



**Narratives of Female Principals' Leadership Experiences of Teacher
Development in the Rural uMzinyathi District in KwaZulu- Natal**

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, **Mkhize Vusimuzi Wilcan**, declare that:

The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated is my original research.

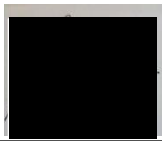
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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the significant people in my life:

- To my late parents Janet and Zephania Mkhize who strove to provide for me and to constantly encouraged me to reach the highest goals in life;
- To my beloved wife Ntokozo Gloria Mkhize who created the space and took on many a responsibility to support me towards the completion of this study.

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I would like to thank the God Almighty who gave me strength and patience to rise above the challenges I have encountered in my life and succeeded in completing the study.

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I am grateful to my family, my wife and my children who supported me throughout this difficult journey. I am grateful for their unwavering support.

It is also a great pleasure for me to thank all my colleagues who assisted and encouraged me when all hope of finishing had dissipated and kept me going during this journey.

God bless all of you!!

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASIDI	Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DOE	Department of Education
SDT	Staff Development Team
SMT	School Management Team
QMS	Quality Management System

Abstract

This study investigated black female principal's leadership experiences of supporting teacher development in the rural uMzinyathi District in Kwazulu-Natal. A narrative inquiry methodology was used to explore principal's lived experiences in rural schools in relation to supporting teacher professional development. Five black female principals from schools in the disadvantaged uMzinyathi District in the Tugela Ferry area, KwaZulu-Natal were selected as participants for this study. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit principal's narratives of their experiences of supporting teacher professional development. Data generated was analyzed thematically.

The findings revealed that to participants, being a school principal entails more than just influencing, regulating, and supporting the school or possessing specific traits. It also entails being aware of challenges and being prepared to overcome a variety of hurdles that they may experience. Findings revealed that whilst principals understood teacher professional development and the need to support this, they often faced challenges and non-cooperation by the teachers, which they perceived to be related to their gender. In addition, the study found that despite the barriers they experienced, female principals in the study demonstrated resilience as leaders who found ways to mitigate the barriers they experienced in their leadership roles.

This study also identified the need to create more supportive platforms for female principals to reduce contextual factors that contribute to women's difficulties in their leadership practices. The main recommendation from this study is that principals in rural schools should be supported by the Department of Education, the school governing body, parents and the community and in fulfilling their responsibility to support teacher professional development, more especially in rural contexts given the challenges that characterize rural schooling.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Globally, gender inequities in school leadership positions are evident and male dominance in principal positions has created a female leadership minority in schools (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). Women have had to overcome gender prejudices and limitations of access solely based on their gender (ibid., 2012). Within the South African education system, while women have had access to employment at various levels of organisations for a long time, their participation in the management and leadership of these organisations is still a matter of concern (Moorosi, 2007). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2018) gender imbalance is reflected in the gender distribution of the teachers and principals in the teaching profession and as well as the possibility for promotion to leadership positions. To illustrate, while the female teachers South Africa make up 60% of the teaching workforce, only 22% are principals as compared to OECD averages of 68% among teachers and 47% of female school leaders. (OECD, 2018)

Characterized by poverty and inequality, South Africa's contemporary schooling system also contends with an asymmetrically-gendered culture of principalship (De Bruyn & Mestry, 2020). Women form the majority of the teaching force in South Africa (70 per cent) (Department of Education 2010). Gender is but one of the categories related to inequitable opportunities in South Africa (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011). According to Lumby and Azaola (2011), since 1994, complex shifts in educators and learners from schools that were previously racially segregated have led to a range of contexts where ethnicity, gender, language and religion continue to mark the contours of schools in South Africa. In some cases, the resulting profile is different from the historic demographic characteristics, and in others it still reflects the previous racial or religious segregation (Lumby & Azaola 2011).

Chisholm, (2001) argues that the post 1994 era in South Africa, created conditions for democracy which promoted and supported gender equity and social justice. Accompanying these changes was the implementation of policies that enabled women to enter leadership domains previously set apart for men within the educational bureaucracy (Chisholm, 2001). The Commission on Gender

Equity Act No.39 of 1996 was empowered to promote not only gender equality, but also the protection, development and attainment of gender equality (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003).

Given South Africa's apartheid past and a socio-political order that was characterized by racial, gender and class inequality and inequity, transformation requires all, women and men to work for redress and equity. However, females in the teaching profession continue to be marginalized and discriminated against and women remain under-represented in managerial positions. There has been a gradual increase of women in senior leadership and managerial positions in South African schools, but female principals have a long way to go in achieving gender equality. One reason for this is that female leaders lack confidence because they have internalized their unpreparedness to take on leadership positions. (Ndebele, 2018)

Principals remain the main pillar of educational transformation as they are the ones that deliver educational services to the primary clients of any education system (Leal Filho, Raath, Lazzarini, Vargas, de Souza, Anholon, & Orlovic, 2018). Fullan (2014) identifies principals as making up the largest group of educational leaders who make decisions and reforms daily that impact school success. Amongst the crucial aspects of such reforms is the teacher's development (ibid., 2014). According to Fullan (2014), school principals are expected to run a smooth school, manage the curriculum, manage staff and learner wellbeing, promote school safety, manage the building, innovate without upsetting anyone, connect with learners and teachers, be responsive to parents and the community, answer to their districts, and above all, deliver results.

School principals have different roles and responsibilities and one of those roles is teacher development in their respective schools which in turn leads to quality education and learner achievement (Cheng & Szeto, 2016). At the same time, principals continue to serve as managers of their schools (Monk, 2007). However, principals in rural and disadvantaged schools operate in a very different environment than their urban counterparts thus experiencing unique and a myriad of challenges (du Plessis, 2017). Public schools in rural areas are characterized by various factors that negatively impact on the provision of quality education (Chakaninka, Sichula, Sumbwa, & Nduna, 2012). Rural areas are typically isolated and underdeveloped. Parents in rural South Africa typically work menial jobs, have a low level of education, and place little importance on education (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). As such principals have to push parents to let their children

attend school. According to Chakanika et al. (2012), rural education is “education, whether formal or informal, provided to and for people residing in rural areas, whose aim is to enable them to live efficiently and effectively in their environment” (p.9).

Several factors have been attributed to poor learner achievement outcomes in different subjects. These include poor content knowledge of teachers, lack of proper teaching methods, lack of professional development of teachers, lack of practical work, poor time management, and lack of motivation and lack of parental involvement (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). In a literature analysis pertaining to the rural principalship, Preston, Jakubiec, and Kooymans (2013) reported that principals in rural school districts confront several sociocultural and economic challenges associated with the school community such as conforming to rural community standards, diversity, a multitude of responsibilities and the ability to handle them alone, lack of professional development, lack of resources, and high-stakes accountability demands.

In order to create high-achieving schools, it is important to study leadership of women practices and experiences of female principals given that more women are beginning to fill leadership and administrative roles in rural districts (Preston et al., 2013). Preston et al. (2013) reported that, although there has been research on principals and the challenges they face, “limited research has targeted the rural principal and his/her unique needs and circumstances” (p.1). Preston et al. (2013) also noted that, although the number of rural female teachers is significantly larger than the number of male rural teachers, rural male principals greatly outnumber their female counterparts.

Education requires significant investment in both human and material resources to ensure amenities and support are distributed equally in rural and urban schools (Kayani, 2017). This view is shared by Du Plessis (2014) who advocates that to foster accelerated growth in rural South Africa, it is critical that all learners, whether in rural or urban settings, receive a high-quality basic education. In keeping with the theme of rural development du Plessis & Mestry (2019) argue that it is important that education be at the forefront of rural development to change the prevalence of extreme poverty and malnutrition in rural communities, and by doing so to break the cycle of disadvantage of rural life caused by poverty. du Plessis & Mestry (2019) identify that the creation of human capital is required for rural development. Human capital in the context of education refers to teachers and therefore this study attempts to explore the different influences and

challenges female principals face in facilitating professional development of teachers in disadvantaged black schools in a rural area of KwaZulu Natal.

Educational leadership has a critical role in the transformation of society, and for change to happen, effective leaders are key (Okinyi, Kwaba, & Nyabuto, 2015). Along with the common belief that leadership quality has a major impact on school and learner performance, there is a growing awareness that successful school leaders and administrators must be developed to provide the best possible education for their learners (Day, 2011). Working in schools that have no adequate resources does not bring professional satisfaction for the teachers (Okongo, Ngao, Rop, & Wesonga, 2015). In many ways they have found their effectiveness to deliver quality teaching compromised by a shortage of resources. Teachers in rural areas are also reported as complaining about the distance from professional specialist support which is easily accessible in urban areas (Knox, 2011). In addition, attracting and retaining teachers and other professionals to work in rural areas remains an international problem (Boyd, and Terry, 2010).

In South Africa, teacher shortage in rural schools remains the biggest challenge in regard to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Kabungaidze, Mahlatshana and Ngirange, 2013). The DoE (2005) reported the shortage as being due to the huge disparity between rural and urban contexts in terms of teacher provision. To address the rural teacher shortage, strategies have among others included, onsite professional induction of the newly appointed, practical internship, increased learner intake in teacher education programmes through means of financial assistance, (for example, contract bursaries), media rural recruitment campaigns, and financial incentives (DoE, 2005).

Due to the prejudices that prevail in many South African communities, some female school principals find it difficult to function effectively in the schools they lead (Botha, 2007). The tendency to perceive women as inferior to men compounds gendered stereotypes and makes it more difficult for female school principals to demonstrate their competence to execute their responsibilities in their schools. (Higgs, 2006). The implication is that they have to overcome the resistance from fellow educators and the community and they have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove that they are capable leaders (Higgs, 2006).

1.2 Problem Statement

Principals in rural and disadvantaged schools operate in very impoverished environments than their urban counterparts thus experiencing many and unique challenges (du Plessis, 2017). Provision of education in rural areas in Africa remains marred with challenges. Rural areas are often deprived of better education service. Policymakers and educators see professional development to improve the quality of instruction in classrooms across the nation (Naidoo & Petersen, 2016). This however is one of the main challenges that school principals in rural areas face.

There also exists lack of career development opportunities of teachers in rural settings which influences the quality of learning as well as principals' ability to fulfil their responsibilities as the school leaders (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). According to du Plessis and Mestry (2019), it is difficult for schools in rural areas of South Africa to attract qualified teachers, because of a lack of available financial resources and teachers see rural areas as a stumbling block for professional advancement. Rural teachers often have less exposure than their urban peers to funding, training and continuing professional development opportunities and fewer opportunities to attend in-service courses (Sindelar, Pua, Fisher, Peyton, Brownell, Mason-Williams, 2018). Professional growth is one possible avenue for hiring new teachers, growing training of teachers and enhancing the productivity of existing teachers Darling-Hammond et al., (2017). A key strategy to address teacher shortages is to improve teacher retention by providing professional development, because "teachers who feel successful and supported are most likely to remain in the profession (Kormos, 2008).

In addition, rural school districts often are not able to offer learners the same resources offered in suburban, and sometimes urban, school districts. Policymakers and educators see professional development to improve the quality of instruction in classrooms across the nation Obiakor, Banks, Rotatori, & Utley, (2017). The purpose of the study is to investigate female principal's leadership experiences, their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in facilitating teacher development to make schools and teaching more effective. Therefore, this study aims to examine how female principals in rural areas try to overcome these underlying challenges and ensure teacher professional development and retain them. The study will focus on schools in uMzinyathi district in Kwazulu-Natal. The province together with Limpopo and Mpumalanga has a high

number of disadvantaged rural schools Romere, Hall, Cluver, & Steinert, (2018).

1.3 Key Concepts

In this section I begin by contextualizing and identifying key concepts that provide clarity on the understanding of educational leadership. These are further developed in the conceptual framework in chapter two. Educational leadership relates to the influence that a principal exerts over teachers in relation to organizational matters (Bush & Glover, 2016). In the literature, educational leadership is commonly referred to as a process whereby intentional influence is directed towards achieving specific organizational outcomes around key values and vision in relation to leadership roles and responsibilities (Atkinson, 2013). Concepts of effective leadership have shifted emphasis from “who” the leader is to “what” the leader does (Eklund et al., 2017, p.13). Who the leader is remains important and is highly relevant to the present discussion of gender and leadership (Eklund et al., 2017). Another consideration concerning the interaction of character and gender on leadership effectiveness is leadership approach (ibid., 2017). Callahan and Grunberg (2016) argue that personality affects the leader's preferred leadership approach and gender also is likely to affect the preferred leadership approach.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (Graham, 2018). Gender is an individual difference characteristic that is relevant to how people think about themselves, are thought about by others, and act in various situations (ibid.,2018). Gender, therefore, is relevant to consider with regard to how it relates to leadership effectiveness (Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg, 2017).

