

**LEADING 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ADOPTED BY PRINCIPALS IN THE RURAL
CONTEXT.**

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DECLARATION

I, Selaelo Sylvia Maifala declare that:

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I, Dr Phumlani Erasmus Myende, declare that this dissertation has been submitted with my approval.

.....

Supervisor's signature Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dearest daughter Hlamalani, my niece Kamogelo and my nephew Neo. May this chapter of my life inspire you to dream big and work hard to achieve your dreams.

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I owe my sincerest gratitude to the following people for their support;

- My dearest grandmother for loving me and believing in every dream I've ever had. Thank you Mma for believing in me more than I believed in my own dreams at times.
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8 November 2016

Ms Selaelo Sylvia Maifala 215082282
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Dear Ms Maifala

Protocol reference number: HSS/1913/016M

Project title: Leading schools in the 21st Century: An exploratory case study of principals' meanings and understandings of their leadership roles in the context of rurality

FULL APPROVAL-NO RISK

In response to your application received 4 November 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

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

Yours faithfully

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the daily leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context within the 21st century. Using the daily leadership practices, the study sought to explore the extent to which their practices manifest awareness of what is required from principals of the 21st century. Further, the contextual challenges they face as well as how they were addressed were also explored and used to evaluate their awareness of the what is expected from a 21st century principal. Literature relating to school leadership were reviewed and the Complexity Leadership Theory used as a framework for the study. It was conducted within the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative research methodology and design were used. Five principals working in Polokwane District Municipality were sampled to participate in the study. Data was generated using a primary method of semi-structured interviews and a secondary method of non-participative participant observations. The findings revealed some daily leadership practices that correspond with literature on effective 21st century leadership practices namely; performing management tasks, inclusion of teachers in planning and decisions, parents' involvement and creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning. However, the findings also revealed that although parental involvement is included in the principals' daily leadership practices, it is not utilised in ways that support 21st support 21st century leadership. Further, the findings revealed that in other areas of the principals' daily leadership practices such as their harm to instructional time, practices do not manifest awareness of what is required from 21st century principals. The challenges revealed in this study are as follows; insufficient human resources, adequate parental involvement, security and sufficient support from the department. Principals address these challenges through engaging the department, the police and other stakeholders. Revealing awareness that 21st century schools require collaboration of different stakeholders to thrive. It was therefore concluded that principals have some awareness of what is expected of them as school leaders of the 21st century while other areas remain lacking. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to the principals, the department of basic education as well as to other researchers for further study.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANNSSF	Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding
BED	Bachelor of Education
B-TECH	Bachelor of Technology
CAS	Complexity Adaptive Systems
CLT	Complexity Leadership Theory
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DOE	Department of Education
EDU MAN	Education Management
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management Systems
PAM	Personnel for Administrative Measures
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SPTD	Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study presents the results of an exploratory study into 21st Century principals, working in South African rural communities. The study intended to answer three research questions. The daily leadership practices that are adopted by principals in the rural areas, the extent to which leadership practices of principals manifest awareness of what is required from 21st Century principals as well as the ways in which principals address leadership challenges that come within the rural context in the 21st Century. This chapter discusses the research problem the study wished to investigate in detail, as well as the purpose of carrying out the research. The research questions guiding the study are also addressed. Further, also discussed is the significance that the researcher hoped answering the research questions would have, regarding the issue under investigation. Finally, the research locations as well as limitations of the study are discussed.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education leadership in the 21st Century presents countless challenges and demands for school principals. To cope with and adapt to these challenges, school leadership, particularly principals have to be well-informed about all the educational and environmental changes as they relate to schools. The necessary adaptation and evolution might be an easier journey for principals and schools with sufficient infrastructure and resources. Those operating in the rural context are not exempted from the challenges of the 21st Century; however they operate under very different circumstances compared to their urban counterparts (Msila, 2010; Du Plessis, 2014). Therefore, schools in the rural context require effective leadership in order to drive themselves to effectiveness, despite the challenges of the context and the broader demands of the 21st Century. Further, there is a need for leaders who have a clear meaning and understanding of their roles in leading schools within the 21st Century. The era has so far been characterised by innumerable changes in technology and globalisation. These advances in technology and globalisation have turned the world into a much compact place. What children learn and how they learn has changed significantly when compared to the 20th century. The so called “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) do not only learn within the context of the classroom.

Their learning occurs through different media such as the internet and television (Jerald, 2009). It is therefore pivotal that those providing them with formal education, understand these changes and are adept to them in order to succeed. School principals need to have the skills and mind-sets fit for leadership in the 21st Century (Fullan, 2001). Those working in the rural contexts who are often forced to deal with challenges such as lack of basic infrastructure and technology, large classroom sizes and a lack of qualified teachers among other challenges, must also adapt to 21st Century demands and challenges (Balfour, Mitchell, Moletsane, 2008; Hlalele, 2012; Myende & Chikoko, 2014; Bhengu & Myende 2015). This is a necessity since educational changes in the South African context have so far neglected the contextual realities in which diverse principals operate.

Du Plessis (2014), confirms that principals operate within unique and trying challenges in the 21st Century. In his argument, there are internal and external challenges that schools in the rural context are faced with (ibid). Those challenges, such as poverty that occur within the school and those that occur in the school communities, affect the functioning of schools,. Because of these challenges, there is evidence that schools in the rural context are unable to produce better matric results as compared to their urban counterparts (Umalusi Statement of Matric Results, 2015). The statement shows that the Limpopo Province scored seventh on the national pass rates at 72.9%, with rural schools suffering the most out of those schools. Based on the “one size fits all” education coupled with the new demands of 21st Century, school principals need to enact their leadership in ways that will allow schools to thrive.

