal, and leader of school B. My studies have shown me that the way to go is to distribute leadership, whilst of course not abdicating all together* (Interview, p. 13).

Mr B elaborated further by saying:

> *In distributed leadership you look for the strengths in people and build on the weaknesses as you bring them on board* (Interview, p. 13).

Mr B recalled that during his interview for the principal's post he spoke of the need and value of having improved his qualifications. He says "I haven't just paid

lip service there [at the interview] and I am happy to say that my professional knowledge has stood me in good stead" (Interview, p. 13). The respondents firm belief in his ability to use the challenges in school B as pathways to building the leadership capacity of the staff are reflected in his words:

> *I now have an opportunity. Here is a school...some people may have felt that it may have been dysfunctional, or that there is a lot wrong with it. But, I feel where else is there an opportunity to build? It is here. Because if you asked me did I want to go into a school where everything is perfect, I would definitely say … No. There's the challenge … I really see a lot of potential … and given the 6 or 7 years that I may have around, I really want to be there the day we open the 'new' school and we celebrate the positive change. And, then probably ride off into the sunset* (Interview, p. 14).

Mr B also acknowledged his support from the SGB. According to him his role as the principal compels him to work at maintaining professional relationships between the SGB and the staff. In this regard he states:

> *I am working at improving relationships amongst the SGB members and the staff, since there is a strong belief in our school that the SGB is responsible for fundraising and that the SGB is not delivering in this regard. The respondent explains that he has put it to staff that they should be realistic and accept that the school B's SGB may not have the financial connections that are associated with ex Model C schools* (Interview, p. 13).

He is therefore of the opinion that the educators should take on a good share of the fundraising responsibility.

Another supporting context for Mr. B is the resilience of some staff members. In response to this he says:

> *I have the commitment of a lot of the teachers who know what they should be doing and going ahead and doing it. I like it immensely. There are HOD's who know their function and get on with the job....we have them here at school B* (Interview, p. 13).

Mr B believes that it is the positive example set by these staff members that have encouraged ex-learners to return to the school and to give back. He explains:

> *It is the trust that ex-learners have in the staff that make them come back to the school and plough back. They come back empowered. One has come back recently and has undertaken to re-build the school. We already have a trust set up. This for me is a positive because we have a vision, this vision of a fantastic school which will be standing on this hill here. I personally think it is within reach* (Interview, p. 12).

According to Mr B he regards the mentorship he received for a number of years from his previous principal as a supporting factor in his take-up of leadership. He claims that a lot of what he learnt there, he is actually reflecting on in his current school. He says:

> *There are some things that, that I do differently..... I always seem to come back to the idea that this is how this other principal would do it and I think that this is actually a great acknowledgement of the work of the person that I am speaking about. That I have something to go by is great. You know how people can say you are in the deep end. I am actually not. There is that expertise that I was given while I was being mentored and maybe sometimes I was not actually aware of the fact that this was mentoring in progress, and whilst I am here in this school, I am hoping that I could do the same for some of our staff* (Interview, pp. 3-4).

From this quotation, it is clear that the principal recognises the benefits of a mentorship programme.

Lastly, but not least, Mr. B welcomed the external support the school receives from private enterprises. During the interview, he indicated that the school welcomed the symbiotic relationships with big business because the common factor in the relationship is the greater benefit for the children. As an example, he mentioned the recent construction of a shelter at the school by a local company. The children, he claims, are the beneficiaries because they now have a safe, covered, waiting area.

What follows below are Mrs C's responses to contexts that supported her take-up of leadership and professionalism.

4.6.3 Contexts supporting Mrs. C's take-up leadership

In response to the above question, Mrs. C spoke of the internal support she receives from her colleagues. She believes that the small dynamic team of which she is a part, has members who are hardworking, diligent and committed. These personal qualities are valued by Mrs. C as she says, "*these are the qualities that earn one respect of learners, colleagues and parents*" (Interview, p. 8). She continued complementing the staff and showing appreciation for them by saying:

> *The teachers are caring, loving and supportive of the learners. That's why I make it my business to follow up on children who stay absent. Absenteeism is a problem, and to help these children we work together with police officer at the local police station to assist us in overcoming learner absenteeism. Love, care and respect for each other are what we want in schools and not the opposite* (Interview, p. 10).

From the above quotation, it is clear that Mrs. C has the support of caring, loving teachers and a concerned police officer who works in partnership with the school. She claims this support is welcomed, as it shows that principals do not have to

lead on their own. Hence she says, "*...respectful working environments build good relationships rather than breaking it down*" (Interview, p. 10).

Secondly, Mrs. C strongly believes that the empowerment she received from her own upbringing and from her previous principal has made her a courageous person. She says, "*I cannot be dependent on the Education Department alone for the leadership in school C*" (Interview, p. 8). She claims that it is the principal's responsibility to break this dependency. When asked how this dependency could be broken, she responded by saying:

> *I was empowered by my previous principal and mentor, and I have tried to emulate her example. What I have learnt from my mentor is that courage and risk taking goes hand in hand. If I am not going to take the chance to bring about positive change in the school, then how do I expect the teachers and parents to respect and trust me? I must be the inspiration to others. It starts with me taking risks to make things better for our school* (Interview, p. 8).

Mrs. C elaborates further that the empowerment from her mentor has taught her to be a risk taking principal. She says:

> *As a leader, I believe failing in trying is much better than not having tried at all. So, for me, leadership is not only empowerment, but it is about not being dependant only on the Department of Education to help with the challenges the school faces. As a leader and principal, it is my job to serve others, to have a vision to listen and to build the school and its community* (Interview, p. 9).

When asked if she received support from the Department of Education, Mrs. C responded as follows:

> *The Superintendent of Education (SEM) has been extremely supportive in inducting me into this position as principal. He makes regular visits to offer guidance and support. The DOE has also held an induction workshop for newly appointed SMT members* (Interview, p. 10).

Mrs. C also spoke about the support she received from the Planning and Infrastructure Component within the DOE. She says:

> *We organised with the DOE. I phoned Bongiwe (pseudonym) to ask how the DOE can assist with improving infrastructure at the school. Bongiwe came to the school to assess our needs, and then organised with the 'Luvelo contract' for the construction of new ablution facilities in our school. Even though these are not flush toilets, these will makes us to be more comfortable* (Interview, p. 11).

From the above, it is clear that Mrs. C received external support from the DOE. Whilst some support happened freely, for example from the SEM, other support had to be initiated by her for example seeking assistance for the construction of the new ablution facilities. According to her, a leader needs to be empowered and to empower others to bring about change and growth in a school. In this regard, she says:

> *Principals, as leaders, must make every effort to break teachers' dependency on the principal, and I in turn must take risks and not depend on the DOE to fight my battles. We also seek a lot of assistance from the contacts I had in my previous school ...Ja...as a change agent, I must keep the school moving forward.* (Interview, p. 12)

This quotation shows Mrs. C's efforts in being an example to her staff, as a servant leader, but more importantly, as building leaders who will in turn serve their school community.

4.6.4 Summary of contexts supporting principals' take-up of leadership

From the above descriptions of the participants, it is clear that there were more similarities than differences in the contexts that supported the principal's' take-up of leadership and professionalism.

All three principals spoke of the benefits of having a team of committed and experienced teachers. They acknowledged that having the support and co-operation of fellow colleagues meant that the principal's load was lighter, since he/she did not lead alone. In addition, they claim that a strong work ethic within a team meant that since people knew what to do, they went ahead and got on with the job.

The responses of the principals also revealed that their own professionalism played a major role in their take-up of leadership. They claimed that leadership was linked to professionalism, and that the one supports the other. The principals believed they had to be seen to have both leadership and professionalism co-existing in their being in order to be efficient and effective principals.

For these principals, the development of leadership and professionalism through ongoing staff development, collaboration, collegiality and mentoring could lead directly to making schools professional places of teaching and learning. In addition, they claimed that the latter could positively impact on the culture of the school. Thus a culture of care, love and support leads to empowerment.

Their responses also revealed that if principals were risk takers and change agents, they would be able to shake off their dependency on the DOE. Hence, they believed that risk taking and change agency are hallmarks of both leadership and professionalism.

The respondents also spoke of the influence of external contexts in their take-up of leadership and professionalism. According to all three principals, minimal financial support was received from private enterprises, whilst the Department of Health, Social Welfare, Environmental Affairs and Transport have also served as pillars of support.

One of the three principals commended the DOE for the support given to her in her take-up of leadership, which was in stark contrast to the limited support given by the DOE to the urban schools.

The key issues emerging from the participants' responses on contexts supporting the take-up of leadership and professionalism are as follows:

- the benefits of teamwork;
- the link between leadership and professionalism;
- The impact of risk taking, change agency and professional development on a school's culture;
- the influence of external contexts.

Another aspect of my research, for which I sought a better understanding, was that of the contexts that inhibit principals in their take-up of leadership and professionalism.

4.7 Contexts inhibiting principals' take-up of leadership

4.7.1 Contexts inhibiting Mrs. A's take-up of leadership

In response to the above question, Mrs. A spoke of a number of contexts that inhibited her take-up of leadership in school A. These ranged from minor to serious challenges.

4.7.1.1 Stress

According to Mrs. A, the context that initially inhibited her take-up of leadership was that of stress. She claims that the stress was caused by fear of the unknown and fear of failure. She believes that since certain tasks were being performed by her for the first time, this brought on panic and anxiety. She notes, "*initially, there was fear in not knowing if one was doing the right thing or not*" (Interview, p. 8).

The respondent is also of the opinion that the stress she experienced could also have been caused by gender resistance from male teachers on the staff. Hence she says:

> *You know according to our cultural belief systems a women's place is in the home. In this school we are all predominantly of one race group so some resistance was felt* (Interview, p. 7).

Mrs. A believes that the clash between her culture and her democratic right as a woman to hold a position of leadership was called into question. She claims that the resistance she experienced not only caused her undue stress, but also inhibited her take-up of leadership.