Teacher development refers to the progression of an individual in his/her professional role (Mizell, 2010). Teacher professional growth is the career advancement that a teacher achieves as an outcome of enhanced expertise and meticulous development in his or her teaching (Darling, Hyler & Gardner 2017). Professional development includes the official experiences such as joining professional meetings and workshops, mentoring, and informal experiences such as reading professional publications and watching documentaries on television related to academic

disciplines (Alsubaie, 2016). Professional development helps teachers to become skilled in teacher leadership which in turn has positive outcome on learner achievement, (Yue, 2019).

1.4 Focus, Purpose and Aim

This study focuses on female principals' experiences of facilitating teacher professional development in rural disadvantaged schools. The purpose of the study is to investigate the leadership practices of selected female principals' and their perspectives on their leadership role in facilitating teacher development in rural schools. The study aims to investigate the factors that influence female principals' ability to contextually facilitate the professional development and effectiveness of teachers in disadvantage rural schools.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the leadership practices of selected female principals' and their perspectives on their leadership role in facilitating teacher development in rural schools. Studies have demonstrated that the school principal in her execution of her roles and responsibilities has emerged as the one factor that influences learner achievement and teacher development in schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2014). In this respect, principal effectiveness has become a focus of many principal preparation programs and this has been accompanied by calls for increased accountability systems aimed solely at administrators (Corcoran, 2017). Principal preparation standards and improved student performance are becoming enormously important (ibid., 2017). With this increased focus on school accountability, principals are under pressure to account for the performance of all areas in relation to school improvement (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015).

The study aims to investigate the factors that influence female principals' ability to contextually facilitate the professional development and effectiveness of teachers in disadvantage rural schools. It further aims to investigate if their gender influences their leadership practices in relation to teacher professional development and how they navigate the daily challenges they face experience in.

It further aims to investigate if their gender influences their leadership practices in relation to teacher professional development and how they navigate the daily challenges they experience in

supporting teacher professional development aimed at improving teacher and school effectiveness.

1.5 Rationale and Significance of the Study

As a teacher who taught in rural contexts for many years, I am aware of the challenge principals in rural schools face in facilitating teacher effectiveness to support learner achievement. Rural schools in South Africa are characterized by a myriad of challenges making school improvement and effectiveness a daunting task. In addition to grappling with the place and space challenges rural schools worldwide face, South African rural schools have a history of being significantly impoverished under the apartheid education system and continue to experience impoverishments. (Paxton, 2015)

Carelse (2018) reminds us that the Constitution of South Africa recognizes the right to quality basic education for all, and subsequent court decisions have confirmed that this right is attainable. However, in many rural communities in our country the right to quality education remains elusive (Carelse, 2018).

Historically, the voices of principals in scholarly research has primarily been from the male point of view (Bray, 2019). There exists a vacuum in scholarship when it comes to investigating the experiences of women principals in general, and in South Africa in particular (Ntaka, 2013). Studies show that female school principals working in male dominated communities face gendered stereotypes, where females are perceived as being less competent than their male counterparts. Female school principals are often faced with conditions which require them prove their competencies as leaders (Mnisi, 2015). Various leadership studies (Versland, 2013; Mukeredzi, 2013; Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015) have focused on the principal's skills and ability to increase learner success and promote school improvement. There is a tendency in studies on educational leadership to focus on the perspectives, leadership experiences, and experiences of male principals with limited research available on female principals' leadership experiences, especially those of Black female principals in rural schools (Shakeshaft, 2012). As a result of increased accountability measures for school principals, regardless of the size of the school, the impact on schools has been great, especially for rural school districts.

This study provides insight into the female school principals' experiences of supporting school-based teacher development in rural settings. Current and aspiring principals, both male and female, can use the insight gained in this research to expand their understanding of characteristics that promote learner success. The insight gained from this study can help school districts hire principals that have identified qualities and abilities of good leadership. In addition, this study adds a female perspective to research findings already in place.

This study, as explained earlier, aims to gain insight on the experiences of black female school principals in supporting teacher professional development in selected rural schools in South Africa. The insight gained from this study can be useful in identifying the needs of principals in rural contexts in relation to promoting teacher development for school effectiveness.

1.6 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study:

To investigate female principals' experiences in facilitating the professional development of teachers in rural schools in the uMzinyathi District.

To investigate female principals' perceptions of the factors that influence their ability to create enabling environments for teacher development and teacher effectiveness in rural schools.

To determine if female principals in the rural uMzinyathi District perceive their gender as influencing their leadership experiences in facilitating teacher development in rural schools.

1.7 Research Questions Main Research Question

What are female principals' experiences of facilitating teacher professional development in rural disadvantaged schools in the uMzinyathi District supporting teacher professional development aimed at improving school effectiveness.

Subsidiary Questions

- 1.7.1 How do female principals understand their role and responsibilities in enabling the professional development of teachers in rural schools in the uMzinyathi District?
- 1.7.2 What are female principals' perceptions of the factors that influence their ability to create enabling environments for teacher development and teacher effectiveness in rural schools?
- 1.7.3 Do female principals perceive their gender to be an influence on their leadership approaches and practices; and if so, how does their gender influence their leadership practices in facilitating teacher development in rural schools.

1.8 Organization of the thesis

The thesis comprises five chapters as indicated below:

- Chapter One introduces the study, provides the background and context of the study as well as the rationale underpinning this study and an outline of the thesis.
- Chapter Two presents a review of literature of inclusion in schooling nationally and internationally, the policy and regulation structure guiding policy on inclusion in South Africa, roles and responsibilities in respect of SIAS policy application process, factors affecting implementation of the policy and conceptual framework that were used to read, analyse, interpret and understand the findings for this study.
- Chapter Three refers to the methodology employed in the study.
- Chapter Four provides an illustration of the data emanating from the study together with an interpretation and presentation of results.
- Chapter Five provides concluding comments based on key points emanating from the investigation.

1.9 Conclusion

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study, the description of the key concepts pertaining to

teacher professional development, the aim and objectives as well the rationale and significance of the study. It also provides an overall chapter layout of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide the literature review and conceptual framework that guided the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study by outlining the background, purpose, focus, aims and significance of the study. This chapter reviews literature and discusses the conceptual framework that underpin this study. There are number of studies (Moorosi, Fuller, and Reilly, 2018; Naidoo, 2019; Enfield, 2019; Khumalo, 2021) focused on women in different workplaces and on women in leadership and management positions. A number of these studies have focused on the manager-as-male stereotype as a major explanation for discrimination against women in the workplace (Ismail & Ibrahim 2008; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). According to the manager-as-male stereotype, gender stereotyping of the ideal manager fosters bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion, and training decisions (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010). Therefore, the existence of gender stereotyping puts women with power in a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts, exactly because their gender stereotype conflicts with the leadership stereotypes (Galanaki, Papalexandris & Halikias, 2009). This chapter begins with a presentation of a review of the literature that pertains to rural education, female leadership, and how women principals facilitate teacher professional development.

2.2 Gender and School Leadership

Teede (2019) argues that while men and women have different leadership practices, this does not imply that one is superior to the other. The gap may be explained in part by men's perceptions of leadership as controlling and women's perceptions of leadership as facilitating (Teede, 2019). Despite the fact that male and female leaders perform many of the same duties, various facets of their role are emphasized (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Men are more concerned with completing assignments, achieving goals, hoarding knowledge, and winning than women are with relationships, sharing, and the process (Akkaya, 2020). Female educational administrators focus on instructional leadership in supervisory practices and are concerned with learners' individual differences, knowledge of curriculum, teaching methods, and the objectives of teaching (Ylimaki

& Jacobson, 2013). Female leadership practices are more attuned to good school administration than masculine leadership behaviour (Carbajal, 2018). Dandan & Marques (2017) identify female leadership traits of nurturing, sensitivity, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, loving, cooperative, and accommodative. These female characteristics are increasingly seen as being synonymous with effective management as these qualities are inherent and desirable (Dandan & Marques, 2017).

The school principal has emerged as the one factor that influences learner achievement and teacher development in schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2014). Principal effectiveness as a means of improving teaching and learning has become the focus of many principal preparation programs as well as the call for increased accountability systems aimed solely at administrators (Corcoran, 2017). Principal preparation standards and improved student performance are becoming enormously important (ibid., 2017). With this increased focus on school accountability, principals are under pressure to account for the performance of all areas of the school improvement (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015).

In order to understand the leadership experience of female principals, it is important to examine the ways that women lead. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted the five approaches that characterize women's leadership in education: leadership for learning, leadership for social justice, relational leadership, spiritual leadership and balanced leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) advise that it was important to study how women lead and how their leadership experiences differed from the traditional command and control approach of leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) argue that studying leadership through a different lens, a feminine lens, allows for a much broader perspective from which both males and females can learn. Redefining leadership through a feminine perspective allows for a more thorough understanding of leadership beyond the traditional and sometime unsuccessful perspective (ibid., 2011).

In studying the leadership experiences of women, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), concluded that "documenting leadership behaviour that predominate among women is not the same as saying that women lead differently from men" (p6). The body of research examining female administrative leadership behaviour suggests multiple components that are commonly associated

with women. For example, according to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), the results were mixed when comparing male and female approaches to leadership in more than 50 studies. The studies examined comprised a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods with 100% of the qualitative studies and 14% quantitative studies identifying differences (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2001). However, after analyzing the findings and methodology, there was no clear explanation for the differences (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2001). The authors suggested that qualitative and quantitative methodologies measure or describe leadership differently and researchers examining male leadership tend to traditionally leave out the less valued male behaviour that are similar to those of females (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

2.2 Rural Education in South Africa

Rural education refers to "education, whether formal or informal, offered to and for rural residents whose purpose is to allow them to live in their community efficiently and effectively" (Chakaninka, Sichula, Sumbwa, & Nduna, 2012, p.8). Rural communities have specific and relative characteristics (O'Laughlin, Bernstein, Cousins, & Peters, 2013). Chalker (2002) contended that the unique characteristics that rural schools possess require unique leaders for rural school districts to thrive. The close cooperation of parents and teachers, the easily understood, goal-directed curriculum, and the value that small communities place on schools, is part of the rural school experience that urban schools lacked (Chalker, 2002). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa specifies that any South African learner ought to have access to schooling and teaching, comparable facilities and equitable opportunities for education. The Schools Act prescribes that School Governing Bodies (SGBs) should ensure that learners are provided with quality education through effective and efficient governance (Van Wyk, 2007). The SGB comprises the principal, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and learners of secondary schools (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019)

Public schools in rural areas are characterized by different factors which adversely affect the provision of quality education (Mohangi, Krog, Stephens, & Nel., 2016). These factors include

teacher shortage problem and the few and unqualified, poor infrastructure and school working conditions. The remoteness of South African rural areas implies that rural schools lack the necessary physical resources and basic infrastructure for sanitation like water, roads, transport, electricity, and information and communication technology (Mulford & Johns, 2004). Rural schools find it difficult to attract good and qualified teachers, because there are fewer financial resources available (Kormos, 2018). As a result, a teacher in rural areas has to be prepared to teach multiple subjects and different grades which she/he may not have been trained to teach (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013). Notably, it is extremely difficult to find teachers who fit into the rural community. This makes access to quality education difficult (Chakaninka et al., 2012).

2.3 Gender, School Leadership and Rural Education

The challenges women face when pursuing leadership positions have been extensively studied and documented (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Women who seek positions in educational leadership face many issues (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The most significant issues that hinder women from obtaining leadership positions include; little encouragement to assume leadership roles; lack of female role models; perceived need to be "better qualified"; women cannot discipline older, some educators prefer male principals; reluctance to relocate (Schwanke, 2013, p.18). According to Grogan and Shakeshaft, (2011) one of the approaches that characterize women's leadership in education is leadership for social justice.

Women in leadership roles equates to leading for social justice as a way to "change the lives of children, make the world fairer place, and change educational institutions so that all learners have a chance" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p.23).

In African countries, it is also found that gender disparity is still a problem in education management (Maime, 2011). For example, Moorosi (2010) reports that, in South Africa there are injustices which are enormously enforced on women particularly in leadership and management positions. Moorosi (2007,) indicates that "the Bill of Rights of 1996, guarantees equal treatment

while the Employment Equity Act (No.55 of 1998) guarantees equal opportunity to employment and promotion”. However, in spite of all the stipulated rights and policy, women are still faced with barriers that negatively impinge on their performance in leadership positions even after occupying the positions (Maime, 2011).