It is against this backdrop that this study was conducted in order to understand what principals in the rural context are doing, what is working about what they are doing as well as how it differs from known literature on school leadership of the 21st Century.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As already established in the introduction, the 21st Century is characterised by various social, environmental and economic factors. These factors in turn have implications on life and work, schools and those who lead them. The 21st Century presents enormous challenges for school principals all over the world. Education reforms on school effectiveness in the 21st Century have focused on various areas such as the curriculum for the 21st Century as well as leadership. With these, the workload and role expectations for school principals have increased (Botha, 2004). South African principals working in a rural context, like in any other context are also

affected by these new role expectations. However, unlike those in other contexts, principals in rural communities must also deal with challenges that are unique to rurality such as those discussed above. To cope with and adapt to the challenges and demands of the 21st Century, schools in the rural context require leadership approaches that are relevant to the new demands, challenges as well as leaders who understand these challenges and their role in them. The roles of leadership are widely studied; however, research on principals' meanings and understandings of their roles, particularly in the rural context is on the periphery.

1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to explore the issues presented in the problem statement. The main aim was to understand these issues from the perspectives of the principals operating in this context. There are three main aims which are;

- To explore the daily leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context.
- To explore the extent to which leadership practices of principals manifest awareness of what is required from 21st Century principals.
- To understand how principals address daily leadership challenges that come with the rural context and the 21st Century.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the daily leadership practices that are adopted by principals in the rural context?
- To what extent do their leadership practices manifest awareness of what is required from 21st Century principals?
- How do principals address daily leadership challenges that come with the rural context and 21st Century?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research on education leadership within the rural context is gaining popularity, but there are gaps that need to be filled. This study intends to contribute to research on rural education leadership and push the boundaries of knowledge and understanding of school leadership in the 21st Century, particularly within the rural context. The Department of basic Education (DBE) has introduced educational changes and the roles of principals within those changes, therefore it can be understood that the DBE knows how principals need to lead schools in time

of rapid changes. In line with that assumption, exploring the daily leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context could provide insight into how they position themselves in leading 21st Century schools. Knowledge of how they position themselves will aid in understanding factors that influence the ways principals lead their schools. Further, the study could provide a platform within which to assess whether the way they position themselves as 21st Century school leaders in the rural context is beneficial to effective 21st Century schools. It is also the researcher's wish that light be shed on whether the daily leadership practices that are adopted, are in line with the objectives of the DBE in what education leadership of the 21st Century needs to be, as embedded in various policy documents. Another question that this study seeks to answer is the ways in which principals address the challenges and demands that 21st Century principals in the rural context face. Having knowledge of those challenges as well as how they are addressed, is essential as it will allow the DBE to provide the necessary kind of support needed.

1.7 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in the Polokwane Local Municipality in the Capricorn district of the Limpopo Province. The rural parts of the municipality, although closest to the province's capital are characterised by a lot of poverty in the home, therefore leading to scarcity of resources in the schools. Seventy-six-point seven percent (76.7%) of schools in the province fall under the quintile one to quintile three of the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (DBE, 2011). Under this policy document, there are five categories or quintiles of schools ranging from poorest to the least poor. Quintile one being the poorest while quintile five is the least poor. Schools that are classified under quintile one to three are declared no fee schools. Many schools in the district of the location of the study fall under the no fee school quintiles, including those in the study. Therefore, they depend entirely on government funding. Five schools and their principals were sampled to participate in the study.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted and analysed from the interpretive paradigm, meaning that the subjective views of participants regarding the phenomenon were used to interpret the data. Due to this method of data generation and interpretation, the findings cannot be generalised to other contexts.

1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.9.1 21st Century

The term “21st Century” has come to mean much more than an era as it includes social changes that have occurred at the beginning of the century and continue to have significant influence on the ways people live. The advancements in technology and globalisation of the century have so far had features that distinguish them from previous centuries. Therefore, the term is embedded in various phrases such as “21st Century skills” “21st Century innovations” “21st Century principals”.

1.9.2 21st Century school leadership

Being a school principal at a time where teaching and learning has changed considerably, has taken a different form. Some of the qualities of effective school leaders of the 21st Century include; the ability to set and communicate a clear vision for the school, creating an environment that is hospitable for teaching and learning, fostering leadership in teachers, creating a standard of high expectations and managing the people and processes that occur in the school (Wallace Foundation, 2013). Therefore, the principal’s role as a school administrator alone will not suffice in the context of 21st Century. Expectations of what a principal symbolises as a 21st Century leader have increased.

1.9.3 The Rural Context

The concept of rurality is connected to geographic settings, population, socio-economic and sociocultural factors. However, it is understood and defined differently from one country to another. For instance, in the USA rurality is often referred to as “the countryside” or simply “the country” which refers to farming areas outside of big cities. According to the National Geographic Encyclopaedia entry (2012), these areas are characterised by low population density and agriculture as a primary source of economy. In Canada, a rural area refers to any area outside of centres of one thousand or more in population (Rural and Small Town Canada: Analysis Bulletin, 2001). Contrary to the USA definition, this one only focuses on low population density and no agriculture is mentioned. In the South African context, rurality is often not based on low population density or agriculture. Rather, these areas are characterised by dense settlement and poverty (DoE, 2005). According to Laldaparsad (2006), there is no standard definition of the concept in South Africa. However, the study she conducted revealed that the concept in South Africa is more connected to the socio-economic factors. It reveals

that participants who live in areas considered rural are impoverished as compared to those in urban areas. For instance, those in rural areas use rivers as their main source of water supply and cow dung and solar as their main source of energy supply. Those in urban areas have access to running water and electricity. Gopaul (2006), states that South African rural areas are some of the most impoverished in the world and are distinguished from their urban neighbours by a lack of health services, education, employment, land, housing and other various necessities. Therefore, the rural context as discussed in this study refers to these areas. The schools where the research was conducted are areas with similar characteristics to those mentioned above.

1.9.4 Learners and Students

The South African term for school children from primary to high school is learners. While “learners” is a term used to refer to those in higher education. However, in countries such as the USA the term is used for both, with the distinction being “high school” or “college” learners. The literature in this study is based on both international and local debates; therefore the term “learners” may be used in one discussion while “learners” is used in another. For the purpose of this study, the researcher makes no distinction between these two terms as both are used in literature presented in this study.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

This study consists of six chapters. Below is a brief description of each.

1.10.1 Chapter 1

The background of the study as well as motivation to conduct this research has been presented in this chapter, followed by a discussion of the problem statement and purpose of the study which was based on the problem. The research questions that the enquiry hoped to answer are also discussed as well as the location in which the study was conducted.