Mrs. A acknowledges that some stress may also have been caused initially by resistance from senior staff members. She claims that they were unhappy with the change from an autocratic leadership style to a more democratic one. However, Mrs. A's response to overcoming the stress was that she, as a leader, now had to learn new ways of dealing with or handling people. She says:

> *I could not allow the stress to get the better of me. How you handle individuals, and motivate them to get on board... is a skill. I had to deal appropriately with people. I needed to understand them, and what their values are. I also had to reflect on my own personality, values, behaviour and leadership style to influence others to work with me, rather than against me* (Interview, p. 8).

The above response shows Mrs. A's willingness to transform school A into a professional place of learning and teaching.

4.7.1.2 Lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers

The second context that Mrs. A believes constrained her take-up of leadership was the non-professional behaviour of a few teachers. According to her, there are two kinds of teachers at school A. She cites those who have received formal full-time training at a teacher training college and those who have acquired teaching qualifications part-time through distance learning institutions. Mrs. A believes the latter have less practical experience of teaching and learning. Consequently, she states:

> *...they struggle with important but basic functions for example, teaching, classroom practice and discipline. However, I am more concerned about the lack of professionalism of these teachers [said with passion and emotion]. I saw something lacking with these young teachers. I picked this up. Their communication skills were not developed. They struggle to interact with learners, colleagues and parents. Their dress code spoke volumes. Teaching is a professional calling and it should be professional in every respect, not only in terms of academics* (Interview, p. 9).

Mrs. A also contrasted the "*commitment of the formally trained, experienced teachers with the carefree attitude of these informally trained young teachers*" (Interview, p. 9). The respondent believes that the professionalism of teachers actually supports principals in their take-up of leadership. Conversely, she says "*the lack of professionalism amongst these teachers inhibits the principal's take-up of leadership*" (Interview, p. 10). Mrs. A's response to the way in which she is handling this challenge was as follows:

> *We are engaging in much more professional development activities. We do have mentoring in place. But, I am looking at revisiting our mentorship programme and our staff development programmes* (Interview, p. 12).

4.7.1.3 The lack of professionalism of the SGB

The respondent claims that a lack of professionalism within the SGB has led her to professionally develop the SGB as well. In this regard she notes:

> *I had to outline duties of the SGB. I had to at our SGB meeting..... I had to run a workshop on what is the role of the finance committee, how far can we go in our duties, what keeps us within limits? I needed to highlight to the SGB that the professional matters of the staff are the responsibility of the principal and the SMT* (Interview, p. 13).

From the above, one can infer that the SGB may also be an inhibiting factor in the principal's take-up of leadership.

4.7.1.4 Lack of commitment of the DOE

Lastly, Mrs. A expressed her frustration with the Department of Education (DOE). She spoke of the difficulty experienced in constantly defending the DOE to staff and parents regarding a number of issues:

- Poor service delivery;
- Poor curriculum support;
- Poor planning;
- Insufficient funding;
- Poor governance support;

She firmly believes that curriculum and school governance support should not be once-off activities, but rather ongoing development activities. She cited the unfolding of the new Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) as an example. She was very vociferous about this and had this to say:

> *The foundation phase teachers did not get the sound training they should have had, but they had to implement the CAPS. Training for 2013 has not yet commenced. By now, policy documents should have been issued to schools. We could then at least attempt to unpack the document ourselves. I am concerned that the dismal training that occurred for the foundation phase teachers will also prevail for the intermediate phase teachers* (Interview, p. 14).

From the above quotation it is clear that poor service delivery, poor curriculum support and poor planning by the DOE are inhibiting both teachers and principals in leading schools in their effort to ensure that these are professional places of teaching and learning.

4.7.2 Contexts inhibiting principal B's take-up of leadership

In response to the above question Mr B acknowledges that past conflicts and irreconcilable differences have impacted negatively on education delivery at school B. However, for him there are three internal contexts inhibiting his take-up of leadership.

4.7.2.1 Resistance to change

The first context for Mr B was the resistance to change by some staff members. According to Mr B some teachers did not understand their leadership role and were not willing to take-up their role as change agents. In this regard he wrote:

> *I have tried to follow a democratic approach to leadership but some staff members have actually suggested that I should be autocratic. They actually prefer how things were done before. These 'seasoned' teachers have a very strong commitment to work and they guard their teaching time jealously and do not take kindly to being called out of class for issues that are being dealt with in the office for example parent visits or disciplinary issues or parents complaining. These mindsets are difficult to change* (Journal, p. 6).

From this quotation one can infer that Mr B realises that the 'seasoned' teachers are leading only in their classrooms rather than leading beyond the classroom as well. He claims that his challenge is to change the mindsets of these teachers as well as to encourage them to see the benefits of a democratic approach to leadership in comparison to the hierarchical authoritarian approach from the apartheid era.

4.7.2.2 Lack of professionalism of parents and teachers

Mr B regards the unprofessional behaviour of both parents and teachers as also being a context that inhibits the take-up of leadership in school B. With regard to these parents and teachers he says:

> *I feel there is a small group of affluent parents who are overly critical of the school to the point of breaking it down. I get the sense that within the school these agendas are being fed by disgruntled people.*

> *So how I get to know of this is through phone calls from irate parents. Then I realise there is somebody on staff that is actually fuelling conflict. That to me is irritating because I invite them to come to and see me.....and it is very difficult to get them here* (Interview, p. 10).

From this quotation it is clear that parent's' resistance to change is impeding leadership and growth in school B. For Mr B the unprofessional behaviour of a few teachers is compounding parent's' resistance to change. These strong views are confirmed by Mr B as he wrote:

> *When I assumed the principalship in the school, I became aware that there was a keen interest in the affairs of the school. Much of this interest from the community was, in my opinion, a "prophets of doom" approach. A small group of disgruntled parents are working at directing negative energy at the school. The change in leadership is meeting with resistance in some quarters* (Journal, p. 7).

4.7.2.3 Lack of parental involvement

Mr B also raised concern about the generally poor involvement and interest of all the other parents in the school's activities. He claims that these parents are not taking ownership of their school. In this regard he says:

> *Getting parents to meetings is not an easy task. I think we know for example when there is a parent meeting only a certain group of parents from the community will pitch up. It is those whose children are performing well. At the annual general meeting only a certain group of parents come. Actually we need the voices of even those that are poverty stricken because they can alert us to their realities. When we have sporting activities the same applies. However, I don't believe it's out of our limit to get parents more involved. I believe we can achieve this with a sought of an onslaught of educating parents to realise this is their school too. We have to get them to sacrifice their time to get involved and to do so in an ethical and professional*

manner. We have to move away from the mentality of parents only coming to school for enrolling their children (Interview, pp. 11-12).

According to Mr B involvement and participation of parents in a school is necessary as he believes they are equal partners in their children's education. He reiterated his belief in the distribution of leadership amongst educators, non educators, parents and learners, and said,

> "*...leadership is a collaborative undertaking and not something exercised by me only" (Interview, p. 12).*

What follows are contexts inhibiting Mrs C's take-up of leadership.

4.7.3 Contexts inhibiting Mrs C's take-up of leadership

Mrs C's response to inhibiting contexts was described as follows, "there are lots of things" (Interview, p. 6).

4.7.3.1. Size of schools

The first factor that she spoke about was once again the vast difference in the sizes of her former school and her current school. She laughed several times when relating the difference between the two schools. She said:

> *Adjusting from a 'tip-top' urban school with over 1500 learners and more than 42 educators to a small farm school with 3 educators and less than 35 learners has not been easy. Whilst my previous principal had 2 deputies and 5 HOD's to assist her in leading and managing the school I do not have an SMT to share the leadership role with. In this school we are only 3 and we have no option but to work together. This may be good in a way but I will not have the experience of leading and managing a very big school. The challenges are very different within the two schools also* (Interview, p.6).

When asked to explain the latter she responded as follows:

> *The way.....disciplinary matters are handled are different. At the former school the children were noisy. They would during dismissal time be making a noise along the verandas' and running down the road. They would be playing, screaming and shouting (laughs). They were constantly in trouble for this as it was against the code of conduct. But at school C, there are so few children and there is no, no noise (laughs). The challenges are just not the same. Here I have to do home visits to hopefully resolve disciplinary issues like absenteeism of learners because the parents in this area are just not interested in their children's education. They do not take education seriously. As long as the children go to school what happens after that they do not care. For me this is a challenge because there must be a relationship between the school and the home* (Interview, p. 7).

From the above quotation it is clear that the lack of parental involvement is also inhibiting Mrs C's take-up of leadership.

According to Mrs C the size of the school inhibited her affording teachers many opportunities to lead beyond their classrooms. In this regard she says:

> *The other thing is sports. I really miss the sports. At my previous school there were different codes of sports, for example netball. I was involved in netball. There's also hockey, rugby, football etc that the children were involved in. Where I am now we am trying but the children are so few. Every Thursday at 13h50 we take the ball and go to the playground but it is an uphill battle. Just not like where I used to be* (Interview, p. 7).

From the above quotation it is clear that the number of children and teachers in a school would determine the extra-mural activities of a school and whether

teachers could be afforded the opportunity for informal leadership beyond their classrooms. According to Mrs C this was something that was taken for granted in her previous school.

4.7.3.2 Limited physical resources

Mrs C also indicated that the limited physical resources at school C are another inhibiting factor. She explains this as follows:

> *At the previous school where I was the children would sit under shelters during assembly but here at school C the children have to stand and they stand in the sun. This is another thing to get a shelter for the children so they are protected from the rain and sun during prayers* (Interview, p. 7).

From the above it is clear that the lack of physical resources at this school could limit teaching and learning and this could negatively impact the principal's leadership. On the contrary this quotation also shows Mrs C's philosophy "*be the change you want to see in others*" (Journal, p. 3). She believes her determination to confront challenges and to find solutions to them makes her a transformational leader.

4.7.4 Summary of contexts inhibiting principals take-up of leadership

The above descriptions of participants revealed that there were commonalities and differences regarding the contexts inhibiting principal's take-up of leadership and professionalism.

One of the three principals regarded stress as an inhibiting context. According to her, stress was caused by three things viz. the fear of the unknown, gender resistance and resistance to a democratic approach by the older teachers on the staff.