Preston and Barnes (2017) argue that the rural school principal is afforded the unique opportunity to be in a position that allows them to lead positive change and to be an instructional leader. Preston and Barnes (2017) maintained that rural school principals understand how local, state, and national policies influence rural schools and can respond in ways that benefit their schools. Rural school leaders empower teachers by being an instructional role model and often provide professional development workshops for their teachers (Preston & Barnes, 2017). Supporting the views of Preston and Barnes (2017), Wallin (2005) argues that rural schools have a profound attachment to the community; therefore, it is vitally important for relevant authorities to focus on the characteristics and needs of the community in order to further their understanding of the role of leadership in rural districts. One of the greatest barriers to women in leadership roles in the rural context has been the view that ‘things have always been done this way and so they shall always be done this way (ibid., 2005).

2.4 School Leadership & Teacher Professional Development in Rural Schools

Research indicates that learners in schools with a high percentage of qualified teachers outperform those in schools with significantly fewer qualified teachers (Mji & Makgato, 2006). According to Mji & Makgato (2006), outdated teaching practices and lack of basic content knowledge have resulted in poor teaching standards, exacerbated by a large number of under-qualified teachers (Mji & Makgato, 2006). The performance of teachers is attributed to the type of qualifications that teachers received at tertiary institutions (Parker, 2011).

Professional development encompasses activities that aim to develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher (Julie, 2015). According to the OECD (2009), the development of teachers beyond their initial training has a number of objectives such as updating teachers knowledge in a subject in light of recent advances in the area, updating

individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in regardsto teaching in general, enabling teachers to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice, to enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects ofteaching practice, to exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, and finally help weaker teachers become more effective. Professional development involves teachers developing and improving their skills to better meet the needs of their learners (Preston et al., 2013). Here, collaboration and evaluation take place to enable educators to enhance learners' outcomes (Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010).

The ongoing professional development of teachers is a cornerstone of the provision of quality of teaching andlearning in a country's education system, affirmed by the literature, with programmes central to proposals forimproving the quality of teaching and transforming education (Tsotetsi & Mahlomaholo, 2015). According toTsotetsi and Mahlomaholo (2015) the skills of teachers in South Africa have not developed as planned with many professional development programs not yet implemented or not considering the experiences of teachers.Steyn & Van Niekerk (2005) describe a number of circumstances under which professional teacher development would be expected and include a supportive leadership and context. This is important to any planning forth professional development as the teachers' work is essentially multidimensional (Tsotetsi, 2013). The need for teachers to learn and develop in different contexts is alluded to by resolution8 of 2003 ofthe Education Labour Relations Council which indicated that external professional development initiatives should take cognizance of the uniqueness of schools and not assume that all the schools are the same. Schoolsshould identify their professional development needs and training and ensure planning fashioned to that need(Tsotetsi, 2013).

While research has demonstrated the impact and current needs of school principals, there has been little research on the rural principal and his or her specific needs and circumstances (Bush& Glover, 2016). Whenfocusing on the effectiveness of shown leadership in rural schools, various studies have identified that rural principals face specific sociocultural and economic challenges associated with the school community (Preston et al.,2013). Educational stakeholders must consider the unique situation faced by rural principals in order to facilitate successful leadership strategies, activities, and services in rural settings (Akala, 2018). Currently, thefunctions and

duties of school principals are largely centered on improving instructional leadership, thus reinforcing the relevance for principals in continuing professional development (Preston & Barnes, 2017).

According to Steyn (2005), the primary objective of professional development is to improve academic achievement, but learner performance and the use of instructional approaches by teachers are profoundly influenced by the school environment in which they work. Principals play a key role in creating the conditions that enable schools to become professional learning communities (ibid., 2005). Schools should become a place in which faculty members share the decision-making process (Mupa & Chinooneka., 2015). A shared vision includes faculty members, rather than excluding them through rules and procedures. Professional development empowers the staff and teachers to work in collaborative teams in order to improve learner learning. The principal model's behaviour that is in line with the vision and values shared by the school (ibid., 2015).

According to Diehl & Dzubinski (2016) women in leadership confront barriers or obstacles that men do not realize exist. Some myths suggest women cannot discipline older students, particularly males; females are too emotional; too weak physically; and males resent working with particularly males; females are too emotional; too weak physically; and males resent working with females (Whitaker & Lane, 1990). After the myths are dispelled, the glass ceiling barrier that limits women from achieving high ranking position must be overcome (Cullen & Luna, 1993). Barriers from the home and the ways women are perceived, culturally and historically, are also regarded as barriers to women's advancement. For many organisations including schools, work and home life should be kept separate for women who are in positions of power (Moorosi, 2007). Society's attitude toward appropriate male and female roles is another obstacle that identifies women as not task-oriented enough, too dependent on feedback and evaluations of others, and lacking independence (Mayimele, Ndudzo, & Ndlovu, 2020). Women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions, while men were encouraged to enter administration to a greater degree than women, despite the positive perceptions of principals toward female capabilities (Eagly & Carli, 2018). This lack of encouragement exists even though women who earn doctorates are more likely than men to desire an academic career, but are not being hired at equal rates (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). The cumulative disadvantage results in women leaving the

profession in greater numbers than men (Lutter, 2015).

2.7 Factors that influence the provision of quality education in rural contexts

2.7.1 Poverty

According to AfricaCheck (2018), in 2015, 55.5% of South Africans were living in poverty. Furthermore, children aged 17 and under, people from rural areas and those with little or no education were seen as the primary casualties of ongoing struggle against poverty (Statssa, 2017). Approximately 63% of South African children are currently living in poverty (Nortje, 2017). Learners' socioeconomic status has a major effect on their academic performance. Material

factors such as income play a big part in determining levels and access to quality education. Lower-income parents may not have the financial means to provide their children with the same educational opportunities as middle- and upper-income parents (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015).

2.7.2 Infrastructure and Resources

Rural schools in South Africa lack the material resources and basic proper sanitation, such as water, roads, transport, electricity and ICT (Mulford & Johns, 2004). In addition, parents' poor socioeconomic status in rural areas puts learners at a disadvantage (Mulford & Johns, 2004). Rural areas also have poorly developed infrastructure and restricted access to essential services required by learners (Agbor, 2012). The lack of infrastructure and access to social services negatively affects the quality of education in rural areas (Agbor, 2012).

2.7.3 Lack of Qualified Teachers

Most rural schools in Africa are staffed with a cohort of untrained teachers, retired teachers, as well as unemployed youth (Manwa & Mukeredzi, 2016). The growing demand for education in the pursuit for education for everyone, coupled with the shortage of qualified teachers in rural areas, has increased the ratio between teacher and learner (Chakaninka et al., 2012). As a result, the rural teacher is burdened with an enormous workload, which has the potential to compromise the

quality of education and hampering their individual professional development (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). A lack of qualified teachers is a huge challenge in the provision of rural education in Africa (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Furthermore, it is difficult to recruit, retain and develop qualified teachers in a rural setting due to distances of schools from towns, poor infrastructure and limited service delivery (ibid., 2014).

Training and career development opportunities could encourage teachers to stay longer in their schools. According to Mulkeen, and Chen (2008), teachers living in rural areas not only have to travel long distances to attend such courses, but also have to take personal leave in order to attend to courses in a field of interest. As a result, continued professional development through contact courses for teachers in rural areas is at times difficult and occasionally impossible to access (Chakaninka et al., 2012).

2.7.4 Parental Participation

Parental participation involves working together between parents and teachers to improve the children's learning, progress (Yulianti, Denessen, & Droop, 2018). Parents are the first teachers of child and are partners with teachers in their children's education (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011). Central to the success of parental engagement and learner success is the teacher parent relationship (CDC, 2015).

2.7.5 Teaching and Learning

According to Mupa and Chinooneka (2015), for effective teaching and learning to take place, teachers need to possess some degree of experience. Mavhundutse (2014) posited that experience is one of the major factors contributing towards effective teaching. Most rural schools in South Africa are staffed with an unexperienced retired teachers and untrained teachers (Manwa & Mukeredzi, 2016). This makes learning and quality education difficult. For the few teachers, when they do get to school, learners are often being taught in overcrowded classes impacting on their ability to learn effectively (Mendenhall, Cha, Falk, Bergin, & Bowden, 2021).

2.7.6 School Environment

UNESCO (2005) identified that the rural working environment tends to demotivate teachers who are posted in rural schools. Most of these teachers feel isolated and lonely. For instance, they are

rarely visited by their supervisors from the education district and provincial offices (Meier & West,2020). These teachers are made to think that their superiors have little concern for their welfare or the state of education in such locations and place (du Plessis & Mestry ,2019).

To address some of the challenges regarding quality education in rural areas, the government has instituted various policy interventions namely the *National Learner Transport Policy* which aimed at assisting learners to travel long distances to schools (DBE, 2016), a policy on Teacher incentives was instituted in an attempt to retain qualified teachers in the most inaccessible areas (DBE, 2016) as well as the *Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI)*.

According to PMG (2018), the government created a package of teacher incentives that goes beyond finance and includes teacher development, career progression, transport, accommodation, recreation and other essential services. These incentives are offered on the basis of the classification of rural schools. ASIDI seeks to replace those schools constructed from inappropriate material (Mud, Plankie, Asbestos). According to the minister of Education, “To date, the ASIDI programme has delivered 136 state-of-the-art schools, a further 299 schools have been allocated to Implementing Agents (IAs), 571 schools have been provided with water -410 given decent sanitation and 294 connected to electricity” (PMG, 2018, p.3).

2.8 A Conceptual Framework

This study aimed to investigate the leadership experiences of female principals in enabling teacher professional development in rural schools. It set out to investigate female principals’ experiences of enabling teacher professional development from a transformational leadership perspective in order to better understand their leadership approaches and practices and the factors that influence these. Furthermore, theoretical insights can serve as guidance for potential principals as they learn and pursue the expertise and skills required to lead schools effectively (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

2.8.1 Transformative Leadership

Principal’s leadership approaches and practices are central to the professional development of

teachers in rural schools in relation to the provision of quality education. Leadership approaches involve how school leaders pursue the task of encouraging and supporting teachers to accomplish particular goals (Bennett & Anderson, 2003). If the school head has an effective leadership approach, he or she will build a positive school environment which also encourages teacher growth (Muthoni, 2017). Principals' leadership approaches and practices can favorably influence teacher professional development, which in turn can influence the provision of quality education in rural areas.

While studies of leadership have focused on different leadership experiences, such as the transformative, autocratic and democratic experiences of leadership, this study sought to understand female principal's leadership experiences from a transformational perspective by focusing on their leadership qualities, their organizational skills, and how they relate to and communicate with teachers, learners, parents and the wider community. The challenges faced by modern organizations in achieving higher results, improved job satisfaction, increased morale and efficiency in subordinates have resulted in demand for better leadership quality (Shields, 2014).

A transformative leadership approach demands that leaders and followers collaborate to achieve common goals of higher order so that both leaders and subordinates can lift everybody to higher motivation levels (Xenikou, 2017). Transformational leadership approach is most frequently associated with vision; direction-setting; company transformation and realignment; personnel and curriculum development; and external community involvement (Wagithunu, Muthee, & Thinguri, 2014).

A transformative leader promotes and inspires followers to produce outstanding results. She gives attention to personal struggles and developmental needs; they alter their knowledge of problems and inspire followers to make extra efforts to achieve group goals (Kowalski, 2010). The principle of transformational leadership is mostly about governance that generates progressive change among followers by taking care of other's needs and serving the interests of society as a whole (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

One of the key functions of transformative leaders is to campaign for justice and challenge the status quo without relying on community engagement (Shields, 2014). Studies on school

leadership tend to focus on the qualities and attitudes of leaders common to all (ibid., 2015). Shield (2014) noted that transformative leadership connects education and educational leadership with the broader social context and is thus the best option for social justice leadership. Leaders practicing transformative leadership can enhance equity and justice in their schools and communities (Ortega, 2019). Shields (2014) posits that transformative leaders strive to understand themselves and others by evaluating their own behaviour objectively. Therefore, the connection between leadership and social justice work is natural (Shields, 2014). Figure 1 below graphically demonstrates the intersection of Social Justice and Transformational Leadership on teacher development.

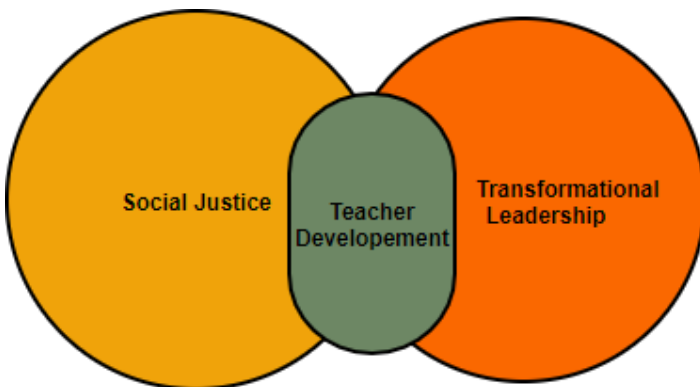


Figure 1: Transformative Leadership and Social Justice

2.8.2 Leadership and Gender

The school principal has emerged as the one factor that influences student achievement and teacher development in schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2014). Principal effectiveness as a means of improving teaching and learning has become the focus of many principal preparation programs as well as the call for increased accountability systems aimed solely at administrators (Corcoran, 2017).