1.10.2 Chapter 2

This chapter discusses local and international debates in life, work and education of the 21st Century. Debates on 21st Century leadership, with attention to school leadership are presented as well as a discussion of popular leadership models. The nature of teaching and learning in the era is also addressed as well as a close focus on the rural context within the 21st Century and the contextual challenges experienced by schools in those areas. Further, this chapter discusses the expected role of the principal according to various education policy documents.

Finally, the study also discusses recent research findings on school principals working in a rural context.

1.10.3 Chapter 3

The theoretical framework underpinning the study is discussed in this chapter. A detailed description of the Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) is made as well as the CLT as it relates to school leadership and the role of the principal within it.

1.10.4 Chapter 4

The research design and methodology that was carried out in the study is discussed in this chapter. The approaches and techniques that were employed to answer the research enquiry are outlined. Further, the measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of findings are discussed.

1.10.5 Chapter 5

This chapter presents and analyses findings from the interviews and observations that were conducted. The research questions that were asked in the enquiry are used to present data under three different themes. The verbatim words of participants are used in conjunction with the data analysis as a way of ensuring trustworthiness of the findings.

1.10.6 Chapter 6

The final chapter of the study summarises the study as well as the research findings and makes conclusions. Further, recommendations are made directed at the Department of Basic Education, principals in the study, others in rural areas and similar contexts as well as other researchers interested in a similar phenomenon.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter one presented the introduction and background of the study. Further, it presented the motivation as well the research problem, objectives and research questions. The location and setting of the study was also presented. Chapter two uses literature to discuss key issues shaping the enquiry.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRINCIPAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY: REVIEW OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEBATES.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the study focus and presented the background. This chapter critically discusses the dynamics of principals that are leading schools in the 21st Century. Issues to be undertaken include the influences of technology and globalisation on life and work in the 21st Century, how these have impacted on education and the role of principals and where the rural context fits into all these factors. The significance of the role of the principal in the 21st Century worldwide and in South Africa is important towards understanding and answering the research questions. This chapter achieves these goals through reviewing popular leadership theories as they relate to the school context. This is followed by a discussion of what policies say about South African school leadership in the 21st Century. Finally, current school leadership trends are reviewed.

2.2 LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The influences of technology and globalisation in the 21st Century have resulted in knowledge becoming the core commodity that drives the economy (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). Factors that drive the economy are also factors that drive the way people and organisations behave in order to continue being productive. Knowledge about the workplace in the 21st Century has therefore become a much more powerful skill to possess than for example, the ability to use certain machinery. As such, knowledge production dictates how organisations behave and operate. There is a drive to produce workers that have expertise in their field of work that will set them apart from competitors and ensure endurance in a rapidly changing world that is forced by technological innovations (Gravemeijer, 2012). Because of these changes, 21st Century leaders and the worldview on leadership have also evolved significantly.

Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) further argue that the challenges faced by leaders of the 21st Century far extend beyond accumulating physical assets as was in the industrial age in the previous century. Rather, the assets become the human resource in the organisation. In an environment where the assets become the people who are hired to perform tasks, leaders are therefore expected to play a role of bigger assets as they manage and direct the other assets. One of the challenges for the leaders in this century is to create an environment that allows knowledge to

be cultivated and nurtured while standing apart from competitors (Boal & Schultz, 2007). Further, Fullan (2001) states that leading in a time of rapid change creates a dilemma for the leader as the conditions demand that one must move with change or face extinction while making quick decisions under pressure can also prove dangerous to the organisation. For this reason, Fullan (2001), contends that leaders must continuously evolve in order to survive and maintain influence in their organisations.

The widespread agreement that the 21st Century is rapidly changing and demands new ways of leadership does not mean an automatic agreement on the best leadership practices and models during this era. For instance, there is research which has suggested that transformational leadership contributes significantly to organisational success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, Burnes, 2004, Huczynski & Buchanan, 2007), thus suggesting that this model may be the best leadership approach for the 21st Century. Gronn (2002), Spillane (2005) and Harris (2005; 2008) suggest that Shared or Distributed Leadership has significant positive effects on the successes of organisations, thus favouring this model for 21st Century organisations. Other models such as the contingency leadership theory that was created by Fiedler (1967), have also been part of the discussions on the best leadership practices of the 21st Century. These leadership models are discussed in detail later in the chapter. Along with leadership that is specific for the 21st Century, teaching and learning have also changed considerably in order to fit into the demands of the century. Below is a discussion of the nature of instruction in the 21st Century.

2.3 THE NATURE OF INSTRUCTION IN THE 21st CENTURY

To gain a full understanding of the role of the school principal in the 21st Century as well as the meanings and understandings principals attach to their roles, it is important to first understand the nature of instruction in the 21st Century. Education in the 21st Century has so far centred around the belief that this century is definitively different from past centuries, therefore new ways of teaching and learning need to be revised in order to be relevant to new ways of thinking and living in the century (Mishra & Kereliuk, 2011). The world we live in today is highly influenced by technology and globalisation, therefore requiring that people think and do things differently. This change in thinking and doing things includes rethinking what is taught in schools and how it is taught (Schleicher, 2012, Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). Technology has given birth to new ways of thinking, therefore skills that may have been sought after ten or twenty years ago may not suffice in today's digital world. Therefore, if children are

to be successful in today's world, the knowledge they receive and how they receive it needs to be changed (Jerald, 2009). To support foregoing arguments, Silva (2009) notes that the workforce has changed so much because jobs that were previously performed by humans can now be done by computers. She (ibid) states that there is a high demand for independent and critical thinkers who can make decisions and contribute through a variety of skills. The benefits of skills-based education that caters for the needs of the 21st Century as opposed to the traditional teaching methods of "chalk and talk" have been widely supported by research (Jerald, 2009; Silva, 2009; Schleicher, 2012). As such, education systems in various western countries such as the United States of America under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Australia and New Zealand as well as Asian countries such as Malaysia and Hong Kong have been reshaping their education systems to reflect 21st Century goals in education. Schleicher (2012), notes that the intentions of many nations changing their education systems in recent decades have been to better prepare learners for roles outside the confinements of the classroom and allowing them to thrive in the 21st Century.