Two of the three principals' responses revealed that non-professional behaviour of the teachers was also regarded as an inhibiting context in the take-up of leadership by principals. One of the principals cited the non-professionalism of young

teachers who attained their teaching qualifications through part-time studies. Their non-professionalism is seen as a constraint that requires a great deal of re-skilling, mentoring and a mindset change. In contrast, the other principal's response revealed that teachers and parents who colluded against the principal were behaving unprofessionally. According to this principal, this resistance to change is not only a constraint, but also a display of unprofessional behaviour. The latter, he says, requires building ongoing professional development.

According to the principals, the lack of parent involvement could also be seen as a constraint. From the responses, it is clear that many parents have little understanding of their role in School Based Management (SBM). Hence, their poor response to parent meetings and other school based activities.

Two of the three principals highlighted the lack of commitment of the DOE as a constraint in the take-up of leadership. They are of the firm belief that poor service delivery, lack of curriculum support, poor planning, poor governance support and insufficient funding are still constraining factors after 18 years of a new democratic South Africa.

The key issues inhibiting the take-up of leadership, based on the experiences of the principals, are the following:

- stress as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- The lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers;
- The lack of professionalism of parents and teachers;
- The lack of parent involvement;
- Resistance to change;
- Sizes of schools;
- the lack of commitment of the Department of Education (DOE);

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the three principals' responses to my interview questions and their reflections in their reflective journals.

The biographical data of the participating principals formed an important component of the study as it provided the background information which could assist the researcher in exploring how these principals experienced leadership and professionalism in an effort to make schools professional places of teaching and learning.

The aforementioned sections of this chapter tried to describe how the principals understood and experienced leadership and professionalism in their schools. The contexts supporting and or inhibiting their take-up of leadership and professionalism was also described. The data obtained from the responses were summarised at the end of each sub-section.

There were similarities in the principals' opinions and there were differences in some instances. The general experiences of the respondents indicated that leadership and professionalism were experienced in different ways.

Since, analysis is an ongoing process the final analysis of the data will be done through the various themes that seem to emerge from the participants' descriptions. The patterns that were identified are as follows:

- Leadership as a participatory activity;
- Leadership values and ethics;
- The impact of communication skills on leadership;
- Leadership as influence, not authority or power;
- Professionalism and the role of personal and professional standards;
- The role of relationships and responsibility in supporting professionalism;
- Professionalism and the role of professional knowledge;
- Pre-requisites of collaborative cultures;
- Leading informally through teacher leadership;
- The importance of leading through teams to transform schools;
- The benefits of teamwork;
- The link between leadership and professionalism;
- The impact of risk taking, change agency and professional development on a school's culture;
- The influence of external contexts;

- Stress as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- The lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers;
- The lack of parent involvement as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- the lack of commitment of the Department of Education (DOE).

The themes that emerged from these patterns are discussed in the next chapter in the light of relevant literature.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings in relation to transformational leadership theory and thinking emanating from relevant literature in chapter 2 as well as my own views. The dominant patterns that emerged in chapter 4 from the general descriptions presented are as follows:

- Leadership as a participatory activity;
- Leadership values and ethics;
- The impact of communication skills on leadership;
- Leadership as influence, not authority or power;
- Professionalism and the role of personal and professional standards;
- The role of relationships and responsibility in supporting professionalism;
- Professionalism and the role of professional knowledge;
- Pre-requisites of collaborative cultures;
- Leading informally through teacher leadership;
- The importance of leading through teams to transform schools;
- The benefits of teamwork;
- The link between leadership and professionalism;
- The impact of risk taking, change agency and professional development on a school's culture;
- The influence of external contexts;
- Stress as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- The lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers;
- The lack of parent involvement as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- the lack of commitment of the Department of Education (DOE);

These patterns were grouped together to form five dominant themes. The themes are listed as follows:

- Understanding leadership;
- Understanding professionalism;
- Teamwork;
- Contexts supporting leadership;
- Contexts inhibiting leadership and professionalism;

5.2 Understanding leadership

In attempting to define leadership the three principals highlighted the importance of understanding the concept in the following ways:

- Leadership is a participatory activity;
- Leadership is an action linked to values and ethics;
- Leadership is a process that uses communication skills and strategies to capacitate others';
- Leadership is influence, not authority or power.

5.2.1 Leadership as a participatory activity

In the democratic approach to leadership, the principal no longer holds all responsibility for leading and managing the school. Rather, everyone participates in decision-making and problem solving, since everyone should have a valuable contribution to make. Hence, for the three principals in this research study leadership was understood as a participatory activity. This means that leadership is all about mutual winning and building high levels of follower motivation to attain aims and objectives through shared involvement and problem solving. In this study, the principals' responsibilities for leading and managing the school were shared with SMT, teachers, SGB and education leaders. Consequently, principals had to assume a more distributive role whilst still being accountable for school functionality. Slater (2008) notes, that in participatory leadership,

principals' share the leadership and the load. But, she argues, that the success of their performance will be determined by the principals ability to inspire a culture of empowerment by acting as hero-makers, rather than heroes. Similarly, Harris and Muijs (2008) view the involvement of others in decision-making as beneficial, as it results in greater organisational effectiveness, individual performance and job satisfaction. From my interview discussions with the three participants, several patterns regarding participatory, democratic or shared leadership emerged. The participants also made constant reference to their efforts to involve and encourage participation of others in leadership.

Much of what the participants described are attempts to involve others in the leadership process. The findings show that these three principals firmly believed in the bottom-up approach in which people are made to feel part of the organisation, rather than a top-down approach, characteristic of the traditional leadership of the apartheid era. This collective or interactive leadership was discussed in the literature review chapter. Thus, the data links well with the literature. Harris and Muijs (2004) found that principals who work together, look together and design together with staff, parents and the SGB have established shared cultures which enhances participants' self-worth and gets them excited about their work.

The three principals in this case study research are good examples of participative leaders. Instead of the principal, as leader, just giving orders and instructing others, he/she acts as a mentor, a motivator and support structure for teachers in achieving their goals. So as Principal A stated:

> *"....for a school to move forward, I cannot just sit in this chair and say I, I, I or my. That is not leadership, rather leadership is 'let us do it' as opposed to "I instruct you to do it"* (Interview, p. 3).

In addition, for the SMT and teachers, it means that their participation in leadership creates possibilities for them developing shared ownership of the school (Gunkel, 2010). This is akin to a transformational approach to leadership as noted by Harris and Day (2002, p.590) "implicit in this perspective is the notion of shared or devolved leadership, where leadership is not the preserve of the principal alone". From this, it is clear that Harris and Day (2002) are

advocates of transformational leadership as it has its tenets in the building of relationships, moral values, joint decision-making and goal setting.

The findings of these case study principals, shows that staff in two schools share common work values, engage in specific conversation regarding their work and help each other. Sergiovanni (2001) defines this as collegiality. Prew (2007) noted that when change was accompanied by a fundamental change from management to leadership and from leadership that is autocratic to leadership that is more inclusive and democratic, improvements in the school's functionality abound. The three principals in this study also understood leadership in this light, namely, that leadership is a process that relies heavily on the leader functioning as a facilitator rather than simply issuing orders or making demands. According to Hall (2001) and Gunter (2001), principals who practise participative leadership would ensure that ethical behaviour is practised. I support this view because without ethics there is no point to leadership.

5.2.2 Leadership is an action linked to values and ethics

In these case studies, I found that the three participants' practises were guided by ethical integrity which is a pre-requisite for democratic, participatory or shared leadership. Thus, there was a connection between the principals' leadership, values and their ethics. According to Gunter (2001), ethical integrity uses values of trust, honour, respect, openness, honesty, support and praise. Evidence from this study shows that leadership was understood as leaders and followers, embracing values of care and concern, honesty, trust, open-mindedness and empathy.

The principals' deep care and concern for the well being of teachers, non-teachers and learners was of paramount importance to them. These values of care and concern are leadership principles likened to the transformational leadership approach. Transformational leadership, according to Pelicer (2008), Harris and Day (2002) and Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) focuses on developing others through the provision of individual support. Transformational leaders are willing to experience the defeats as well as the victories of their followers. This was aptly stated by Principal B when he said "*leadership is about celebrating people's success and acknowledging them*" (Interview, p. 2). In addition, Pelicer (2008, p.

38) states that transformational leaders "*want to be insiders, rather than outsiders ... active players in the game ... they want their colleagues lives to count for something ... you can hear caring echoing in their voices.*" The three principals in this study displayed their humanity in order to lead their schools better so that their schools could become professional places of teaching and learning.

There is also evidence that the leaders in this study were honest with their followers. Honesty is a complex concept. Autry, in Pelicer (2008, p. 140) hints at the complexity of honesty:

> "*When I talk about honesty, I don't just mean honesty of words: I also mean honesty of feelings ... honesty entails learning to see yourself as others see you and learning to openly and honestly express emotions in the context of the workplace".*

This value of honesty was particularly evident with Principal A, who at the interview shared her fear of the unknown, fear of failure and the initial resistance from senior staff members. Similarly, Principal B willingly spoke of the conflict between some members of the SMT and amongst the staff.

The honest sharing and disclosure of information, both personal and professional, by the participants shows their openness. The participants realised that for them to become fully trusted, they had to be open in their relationships with staff, parents and education officials. As noted in the literature review, when principals take the risk of being open, colleagues are more likely to take a similar risk, thereby building inter relation trust. In the South African context, principals traditionally held on to information as a source of power and control. On the contrary, the findings show that these three principals are not autocratic. On the contrary they are sharing information, and in so doing, are less controlling and focussing in more on empowering others. These ethical values could assist principals in leading their schools into becoming professional places of teaching and learning

Empathy is another value that participants linked to leadership. According to Goleman (in Slater 2008), empathy involves identifying the emotions of another person, and being able to see the situation from that person's perspective. The findings of this study show that all three principals were empathetic. According to

these principals, leadership is about being an empathetic listener, creating a culture of trust, sharing information, taking risks and being a lifelong learner.

It is my view that since these leaders display a high degree of care, respect and honesty in their relationships with others, they possess the traits of transformational leaders. In addition, honesty is a particularly critical leadership trait because, according to Pelicer (2008, p. 140), "*it is the primary precondition for trust, and no one can lead without trust*".

Do principals who practice participative leadership consider communication skills to be an important part of leadership?