Principal preparation standards and improved student performance are becoming enormously important. With this increased focus on school accountability, principals are under pressure to account for the performance of all areas of the school improvement (Mitchell, Kensler, & Tschannen-Moran, 2015). In order to understand female leadership experiences, one could

examine the ways that women lead, namely, their leadership experiences. However, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted five approaches that characterize women's leadership in education: relational leadership, leadership for social justice, spiritual leadership, leadership for learning and balanced leadership. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) advised that it is important to study how women's leadership approaches differ from the traditional "command and control" approach of leadership. Studying leadership through a such a lens allows for a much broader perspective from which both females and males can learn. Redefining leadership through such a perspective allows for a more thorough understanding of leadership beyond the traditional perspective. Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg (2017) explain that in order to promote effective leadership, one needs to go beyond simplistic understandings of the way in which women and men lead in relation to biological sex. They argue that it is important to understand "if and how gender relates to leadership" as they see gender as "an individual difference characteristic that is relevant to how people think about themselves, are thought about by others, and act in various situations" (p.130). This study draws on key understandings of leadership and gender proposed by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) as a conceptual framing for this study.

2.8.2.1 Relational Leadership

Relational leadership is explained as the horizontal relations that characterize the nature of relations between the leader and others rather than hierarchical relations. They explain that women view power differently and this approach serves to reduce the power differentials between them and others, which is perceived as having significant influence on organizational effectiveness and change. According to Eklund, et.al. & Grunberg (2017) historically, female leaders were ambivalent about their own power and studies they reviewed demonstrated that women tend to perceive power shared as a way of increasing power. For them, it is important to understand how women perceive of power as this provides a way of understanding their conception of power as shared, that is, power with rather than power over others. In this sense, women's conception of power relates closely to how they perceived their relationships with other, where power serves to strengthen rather than weaken relations (Eklund, et.al. 2017).

2.8.2.2 Leadership for Social Justice

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) explained that leadership for social justice in education involves

transforming conditions for those that have not been adequately served by current policies and practices. The goal of leading for social justice is to create change in the educational environment so that all students are successful. Cuervo (2016) explained that social justice does not have a definitive meaning. Many terms have been associated with social justice. Terms such as “merit, need, fairness, equity, and equality” (Cuervo, 2016, p.1). Women in leadership roles equate leading for social justice as a way to “change the lives of children, make the world fairer place, and change educational institutions so that all students have a chance” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p.11). The history of women in education indicates that when compared to men, women identify their careers as “social justice work” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p.11). Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011) went on to explain that many women approach this idea of social justice work as a collaborative effort; it is the work of the entire educational community. Women believe “if change to bring about greater social justice is the end product, then hope, spirituality, and belief in God is the motor that propels them to change the system” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p.13).

2.8.2.3 Spiritual Leadership

Leadership is about how changes are made to a system. The idea of leadership grounded in spirituality is particularly significant for Black women. Drawing on studies of women of African descent who are principals and superintendents Eklund, et. al (2017) describe leaders who extend the ministerial aspect of their leadership that for many women, then hope, spirituality, and belief in God is the motor that propels many of them to change the system. Many women administrators are both focused on social justice and reliant on what they describe as a higher power to help them in their fight. (Eklund, et. al. 2017)

2.8.2.4 Leadership and Learning

In terms of leadership and learning, women focus on teaching and learning with a view to enhancing learning to promote teacher effectiveness and learner achievement. In this regard, they place emphasis on supporting staff development by encouraging teachers to be innovative with the pedagogical approaches. By adopting such an approach to learning and staff development for increased learner achievement demonstrates their social justice approach to leading and this is relevant to this study when we consider the lack of the provision of quality education in rural schools. (Eklund, et.al. 2017)

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented a review of the literature on school leadership, gender and the factors that influence principal's ability to support teacher professional development. As this study aimed to investigate the leadership experiences of female principals in enabling teacher professional development in rural schools to promote school effectiveness and learner achievement, it also presents a conceptual framework that focused on transformational leadership.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate female principal's approach to leadership, their leadership practices and its influence on teacher development in the rural UMzinyathi District in Kwazulu-Natal. This section presents the research design and methodology of the study. The research design uses a narrative inquiry methodology wherein data was produced through semi structured in-depth interviews which focus on principals lived experiences in rural schools. This section starts by explaining the research paradigm, namely the transformative paradigm, within which the study is located. It then presents the research approach and research methodology adopted in the study. In explaining the research process followed, it also provides an explanation of the sampling technique used to identify research participants; the research methods that were used to generate data as well as the process of data analysis. The section concludes with a discussion of validity, reliability and ethical considerations related to the study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This qualitative study is located within the broader space of the transformative paradigm. Transformative paradigm bases its work on social justice problems and aims to tackle the social, economic and political concerns that contribute to societal inequality and social injustice (Cram and Mertens 2016). The transformative research paradigm directly engages the complexity encountered by researchers and evaluators in culturally diverse communities when their work is focused on promoting social justice.

The transformative paradigm is a research "...framework for addressing inequality and injustice using culturally competent, mixed methods strategies" (Mertens, 2010, p.18). The transformative paradigm guides researchers in clarifying the ontological (nature of reality), axiological (role of ethics), epistemological (relationship between knower and the known) and methodological approach in relation to their study (Corry, Porter, & McKenna, 2019). Romm (2015) argues that the choice for transformative paradigm is not limited to the philosophy and its research

methodology, but the method of data generation for such study. The methods of generating data could be an interview, social observation, interactions and above all, focus group discussion all which fall within the ambit of the transformative paradigm (Romm, 2015). In locating this study within this paradigm, the researcher takes a position in relation to the nature of the knowledge production thereby privileging the standpoint of research participants as well as and ways of being in the world, which acknowledges that women continue to experience oppression. Research within this paradigm aims to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field which potentially can influence social transformation. While privileging the experiences and voices of participants can potentially raise their awareness of the ways in which they experience gender inequality, I do not assume to bring about such change through this research study. Locating my research study within the transformative paradigm therefore provides a way of conducting research which has a social justice focus.

Most rural areas already face tremendous barriers to learners' high achievement and operate in less than favourable policy environments (Johnson & Strange, 2007). Poverty, fiscal incapacity, low levels of adult education, and low levels of learner achievement run in the same mutually reinforcing circles in rural areas (ibid., 2007). As expected, regions where the educational outcomes in rural schools require the most urgent attention are those with most impoverished minority and rural learners, where schools receive the fewest resources and where rural learners attend the largest schools in the largest districts (Karlidag-Dennis, Hazenberg, & Dinh, 2020).

The transformative paradigm was adopted as the research worldview that informed the study as it was considered appropriate because it aims to address the perceived marginalisation of the disadvantaged rural black schools (Mertens, 2017). This agrees with the argument that research must specifically seek to understand and involve the people facing the problem in providing solutions to the problem (Mertens, 2007).

The transformative paradigm, at the same time, addresses the issue of social justice towards transformation and inclusivity to change the existing situation for better (Mertens, 2007). This is supported by the definition of Dube (2016) and Omodan (2020) that the priority of professional teacher development is to change the existing status quo of the participants for better. The principal challenges call for a transformational change into the predicament of rural communities and their

schools to enable them to provide conducive environment for female principals and professional teacher development.

3.3 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach which enabled the researcher to obtain rich insights about principal's leadership experiences and its influence on teacher development and subsequent solutions to the problem using the perspectives of the researched (Alase, 2017; Teherani et al., 2015). Qualitative research provides an insider perspective. The literature review identified that there have been few studies on how the female principals in rural areas manage to facilitate professional development of teachers and ensure academic achievement of learners in the disadvantaged environment. According to Chivanga and Monyai (2021), qualitative research enables the research to obtain richly detailed understanding of a particular topic, issue, or meaning based on first-hand experience, therefore the qualitative research design was adopted to investigate black female principals' experiences of facilitating school based professional development. This was achieved by having a relatively small but focused sample base of female principals from disadvantaged rural areas utilising qualitative techniques to give a unique depth of understanding which is difficult to gain from a closed question survey as argued by Schoonenboom & Johnson (2017). In addition, qualitative methods offer a dynamic approach to research, where the researcher has an opportunity to follow up on answers given by respondents in real time, generating valuable conversation around a subject – something which isn't possible with a structured survey (Dumay & Qu, 2011). the benefit of the qualitative method is that respondents have the opportunity to freely elaborate on their answers (Sutton & Austin, 2015) which reinforces participant views and experiences.

3.4 Methodology: Narrative inquiry

Methodology is concerned with the specific ways, the methods that we can use to try and understand our world better (Cohen et al.2007). I adopted Narrative Inquiry as the methodology to be able to understand and real-life experiences of female principals in rural areas in regards to

teacher professional development because Narrative study involves “living, telling, retelling and reliving of stories of experience” Caine, Estefan & Clandinin (2013, p.6) In this study the researcher drew on narratives obtained from 5 principals who were working in rural schools in UMzinyathi district. Narrative inquiry was first used by Connelly and Clandinin (2000) as a methodology to describe the personal stories of teachers. Narrative researchers look for ways to understand and then present real-life experiences through the stories of the research participants (Creswell, 2005).

My choice of narrative inquiry as my research methodology was reaffirmed by Clandinin (2013) who posits that narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. My focus was on female principals’ leadership experiences and their lived experiences in regards to teacher development. Narrative inquiry helped me analyse, and represented Female principals’ views and how physical, social and cultural environment influences and informs their individual experiences stories as told by them, which challenges traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood (Etherington, 2013).

In utilising the narrative inquiry method, a researcher is able to gather memorable, interesting knowledge that brings together layers of understandings about a person, their culture and how they have created change (Etherington, 2013). This includes the struggles the participants have underwent and how and what happened to them. (Haydon, Browne, & van der Riet, 2018). In narrative inquiry data can be collected using field notes, journal records, interview transcripts, one’s own and other’s observations. This research used interview scripts and researchers’ observation to gather data. The next section discusses the sampling approach used.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

I adopted purposive sampling as the method to select my participants. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their study Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, (2016). Researchers use purposive sampling when they want to access a particular subset of people, as participants of a study are selected because they fit a particular profile Robinson, (2014).

In this study a sample of five black female principals from schools in the Umzinyathi District in the Tugela Ferry area, KwaZulu Natal were selected. Five participants selected based upon their principalship and their willingness to participate (McMillan & Schumachers, 2014). McMillan and Schumacher's (2014) explain that only "information rich informants, groups and places to study" should be the target of purposive sampling (p.58). For ethical reasons, particularly in relation to confidentiality and anonymity participants were given pseudonyms.

Another reason for using purposive sampling related to identification of the schools in uMzinyathi district, which were headed by female principals. Given that the study aimed to investigate female principals' experiences of supporting teacher professional development in rural schools, I had to select schools that were headed by female principals.

3.6 Research Site

The schools were situated in a rural area of UMzinyathi District rural areas in the Tugela Ferry area, KwaZulu Natal. The area is characterized by socio-economic conditions such as poverty and unemployment. Most schools in the area function with inadequate resources and facilities. Classrooms in the research site are overcrowded, poorly equipped with no laboratories or library and limited ablution facilities (Theron, 2015).

Principal's Participant Demographics

Name of the schools	Location	Emis no.	Pseudonym	Age	Number of teachers	HOD's	Learners
Cabangokuhle H.S.	Tugela Ferry	500114108	Mercy	>50	34	2	1065
Dlabesuthe S.S.	Tugela Ferry	500415029	Jane	40-45	24	2	700
Bunyebethu H.S.	Pomory	500113701	Maria	45-50	9	2	264
Mabaso S.S.	Tugela Ferry	500113700	Winnie	40-45	26	3	600
Bathembu H.S.	Tugela Ferry	500106153	Dotty	35-40	30	3	400

Table 1: Participant profiles

The map displays the Umzinyathi Local Municipality, which is divided into five wards. The central ward is light green and labeled 'Umzinyathi'. To its north is the pink ward 'Endumeni', to the northeast is the green ward 'Nquthu', to the south is the yellow ward 'Msinga', and to the southwest is the blue ward 'Umvoti'. The map also shows the 'Natal' coastline to the west and south, with labels for 'Dundee' and 'Grahamstown'.

Figures 2 and Table 1 above provide a visual and profile context of the location of the schools in the study. The map denotes all areas that are classified as rural.

I used unstructured interviews as my primary data generation tool as the main purpose of narrative interviews is to hear the participant's story (Theron, 2015). A semi-structured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer asks participants a particular set of predetermined questions Pathak, & Intratat, (2016). Questions were planned in advance, which meant that all participants were asked the same questions in the same order. The interviews took approximately one hour for each of the principals.