Another significant theme of 21st Century education is that education should be learner centred (Jerald, 2009). The main objective of learner centred education is placing children at the forefront of their own learning and making them as actively involved as possible (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The intention of this approach is to, inter alia, encourage independence, critical thinking and engage children in real-life problem-solving tasks (OECD, 2012). Active involvement in learning includes hands-on activities such as learning how to use computers through first-hand use and making mistakes rather than observing a teacher demonstrate how a computer is used (Eison, 2010). The implication of the nature of education on principals in the 21st Century is that they too are forced to evolve in order to fit into the new, rapidly changing world. As with other leaders of the 21st Century as discussed above, the knowledge and experience those principals possess, will not suffice in the 21st Century unless they continue to learn and improve their knowledge (Gamage & Ueyama, 2004). The challenge for principals therefore becomes their ability to learn new skills that are relevant in a world highly influenced by technology. These challenges will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

2.4 THE CONTEXT OF RURALITY AND THE 21st CENTURY

The term "rural" relates to geographical settings, demographics as well as the socio-economic and sociocultural factors (DoE, 2005). However, it is not easy to define as it could mean

different and sometimes ambiguous things when used in different contexts. Msila (2010), is convinced that the word is confusing because its meaning could vary from country to country. For instance, as stated in chapter one, a rural area in Canada refers to any area in the countryside and outside of centres of one thousand or more in population (Rural and Small Town Canada: Analysis Bulletin, 2001). This definition does not consider the socio-economic or any regard to the occupants of those areas but the fact that they live outside the city and are less than a thousand in number. In New Zealand, the Urban and Rural Profile (Statistics New Zealand, undated), acknowledges that although it may have been acceptable to define a rural area as small and having similar characteristics such as farming; recent trends of employment and immigration have changed what was known as rural. Unlike the traditional rural areas, people can now live in the rural area while working in urban areas and as a result be influenced by urban life. Other international definitions of the term have mainly focused on the socio-economic and demographics such as low population density and agriculture as a primary source of the economy (DoE, 2005; National Geographic, Encyclopaedic entry, 2012). Agriculture as the main source of the economy could be interpreted as farming areas with farmers who own hectares of land and or livestock and can produce their own food and trade in urban areas. Those would therefore be self-sufficient and productive communities. However, in the South African context, the term takes a different meaning. These are areas which are characterised by dense settlement and poverty, with the working class majority and many people that live below the poverty line (DoE, 2005).

The Limpopo Province is no exception to this. In the researcher's observation, many of the people who live in the rural parts of the province and the location of the study are poverty-stricken and the only benefit some get from farms they are often associated with, is working as labourers for a minimum wage. The situation of rural communities in South Africa in the 21st Century is therefore alarming. As established, this era is enormously influenced by technology and globalisation. The interconnectedness that technology provides has resulted in the world becoming smaller and countries interdependent on one another (Trilling & Fadel, 2009; OECD, 2009). Another established character of the 21st Century in the study is its rapidly changing nature which is also influenced by technology and global connectedness. Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) suggest that the factors shaping the 21st Century also drive the economy as knowledge and knowledge production have become the core commodity. The above arguments suggest that to succeed in navigating through the 21st Century requires that one participates actively in the elements that shape the world. Active involvement in the economy also requires knowledge

and access to the already discussed elements. For instance, many companies advertise jobs through the internet; some interviews are conducted online using skype and other online communication tools. Computer literacy is also considered a basic and entry skill to possess in many employment sectors (Burrus, Jackson, Xi & Steinberg; 2013). Therefore, to be even considered for a simple job such as a clerk requires computer skills. Computer literacy and internet access have therefore become a prerequisite of becoming an active participant in the 21st Century. Kavalier and Flanningon (2006), suggest that 21st Century literacy has a new meaning as it extends beyond the ability to read and write, to include digital and visual literacies. Digital literacy pertains to the ability to use computers and other telecommunication technologies as well as the ability to use them for other purposes rather than communication. However, in rural areas where some still struggle to access electricity and other basic services such a running water, being an active participant in the new world is a big challenge. For instance, in 2014, 14% of South African households had no access to electricity while only 10.9% percent had access to home internet (Stats SA, 2014). The statistics on internet access also showed that provinces with the most rural areas such as Limpopo and Eastern Cape were the most affected with only 2.2% percent of the Limpopo population having internet access at home. What this means for rural communities is the inability to be active participants in factors that drive the 21st Century, therefore the inability to participate fully in the economy is also essential. Unfortunately, poverty in many of these areas does not end with the affected households; it often extends to the school (Gardiner, 2008). Below is a discussion of some of the challenges South African schools in the rural context face in the 21st Century.

2.5 CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOLS IN THE RURAL CONTEXT

The challenges of rural communities in the 21st Century were presented above; however, these cannot stand alone in the study without further understanding the challenges schools in these areas face. The rural context is a serious concern when it comes to the provision of education due to the prevalence of poverty and unemployment in communities (Hlalele, 2012; Myende & Chikoko, 2014). These are areas where the majority of the population forms the working class since many of them live below the poverty line (DoE, 2005). As already stated, in the researcher's observation most of the people who live in rural areas in the Limpopo Province, Capricorn District which is the location of the study, are poverty-stricken and work in the nearby farms for a minimum wage. Research also shows that the academic achievement of learners in provinces which are predominantly constituted by schools in the rural context are found to be trailing far behind provinces that are dominated by urban and semi-urban contexts

(DoE 2005, Gardiner, 2008, Msila, 2010 and Du Plessis, 2014). Many schools in the rural context are challenged by a lack of classrooms and or libraries, lack of internet access or any form of modern technology (Gardiner, 2008). In 2014, there were still children who received instruction while cramped in one classroom due to the classroom shortage while some in the Giyani area of Limpopo were still taught under the trees (SABC News, 2014). One of the founding pillars of education in the 21st Century is the use of technology in the classroom; therefore, the lack of these resources is a tremendous disadvantage (Jerald, 2009). Additionally, in a time where thriving means the ability to meet the 21st Century expectations that include knowledge of technology, schools that do not even have the most basic technology will experience difficulties when competing with their well-equipped counterparts. This could present major challenges for the principals who lead such schools. This means that to survive such contextual challenges and triumph over them, requires principals with great leadership skills.