5.2.3 The impact of communication skills on leadership

My findings were clear that leadership was understood as a process that uses communication skills and strategies to capacitate others. Communication, or how leaders interact with followers, is an important aspect of participative leadership and transformational leadership. Slater (2008) notes that principals' use most of their time speaking and listening to people namely colleagues, friends, learners, parents and the community at large. Similarly, the three participants in the study used their ability to listen accurately to others in order to capacitate them. From my own experience, I have learnt that by listening, one gets to know people well and that this could well be the avenue that the participants used in order to form relationships that encouraged leadership.

In the literature Slater (2008) claims that listening is an important communication skill which is not easily mastered since it requires ongoing analysis. This was confirmed by Principal B who said; "*listening is hard work. I cannot only listen with my ears. After listening, I have to counsel, chastise, agree or disagree with people. Yes, for me leadership is about listening*" (Interview, p. 3). Hence the participants in these case studies believe that leadership is about using listening as a communication skill to lead others. They argue, as is noted by Sergiovanni (2001), that by listening, not only with their ears, but also with their eyes, hearts and heads, they link their thoughts, feelings and actions to lead alongside others.

The implication is that leaders should be perceptive of the needs of others, since leadership is directed 'group will.' From the latter, one can assume that leadership is a process that uses both verbal as well as non-verbal skills to communicate with others.

This understanding of leadership concurs with the views of Pelicer (2008), Sergiovanni (2001) and Taylor et al. (2007) who view communication as being integral to leadership. In addition, the principals in this study regarded effective communication as a central feature of leadership. They indicated that professional and convincing dialogue with colleagues, learners, parents, the SBG, DOE officials and the general public should prevail in all schools. This is akin to the views of South African authors, Rule (2004), Grant and Jugmohan (2008) and Grant (2009), who advocate the importance of leaders creating 'dialogic spaces' that foster two-way communication rather than channels that direct flow of information in only one direction.

My belief is that communication cannot be separated from the decision-making process. Principals who strive to create a democratic ethos and use the skill of listening, questioning, probing and guiding to supplement the skills of observing, evaluating and directing are building relationships and establishing trust. A very strong quality of the three participants in the study was their personal interaction with their staff, the parents and the DOE officials. Through these interactions, two of the three principals had successfully communicated both formally and informally. The presence of 'monologic spaces' (Grant, 2009), allegedly created by some members of the SMT and some parents and the DOE officials are inhibiting the emergence of new leadership opportunities at school B. Hence, Gates (2000) argues that democratic or transformational leadership relies on extensive networks of engaged dialogue to achieve collective wisdom and expertise. Evidence from this study concurs with that of Slater (2008, p. 61) "*that knowing people and engaging dialogue is crucial in developing the trust and respect that characterise collaborative leadership*."

In essence leadership and communication are intertwined because, in my view, a leaders' relationship with his/her followers is determined by these questions, namely: what does the leader share with colleagues; what is the quality of his/her

personal rapport with others; how does he/she open up to others; does he or she influence or control others?

5.2.4 Leadership as influence not authority or power

The findings from this qualitative study involving principals, demonstrates that leadership is about influencing others and not about enforcing authority or power. The importance of principals exerting influence by building relationships with those that they are called to lead is documented in the literature (Bush, 2008; Christie, 2010; Harris and Lambert, 2003).

Evidence from this study suggests that leadership does not come from the title or the positional authority that a person holds but from the way the person performs the task. Consequently, whilst many leaders possess formal power, Bush (2008) reminds us that power and authority are not the same as leadership. Consistent with the perspective of the participants in the study, Bush (2008) notes that power is about strength, the ability to control others or to force things to happen. On the contrary, leadership is the ability to influence others and not to force or order others (Bush, 2008; Christie, 2010; and Harris and Lambert, 2003). According to Bacon (2011) leadership without influence is nonexistent because influencing is how leaders lead, a view with which I concur.

In my view, leaders build influence by building positive relationships with the groups they are called to lead. Hence, the principals in the study built positive relationships with the SMT, teachers, learners, parents. Evidence shows that where relationships grew, trust emerged. In this study, principal A and C initially enjoyed more trust as leaders and this was visible in greater team productivity, teacher satisfaction as well as overall organisational effectiveness. However, despite principal B knowing the art of management and leadership, and knowing when to use authority and when to use influence, his ability to influence the entire staff to use their expertise to bring about change and growth in their organisation is still evolving

The researcher has tried to show, through this discussion, that the various elements of democratic leadership experienced by the three principals are interlinked. Hence participation, communication, ethics, values, influence and empowerment are central to leadership. These characteristics correspond well with the participants leadership qualities since they allowed others to lead by involving them, empowering them, trusting, respecting and encouraging them as well as mentoring and coaching them. Thus the findings support the theory of transformational leadership as outlined by Bass and Riggio cited in Preedy, Bennett and Wise (2012, p. 75) that includes bringing about change in individuals and systems by creating positive change in followers and developing them into future leaders.

The principals' experience of leadership concurs with what the literature says about transformational leadership. Thus the three participants understand leadership as being a relational phenomenon rather than a form of control and direction. The question to be asked next is what are the basic qualities of professional principals? In addition, what does it mean to be a professional and to exhibit professionalism in the field of education?

My findings led me to question one of the most fundamental, if often unstated assumptions about leadership namely, that it is the work of one individual who in some way is responsible for the change process. In defining leadership as a set of tasks to be performed, rather than the work of a role, I found evidence that the three participants were democratic leaders because they understood leadership as a process that involves others. In my view no one person could possibly master all the different sources of information, skills and or expertise necessary for taking good decisions. Hence in leading schools into professional places of teaching and learning, principals should be democratic leaders

5.3 Understanding professionalism

In attempting to define professionalism the three principals highlighted three facets of professionalism that contributed to the development of their professional status as teachers and then as principals. The aspects identified were:

- Professionalism and the role of personal and professional standards;
- The role of relationships and responsibility in supporting professionalism;
- Professionalism and the role of professional knowledge.

5.3.1 The role of personal and professional standards in professionalism

The findings show that all three principals identified standards of behaviour as being part of their role as a teacher and a principal. They confirmed that these standards of behaviour were documented in the Code of Professional Ethics as outlined by SACE (2006).

In defining professionalism, they stated that the behaviour exhibited by a principal is what identifies the principal's professionalism. High personal standards of communication, appropriate dress, punctuality, attendance and professional knowledge were considered important aspects of professional teachers and principals. This is supported in the literature by Hurst and Reding (in Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005) who align certain behaviours with teacher professionalism, namely, high standards of dress, use of proper language, punctuality and building of strong relationships with colleagues. The principals in this study respected the high personal standards imposed on them as they spoke of working hard at not becoming complacent and, as Morrow (1998) argues, professionalism is the degree to which one is committed to the profession. This is further elucidated by Morrow (1998) who notes that a high degree of professionalism would include accepting responsibility for the way in which a job is done. The principals interviewed seemed to display a high degree of professionalism since they were committed to their jobs. Their commitment was evident in that they worked at higher levels than the baseline criteria outlined by the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) prescribed by the Department of Basic Education.

The principals in this study were of the opinion that their own values and beliefs impacted their personal and professional standards. Hence these three leaders believed that their ability to work professionally with others in a collective manner was guided by their ability to make their own values and beliefs

compatible with that of the school culture. This is supported in the work of Sockett (in Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005) who stated that principals who work in a team have a whole school focus and subsequently reconcile their own values and beliefs to that of the school community.

According to Gunter (2001) and the SACE (2006) code of professional ethics, leaders should display high personal standards or attributes towards learners, parents and colleagues. The principals in this study believed that as professionals and transformational leaders, they showed attributes of integrity, empathy, trust, reliability and care in working with the school community. These findings on the role of personal and professional standards were supported in the literature and therefore reveal that the data in this study is trustworthy.

5.3.2 The role of relationships and responsibility in supporting professionalism

Evidence from the study shows that the principals' regard professional relationships and professional responsibility as pre-requisites for professionalism. This view was noted by Gunter (2001), Bush (2003) and Honingh and Hooge (2009). These scholars claim that ethical integrity guides the professional and the collective responsibility connects the practise to the wider picture of social issues (Honingh and Hooge, 2009). Similarly, Ryan (2006) also notes that working as a collegial team requires trust and respect. As mentioned earlier, principals interviewed stated that having high levels of respect and trust for others is paramount in building a collegial school culture. It was also noted that two of the principals stated they had succeeded in developing trusting relationships amongst the staff of their schools whilst for the other principal this was still in its infancy. However, all three principals claimed that trusting relationships with the community were still evolving and that the principals had to work hard at this.

The benefits of an inclusive, trusting relationship namely, enhanced professional knowledge, shared decision-making and enhanced problem solving skills, as proposed by Harris and Muijs (2004) was supported in the findings. The principals in the study were leading with people, rather than instructing them. Thus, they believed that as principals of schools, they not only modelled professional relationships, but that they practised transformative leadership. These

findings were supported in the literature by Boehnke, Bontis, Di Stefano and Di Stefano (2003), Birasnav, Ragnekar and Dalpati (2011) and Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999), who noted that transformational leaders encouraged collective responsibility and teamwork.

From the findings, it is evident that the principals in this study believed they had a responsibility to the professional nature of their job. More importantly, the principals believed that through collective responsibility the practise of teacher leadership could emerge. Effective professional relationships and professional responsibility were seen as key elements for extending professional knowledge.

5.3.3 Professionalism and the role of professional knowledge

The principals in this study believed that professionalism should be seen as the extension of one's knowledge base. Hence, the principals were committed to continuous professional development, and this is supported by Harris and Muijs (2004) who claim that principals will need to act as catalysts in providing regular opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful professional development. The principals interviewed were leading by example, by being committed to improving their own knowledge base. All the principals in this study completed the ACE Course, and two had completed the B Ed Honours Degree. One had completed the M Ed Degree, and two of the three were completing the PMDP course. This improvement of professional knowledge is supported in the literature by Bush (2008), Fullan (2003) and Harris (2007) who consistently claim that the principal is the key to an effective school. In addition, Bush et al (2011) stressed that in times of change, the preparation of principals should go beyond training them to implement the requirements of the hierarchy but rather to developing rounded and confident leaders who engage all stakeholders.