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shared. In addition, the use of semi-structured interviews provided a very flexible technique for such a small-scale research study with a sample of 5 participants. The best way to capture the lived experiences of female principals was to utilize semi-structured interviews.

The next section discusses the various methods used in the data analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data generated through narrative interviews was transcribed before commencing with the analysis process. When the transcripts were ready, they were carefully read and sent to the participants to verify before commencing analysis. One method of data analysis was adopted i.e. Thematic analysis of the principals' narratives and document analysis (Theron, 2015). Data analysis is the process of applying logical techniques or statistical methods to describe, evaluate and obtain meaningful insights from data (Theron, 2015). The purpose of analysing data is to obtain usable and useful information. The analysis, irrespective of whether the data is qualitative or quantitative aims at describing, summarizing and identifying relationships between variables (Flick, 2014).

Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data. It is applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. Thematic analysis does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of other qualitative approaches; it offers a more accessible form

of analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006, p.26) present a six-step guide for conducting thematic analysis in qualitative research. The steps are outlined below.

“Step 1: Become familiar with the data. *The first step in any thematic analysis is reading, and re-reading the interview extracts and the transcripts.*

Step 2: Generate initial codes. *In this step the researcher organizes the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning.*

Step 3: Search for themes. *A theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. A theme is characterised by its significance. In this step*

I then examined the codes and fit them to particular themes.

Step 4: Review themes. *In this fourth step I reviewed, modified and developed the preliminary themes identified in Step 3.*

Step 5: Define themes. *This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim is to 'Identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about.' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). What is the theme saying? If there are subthemes, how do they interact and relate to the main theme? How do the themes relate to each other?*

Step 6: Writing-up. *This is the last step of the research and it involves the write up of a report, journal article or dissertation”.*

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in research deals with how reliable and valid the findings of the study are (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). This study used four procedures of trustworthiness being credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability noting that the trustworthiness of results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research (Northcote, 2012).

“Credibility is largely influenced by the extent to which the data matches participants' lived reality and represents the actual subjective experience of the participants (Creswell, 2010). To ensure content validity in this research study I developed the survey questions and sent them to my supervisor to cross check the potential of the questions in answering the research questions. The supervisor made suggestions and revisions were made

Dependability focuses on whether one can track the process and procedures used to generate and interpret data. To ensure dependability, I used an audit trail as description of research steps taken during the research process (Loh, 2013). The field texts were recorded and kept in a storage device

Confirmability is the degree to which researchers can verify the findings of a study to ensure that they accurately reflect the participants' understandings rather than any researcher biases (McGinley et al., 2021). To ensure confirmability, I discussed with my participants my

interpretations of what they had told me after data analysis to confirm if I was able to capture their narratives correctly.

Transferability *If research results are applied to other contexts outside the original study area, they are transferable or generalizable (Paparini, Papoutsi, Murdoch, & Green, 2021). Being a case study, the findings generated from this particular study and particular setting, can be useful to others”.*

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The research was guided by the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethical rules and regulations. An ethical clearance was pursued by the researcher and approval was granted to conduct the study by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal through formal documentation. I adopted various approaches to adhere to the ethical standards for this research.

Participants were provided with a consent form (APPENDIX B) that highlighted the purpose, objectives, confidentiality and free participation in the study. Ethical issues in research also ensure that participants are protected from harm, and guarantees the right to privacy.

This study sought consent from the participants who agree to voluntarily partake in the study and must have the liberty to withdraw at any time. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used for ethical consideration purpose

I also obtained permission from the Department of Education (APPENDIX A) in order to interview the principals. There was informed consent i.e. all participants were informed of the purpose of the study and given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. I gave a clear explanation to participants of what the research expected of them.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. This included a choice of research paradigm and the research approach. Sampling method, data generation method

and analysis methods were also discussed. The chapter concluded with a consideration of ethical principles and limitations of the study. The next chapter presents the analysis of data and discussion of the findings.

Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

In many developing countries, the underrepresentation of female leaders in decision-making positions is common and well documented, raising issues of equity, social justice and sustainable development. As in other African countries, in South Africa females remain underrepresented in various sectors, including academia. In the schooling sector, male principals outnumber women in primary schools. The purpose of this study was to investigate female principals' experiences of supporting teacher professional development in disadvantage rural South African schools.

The research findings presented in this chapter are a response to the following research questions:

- What are female principals' experiences of facilitating teacher professional development in ruraldisadvantaged schools in the uMzinyathi District
- How do female principals understand their role and responsibilities in enabling the professional development of teachers in rural schools in the uMzinyathi District?
- What are female principals' perceptions of the factors that influence their ability to create enabling environments for teacher development and teacher effectiveness in rural schools?
- Do female principals perceive their gender to be an influence on their leadership approaches and practices; and if so, how does their gender influence their leadership practices in facilitating teacherdevelopment in rural schools.

I begin the presentation of key findings by presenting the profile of the research participants. I then present the key findings guided by the research questions above by drawing out the themes that emerged. The discussion of key findings presented, drawing on the conceptual framework is integrated with the presentation of findings.

4.2 Profile of participants

Principal 1: Mercy

The first Participant is Mercy. She has a postgraduate degree and she has been a principal for seven years. She is above 50 years old and leads a school with 1065 learners. The school has two HODS and 34 teachers. She lives near her current school. Mercy described her parents as very rigorous and had working persons who emphasized respect. She was motivated to be a principal because of her dedication at work and involvement in community work. Mercy has been teaching for over 20 years and her career path began as a teacher assistant before being employed as a teacher. Her management and administrative career began as HOD, deputy principal, and, then, she was promoted as principal since 2014 having served 15 years in the current school. She noted that

“I see myself more as a role model, mentor and principal. Mentorship and Principalship brings me much closer to the learners and teachers”

Principal 2: Jane

The second participant is called Jane. She has a postgraduate degree and she has been a principal for four years and leads a school with 700 learners. As a teacher she used to teach English. She noted that:

“I believe all learners need to know not only their mother tongue but also English since it will enable them to explore their language abilities other than their home language”.

The school has two HODS and 24 teachers and her age bracket is between 40-45 years. Jane has been principal for more than five years and she recalls being discouraged by some of her family members and some colleagues when she wanted to apply for the principalship.

Principal 3: Maria

The third participant is called Maria. She has a Bachelor's degree and she has been a principal for 5 years and leads a school with 1264 learners. She has been in the teaching profession for over 20 years. She believes that teaching is a calling and it is not for the faint hearted. She asserted that

“Teaching needs passion and it's more of a calling because you have opportunity to

shape learners' careers at such a young age and I love it".

She has been at the current school for over 10 years. The school has two HODs and 9 teachers and she is above 50 years old. She wanted to see growth within herself in the teaching profession and as a leader which motivated her to be a principal.

Principal 4: Winnie

The fourth Participant is called Winnie and manages a school of 600 learners with two HODs. She has an Honours degree in education and has been a principal for three years. Ms. Winnie explained that she had been an assistant principal for a period of four years before deciding that it was time to become a principal. She had an ambition to become a principal for her personal development.

Principal 5: Dotty

The last participant was given the pseudonym Dotty and has been a principal for 6 years. She has a postgraduate degree and enjoyed her role as principal. She was however critical of the Department of Education (DOE) for insufficient support given to female principals. The community where her school is based were not supportive enough in implementing discipline to wayward learners. My interview with her took place over zoom and she was quite engaging in her responses. Dotty felt that women are not encouraged enough to pursue their dreams. She acknowledged that people even discouraged them. She opined that

"As a principal, people fight against your opinion or vision just because of you are woman gender."

Table 2 on the next page presents a comparative summary of the participant demographics based on gender, age, number of teachers under their leadership, number of Heads of Departments (HOD) and the number of learners in their respective schools.

Pseudonym	Age	Number of teachers	Years as Principal	HOD's	Learners
Mercy	>50	34	7	2	1065
Jane	40-45	24	5	2	700
Maria	45-50	9	5	2	264
Winnie	40-45	26	3	3	600
Dotty	35-40	30	6	3	400

Table 2: Participant Demographics

Table 2 above comparatively illustrates that all participants in this study had a minimum of a three-years' experience as principals in their respective schools. It was also evident that the participants had different numbers of teachers and HODs' reporting to them.

4.3 Principals' Understanding of and Role in Supporting Teacher Professional Development

4.3.1 Understanding of Teacher Professional Development

The five principals interviewed clearly shared similar understandings of the concept of teacher professional development. They conceived of teacher professional development as the development of teachers in totality with reference to knowledge and skills that teachers need for effective teaching and learning. They also indicated teachers require skills of managing their classrooms, which includes leadership skills and knowledge and skills in relation to disciplinary procedures. This is reflected in the extracts below:

“anyone who wants to become a teacher would need to be developed from being a novice teacher till she/he develops fully. Professional development is an ongoing process in teaching career” (Principal Jane)

“Professional development of teachers is an ongoing process whereby teachers upgrade themselves by means of attending workshops, and sharing information with peers” (Principal Jane)

Principal Dotty noted that the SGB plays a big role in teacher professional development as they are the ones that secure funding and identify training needs for teachers under them.

Principal Mercy opined that

“Professional teacher development (is about) being equipped on various aspects like curriculum once or twice in a year can be equipped with new developments of the curriculum.”

Principal Maria indicated that;

“In professional development, teachers often indicate their various areas of need where they need to be further equipped and any gaps from IQMS”

For a long time, researchers have acknowledged that teachers' professional development is crucial for altering classroom practices, enhancing schools, and boosting learners' results (Borko,2004; Postholm, 2018). The professional development of teachers is significantly influenced by school principals (Bredeson, 2000). All principals in this study revealed a similar understanding and identified that it was their responsibility to support the professional development of educators. Berry (2004) argues that the role of the principal is very important to support teachers' professional development both for effective teaching as well as for the success of teachers' professional growth. The role and contribution of the school principal-leader are some of the most crucial and determinant factors in teachers' professional development. School principals' leadership is a crucial factor for teachers' professional development as a prerequisite for establishing a successful learning community (Bredeson, 2000). Principal Dotty noted that:

“As a principal, I give the feedback to teachers, and I also encourage HOD's to always assess and give feedback to teachers so that they can all develop collectively. Sometimes I delegate some duties when am not available or busy to other teachers with an aim of developing my subordinates”

The principals interviewed for this study emphasized their role and leadership in relation to supporting teacher professional development. They recognized that professional development is an ongoing process that includes workshops, information sharing with peers, and training.

Principals play a central role in the professional growth of teachers, and this, in turn, influences learner outcomes positively (Brown & Militello, 2016; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). They have an enormous influence on the effective functioning of schools and creating a success-oriented school culture that supports teachers' professional development.

4.3.2 Perceptions of Principals' Preparation to Support Teacher Professional Development

The participants noted that being prepared for principalship is essential. This preparation happens in three distinct dimensions: theory, networking and mentoring. In terms of theory, acquiring degrees, certificates, and advanced diplomas was universally agreed as being critical. Coupled with the university qualification, participants' strategies included attending workshops to equip themselves with necessary leadership skills and also to enable them to organize workshops within the schools.

Mentoring, which improves employees' personal, social and professional abilities, has become more significant in school administrations (Dönmez, Gök, & Sahin, 2021). Mentoring by more experienced and highly qualified principals is valued. Principal Mercy and Maria noted that;

"I was inspired by our retired principal who used to task me to do certain jobs and run errands on his behalf and therefore I was subconsciously groomed. When he retired I was recommended to succeed him".

"I was fortunate enough to have a union which assisted me in preparing for my leadership where I was. I was given a mentor; my mentor helped me on the types of the questions that may be asked within the interview and also trained me in regards to the interview and assisted me in answering the questions in the best suitable way and given me advice on not only for the interviews and also once I had been appointed as the principal."

(Principal Maria)

Principal Dotty noted that;

“I believe female principals experience a degree of difficulty in their transition; I think the transition journey of female principals differs from that of male principals.”

Mentoring has traditionally been defined as fostering a relationship between a younger, less experienced person and an older, more experienced person in order to advance the career of the less experienced person (Kram, 1983; Dönmez *et al.*, 2021). According to Kram (1983), mentorship serves both psychosocial and career purposes. Five components make up the career function, which focuses on the mentee's professional growth: sponsorship, visibility, coaching, protection, and demanding assignments (Kram, 1983). It is evident that participants adopted the mentoring from senior principals or retired principals as a mode of mentorship. Moreover, it is evident that mentees (principals) benefited from the sponsorship, visibility and coaching components of mentorship.

In terms of her responsibilities as a principal Jane noted that:

“Leading the school is quite a different role to leading and building capacity of teachers under you. It is a big job to juggle being a principal and being a mentor to teachers also”.