2.6 THE PRINCIPAL AS A LEADER OF THE 21st CENTURY AND THE RURAL CONTEXT

There is a body of literature which suggests that school principals play a vital role in the success of their schools in the 21st Century regardless of their context (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006; Bush, 2007; Schleicher, 2012, The Wallace Foundation, 2013). However, in rural areas the principal must perform various tasks to ensure that learners overcome the contextual challenges. Msila (2010) states that due to the contextual challenges already stated, principals are not always able to fulfil their roles as leaders of change. He further argues that although implementing curriculum and organisational changes of the 21st Century may prove challenging for many school principals, principals in the rural context even have bigger challenges in this role.

As already established, change is a big part of life and work in the 21st Century; therefore, it also affects the nature and approaches of teaching and learning. As such, the constant changes require schools that can master the art of navigating through these changes and embrace them as part of the 21st Century education. There is therefore a need for principals with skills and the ability to lead and implement curriculum changes (Botha, 2004) among other roles. Another significant role of the principal that may prove challenging in the 21st Century in the rural context, is the creation of an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning to thrive. This role is found in instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986) and transformational

leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2001) models, which will be discussed later in the chapter. An environment that is conducive to teaching and learning includes building relations with teachers, learners, as well as school safety and orderliness (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). The researcher believes that creating an environment that allows teaching and learning to thrive further includes ensuring that there is proper furniture and teaching and learning resources. The lack of furniture and resources may mean children are cramped into one classroom, the lack of library resources may mean that learners are deprived of important information that is needed to thrive, therefore becoming an obstacle for the principal's role as a creator of a conducive environment.

Issues stemming from the rural contexts in relation to the 21st Century that were discussed in the previous section will also affect the way learners learn and the principal's role as a leader. As a leader of the 21st Century curriculum and instruction, (The Wallace Foundation, 2013) the principal also has the responsibility to ascertain that learners who have no access to resources at home such as computers or internet still benefit from and take advantage of learning opportunities. According to Gardiner (2008), ensuring that children take advantage of opportunities in the rural context is a bigger challenge as it requires a principal who can come up with alternative ways of achieving such goals. As earlier mentioned, there is added emphasis on the role of the principal in improving school effectiveness in the 21st Century. As such, below follows a discussion of the evolution of the role of the principal as well as the challenges that prevent them from reaching greatness in their roles.

2.7 THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The role of the principal in the school as an organisation has historically been regarded as necessary; hence, schools have always had the position of principal. What has changed, however, are the tasks, functions and responsibilities that they are hired to perform as well as what their role means to the success of the organisation (Mestry & Singh 2007). Traditionally, the role of the principal was administrative in nature (Botha, 2004). This could be interpreted as meaning that some of the functions were to ensure that school record books were in order and kept up to date. This could also be interpreted as meaning the monitoring of teacher and learner attendance as well as looking after the physical resources of the school. It was not expected of the principal that they possess any knowledge of the curriculum or anything to do with teaching as that was assumed to be the work of the teachers in their respective learning areas (Botha, 2004). Being unexpected to understand curriculum matters and instruction would

imply that the principal was left with limited control and influence. However, Botha (2013), states that it was in the 1980s that the role of the school principal started to take a new shape. It was during that time that theories on the importance of school-based management gained momentum, with them emerged theories on the importance of the role of school principals. The principal was then viewed as someone who could have an impact in the school and influence performance and overall effectiveness. Some of the theories spoken about here are; instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). These theories signified the role that the principal as a leader who should have an active involvement in instruction, curriculum and other areas of leadership in the school such as parent involvement. Further, the role of the principal includes, making important decisions regarding activities and functions of the school as well as creating an environment that allows teaching and learning to thrive (Hallinger & Murphy 1986). Some of the suggestions in these theories have remained relevant even in the 21st Century as some researchers (Shelton, 2011; Mendles, 2012; Schleicher, 2012; The Wallace Foundation, 2013) continue to signify the role of the school principal as a leader rather than an administrator with minor functions.

Botha (2004) and Hallinger (2005), reveal that the focus on developing school leaders emerged as part of reform initiatives around the world aimed at improving school effectiveness. It is in light of the already stated challenges of the 21st Century on school leadership, that there have been demands for school principals to evolve in order to cope with these challenges. Being a school principal at a time where teaching and learning has changed considerably, has taken a different form. These new standards for principals have required a higher level of accountability for the learner achievement (Ross & Gray, 2006) and overall school effectiveness. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006), contend that when it comes to school related factors that contribute to what learners learn, school leadership is second only to classroom instruction. These new roles and expectations on the principal suggest that the skills the principal needed in the previous era of administration, may not suffice in the 21st Century. Being a leader of instruction and curriculum requires the principal to possess a considerable amount of knowledge of curriculum. Further, Botha (2004), argues that the role of the principal extends beyond knowledge of curriculum as it also requires that the knowledge be utilised to improve practice.

In the South African context, however, there are factors affecting the principal's role as a leader of the 21st Century. For instance, Bush (2004) states that there is no qualification for the

principalship position as candidates are appointed only as promotion and the only qualification often needed is a teaching qualification. He suggests that this can be an obstacle for effective school leadership of the 21st Century. Another obstacle for principals in their role as 21st Century leaders is the decentralisation of responsibilities from states to schools (Marishane, 2013 in Botha eds, 2013). He argues that decentralisation has significantly increased the workload of the principal. This is because in South Africa particularly, the principal's role as head administrator has not ceased with the new standards of the 21st Century. There are various managerial functions and responsibilities that the principals must still accomplish in addition to being a leader of instruction and transformation. Some of the administrative roles of the principal are discussed below.