The findings show that principals and teachers believed that they are lifelong learners. Hence, they were committed to continuous professional learning, which Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) stated was pivotal to teacher leadership and teacher professionalism. New knowledge was gathered and disseminated by principals within the study schools in different ways. All three principals used

teamwork, mentoring, the practice of teacher leadership and networking to ultimately improve teaching and learning in schools. This supports the work of Fullan (2001) who stated that professional development is not about attending one of workshops, but rather its focus is about learning from and sharing with others daily through organised groups which focus on learner achievement. According to Honingh and Hooge (2009), this cross-grouping, whilst being beneficial, requires collective responsibility, professional collaboration, and participation in the school's decision-making process.

The critical importance of the professional development of professional knowledge that was highlighted in the findings supported the related literature. The principals' use of leadership terms and concepts and their understanding of leadership and professionalism are linked to their experience as academics which I alluded to earlier in this section. However, the findings revealed that their understandings of leadership differed from what they as principals of primary schools actually experienced.

5.4 Leadership through teamwork

Within this study, there was also evidence of the differences between the principal's understanding of leadership and the way in which leadership was experienced. All three principals' responses revealed that they understood leadership as a process that leads to movement and positive change hence they acknowledged the importance of leading in a democratic and participatory way by distributing leadership in their schools. In transforming their schools and developing collegial working relationships the participants identified three experiences of leadership:

- The importance of leading through teams to transform schools;
- The benefits of teamwork;
- Pre-requisites of collaborative cultures.

5.4.1 The Importance of leading through teams to transform schools

The interview discussions with the principals around their experiences of leadership revealed that working in isolation yielded very little success. For them teamwork was potentially much more empowering to both them and the staff, as all parties had to be accountable for their actions and outcomes. This concurs with Mercer, Barker and Bird (2010) who believed that empowerment through self-managing teams was a powerful way of mobilising the teaching and non-teaching staff in the quest for improved quality and productivity.

The participants in this study believed in the idea of self-managing teams, in which voluntary involvement, co-operation, participation, delegation and effective communication are considered the hallmarks of good leadership. The findings indicated that the principals were at various points on a spectrum of distributing leadership to teams. One participant, a principal of a small rural primary school, highlighted the difficulty but not the impossibility of distributing management tasks and sharing leadership with a staff of only three educators, no SMT and less than forty learners. This is supported by Robinson (2011, p. 61) who notes in a small school:

> " *it must be remembered that there are fewer people with whom to share and less of a choice of sharing leadership according to people's strengths .....fewer people to share with makes true shared or distributed leadership difficult".*

Nonetheless, the principals in this research study placed importance on lessening feelings of isolation, by teachers working collaboratively and planning together as teacher leaders, grade group teams, phase teams, SMT's and SGB's. The latter practice could be described as the use of transformational leadership (Leithwood, 1992) since it is linked to managing change and shaping members beliefs, values and attitudes while developing plans for the future. Similarly, Middlewood et al. (2005) argue that transformational leaders respond to the needs and interests of colleagues and followers who seek to move their organisations forward.

The participants in this study could therefore be described as transformational leaders since they were, in my view, serious about transforming their schools into professional places of teaching and learning. The findings show that the principals in the study regarded teamwork as being beneficial to their take-up of leadership.

Conversely, having come from an era of autocratic leadership, the participants were also aware of the dangers of a lack of teamwork. Principals were also aware of the concomitant conflict that could result from a principal's' failure to resolve differences of opinion, or of a lack of trust and lack of respect amongst staff. This is noted by Walker (in Grant, 2006) who confirms that for teamwork to be successful the culture of the school has to be based on values of openness, trust and participation. What then are the benefits of teamwork?

5.4.2 The Benefits of teamwork

The findings reveal that the principals in this study were aware of the advantages of teamwork. They reported that as principals they did not lead alone, but shared leadership with their colleagues. Because of this, they had the co-operation and support of most of their staff. This is supported in the literature by Mercer, Barker and Bird (2010) who claim that individual attempts have limited outcomes, whereas teamwork has the potential for multiplied effects. The participants acknowledged that the resilience, commitment and strong work ethic of their dynamic teams, that they are a part of, supported their leadership. This concurs with the work of Bush and Middlewood (2005) who state that teams can tackle a great range of problems, generate commitment and take joint responsibility for identifying and solving problems. The findings reveal that the principals used varying expertise, skills, abilities and personalities of their staff to create a collaborative work culture within their schools.

The findings also revealed that teams were not automatically successful. The principals in the study had to work hard at establishing teams. As mentioned previously, two principals initially experienced resistance from team members who were reluctant to co-operate fully, because of a lack of trust due to incompatible personal characteristics. Lafasto and Larson (in Mercer et al 2010) regard this dysfunctional and counterproductive behaviour as a disadvantage of teamwork. According to these scholars, good teams are therefore dependant on simple, easy relationships which enhance a team's performance. On the contrary, poor teams were manifest in relationships that were complicated and where SMT did not deliver on what was agreed, as was experienced by Principal B. The

principals'' initial negative experiences of leadership therefore encouraged them to focus on the beneficial aspects of teamwork. The participants started by creating a collaborative culture within their schools and by ensuring that certain conditions essential for team success were established.

The findings show that as leaders, these principals enabled a team structure, shared their vision with the staff, mentored followers and provided a supportive school culture. These four conditions are consistent with the work of Hackman (2002), who reports on five similar conditions that are essential for team success namely:

- having a real team;
- having a compelling direction;
- having an enabling team structure;
- having a supportive organisational context, and
- expert team coaching.

These conditions are also consistent with transformational leadership as outlined in the literature. The findings reveal that the principals involved in this study believed that positive teamwork was an essential precondition for transforming schools into professional places of teaching and learning. In addition, the principals in this research study identified their twin roles of being both leaders and professionals

5.4.3 Pre-requisites of collaborative cultures

All three principals in this study claim that one of the main pre-requisites of collaborative cultures was for principals to gain the respect and trust of followers. In addition they claimed that the latter was possible if principals had a caring, open and honest leadership style. This is supported in the literature by Grant (2006) who notes that values which lie at the centre of a collaborative culture and organisational change include transparency, trust, respect, a sense of worth,

communication, consultation and ownership. In addition, Sergiovanni (2001) indicated that in a collaborative school culture, individuals are in a relationship together by natural will, continual sharing of ideas and values of honesty and integrity.

In my view, working collaboratively requires principals' and SMT's to build relationships of trust, positivity, equity and inclusivity since this could overrule authoritative instruction and rule thereby quelling stress and conflict. However, a collaborative culture calls for principals' and SMT's to be enthusiastic, flexible, and steadfast. This is so because their role demands constant inspiration, motivation, challenging, influencing and mentoring of colleagues. Also collaborative cultures require principals and SMT's to see their role as empowering others to make decisions about the operation of the school. In addition the principal and SMT should entrust others to achieve outcomes without constant supervision. A pre-requisite of collaborative cultures should therefore be seen as participatory decision-making and vision-sharing. Through this, principals together with the SMT are able to distribute leadership wisely according to colleagues' strengths.

A collaborative school culture is directly related to teacher leadership. This is supported in the literature by Grant (2010) as she argues that a school that wishes to embody the practice of teacher leadership would need to develop a culture as stated above. A collaborative culture therefore supports collaboration, partnership, teamwork and collective decision-making. What then were the contexts that supported principals in their take-up of leadership?

5.5 Contexts that support principals' take-up of leadership

The findings from this qualitative study involving principals, demonstrates that these three leaders recognised that collaborative cultures have the power to support a principal's leadership and transform a school positively' whilst autocratic leadership could have the reverse effect. Context that supported the principals' take-up of leadership are as follows:

- Leading informally through teacher leadership;

- The impact of professional development, risk taking and change agency on a school's culture;
- The link between leadership and professionalism;
- The influence of external contexts.

5.5.1 Leading informally through teacher leadership

Teacher leaders are persons who are aware of the demands made by changing South African situations on schools to change, and are willing and courageous to lead the change process (Grant 2006). Two of the participants regarded themselves as being teacher leaders earlier in their careers in that they led change informally in their former and their current schools. They claim to have led in the classroom by always striving to improve their teaching whilst simultaneously leading outside the classroom and in the community as grade leader, sports administrator, fundraiser, exam committee chairperson, bereavement co-ordinator, SGB representative and union representative. In keeping with the other participant, who claims as a principal to be growing teacher leaders, all three highlighted the importance of principals affording teachers the opportunity to lead informally by allowing them opportunities to exercise their professional leadership roles within and beyond the classroom.

The findings show that leadership was experienced informally by the participants at many different levels within the school. This is supported in the literature by various authors such as Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), Muijs and Harris (2003) and Grant (2006, & 2008), among others. These authors confirm that teacher leaders are firstly expert teachers within their classrooms while at the same time taking on additional roles beyond the classroom. Hence teacher leadership afforded participants the opportunity to be leaders in that they participated in school level decision–making with the aim of identifying and solving problems. Like Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) the principals in this study do not equate leadership only with formal positions of the SMT and/or the position of principals. On the contrary they argue, and I support the view, that by using the energy of teacher leaders as agents of school change, they are distributing

leadership to others in the school. Through this act schools could become professional places of teaching and learning.

The participants argued that a school that wishes to embrace teacher leadership would need to develop a culture that supports collective decision-making, collaboration, partnerships, and teams.

5.5.2 The impact of professional development, change agency and risk-taking on a school's culture

The principals in this study claim that for SMT's to build leadership capacity whether through teacher leadership or teacher professionalism or both, their own formal leadership style as well as their support and encouragement were called into question. As mentioned earlier, the principals in this study stated that working together with colleagues requires an environment of collegiality. For these participants a collegial practice was recognised as one with high levels of trust, respect for others, risk taking, encouragement and support for those who were innovative, and who worked in collaborative manner. As Temperley and Street (2005) stated, being inspired to work together and to take collective responsibility for improving teaching and learning in a school, requires a collegial environment.

The findings reveal that in order to achieve collegiality, the participants had to become change agents who were committed to changing the mindset of their followers for the greater good of their organisations. The participant principals claimed that they had to adopt a transformational leadership style in order to achieve collegiality and a collaborative work culture. As Bhagowat (2006) outlined, transformational leaders motivate followers to set higher goals, reach their full potential, work in collaboration and aspire to leadership.