Principal Mercy noted that:

“I support teachers by organizing and recommending them to workshops to learn new ideas and pedagogy”

For Principal Maria, Professional development of teachers often happens over a period of time. She opined that;

“Before I became the principal the school had an outside provider to come and coach/mentor HOD's in topics of leadership. Now all teachers normally attend the session once in a while”

In South Africa, all provincial education departments predominantly employ workshops as a

strategy of delivery of professional development. Through workshops, identified issues that teachers experience while educating learners are addressed. Despite the fact that this method is well-liked for professional teacher development, Phorabatho (2013) noted that it frequently assumes what the roles of teachers are and offers no follow-up afterward.

Principal Winnie opined that:

“Since I became principal I have initiated Informal conversations with HoD’s and staff which has provided a forum for staff to share ideas/problems and areas they need more training or mentorship. This has greatly helped our school”

Principal Dotty noted that:

“In terms of professional development, we have an induction and mentoring program where we take in novice teachers yearly to prepare them, for career in teaching. The teachers are allocated a senior member of staff who supervises them and mentors them doing the induction program”

Principal Mercy observed that:

“we normally have two workshops which are organized by the DoE and in the school, and we have got two, which is subject meetings, during which our department plan for the year. We also assess training needs for all staff”

Principal Dotty noted that:

“I always ensure that IQMS is implemented fully and that attend trainings and meetings needed to equip them. Though I am not competent on some areas of IQMS since not much training has been provided to us principals on IQMS since I took over”.

The effectiveness of a nation's educational system is greatly influenced by the caliber and effectiveness of its instructors in carrying out their duties. However, teachers need pertinent and sufficient assistance and training in order for them to perform their jobs efficiently (Ngema & Lekhetho, 2019). For Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), teacher professional

development is structured professional learning that seeks to improve teacher practices and learner learning. It is also defined as a comprehensive, sustained and intensive process of enhancing the effectiveness of teachers and principals in order to raise learner achievement (Brown & Militello, 2016).

Principal Winnie noted that”

*‘I also encourage my teachers to pursue further studies to equip themselves
moreso those what aspire to be principals as I was also supported when I
was a teacher’*

Principal Jane asserted that:

*“I also have a good relationship with the professional development in my
school”*

The aforementioned makes clear that principals highlighted a variety of factors as supporting professional development. Financial support, openness of educators, training, and motivation, among other things, are all significant. Findings from the participants showed that there are also in-service professional development activities for teachers (Ajani, 2020). These initiatives support the South African Council for Educators' (2008) requirement that teachers partake in professional development activities in order to accrue the professional points necessary for career advancement. Department of Education (2007) recommends that teachers should be engaged in professional development activities every year to enhance learners' performance in schools. Gumbo (2020) affirms that South African teachers are provided with various workshops, training, or meetings that can improve their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). However, most of these workshops do not meet the attendees' needs. Similarly, Dlamini and Mbatha (2018) affirm that existing teachers' professional development does not adequately address their professional needs.

It is evident that principals exercise their role regarding teachers' professional development through training (workshops) and mentorships. They take the responsibility of motivating teachers in order to enhance their professional skills. Majority of respondents agreed that principal act as role model (Hussain, Atta, Khan, Bakhsh, & Sibtain, 2021). The role of the school principal in the professional development of the teacher is very vital and often decisive. The school principal has

a unique position in the school that can affect the professional development of the teacher (Bredeson, 2000 cited by Chalikias, 2020).

Principals make decisions daily that impact the school's success (Gupton, 2003). Women have become the focus of international programmes and conferences. Even though women characteristically lead in a way that seems advantageous for organizations today, the number of women occupying secondary school principalship still remains low (Bartling, 2013). According to Oyeniran and Anchomese (2018), women who have become leaders or heads of institutions have successfully broken the barriers that traditionally stand in the way of women seeking career advancement. They have gone beyond the great divide.

4.3.3 Principal's Perceptions of the Factors which Influence their Ability to Support Teacher Professional Development

The process of education is ongoing. It continues even after obtaining a degree and beginning a career. Career-minded individuals can continuously enhance their skills and become more proficient at their employment by continuing their education (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). It is crucial for principals to support teachers in pursuing professional development in order to secure the best learning results for their learners as well as to help them be more effective and fulfilled in other areas of their careers. When educators discover new teaching strategies through professional development, they are able to go back to the classroom and make changes to their lecture experiences and curricula to better suit the needs of their learners (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). In most situations, female principals face particular difficulties in the school, such as gender stereotypes, the physical setting of the school, and learner behavior. In relation to teacher development, the next section examines gender stereotypes and the school environment that principals must contend with.

4.3.3.1 Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are structured collections of beliefs about the interests, competencies, and duties of men and women. They are also known as sex stereotypes, sex-role stereotypes, or gender-role stereotypes (Kollmayer, Schober, & Spiel, 2018). These widely held views have been discovered to be remarkably consistent across time (Prentice, & Carranza, 2003). The principals

identified gender stereotypes as the primary barrier preventing them from fostering an atmosphere that is supportive of teacher growth with regard to professional development. When female principals were appointed to their positions in their respective schools, they received diverse receptions as demonstrated below. Societal barriers include gender stereotype, sociocultural cultural perspectives, and family responsibility. The main challenge they encounter on daily basis since appointment is gender stereotype.

Principal Dotty noted that:

“When I was first appointed, there was a mix of reactions. Some teachers and members of the society showed support and encouragement where as

Some showed resistance and maybe lack of support in my decision of becoming a principal.”

Researchers have drawn attention to how difficult it has always been for women to hold top roles in educational institutions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Before and after assuming leadership roles, women in educational settings confront a number of obstacles. This is often referred to as the glass ceiling effect, which causes hindrances in women's career advancement (Mdabe, 2021). Even if women are more likely to join the paid labour force, they will likely only be offered lower status service employment, and that is simply unacceptable.

Principal Jane noted that:

“For personal, I found that being a teacher as I grow up I found myself moving away from teaching profession to leadership profession. I spend less time in classroom and more time in the office which is becoming more an administrative rather than a teaching profession.”

It was clear from the interviews with participants that they struggle to escape the deep-rooted prejudice against female in relation to their competency. The perception that women are less talented than males hinders female school principals from being effective and successful school administrators. Principal Jane indicated that:

*“When people come into the school, when they see that you are a woman, you can feel that you are respected less. Just because I am a female, it seems the male colleagues are threatened by a female who is challenging them”.
The context influenced my leadership as a woman. I do not think male principals in secondary schools, have a problem that goes on and on”*

Principal Maria also noted that as a principal she faces stereotypes every day for not being a man. She said:

“Women have to break down many barriers on their way to success. One of them is the fact that I am constantly reminded that I am not a man and that I am lucky to be principal”

The interviews with female school principals made it evident that prejudice against female leadership was still a problem, and that this discrimination was linked to the idea that leadership was only a male responsibility. Female school administrators have to deal with discrimination on a daily basis. This bias stems from the deeply ingrained historical belief that males are leaders and women are followers.

The above description of women provides insight into how the majority of female principals feel about their jobs and how they saw them. Despite the policies, strategies and mechanisms put in place by the South African government to implement gender equality in state institutions, Chisholm (2001) shows that South African educational leadership favours males and resists change.

Principal Mercy noted that:

“The Community hardly admit or accept schools with female principals. They would prefer schools headed by men. There is also less or no support at all from SGB or DOE in some cases”

The response from principal mercy shows that female school principals lack of support from the school's stakeholders. It is understood gender stereotype is still enshrined in the community and stakeholders. In Mnisi (2015), The female school principal participants maintained that they work very hard, but that they do not get the necessary support from the different stakeholders such as

the educators, the members of the SGBs, the unions, the parents, and the community leaders. In many instances a lack of support is especially significantly felt with regard to their male colleagues.

Principal Maria noted that:

“It was not easy for teachers to accept me as principal. Most male teachers when not pleased because of their cultural belief that a man is a head everywhere”

Female principals also experienced resistance from their teachers, especially older male teachers. The prolonged stereotyping of women as being inferior to men manifested in a hostile approach of receiving school principals at their schools which resulted in a hampering effect on school leadership effectiveness.

Principal Dotty further pointed out that:

“Sometimes senior male teachers don’t want to listen to me or follow my instructions because I am a woman. Sometimes during staff meeting some SMT members oppose my suggestions. Some even refuse to share their views when asked so that they just sabotage me”

It is evident that school principals experience discrimination by staff because of their gender. It is understood that male teachers have a particular understanding of leadership which is influenced by societal norms around leadership. Gender stereotyping affects women's advancement into leadership positions, since leadership has been identified as masculine (Lumby, 2015; Jauhar & Lau, 2018). This causes women to have a double burden in doing their jobs well while overcoming stereotypes in relation to their potential to lead (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). Women are constantly viewed as incapable of taking up leadership positions (Alqahtani, 2019; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). These stereotypes separate women from men within society. Therefore, the problem is not the number but rather the culture and practices that women experience within the system.

4.3.3.2 School Environment

A pertinent contributing factor to challenges faced by female principals was issues faced within

the school environment. This ranged from general learner indiscipline in schools and also working with teacher unions which have a significant influence on teachers. In addition to the internal school environment, the neighborhood within which the school is located has a negative influence on learners, teachers and schools. It is understood that learners' indiscipline is another issue affecting the principals and teachers. Indiscipline is characterized by absenteeism, learners not handing work in time, and parents not being able to discipline their kids.

Principal Mercy noted that:

“My main challenge is absenteeism due to that fact that my school is situated next to a tavern. I have requested the owners to change its location and they refused. Learners cannot pay attention when music starts to play. There are frequent fights where we all end up affected, so external factors are slowly demoralising the educators, they tend to have trust issues and learners do not hand in their work in time and parents cannot control or discipline their kids appropriately.”

Principal Jane noted that:

“There are frequent fights where we all end up affected, so external factors are slowly demoralising the teachers, they tend to have trust issues and learners do not hand in their work in time and parents cannot control or discipline their kids appropriately”

For some principals lack of enough resources and social factor like teenage pregnancy were some of the challenges they face. For Principal Winnie:

The main challenges I face on daily basis and where my teachers have to handle is teenage pregnancy and insufficient teaching aids.”

Principal Dotty had a unique challenge in regards to leadership and teacher development in her school. She noted the influence of external forces specifically SADTU. She noted that

“Most teachers in my school are SADTU members, my sister ... only those old teachers belong to other unions. When the officials tell them not to attend

district workshops for their development they respect the unions more than my leadership. When they are given mandate not to write provincial papers or chase district officials out of the school, they carry out the union mandate. This becomes difficult for me as a principal”

The school principal sets up all of these settings so that school teachers and school units can adapt to environmental needs (Zimmerman, 2006; Ntanos et al., 2020). The leader must promote teachers' professional development by setting goals, which is the approach's most crucial component (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2012).

4.3.3.3 Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Due to the responsibilities of leadership roles, women find it difficult to rise to expectation in relation to leadership, particularly in relation to balancing their personal and professional lives, which often lead to work-family conflicts (Mthembu, 2013; Pirouznia, 2013; Shava *et al.*, 2019). According to Mbithuka, Muola, and Maithya (2017), women leaders who are parents often find it difficult to integrate their family responsibilities with their professional obligations, forcing them to juggle two completely different worlds. The principals proposed a number of ways to improve women's leadership, particularly in schools. Principal Mercy opined that:

“For me I think there needs to be a more feminist approach to principal leadership where female principals are given equal opportunities, equal rights and everything that is equal as that of male principals.”

The fourth goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines the necessity of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and fostering opportunities for all. This indicates that in order to challenge established gender roles and stereotypes, educational systems must consider the need to integrate gender discourse into a variety of educational contexts (Esteves, 2018).

According to Moorosi (2010), the cultural views of the community and schools in South Africa are a barrier to women's advancement. Women's sociocultural roles are caring for children and taking care of the home, whereas men are seen as the family's primary provider. As a result, when women rise into leadership positions, it has little impact on their sociocultural status (Coleman &

Glover, 2010).

Subsequently, Principal Maria noted that:

“First, female leaders should be encouraged. There should be some platforms that allow encouragements of female leaders and also we should be given more opportunities in becoming principals within schools both high and primary schools. One should also trust in their own capability as a principal, see themselves a principal before wanting others to see themselves a principal”.

Where gender regulations are implemented, women should be able to obtain leadership and managerial positions, however, this is not the case because women are still underrepresented in these positions (Watson et al., 2017). The results showed that social and cultural entrenchments, particularly in schools, are a challenge for female principals. These difficulties could be influenced by the additional responsibilities that principals have taken on in addition to their role as campus principals.

For Principal Jane:

“DOE need to triple their efforts to encourage and promote women leadership.”
She noted that: “For me I feel that the department itself should put more emphasis on leadership for principals for female principals. To try to eliminate stereotype that male principals are more adequate or more just in essence that female principals and also they should be an overall workshop or training for female principals. Sometime in some cases it should not be just female or male just a workshop for principals where we can all learn and take steps together that would lead us into becoming effective principals.”