2.7.1 The Administrative role of the Principal

Christie (2010) states that the administrative role of the principal is essential for school effectiveness as it entails the processes and structures that are taken to ensure that organisational goals are met. However, there is an agreement that the role of the principal as an administrator is an obstacle to their leadership role. For example, it is argued that when principals are busy with administration, they lose contact with what is happening in the context of the classroom (Myende, 2015). In addition, Botha (2013); Mestry (2013); Du Plessis (2014) indicate that in some schools, the administrative role still takes centre stage thus preventing the principal from performing their leadership duties in the school. However, having considered these arguments, I contend that the administrative role of the principal is sometimes necessary to support their leadership role just like the role as a manager of the school's physical resources. This is a role that as Myende (2015) suggest, might make them lose contact with what is happening in the classroom context, however, this role is necessary to support teaching and learning. Without management of physical resources such as teaching and learning equipment, school furniture, books and other resources, there is potential for misuse, theft and damage that will affect the overall school effectiveness. Matombela (2005) asserts that the desire for quality education will not be fully realised without proper physical resources. It is therefore important that the principal takes time to safeguard school resources.

Further, one of the roles stipulated in theories of instructional and transformational school leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), is that of creating a school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning. Therefore, in this administrative role as manager of physical resources, the principal is also playing a vital leadership role. Other

administrative roles of the principal include that of financial manager, facilitator of communication and monitoring absenteeism. Below is a discussion of some of these roles.

2.7.1.1 Financial management

According to the South African Schools Act(SASA) (RSA, 1996) section 37(1) the School Governing Body (SGB) is responsible for managing the school funds. However, principals in their role as the accounting officers remain key players as they are expected to attend all SGB meetings and be part of the school financial planning. The principal is responsible for guiding the SGB in the decisions regarding the best ways of allocating funds. The challenges of this role may be intense in rural areas where many of the parents in the SGB may be uneducated and therefore incapable of dealing with school finances, thus leaving most of the responsibility in the hands of the principal. In addition to the role of the principal in the finance committee, the Personnel for Administrative Measures (PAM) document, which, in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998), also stipulates that the management of school funds is one of the many responsibilities of the school principal. In this role, the principal is expected to have various accounts and records of what the school funds are allocated to as well as ensuring that they are allocated to the right places and used wisely. The demands placed on the principal in the role of financial manager of the school could therefore be a constraint to the role of the principal as a leader of the 21st Century schools.

2.7.1.2 Communication with stakeholders

Communication plays a vital role in the success of any organisation. The principal as a central link to all stakeholders in the school, therefore has a role in ensuring that there is not only communication but effective communication among and within all stakeholders (Van Zyl, 2013, in Botha Eds). Working with parents to ensure that they are aware of progress made in the school as well as communicating academic or behavioural issues some learners may have, is an important part of the principal's day to day management duties. Lemmer and Van Wyk, (2011) contend that there is a positive correlation between parent involvement and school effectiveness. They uphold that parents that can support and are actively involved in their children's education, beyond just payment of school fees, have a role to play in reducing school drop-out rates, improving learner behaviour as well as encouraging teacher enthusiasm in their roles. It is, therefore, crucial that the principal is active in this role through keeping the channels of communication open between parents and other interested stakeholders. This is especially important considering the resource needs of schools in the 21st Century.

2.7.1.3 Monitoring of absenteeism

The main objective of any school as an organisation which sets it apart from other organisations is teaching and learning (Zengele, 2013 in Botha Eds). Without the realisation of this, all other objectives that a school has, would be in vain. Henceforth, it is important that the principal, as a school manager, ensures that teachers are at school teaching and learners learning (DBE, 2010). Teacher and learner absenteeism is a major problem in South African public schools (DBE, 2010). A principal working at a school with high levels of learner and or teacher absenteeism will have their hands full dealing with this issue. This administrative role can therefore be an obstacle for the principal as a leader.

As stated in chapter one, there are various models of leadership that are suggested as the best models for 21st Century leadership. Below is a discussion of three of those models as they relate to school leadership in the 21st Century.

2.8 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODELS

The right approaches for effective leadership have always been subject to much debate. There is conflicting and often contradictory literature on what constitutes great leadership as well as how it is to be achieved. Instructional and transformational leadership models have dominated debates on the best approaches for school leadership since they emerged in the 1980s (Hallinger 2010; Printy, Marks & Bowers; 2009). Hallinger (2007), contends that there is ongoing tension between the two leadership models and a continual change of power between the two as one gains more favour over the other. Leithwood (1992), argues that instructional leadership, although it has been popular at the time, is no longer sufficient to deal with changing times and new demands for school principals. His contention is that the inadequacy of instructional leadership has necessitated a new way of leading, hence transformational leadership is gaining popularity. Furthermore, Printy (2006), suggests that research on Distributed leadership has also played a role in helping us understand the kinds of leadership practices that are sufficient for school improvement. These three leadership models are discussed below.

2.8.1 Instructional Leadership

The Instructional Leadership Theory has been extensively debated in education leadership literature and over the years, with a significant amount of research suggesting that this model of leadership is necessary for school effectiveness (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 1986;

Hallinger, 2005; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). This approach is governed by the belief that the principal has a major role to play than that of an administrator, particularly in the 21st Century. Principals are viewed as having a professional role to play. Further, their leadership practices have an influence on the instructional successes and failures of the school (Hallinger, 2005; Ross & Gray, 2006). Therefore, according to The Wallace Foundation (2013), principals in their instructional leadership role must have an understanding of the curriculum and instruction in order to effectively support teaching and learning and new pedagogical approaches as well as other factors that relate directly to the classroom.

There are five roles of the school principal as an instructional leader outlined by Mendles (2012) and The Wallace Foundation (2013). The first role of the school principal, according to them, is that of creating and shaping a vision for the school to be guided by. This vision should be aimed at academic success for the learners. Secondly, the principal is responsible for creating an environment that is hospitable for education and allows learners to thrive; therefore reaching the vision the school has for them. Another role of the school principal is that of a professional developer, cultivating and nurturing leadership in others within the school. Principals are responsible for providing opportunities for teachers and learners, through various programmes to gain and improve their leadership skills, to guide and encourage them to take on leadership roles within the school. The fourth role of the principal is that of a leader of instruction. In this role, the principal is responsible for emphasising and encouraging the use of best teaching practices. These principals model the use of research-based approaches in teaching and learning, as well as organise discussions with teachers and learners on instructional approaches that are suitable to the school (Mendles, 2012). The final role of the principal as an instructional leader involves managing people in the school and all the processes occurring in the day to day functioning of the school. In this role, the principal as an instructional leader does not neglect their administrative role as a school manager while focussing on leadership. It is a role that provides a balance between the principal as a leader and manager through performing tasks such as planning, resolving conflict, communicating with stakeholders and monitoring.