The findings show that principals in this study believed that collaboration helps deepen knowledge. This concurs with the work of Harris and Muijs (2004), who state that collaboration, also leads to a heightened awareness to the teaching practice. I support this view since collaboration facilitates transformation. According to Bhengu (2005) principals as transformational leaders facilitate the

formation of effective networking to share knowledge, ensure best practices, offer support and monitor progress.

Two principals in this study also claimed that their development had been influenced to a certain extent by role models they had had in teaching. Hence, ex-principals were seen, by the two participants, as mentors and role models. These two participants viewed their mentors as transformational leaders who inspired, motivated, coached, encouraged and supported the development of their leadership and professionalism as teachers and SMT members.

As Fullan (2003) argues, effective leadership is an art, since it comprises four main aspects, namely, knowing what to do, knowing when to do it, knowing how to do it, and knowing why it must be done. Similarly, the principals in this study believed that the leadership skills of staff members could be developed by setting an example of being honest, trustworthy, risk-taker who was fair to all. Hence in exercising leadership the participants in this study did not hold onto information as a source of power and control. On the contrary, they were able to determine what interested, motivated, captivated and renewed their staff (Slater, 2008). Through this they initiated the opportunity to expand the human capacity of their organisations. The findings reveal that by encouraging staff to work in a collegial environment with the guidance and support of the grade leaders, mentors, SMT and the principal as their chief role model these principals were in reality adopting shared leadership approach. The sharing of leadership identified in these organisations is characteristic of transformational leadership of which collaboration and collegiality are key components. Thus, my findings around a transformational leadership style supporting leadership development are supported in the literature.

As mentioned, earlier transformational leaders stimulate followers to set aside individual interests for the collective or team purpose as this is beneficial to leadership. The principal therefore plays a strategic role in facilitating the staff to acquire the habit of learning and working together as a team. The principals in this study did not assume that the Department of Education (DOE) must first get its act together before principals can do their work on the contrary they sought external support in their take-up of leadership.

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5.5.3 The link between leadership and professionalism

The participants in this study recognised that their leadership and professionalism was closely linked. They also realised that as principals, they were expected to exhibit both [leadership and professionalism] in their actions and relationships with others. Thus the participants believed that strong leadership reinforced professionalism. The importance of principals being aware of this link when exercising leadership in schools cannot be overestimated. Thus the principals in this study were of the opinion that the Department of Education and Higher Education Institutions needed to include in their professional development work, opportunities for principals to explore these concepts and to understand and be aware of their impact. All three participants believed that the ACE-SL afforded them such an opportunity as did the PMDP course for two of the three principals.

As Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011) stated, principalship is now a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation. Hence principalship, like teacher leadership, is about developing rounded and confident leaders who are able to involve all stakeholders for the benefit of the organisation (Bush et al, 2011). In my view, leadership is about greater empowerment, which expands a principal's professional status. Through empowerment, principals can realise their professional worth. The principals in this study also believed that as leaders, they needed to set-up various ways in which both they and the staff could develop their skills of working with others.

The participants in this study realised that the effect of leadership without an emphasis on the professional nature of their work, is short-sighted since leadership, as stated earlier, is about influencing others. Consequently, the participants believed that leadership is likely to falter if the high standards and expectations of professionalism are not part of the leadership. This confirms the participants' firm belief that all role players in a school need to be supported in developing the professional side of their role. In addition all should be given the opportunity to take-up leadership that will in turn enhance their professionalism. In my view, the development of leadership and professionalism amongst the staff, would then lead to schools becoming professional places of teaching and learning,

since new practices and new knowledge would be employed. Hence, in this study, principalship was also seen as leadership for school transformation and improvement as outlined by Fullan (2003). This was evident in that, the three principals strongly believed that by taking action to build leadership capacity, they were in reality taking action to change the system in which they worked.

5.5.4 The influence of external contexts

In their take–up of leadership and professionalism principals acknowledged the support received from other government departments namely, Health, Social Welfare, Environmental Affairs and Transport. Principals in the study networked with these departments and this assisted them in acquiring the necessary values and attitudes to effect and lead change in our schools.

The financial support received from private enterprises was also acknowledged as a pillar of support in their take-up of leadership. The participants in this study believed that they could not remain dependent on the education system to correct its 'wrongs'. Thus by breaking their dependency on the education system they were in fact being innovative in finding solutions to their own leadership problems. This notion is supported in the literature by Fullan (2003) who strongly believes that by taking action against the system that contains us we immediately change the context in which we work. Similarly, the Task Team Report (Department of Education, 1996) also argues that principals who draw on others for levels of support are in effect developing the capacity to lead and manage themselves, and the capacity of others. In my view drawing on others for support shows that partnerships can be valuable and effective. This therefore reveals that the data in this study are trustworthy.

Whilst the participants experienced contexts that supported their take-up of leadership there were also challenges.

5.6 Contexts inhibiting principals' take-up of leadership

The findings of this research study reveal that principals also experienced some negative factors in their take-up of leadership. The four main constraints were:

- Stress as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- The lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers;
- The lack of parent involvement as a barrier to leadership and professionalism;
- the lack of commitment of the Department of Education (DOE).

5.6.1 Stress as a barrier to leadership and professionalism

One of the three participants in the study identified stress as an inhibiting context to her initial take-up of leadership. According to the participant the stress was caused by her fear of the unknown, gender resistance and resistance to her democratic style of leadership by the older teachers. The findings show that the participant experienced stress when she had to decide whether or not to lead with honesty, and convince colleagues that she needed their support in transforming the leadership within the school. According to van der Merwe (in Van Deventer and Kruger, 2005) stress of this nature is caused by intrapersonal conflict, implying that the individual has difficulty in choosing personal aims, hence conflict occurs within the self and this emerges as stress.

However, rather than be an autocratic leader the findings show that this participant was eventually able to resolve the stress she experienced. The participant did this by applying "directive action techniques" (Kyriacou, 2001, p. 30) namely, developing a culture that supports shared leadership. The latter is evident in her words:

> *I could not allow the stress to get the better of me.... I had to deal appropriately with people... I also had to reflect on my own personality, values, behaviour and leadership style to influence others to work with me, rather than against me* (Interview A, p. 8).

My view is that by dealing with her fear rather than avoiding it, this principal was able to manage her stress. The use of this productive approach also showed her understanding of transformational leadership, for as Bass and Avolio (1993) and Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) noted, transformational leadership requires fostering

a culture building approach in which shared decision-making and problem-solving capacities are created. In addition to stress the principals also cited a lack of professionalism as a context inhibiting their take-up of leadership.

5.6.2 The lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers

The findings reveal that two of the three principal's take-up of leadership and professionalism was inhibited by the non-professional behaviour of young part-time trained teachers. The principals in the study claimed that these teachers lack of formal full-time training at a teacher training institution perpetuated their lack of professionalism. Hence the participants highlighted these teacher's poor communication skills, classroom practice, teaching techniques, lack of discipline and dress code as behaviours that differentiated them from those who had attended teacher training institutions on a fulltime basis. In addition the participants claimed that the carefree attitude and lack of commitment of these informally trained teachers were also constraints to their take-up of leadership. For the participants, these teachers' non-professionalism is seen as a constraint that requires a great deal of re-skilling, mentoring and a mindset change. As mentioned earlier in chapter 1 even though working collaboratively is important it does not mean that achieving it is easy. Hence the principals in this study realised that building the competencies of others in the team is no easy task. They therefore regarded this as a context constraining their leadership. The difficulty of working collaboratively and developing others was noted in the Task Team Report (Department of Education, 1996, p. 51) in these words; "building peoples capacity depends on principals and SMT's making available opportunities, as well as a great deal of time and energy to make them work".

In addition to the above the principals in this study also saw the lack of parent involvement in school activities as a context constraining their leadership.

5.6.3 The lack of parent involvement as a barrier to leadership and professionalism

The findings reveal that all three participants take-up of leadership was inhibited by a lack of parent involvement. This lack of parent involvement could be an indication that many parents had little interest and understanding of their role in

SBM. This could also be that schools in the study have governors who do not always have the governing skills or even the resources to travel to meetings (Christie, 2010). Hence despite the principals belief that parents are equal partners in their children's education evidence from the data reveals otherwise. Their poor response to parent meetings and other school based activities was an area of concern to all three participants who regarded themselves as transformational leaders practising a participatory leadership style. The participants saw the inclusion and participation of parents as a challenge they still had to resolve because for them leadership is the responsibility of the trio namely, parents, teachers and the SGB. This involvement of parents and guardians in SBM is supported in the literature by Sergiovanni (2001) and Christie (2010). The researcher concurs with their view that a supportive culture can only thrive when all the major stakeholders are involved for in that way all take ownership of the school. According to the participants yet another context inhibiting their take-up of leadership was the lack of commitment from the Department of Education.

5.6.4 The lack of commitment of the Department of Education (DOE)

The findings reveal that two of the three principals noted the lack of commitment of the DOE as a constraint to their initial take-up of leadership. They claim that they were constantly defending the DOE to staff and parents. Poor service delivery, poor curriculum support (previously for OBE, NCS and now for CAPS), poor planning, lack of governance support and insufficient funding were still identified as factors constraining principals in leading schools better. In my view, effective leadership and effective capacity building was dependant on the availability of appropriate levels of infrastructural, financial and other related resources. Hence the participants in this study believe that in order for them to perform adequately within the context set by national policy and legislation school management and leadership structures require the commitment of the DOE. I concur with the view of the Task Team (DOE 1996) that it is imperative that people who work in an environment that is constantly changing receive infrastructural resources, training and support, especially in the development of new competencies required in terms of new approaches. The participants in this study believed that whilst some training was given it was once off rather than ongoing. In addition it did not capacitate them with new leadership and

management competencies (knowledge, understanding, abilities and attitudes). Consequently the lack of commitment from the DOE to support the people who make schools and structures of the DOE work served as their motivation to embark on the ACE-SL Course, BEd and MEd degrees, and the PMDP Course. It is clear from the latter that commitment from the DOE is necessary for good working relationships, effective staff participation and effective leadership to unfold (Department of Education, 1996)

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the key issues and themes around leadership and professionalism that have emanated from the data. I have also shown what the three primary school principals in this study are doing to lead their schools better to ensure that they are professional places of teaching and learning.