Even though women are few in leadership and experience barriers in their leadership experience, they can still contribute positively to school effectiveness through survival mechanisms. As a means to survive in male-dominated leadership areas, women have to find alternatives to enhance their educational practices. Zikhali and Smit (2019) mention that, women need academic and self-

efficacy beliefs as mechanisms of survival in their leadership.

According to April & Sikatali (2019), societal barriers like stereotypes, bias, a lack of role models, inadequate growth opportunities, and the glass ceiling prevent women from advancing to leadership positions and imply unfavorable working conditions that directly affect women's retention in leadership. Gender stereotypes, sociocultural cultural perspectives, and family responsibilities are examples of societal barriers. The first societal challenge is gender stereotype.

Gender stereotype refers to the generalised view of men or women's attributes and roles (Mbithuka, 2019). Culture refers to a set of beliefs, values, practices and norms associated with the local community and workplace (Al-Ruhaili et al., 2020; Shava, Tlou, & Mpofu., 2019). These are reflected in the roles assigned to women and men, which does not put women in leadership spheres.

The difficulties women face in gaining acceptance from their male counterparts have a significant impact on their readiness to assume leadership roles. According to Principal Mercy stereotypes remains an impediment to women ascension to leadership. She noted that:

“As mention before one of the major factors is the way the society; the stereo type of the female teachers. Where a high school may be seen as a place that should be led by a male teacher because learners are older and male teacher would give a different perspective than that of a female”.

Gender stereotyping is seen as an external barrier that affects women within the workplace which hinders even their motivation towards leadership positions (Jugmohan & Muzvidziwa, 2017). Stereotypically men are expected to be independent, aggressive, competitive, rational, dominant, and objective (Crites, Dickson, & Lorenz, 2015). This makes men to be seen as fit for the control of learners. Women, on the other hand, are seen as incapable. These perceived differences that gender stereotype impose are barriers that hinder women's advancement in their careers (Chase & Martin, 2019; Mthembu, 2013). In Zikhali and Smit's (2019) study, it was observed that South African women often face barriers that are societally influenced. A female principal indicates how her leadership was tested by the local community members and male colleagues who undermined her leadership just because she is a woman (Zikhali & Smit, 2019).

In many developing countries, the underrepresentation of females in decision-making positions is common, and well documented, raising issues of equity, social justice and sustainable development (Oyeniran & Anchomese, 2018). Principal Jane noted that:

“I think the most obvious is the women personal fears; the fear of being a principal, the fear of leading the fear of being a woman and leading and, men being superior beings within a school organization. Also the way the public views me; the stereotypes against women as leaders where within the education systems the majority of principals are male leaders.

Burke (2015) opined that the number does not matter itself, as numbers alone will not change gender inequality. She demonstrated that the fact that the high number of women in universities in the UK is not sufficient to empower women or fill the gap between men and women. Burke's point of view is very pertinent because cultural bias, stereotypes, and moral and psychological oppression continue to be the main attitudes that people have toward women, especially men. Thus, whatever the representation of the gender, what is important is how they are treated and perceived in higher education and what place is given to them.

Principal Winnie noted that:

The female leaders are becoming more hindered and some sort of resistance for them to be leaders especially with high schools. We see more male rather than female principals.”

Studies globally have been undertaken to identify the obstacles preventing more women from holding positions of leadership (Baron & Bielby, 2018; Cross, Lee, Bridgman, Thapa, Cleary, & Kornhaber, 2019; Chanana, 2022; Farkas, Bonifacino, Turner, Tilstra, & Corbelli, 2019). Common obstacles identified, include a shortage of women in managerial positions, discriminatory stereotypes, such as the idea that qualities associated with effective leadership are often masculine traits, structural and institutional barriers, such as the incompatibility between women's domestic and work responsibilities and the challenge they experience creating a balance between their personal and professional lives.

Studies have also identified a lack of specialized training, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes

in relation to leadership, and a lack of self-confidence as significant barriers for women in leadership (Segovia-Pérez, Laguna-Sánchez, & de la Fuente-Cabrero, 2019). Olajide and Israel (2016) maintain that there is a relationship between the leadership experiences and practices and organizational productivity. There is evidence that the leadership approaches and practices can increase or decrease commitment of staff (Asrar-ul-Haqa & Kuchinke, 2016). Good leadership in schools is needed to ensure that teachers attend to their responsibilities diligently and that the importance of education is taken seriously (Modisaotsile, 2012).

4.3.4 Principals' Approaches to Leading

The school principal's role in the teacher's professional development is very crucial and often decisive. The school principal occupies a unique position in a complex school environment and can affect the teacher's professional development (Bredeson, 2000). However, the choice of a leadership approach has a significant contribution to teachers' professional development. The question that emerges is which leadership approach is the best for a school principal (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008). The school principal has a directional role through leadership. The school principal must choose a leadership approach that is in line with each school unit's needs and the specific characteristics and abilities of the teaching staff (Papaioannou et al., 2013; Kirkigianni, 2014). School leadership approach is recognized by the principal's behavior and his relationship with stakeholders of a school unit (teachers, learners, parents). School principals' leadership experiences have been shown to have an effect on many different types of school variables, including organizational (Cemalolu, 2011) and teacher satisfaction (Mota, 2010). The principal as the school head sets the tone for the school through varied leadership experiences or behaviour displayed as leadership functions are carried out.

The participants were asked what leadership experiences they exercised in the course of their work. Their responses clearly showed that there are different types of leadership approaches as illustrated in the excerpt below:

"I use combination of democratic and dictatorship leadership style. "Democratic style allows me to take the views of other teachers in decision making. Where I consider that my decision will impact us all as staff. However, the dictatorship approach allows me to stand my ground as a principal and say my decision is final. The fact that we all have different opinions may be a

disadvantage when it comes to leadership.” (Principal Mercy)

For Principal Jane:

“My style of leadership is participative or democratic where I consult and everybody in the staff participate in decision making. I find that my approach helps in 90% cooperation of my staff.”

It is evident that principals Mercy and Jane are using a combination of democratic and authoritarian leadership approaches. Principal Mercy justifies the combination of the two leadership approaches as her way of being effective. For principal Jane, a democratic approach allows her to get everyone involved in the decision making and it is working for her. According to the findings of a study conducted by Munir and Iqbal (2018), democratic leadership is the most commonly used leadership approach in colleges for women.

Democratic leaders delegate authority, empower subordinates, and involve them in decision-making (Gastil, 1994). The leader makes every effort to make each individual feel like a valuable member of the organization. A person's approach is usually a very personal and distinctive feature of his or her personality and character. An approach may be democratic or autocratic, centralised or decentralised, empathetic or detached, extroverted or introverted, assertive or passive, engaged or remote (Bhargavi & Yaseen, 2016).

Adeyemi (2010) further demonstrated that in a democratic leadership approach, the emphasis is on group and leader participation. After consulting and communicating with various persons in the company, decisions about organizational matters are made (Nwamae & Kayii, 2018). Different experiences may work equally well in different situations and there is often a proper fit between the needs of an organisation and the required leadership approach. According to Shakeshaft and Robinson (2012), the leadership approach of women has been described as “rational and connective, requiring trust and understanding of the diverse needs and desires of the group.”

Principal Maria noted that:

“I often communicate to learners’ and advise them. In case of any issues in school. I always keep a positive frame of mind. I make the effort to solve issues with my staff amicably”

Leadership approaches according to Olagboye (2004) are the various patterns of behaviour leaders adopt in the process of directing the efforts of subordinates towards the achievement of organizational goals. These leadership behaviour are perceived by teachers and determine considerably their mental and emotional attitude towards their job. Teachers and staff are more at ease if their principal understands their function in the school, and they are more likely to respond to the principal if they are motivated and inspired (Andriani, Kesumawati, & Kristiawan, 2018). The amount to which principals impact the achievement of school goals appears to be inextricably linked to the leadership experiences used (Anderson, 2017).

The majority of female principals in this study emphasized participation, collaboration and caring as characteristics of their leadership approaches and they described their approach as transformational leadership. A leader that practices transformational leadership encourages, inspires, and motivates staff to innovate and bring about change that will advance the organization and shape its future success (Siangchokyoo, Klinger, & Campion, 2020; Kwan, 2020). Leadership approach appears to have a good impact on the school's efficiency. Despite the fact that there is no difference between female and male principal leadership (Shava, et al., 2019), certain attributes are primarily connected with female principle leadership. Women are effective at prioritizing, delivering on promises, being socially aware, boosting teamwork, and having multiple skills (Lopez & Rugano, 2018; Shava, et al., 2019). Principal Winnie noted that:

“I prefer relational and collaborative leadership approach; I encourage and mobilize for the participation of all teachers in the task. I also emphasize on team spirit, sharing power and information, even though some tasks take up most of their time.”

Women contribute to school leadership by their collaborative approach which keeps stakeholders in line with the goals of the school; this motivates charisma in followers (Iyekolo, et al., 2020). Women can be effective leaders when given a chance. Collaboration in modern organisations creates effective teamwork.

Transformational school leadership, according to Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) and Sahin (2004), focuses on the school's vision, goals, and motivation while also providing individual support, symbolizing professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations, and

developing structures to increase participation in school decisions. Principal Dotty noted that

“I generally respond to the situation as it presents itself. On a daily basis, I am trying to create an enabling environment to allow teaching and learning to happen. I am very strong in interaction.”

The above narratives show that the participants adopted different leadership experiences in their work place. Democratic, autocratic and transformational leadership approach were all adopted by different principals.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and analysed data on the female principals Leadership Experiences and its influence on teacher development in the rural UMzinyathi district in Kwazulu-Natal. This chapter has presented the findings based on unique challenges that Female principals face in disadvantage rural South African black schools regarding professional teacher development. From the interview of the female principals, the research noted that they experience the principalship differently. The findings discussed stemmed from the interviews and themes that emerged, which shed light on the phenomenon researched. Some responses that emerged from the participants included the fact that while principals understood the aspect of professional teacher development, they often faced challenges based on their gender and also non-cooperation by the teachers. Some teachers reported that they did not attend some developmental workshops because of the influence of their respective unions. The findings revealed that being a school principal entails more than just influencing, regulating, and supporting the school or possessing specific assets, it also entails being aware of challenges and being prepared to overcome a variety of hurdles that may develop.

4.5 Conclusion

The data emanating from the study presented a clear view of the current status of women leadership in rural schools. Female Principals face peculiar challenges like discipline, union influence, lack of respect from some teachers and at times non-cooperation.

The school principal has emerged as the one factor that influences teacher development and learner achievement in schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2014). Principal effectiveness as a means of improving teaching and learner achievement has become the focus of many principal preparation programs as well as the call for increased accountability systems aimed solely at administrators (Corcoran, 2017).

Principal preparation standards and improved learner performance are becoming enormously important. Deeper insight was gained from the responses of the principals on the discrimination against female leaders due to prolonged gender stereotyping.

In the next chapter a discussion of findings is provided followed by recommendations based on the findings presented in relation to female school leaders experiences of facilitating school based teacher professional development. Principals' leadership approaches and practices can have a beneficial or negative impact on the school. There are studies that demonstrate that transformational leadership approaches and practices have a favorable impact on organizational performance. Because they genuinely believe that teachers as a group may generate better answers than the principal alone, the transformational leader supports teacher growth and assists teachers in solving challenges more effectively (Naidoo & Botha, 2012).

Chapter five: Discussion of Findings, Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the experiences of female principals in regards to teacher professional development in disadvantaged South African rural schools.

This chapter presents the discussion of findings, conclusions based on the objectives of the study as well as the general recommendations that have been drawn from the study. In addition, the chapter presents the conclusion, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are presented based on the themes that emerged from an analyses of data generated in relation to the key research questions. The first key finding indicated that participants understood what teacher development entailed and their roles in facilitating teacher professional development. They described teacher professional development as an “on-going concern”, an activity that is continuous during the lifetime of a teacher. Hence I conclude that the principals viewed teacher professional development as a lifelong journey. This is in line with the views of Darling- Hammond et al. (2009) that professional development should be rigorous and on-going. Participants perceived the professional development of teachers as an ongoing process. The principals in this study adopted different ways in which they supported or facilitated professional development in their schools. The main methods were by internal development meetings and also allowing teachers to attend various workshops conducted externally.

The adoption of different ways to support or facilitate professional development indicates that the principals were taking their contexts into consideration and were working together with the teachers to promote professional development. Xenikou (2017) argues that the transformative leadership approach demands that leaders and followers collaborate to achieve common goals of higher order so that both leaders and subordinates can lift everybody to higher motivation levels (Xenikou, 2017). It is clear therefore that by adopting different methods to enhance professional

development that the participants display some key characteristics described by Xenikou (2017) and one could therefore argue that the principals demonstrate elements of being transformative. One can further argue that the adoption of different approaches and practices suggests an analysis of context and the need to work within the context in promoting teacher professional development.