Hallinger and Murphy (1986) who have both written extensively about school leadership and instructional leadership, propose a two-dimensional framework for instructional leadership, comprising of functions and processes. They suggest that the leadership functions represent the substance of the principal's role as an instructional leader; while the processes represent the

guiding activities the principal should perform in order to successfully implement the functions. The dimensions are as follows;

2.8.1.1 Instructional leadership functions

- Framing and communicating school goals
- Supervising and evaluating instruction
- Monitoring student progress
- Coordinating curriculum
- Developing high academic standards and expectations
- Promoting the professional development of teachers
- Protecting instructional time
- Developing incentives for learners and teachers

It is through performing these functions that Hallinger and Murphy (ibid) believe the principal, as an instructional leader, will have full control and influence on instruction, therefore leading their schools to thrive academically. As already stated, the functions are accompanied by six processes which the principal must perform in order to successfully implement the aforementioned functions. The processes are as follows; Figure 1 below.

2.8.1.2 Instructional leadership processes



Hallinger and Murphy (1986) outline six processes that are involved in effective instructional leadership. Like the functions, the writers acknowledge that they are not the only processes but are pivotal to instructional leadership. The processes are shown in

Figure 2.8: Adapted from Hallinger and Murphy (1986).

(i)Communication

The school principal as an instructional leader has a significant role of communicating with all stakeholders in the school. If the principal is to support instruction, there is a need to be in constant communication with teachers to find out what their challenges are, where they are excelling and where support is needed. Understanding the needs of learners as communicated by themselves and their teachers is also important for the principal to provide adequate support.

(ii)Group process and decision making

Hallinger and Murphy (1986) suggest that there is a connection between collaborative efforts and decision making in effective instructional leadership. The school principal has the responsibility of making sure that decisions that affect a common work structure such as shared goals are taken collaboratively and for the benefit of all involved. Hallinger and Murphy (ibid) insist that strong leadership does not require that one takes all decisions by themselves as much as all decisions in the school will not be made in a group.

(iv) Conflict management

Hallinger and Murphy (1986) state that an important part of conflict management starts at planning. Developing strong consensus and understanding of the aims and objectives of the school regarding curriculum and instruction might cancel the conflict before it occurs. Although conflict is inevitable in an organisation, when everyone is aware of what is expected of them and when it is expected, half of the conflict is already resolved. Considering the needs and concerns of the different teachers, learners and parents, is also the task of the effective instructional leader.

(v) Change process

Like conflict, change is inevitable in an organisation such as a school. It is therefore important for the instructional leader to have knowledge of factors that may discourage the change and know how to deal with them within a school. In changes that involve the curriculum and instruction, Hallinger and Murphy (1986) note that getting the input of teachers, learners and parents alike and involving them in the whole process will lead to smooth implementation of whatever change the school is going through.

(vi) Environmental interactions

The instructional leader needs to see to it that what is taught in schools is in accordance with the expectations of the environment. It is the responsibility of the instructional leader to ensure that whatever expectation or trend the school needs to fit into their school programme is fitted well and that the transitioning is successful. This is achieved through getting the input of the community, parents, teachers and learners and is also important when one has to decide what is to be included into the school programme.

It is clear from the above that literature on instructional leadership in its emergence in the 1980s and current literature is consistent in suggesting that the principal plays the role of leader of instruction in their schools. Blasé and Blasé (2000) conducted a study to explore teacher's perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning. The study revealed that effective instructional leadership had various positive effects on teachers, such as motivation, increased planning and innovation. Further, such principals were found to have cognitive influence on their teachers. Critics of this model of leadership have suggested that it is not democratic because of it creates a hierarchal structure between the principal and teachers (Goddard, 2003). According to Prytula, Noonan & Hellsten (2013), other critics have suggested

that the instructional leadership theory is unrealistic because of the expectation that the principal knows and becomes an expert of all subjects when in reality it is not possible. I disagree with this criticism because I believe that a principal or any other kind of leader does not require expertise in every area in order to support it effectively. They can lead mentorship programmes in the school to ensure that experienced teachers support new ones. They can also learn about the nature of instruction in the 21st Century across different subjects, learning enough to be able to provide curriculum and instructional support. Further, the role of the principal as an instructional leader extends beyond understanding curriculum; they are also responsible for creating an environment that is conducive to learning (The Wallace Foundation, 2013) and therefore be influential as instructional leaders by using various other skills to support classroom instruction.

Based on the presented literature that supports instructional leadership, the researcher believes that this approach is necessary in 21st Century schools. Firstly, the core objective of any school is teaching and learning, therefore I believe that the principal has the responsibility to lead in a way that prioritises instruction over mandated administrative tasks. Secondly, it is because of the constant changes in schools influenced by technology. A lot of the changes that happen in schools are often new to teachers (Jansen, 1998) therefore there is a need for a leader who understands these curriculum and instructional changes and uses that knowledge to guide the school into the right direction. Van de Merwe (2013) cites the lack of leadership skills as one of the factors contributing towards resistance to change in 21st Century organisations. He contends that without an able leader steering the wheel, there will be no direction or clear aims on how to tackle change and transition smoothly.