Thus I hope we see in the leadership of these three school principals that they use participatory leadership as the means to involve everyone in decision-making. They do this through shared involvement, problem solving and mutual winning. These principals adopted a participatory approach which is in line with the new leadership approach advocated by education reforms in South Africa since 1994. These reforms call for schools to be led by principals who are democratic, collaborative, ethical and inclusive.

In being participative the principals displayed values of trust, empathy, openness, care, concern and honesty. Adopting this interactive approach could also be misunderstood as leaning towards a laissez-faire approach that lacks directives and control. However, this was not the case in this study since leadership and communication were intertwined. In addition, whilst stressing a people orientation approach, principals did not neglect task orientation neither was authority or power enforced. On the contrary, leadership was a relational phenomenon that reflected concern for task, structure and professionalism.

The principals' understandings and experiences of leadership and professionalism brought into question several concerns namely: how best they could lead schools;

how best they could use the resources and skills of others to create strategies for building pathways to leadership and professionalism. The principals in this study used their experiences, their values and their ethics to guide them in leading their schools in a professional way. These qualities are characteristic of transformational leadership. Hence these principals were described as transformational leaders in that they motivated their followers, to share knowledge, and work collaboratively for the common good of the organisation rather than of self. They also offered inspiration and support to others.

In the next chapter, the conclusion, I summarise my main findings and then make recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative case study within the interpretive paradigm and it explores the leadership and professional experiences of primary school principals. The study was undertaken through in-depth interviews and reflective journal writing with principals to determine how they could lead schools better to ensure schools are professional places of teaching and learning.

This introduction provides a brief description of the preceding chapters, the significance and limitations of the research and concludes with suggestions for future research.

The preceding five chapters provide the foundation for the conclusion. The first chapter stated the problem of the study. Chapter two discussed the literature reviewed nationally and internationally in relation to principals' leadership experiences and understandings of professionalism. Transformational leadership theory which is applicable to school leadership, professionalism and change was also discussed. The third chapter provided the aim of the study and the research methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter four was a presentation of the data received from the participants. The fifth chapter discussed the main findings of the research. This concluding chapter summarises the main findings as discussed in the previous chapter.

6.2 Summary of the main findings

With regard to leadership and professional practices employed in ensuring schools are professional places of teaching and learning, data have shown that principals practices were possibly influenced by their understanding of leadership and professionalism.

In this research study leadership was understood as a participatory activity. Consequently, the principals' assumed a more distributive role whilst still being

accountable for school functionality. The findings show that the principals' inspired a culture of empowerment by involving others in decision-making and acting as facilitators, mentors, motivators and support structures rather than simply issuing orders or making demands. By practising the bottom-up approach in which people were made to feel part of the organisation their leadership style was akin to transformational leadership in that it was collective, interactive and it motivated followers to new heights.

Evidence from this study also shows that leadership was understood as leaders and followers, embracing values of care and concern, honesty, trust, open-mindedness and empathy. The principals' deep care and concern for others showed their humanity and their empathetic nature in creating a culture of trust and sharing. The findings showed that these principals have leadership principles likened to the transformational leadership approach. The participants realised that for them to become fully trusted, they had to be open in their relationships with others.

In addition the findings were clear that leadership was understood as a process that uses communication skills and strategies to capacitate others. Professional and convincing dialogue with colleagues, learners, parents, the SGB, DOE officials and the general public prevailed in all three schools. These extensive networks of engaged dialogue assisted principals in achieving collaboration. However, the presence of 'monologic spaces' allegedly created by a few members of the SMT, some parents and some DOE officials were inhibiting the emergence of new leadership opportunities for one principal.

The data also showed principals understood leadership as influencing others and not enforcing authority or power. Since they understood leadership as a process that involves others they allowed others to lead by involving, empowering, trusting, respecting, encouraging, mentoring and coaching them. Hence in leading schools to become professional places of teaching and learning these principals used a democratic approach.

In attempting to define professionalism the three principals highlighted three facets of professionalism that contributed to the development of their professional status as teachers and then as principals. Firstly, the findings show that all three

principals understood professionalism to be the behaviour exhibited by a principal as documented in the Code of Professional ethics as outlined by SACE (2006). Hence the data showed that high personal standards of behaviour such as communication, appropriate dress, punctuality, attendance and professional knowledge were considered important aspects of professional teachers and principals. The data showed that the principals also understood professionalism as commitment and the ability to work with others in a collegial manner. Hence the principals in this study believed that as professionals and transformational leaders, they showed attributes of integrity, empathy, trust, reliability and care in working with the school community.

Secondly, the principals' viewed professional relationships and professional responsibility as pre-requisites for professionalism. For them working as a collegial team required inclusive leadership through trusting relationships, enhanced professional knowledge, shared decision-making and enhanced problem solving skills, as proposed by Harris and Muijs (2005). From the findings, it is evident that the principals in this study believed they had a responsibility to the professional nature of their job. More importantly, the principals believed that through collective responsibility the practise of teacher leadership could emerge. Effective professional relationships and professional responsibility were seen as key elements for extending professional knowledge. Thus, the findings show that as principals of schools, they not only modelled professional relationships, but that they practised transformative leadership.

Thirdly, the principals in this study believed that professionalism should be seen as the extension of one's knowledge base. The data shows they were leading by example, by being committed to improving their own knowledge base since all three principals had completed further studies. Hence, their commitment to continuous professional learning was pivotal in the development of teacher professionalism.

Within this study, there was also evidence of the differences between the principal's understanding of leadership and the way in which leadership was experienced. All three principals' responses revealed that even though they understood leadership as a process that leads to movement and positive change

their experiences were different. Hence they acknowledged the importance of devolving leadership by distributing leadership in their schools.The principals attributed their ability to transform their schools to four practices: creating pre-requisites for collaborative cultures, leading informally through teacher leadership, leading through teams and establishing supportive external contexts. The findings revealed that through the above practices they discovered that working in isolation yielded very little success but that teamwork was potentially much more empowering and beneficial to both them and to the staff, as all parties had to be accountable for their actions and outcomes.

The findings show that contexts supporting leadership were teamwork, linking leadership with professionalism, recognising the impact of professional development, risk taking and change agency on a school's culture, and the influence of external contexts. The participants acknowledged that teams were not automatically successful but that they had to work hard at establishing teams which is consistent with transformational leadership. Evidence from the data show that the principals in this research study recognised their twin roles of being both leaders and professionals. The findings also reveal that in order to achieve collegiality, the participants had to become change agents who were committed to changing the mindset of their followers for the greater good of their organisations.

In their take–up of leadership the principals in this study did not assume that the Department of Education (DOE) must first get its act together before principals can do their work, on the contrary they sought external support from other government departments namely, Health, Social Welfare, Environmental Affairs and Transport to assist them in their take-up of leadership. This was consistent with the Task Team Report (Department of Education, 1996) which argues that principals who draw on others for levels of support are in effect developing the capacity to lead and manage themselves, and the capacity of others.

6.3 Key issues inhibiting the take-up of leadership and professionalism

There are several critical issues that have arisen from the findings that are perceived to be hampering the principals' take-up of leadership and

professionalism. The four key constraining factors were stress, inadequate professionalism of part-time trained teachers, inadequate parent involvement and inadequate commitment from the Department of Education (DOE).

One of the participants in this study felt that stress caused by her fear of the unknown, gender resistance and resistance to her democratic style of leadership by the older teachers was an inhibiting factor to her initial take-up of leadership. The principal felt stress occurred when she had to decide whether or not to lead with honesty, and convince colleagues that she needed their support in transforming the leadership within the school. The implication is that for leadership and professionalism to be practised effectively and efficiently adequate preparation of principals is necessary.

This research suggests that the lack of professionalism of part-time trained teachers is constraining the principals' take-up of leadership. For the participants, the inadequate professionalism of these informally trained teachers namely, poor communication skills, poor classroom practice, poor teaching techniques, lack of discipline, poor dress code, carefree attitude and lack of commitment were seen as constraints that require a great deal of re-skilling, mentoring and a mindset change. The lack of professionalism has a negative effect on making schools professional places of teaching and learning. The principals in this study realised that building the competencies of others in the team is no easy task but is an important and necessary one for working collaboratively. The benefits of professionalism are noted in the Task Team Report (1996).

Participants felt that parent involvement was minimal and that this was creating a challenge to leadership in their schools. Hence despite the principals belief that parents are equal partners in their children's education evidence from the data reveals otherwise. Parents' poor response to parent meetings and other school based activities was an area of concern to all three principals and one they hoped to overcome shortly.

The lack of commitment of the DOE was seen as a constraint to the participants' take-up of leadership. This claim was evident in the fact that poor service

delivery, poor curriculum support (previously for OBE, NCS and now for CAPS), lack of governance support, lack of infrastructure development and insufficient funding hindered principals in leading schools better and ensuring that these become professional places of teaching and learning. The Task Team Report claims that commitment from the DOE is necessary for good working relationships, effective staff participation and effective leadership to unfold (Department of Education, 1996)

6.4 Significance of the study

This research explored principals' understandings and experiences of leadership and professionalism. It aimed to find out how principals understood and experienced leadership and what their view of professionalism in their schools entailed. Although this is a very small scale study I believe it has identified some interesting findings that reiterate some of the findings of national and international research. The principals chosen for this research study were forward thinking principals who consciously promoted the development of leadership and professionalism in their schools. The aim of the research was to support principals rather than dictate how they should exercise the twin roles of leadership and professionalism. The potential value of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts supporting leadership and professionalism and the implications of this which may assist policy makers and other principals on how best to design policies that ensure schools become professional places of teaching and learning. This research has paved the way for further study into the sustainability of school improvement through the building of the leadership capacity and professionalism of principals.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

The small sample size (three principals) to save cost and time may have been a limiting factor to the generalization of the findings. The lack of generalisability should on the contrary be seen as positive rather than a limitation because it was not the purpose of this case study research to generalise. Rather it is the

uniqueness and rigour of case studies that makes the findings of qualitative studies dependable (Rule and John, 2011). In view of this, I hope that the sample size can still be considered sufficient, as the focus of my study was the experiences of principals only.