Wagithunu, Muthee, & Thinguri (2014) state that transformational leadership is most frequently associated with vision, direction-setting, company transformation and realignment, personnel and curriculum development; and external community involvement. The principals' promotion of professional development indicates that they acknowledge the link between professional development and learner achievement. This is in keeping with Kowalski (2010) who argues that a transformative leader promotes and inspires followers to produce outstanding results. They pay attention to personal struggles and developmental needs, they alter their knowledge of problems and inspire followers to make extra efforts to achieve group goals (Kowalski, 2010). The principle of transformational leadership is mostly about governance that generates progressive change among followers by taking care of other's needs and serving the interests of society as a whole (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). This study found that participants demonstrated some elements of transformative leadership.

Participants shared experiences which demonstrate gender stereotypes prevalent in teachers from the teachers and within the community. They confirmed that have experienced discrimination and gender stereotyping has negatively affected them. Stereotypical classifications of professions and subjects have strong implications for females. They impair learning and prevent females from achieving their full potential. Stereotypes lower one's self- esteem and sense of competence, i.e., a person's self-concept (Marsh and Scalas, 2011). Difficulties in overcoming gender inequalities are caused by external (organization, system of laws) and internal (perception) factors. These findings of this study also concur with those by Faulkner (2015) who notes that despite the equal opportunity legislation introduced in many countries, including South Africa, in the last three decades, traditional stereotypes of women's roles, position, characteristics and abilities continue to exist. Gender stereotypes are ranked as the biggest challenge that women face in their quest to be top management office bearers. Gender stereotypes in society have led to the formation of normative beliefs about the different roles expected to be performed by men and women (Katuna, 2014).

The female principals desire for self enhancement and their willingness to face the challenges of female principalship in a male dominated environment and an environment prevalent with gender discrimination indicates that they display the characteristics of transformative leadership and work for social justice as described by Shields (2014). It is stated that one of the key functions of transformative leaders is to campaign for justice and challenge the status quo. Shield (2014) noted that transformative leadership connects education and educational leadership with the broader social context and is thus the best option for social justice leadership. Leaders practicing transformative leadership can enhance equity and justice in their schools and communities (Ortega, 2019). Shields (2014) posits that transformative leaders strive to understand themselves and others by evaluating their own behaviour objectively. Therefore, the connection between leadership and social justice work is natural (Shields, 2014). Participants in this study demonstrate elements of transformative leadership and in this respect this study does not argue that participants are transformative leaders.

In having to deal with and to navigate an environment characterised by gender discrimination, the principals' willingness to challenge the status quo display characteristics of social justice leadership as described by Shields (2014) in that they seek via their own experiences to challenge and influence change. In having to manage contextual matters, the principals are forced into playing multiple roles and therefore they display multiple leadership roles in addressing multiple contextual factors. In this instance of challenging the status quo, one can argue that the principals are demonstrating elements of leadership for social justice under the broad umbrella of transformative leadership.

Cuervo (2016) explained that social justice does not have a definitive meaning as many terms have been associated with social justice, such as "merit, need, fairness, equity, and equality" (Cuervo, 2016, p.1). This argument by Cuero (2016) presents a broad description of the many contextual factors that impact the role of female principals especially in rural areas. In order to promote teacher professional development, the principals in this study had to adapt to and manage the contextual factors by adopting different approaches to school based professional development. Findings in this study demonstrate that given the opportunity and necessary support, female principals are able to fulfil their roles as transformative leaders working to promote social justice.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) explained that leadership for social justice in education involves transforming conditions for those that have not been adequately served by current policies and practices. The principals having to deal with the issues of gender bias and broad social inequality and inequity in rural schools have by default adopted the task and goal of leading for social justice to create change in the educational environment to promote teacher effectiveness and success for all learners. Within the broad umbrella of transformative leadership, the findings present evidence that principals in promoting professional development opportunities for teachers, were also promoting enhanced learner achievement in an environment of social inequity. By doing so, the principals can easily be identified as leaders aiming to promote social justice.

The respondents' perceptions of teacher leadership demonstrated a distinct difference in how teachers acted in leadership roles beyond simply taking and making these roles. Most respondents claimed to adopted transformative leadership but their idea of using both democratic and authoritarian leadership approaches demonstrates their current socialization into traditional ways of leading surface and this reflects a challenge to being transformative leaders. According to Emrich (2004) and Paris (2003) the variation of leadership approaches is influenced by normative perspective as the same concepts may contain specific beliefs, processes and implicit understandings which influence participants' leadership practices.

This study identified that the gender of the principals was foregrounded in their leadership. They had to constantly navigate rural societal expectations of females, the need to win over the staff at their schools as well as the desire to provide the best opportunity and environment for teachers to develop and learners to achieve success. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) advised that it is important to study how women's leadership approaches differ from the traditional "command and control" approach of leadership. Studying leadership through a such a lens allows for a much broader perspective from which both females and males can learn. Redefining leadership through such a perspective allows for a more thorough understanding of leadership beyond the traditional perspective. Eklund, Barry, & Grunberg (2017) explain that in order to promote effective leadership, one needs to go beyond simplistic understandings of the way in which women and men lead in relation to biological sex. They argue that it is important to understand "if and how gender relates to leadership" as they see gender as "an individual difference characteristic that is relevant

to how people think about themselves, are thought about by others, and act in various situations” (p.130). Being aware of the societal gender bias, adopting various strategies to promote teacher professional development, promoting teacher professional development for enhanced learner achievement, demonstrates that participants in this study were able to manage and mitigate their gender in relation to both the opportunities as well as constraints they experienced in their leadership role. As such, it can be argued that while participants demonstrated some evidence of transformative leadership, personal approaches as well as practices contextual factors influenced the extent to which they were transformative leaders.

5.3 Recommendations

- More research needs to be done in relation to the experiences of female principals, particularly in rural contexts, to identify the individual and collective needs of principals to mitigate contextual factors and gender discrimination. Women have often cited lack of adequate support as an impediment to achieving leadership goals.
- The second recommendation is the need for research on mentorship for female leaders aspiring to be transformative leaders. This may be useful in overcoming challenges faced by women as the findings that mentoring can help overcome challenges faced by female leaders. Grant (2012) in his study concluded that mentoring is a useful method that can be used to overcome some of the leadership challenges that women face in the higher education sector.
- The third recommendation relates to creating greater awareness of how men are privileged in society and how this leads to their dominance in school leadership. Moorosi (2019) asserts that challenges faced by women leaders are usually embedded in the culture of organisations. Many organizational cultures are shaped by men's views of what an effective manager should be like. In addition, Eddy et al. (2017) notes that, because leadership is dominated by men in terms of power and influence, cultures prevailing in the higher education institutions tend to exhibit attributes which favours men. This is true for schooling as well.

5.4 Limitations

The main limitation of this research study like various qualitative studies is that the sample in this study was small. However, the findings will still provide an understanding of female principals' experiences of facilitating teacher professional development rural schools.

5.5 Conclusion

This study found that female principals do demonstrate some elements of transformative leadership in relation to their managerial practices, such as placing emphasis on learners' differences, developing knowledge of the curriculum as well as pedagogical objectives, approaches and practices (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013). While it confirms that female leadership practices are in line with good school administration and the promotion of teacher effectiveness, more needs to be done to support female principals as transformative leaders (Carbajal, 2018). Findings confirm the leadership traits that female principals demonstrate, namely, traits of nurturing, sensitivity, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, loving, cooperative, and accommodative align with transformative leadership. (Dandan & Marques, 2017). Participants agreed that such characteristics are not only synonymous with effective management but provide a platform for transformative leadership (Dandan & Marques, 2017).

In the twenty-first century women are still fighting for emancipation and recognition in various places. This study demonstrated that provided with opportunities accompanied by access to resources, women principals are able to transcend societal preconceptions of women in leadership positions and are able to use their personal experiences as advocates of teacher professional development and as champions of transformation in schools and schooling.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Gatekeepers Letter



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 3921062 / 033-3921051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Ref.:2/4/8/7061

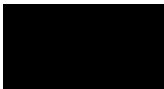
Mr Vusimuzi Wilcan Mkhize
1 Mustang Drive
Glenwood
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Mr Mkhize

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"NARRATIVES OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ITS INFLUENCES ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL UMZINYATHI DISTRICT IN KWAZULU-NATAL"** 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 17TH December 2020 to 10TH March 2023.
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 Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
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 Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.



APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Letter to Gatekeepers

Faculty of Education
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg Campus.

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

13 April 2021

Dear Participant,

I am a Masters learner in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **“Narratives of Female Principals’ Leadership Experiences and Its Influences on Teacher Development in the Rural UMzinyathi District”**

The purpose of the study is to explore how female principals understand their roles in facilitating the professional development of teachers in rural schools in the UMzinyathi District. The University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Department of Education have approved this study.

I will use are in-depth semi structured interviews and document analysis. I will request your participation in this study.

The duration of the interview will be about one hour.

During the research and after, I will abide by the following ethics:

- ✓ No harm will overcome you during and after the project
- ✓ The name of your school and yours will not be printed or mentioned in the project
- ✓ Issues discussed at interviews or poems will not be discussed with anyone besides you and my supervisor
- ✓ You are at liberty (have the right) to stop your involvement in this project at any time without any negative consequences.
- ✓ Your informed consent will be sought before commencing with this project
- ✓ The data collected from this study will be kept in a locked cabinet for three years.

If you would like to know the results of this project, you may contact me on email mkhizevusi84@gmail.com. Thank you for your participation in this project. Your responses are greatly

valued. Feedback with regards to the interview and document analysis will be made to you through a meeting date that would suite both the participant and the researcher.

Your signature below confirms that you have read the above and are willing to participate in this project.

Print Name

Signature

Date

CONSENT

I _____ have been informed about the study entitled by Mr. Vusimuzi Mkhize.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Contact Details

Researcher: Mr. Vusimuzi Wilcan Mkhize (063 023 5312, mkhizevusi84@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Dr. Saajidha Sader (033 260 6148 / saders@ukzn.ac.za)

Research office: Ms. Phumelele Ximba Tel: 031-260 3587 or email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX C: Ethical clearance

21 August 2021

Mr Vusimuzi Wilcan Mkhize (217076997)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Mkhize,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00002733/2021

Project title: Narratives of Female Principals' Leadership Styles and Its Influences on Teacher Development in the Rural UMzinyathi District in Kwazulu-Natal

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received 23 April 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

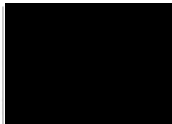
This approval is valid until 21 August 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

APPENDIX D: In-depth Interview Questions

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SECTION A – Biographical and Educational Data

Biographical questions

1. Please indicate your age bracket:
2. Gender:
3. Staff Composition:
4. Highest Qualifications:

SECTION B: Principals duties

5. How long have you been a principal in your school?
6. What factors motivated you to become a school principal?
7. What sort of reaction did you get from other people, when you showed interest in leadership?
8. What was the selection process like?
9. What are your roles as a Principal? In your opinion which of these roles do you consider more important?
10. How did you prepare for your leadership? (In term of training and mentoring)
11. What are some of your major challenges in the course of your work? (Personal and Administrative)
13. Would you say you have adequate support as woman principal from all the stakeholders? (Parents, Teachers, DOE).
14. What do you think is the stumbling block that hinders women from all participating in Secondary school leadership?
15. What do you think would improve women's participation in secondary school leadership?
16. How would you describe your leadership approach?
17. What are your experiences as a Female principal?

18. Does your experience in leadership influence the way you lead? Explain?

19. In your opinion what are the barriers to females “promotion into educational leadership position?”

20. How do you think these barriers can be dismantled?

21. What would be your advice to females who want to enhance or improve their leadership skills?

22. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX E: Editing

12 March 2023

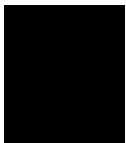
To whom it may concern

Editing of dissertation for Mkhize, V. W (Student Number: 217076997)

I have a Master's Degree in Education Management from UKZN. I hereby confirm that I have edited the dissertation titled Narratives of black female principals' leadership experiences and its influence on teacher development in the rural uMzinaythi district in Kwazulu-Natal.

Corrections were made in respect of grammar, tenses, spelling and language usage using track changes in MS Word 2016. Once corrections have been attended to the dissertation the dissertation should be correct.

Yours Sincerely



.....

Mahomed Yusuf Sader

Please note:

Should the learner not attend to the suggested changes by the editor and made additions to the dissertation after editing has been completed (before submission to Turnitin), the editor cannot guarantee the language, grammar and tenses are correct.

APPENDIX F: Turnitin Certificate