Another limitation is that I employed two techniques, namely in-depth interviews and reflective journal writing. School visits, observation and document analysis could have added a different perspective to this research. Also to gain a wider perspective of the study, I could have increased the number of participants in the research and increased the number of data collecting techniques.

Being a principal could also have been a limitation. However I was aware of my own *preconceived assumptions* concerning leadership and professionalism so during data collection and analysis I tried to look at the information through unbiased lenses, letting the phenomena take their own shape and speak for itself.

6.6 Recommendations

As South Africa is merging its experiences of leadership and professionalism with that of the international community, some recommendations are made in an effort to improve leading in schools:

The research showed there was a connection between the principals' leadership, values and their ethics hence the importance of principals focusing on ethical integrity which is a pre-requisite for democratic, participatory or shared leadership. Principals' leadership is likely to falter if the high standards and expectations of professionalism are not part of the leadership.

Principals were sharing information and in so doing were less controlling and focussing more on empowering others. Communication cannot be separated from decision-making. No one person could possibly master all the different sources of information, skills and or expertise necessary for taking good decisions. So principals' who create 'dialogic spaces' are fostering two-way communication, rather than building channels that direct information in one direction only.

Principals who work in a team have a whole school focus and subsequently reconcile their own values and beliefs to that of the school community. However, a collaborative culture calls for Principals' and SMT's to be enthusiastic, flexible, and steadfast.

6.7 Conclusion

Leading a primary school into a professional place of teaching and learning during a period of ongoing transformation requires enthusiasm, flexibility and steadfastness. The findings from this research validate this claim. This research has also shown that that there is a link between the leadership and the professionalism of principals. The development of leadership capacity supported the development of professionalism as leaders and followers worked together. Principals instilled a sense of teamwork and leadership in their followers and by doing this they encouraged teachers to work in self-managed teams within as well as outside the school. The principals were visionary while they served as role models to those in their care. As mentioned in Chapter One, the South African Standards for Principals: leading and managing schools in the 21st century (Department of Education, 2005) (draft document) recognised the principal as 'the leading professional'. Also, the DOE considered effective leadership to be critical to the achievement of the transformational goals of the education system. This link between the principal's role and leadership recognizes the principal as an individual influencing others in visionary if not transformational ways" (Christie, 2010, p.698).

This research has shown that principals understanding of leadership and professionalism as presented in chapter four, discussed in chapter five, and summarised earlier in this chapter is about principals being motivators, challengers, initiators, innovators, encouragers, mentors and supporters. I believe as stated in Grant (2009) it is the principal who creates the culture of openness, trust, respect and risk-taking. It is the principal who uses his/her leadership and professionalism to ensure schools are professional places of quality teaching and learning.

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kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar Tel: 033 341 8610 Ref.:2/4/8/182

Mrs Valencia James
65 Melsetter Road
Woodlands
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Mrs James

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Exploring Principals Experiences of leadership and Professionalism: Case Studies of Three Primary School Principals in the Pietermaritzburg Region**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The Period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 March 2012 to 31 March 2013.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following Schools and Institutions:

10.1
10.2
10.3
10.4
10.5

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education

25/04/2012
Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610 | Fax: +27 33 3341 8612 | E-mail: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za | Web: www.kzneducation.gov.za

APPENDIX 2

65 Melsetter Road

Woodlands

Pietermaritzburg

3201

The School Governing Body

The SGB CHAIRPERSON

THE PRINCIPAL

Dear…Sir/ Madam……

I am currently studying for my Masters Degree in Educational Leadership and Management. As part of my course I have to complete a research project. My research topic is: EXPLORING PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONALISM: CASE STUDIES OF THREE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG REGION.I wish through my study to find out how leadership and professionalism is understood and experienced by principals and to gain insight into the contexts that support or constrain the take-up of leadership and professionalism in schools. I believe that leadership and professionalism have a powerful role to play in transforming the teaching and learning in our South African schools. In this regard I have identified your school as a school that exhibits strong leadership qualities at various levels within the institution. I would very much like to conduct research into leadership and professionalism in your school, and work closely with the principal to extend the boundaries of our knowledge on these concepts.

Please note this is not an evaluation of your performance or competence as a SGB/ Principal and by no means is it a commission of inquiry! The identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all participants and they will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. In this regard, participants will be asked to complete a consent form. Furthermore, in the interests of the participants, feedback will be given to them during and at the end of the project.

The research is being done with the permission of the Higher Degree Committees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg and the Department of Education. My supervisor is Dr. Irene Muzvidziwa **(School of Education and Development) and she can be contacted on 033 2606095 at the Faculty of Education, Room 46).**

Please feel free to contact her or myself at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours sincerely

…… …….

Mrs. V.D. James Contact details: Tel. Nos. 0333876232(h) / 0835585742(c) / 0333425464(w)

email: lancyjames@absamail.co.za

….……DETACH AND RETURN……

Declaration

I…… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project. I am willing for our school to be a research school in this project.

I understand that I reserve the right to withdraw from this project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of the SGB Chairperson Date

…… ……

APPENDIX 3

65 Melsetter Road

Woodlands

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Letter of Invitation to Participants

Dear……..

I am sending this invitation to you as a principal who might be interested in participating in a research project about leadership and professionalism in schools. My name is Valencia James and I am currently a Master of Education student at the University KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. . As part of my course I have to complete a research project. My research topic is: EXPLORING PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONALISM: CASE STUDIES OF THREE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG REGION.I wish through my study to find out how leadership and professionalism is understood and experienced by principals and to gain insight into the contexts that support or constrain the take-up of leadership and professionalism in schools. I believe that leadership and professionalism have a powerful role to play in transforming the teaching and learning in our South African schools. In this regard I have identified your school as a school that exhibits strong leadership qualities at various levels within the institution. I would very much like to conduct research into leadership and professionalism in your school, and work closely with you, particularly, to extend the boundaries of our knowledge on these concepts.

The research project is framed by the following research questions:

How are leadership and professionalism understood by principals?

How do principals experience leadership and professionalism in their schools?

What are the contexts that support or inhibit the take-up of leadership and professionalism by principals?

The instruments that I will be using will include an in-depth interview guide as well as a journal writing guide. The sources of my data will therefore be three primary school principals who have completed the ACE-SL Course. As a participant you will be required to undertake a maximum of three audio recorded interviews and three journal entries over a three month period.

Please note this is not an evaluation of your performance or competence as a principal and by no means is it a commission of inquiry! The identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all participants and they will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. In this regard, participants will be asked to complete a consent form. Furthermore, in the interests of the participants, feedback will be given to them during and at the end of the project.

The research is being done with the permission of the Higher Degree Committees of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg and the Department of Education. My supervisor is Dr. Irene Muzvidziwa **(School of Education and Development) and she can be contacted on 033 2606095 at the Faculty of Education, Room 46).**

Please feel free to contact her or myself at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours sincerely

…… …….

Mrs. V.D. James Contact details: Tel. Nos. 0333876232(h)/ 0835585742(c)/ 0333425464(w)

Email: lancyjames@absamail.co.za

….……DETACH AND RETURN……

Declaration

I…… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project. I voluntarily consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I reserve the right to withdraw from this project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Principal Date

…… .....

APPENDIX 4

EXPLORING PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONALISM: 2012

INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

During the **interview** I would like to explore the following:

1. the principals understanding of leadership and professionalism
2. the principals experiences of leading in their schools
3. the contexts that support or inhibit the take-up of leadership and professionalism in their schools

QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of the term "leadership"?

2. What is your experience of leading in your school?

(Eg: the leadership roles you undertake, the ways you lead and why, the link between leadership and principalship, your feelings about leading in your school, any other related issues)

3. From your experience, as a principal, talk about some of the contexts that support, and or constrain you as the principal in the take –up of leadership in your school?

(Eg: the staff, teacher leaders, school culture, SGB, Department Of Education, Unions and Private enterprise and Other eg ACE) Explain why you think this is so.

4. Tell me what you understand by the term "professionalism"?

5. From your experience, do you think principals and teachers behave and fulfil their leadership roles in a professional manner? Explain.

APPENDIX 5

JOURNALWRITING GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS

Please note that you are required to write articles in your journal on leadership and professionalism. Do not worry about the length as long as you have answered the questions adequately. I have provided you with a guide for the journal entries. Please do not be nervous about writing. Do not worry about grammatical errors, spelling etc. Please complete your journal on a weekly basis and then email/fax a copy to me weekly.

The first week's information will serve as an introduction and it will help me to get to know you a little better and will also provide me with background information about the social context of your school. Please be as honest as you can! I will ensure your anonymity at all times.

TITLE: Exploring principals' experiences of leadership and professionalism: Case studies of three primary school principals in the Pietermaritzburg Region.

Introduction: Biographical information (April 2012)

Please tell me something about the following
(Length between 1 to 2 pages)

About you:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Years of experience as a teacher and as a principal.
5. Qualifications
6. Union affiliation
6. Learning areas and grades you teach
7. What motivated you to become a teacher / Principal.
8. Your philosophy, goals and ambitions
9. Your family

About your school:

1. The kind of school (type/ resources/diversity/size funding status/annual school fees etc)
2. The socio-economic backgrounds of the learners and the surrounding community
3. The culture of your school (in other words, "the way things are done around here")

NB: Please email/fax THE ABOVE INFORMATION TO ME AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE. FAX: 0333425464

Journal Entry 1 (April 2012)

Tell me what you understand by the concept "leadership", and what your experience is of leading in your school.

Journal Entry 2 (May 2012)

Reflect on the support or not you as a principal receive and give to the staff, SGB, Department of Education, Unions and Private enterprises and other in your take-up of leadership.

Journal Entry 3 (May 2012)

Write up your understanding of professionalism and relate from your experience the professionalism displayed or not by principals and teachers in fulfilling their leadership roles.

NB: THE ABOVE JOURNAL ENTRIES COULD ALSO BE emailed / faxed on a weekly basis.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research study, and for sharing your experiences, understandings, feelings and reflections with me. Your anonymity is assured at all times.