2.8.2 Transformational Leadership

The theory of transformational leadership was developed by Burns (1978), and gained popularity in the 1980s in general leadership literature. According to Hallinger (2010), it was only in the 1990's that it became popular in education leadership literature. This model of leadership has sustained popularity even in the 21st Century and has been researched in various fields such as medicine, business sectors and education. Researchers of transformational leadership have often suggested it is a process in which the leader takes certain steps to inspire and motivate subordinates in order to build commitment to the objectives of the organisation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Burnes, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Riggio (2006),

state that some of the ways in which transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers is through coaching, mentoring and providing support when subordinates face challenges. Further, transformational leaders influence their subordinates to think more about shared objectives and work towards them rather than individual goals (Griffin, 2004; Burke & Collins, 2001; Balyer, 2012). Once subordinates understand the collective goal, transformational leaders then encourage them to perform beyond the requirements for the job in order to realise the shared objectives (Printy, Marks & Bowers, 2009). The benefit of getting subordinates to consider group goals more than their own is that it can allow workers from diverse backgrounds to develop a group identity and focus on it than focusing on their differences (Lee, 2014). Further, numerous studies have suggested that there is a positive correlation between transformational leadership, employee motivation and job satisfaction, (Jung & Avolio, 2000; Manning, 2002; Awamleh & Al-Dmour, 2004; Amarjit, Alan & Charul, 2006) therefore is vital in organisations. Riaz, Akram and Ijaz (2011), suggest that workers who feel valued, inspired and supported, as transformational leaders do, have the motivation to work harder and derive satisfaction from the roles they play within the organisation.

Furthermore, Lee (2014) states that there is enough credible evidence to suggest that transformational leadership is effective with a broad range of determinants for success in organisations, such as staff retention and organisational innovation. However, despite much empirical evidence supporting transformational leadership, this leadership approach has also been subject to much criticism. For instance, Spillane (2006), contends that viewing leadership as a “heroic” task of a single individual is problematic and inaccurate. He states that in organisations such as schools, there are various role players that must work together through various tools and structures if the organisation is to succeed. Similarly, Lee (2014) states that because of the heroic nature of transformational leadership, it leaves a gap for exploitation as followers may trust the leader blindly. She further points out that transformational leaders may put themselves above those they lead and be autocratic as they decide which objectives the followers should work towards. On the contrary, in the field of education, various scholars have suggested that transformational leadership has significant positive effects on school effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, 2002; Mark & Printy, 2003; Chew & Chan, 2008). For example, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) argue that the working conditions of teachers, their motivation level and work settings, which can be influenced by transformational leadership, influence their classroom practices greatly. Similarly, Northouse (2010) contends that skilled transformational leaders can lead their schools to greatness through motivating teachers and

learners to work hard. Numerous studies have also found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and improved school practices such as extra commitment, job satisfaction and improved productivity (Silins & Mulford, 2002; Ross & Gray, 2006; Stewart, 2006; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Geijsel, Sleegers, Stoel & Krüger, 2009).

Based on the literature presented, the researcher believes that there is a place for this model of leadership in the 21st Century. The new and diverse roles of principals in the 21st Century have tremendously increased their workload (Botha, 2004; Steyn, 2002; Marishane, 2013), therefore it is essential that other stakeholders be empowered in a way that allows and motivates them to take on a bigger role in the school. By empowering and motivating others, the principal of the 21st Century is distributing leadership and making the organisation a much more productive place. In the South African context particularly, there is the issue of lack of training by school principals which may affect their leadership skills and meeting expectations of the era. For example, Bush (2004) contends that the criteria for hiring principals are a teaching certificate and experience. Therefore, sharing of roles in the school with new and younger teachers who may understand technology better or other areas of teaching and learning in the 21st Century, will be beneficial to the school.

2.8.3 Distributed/Shared Leadership

For the purpose of this study, distributed and shared leadership will be used synonymously as my understanding is that these two are the same. Distributed leadership will be used to refer to both the idea of Shared and Distributed leadership. The theory of Distributed Leadership focuses on the collaborative effort of a group rather than a single leader and their individual leadership practices (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Bligh, Pearce & Kohles, 2006, Spillane, 2006). In this model of leadership, teams working together in organisations are all considered to have a leadership role to play and a contribution that is fundamental to the organisation. Similarly, to transformational leadership, Distributed leadership has been researched in various organisational sectors including education. Further, Menon (2011) suggests that this model of leadership is recently compared to the others as it only gained popularity in the 21st Century.

Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009) suggest that Distributed leadership was developed when traditional models of leadership with hierarchal structures were no longer deemed necessary. They state that it is due to knowledge being a commodity in the 21st Century that organisations

value teams who can share leadership than one heroic leader. Similarly, Bligh et al., (2006), believe that 21st Century innovation and the value of knowledge in organisations has created a need for team leadership, as groups of professionals often work together and make joint decisions. Spillane (2005), who has written extensively on this model of leadership, argues that leadership models that focus on an individual leader as a sole driver of success are problematic for many reasons. As noted earlier, he maintains that in an organisation such as a school, there are various role players playing different leadership roles and using different tools that enhance the whole organisation. Further, he argues that such models fail to acknowledge how different roles are played but instead only focus on what those roles and functions should be. Meaning that traditional leadership models prescribe what the role of the principal as a leader should be but not the ways these roles should be performed. Equally, Gronn (2002) contends that to view leadership in a superiority manner is outdated and may not be realistic.

These arguments mean that in Distributed leadership, all role players have a key role to play which is viewed as essential to the successes of the organisation. For example, in a school, teachers have important roles they play as leaders in their classroom and make important decisions that impact on their learners' achievement. The parents are also regarded as important and playing a vital role. Some get involved in the leadership of the school through the SGB while others may find other ways to be involved and influential, therefore influencing the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

One criticism of this approach of leadership is that there is not enough empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Distributed leadership in organisational structures (Timperley, 2005, Avolio et al, 2009). However, Harris and Spillane (2008) contend that there has been a consistent positive correlation between the approach and improved organisational practices. A study conducted by Day (2007), found that schools in challenging circumstances were able to move past those challenges and thrive through the empowerment of teachers. Based on the discussed literature, I believe that there is a place for Distributed leadership in 21st Century organisations, particularly schools. The researcher believes that, similar to the benefits noted in transformational leadership research, Distributed leadership can have positive results in schools. The empowerment of teachers through giving them a leadership role and a level of professional autonomy will not only result in job satisfaction but also motivation to work hard and achieve the instructional goals of the school. However, in this role, teachers are not just dependent on the leader to tell, motivate and inspire them. I further believe that HOD's of

different departments can, in their leadership role, play the role of mentors and coaches to novice teachers, further strengthening the organisational structure of the school.

As earlier stated, I also believe the theory of instructional leadership is vital to 21st Century schools. These three leadership models have the potential to complement each other in a school environment. Through empowering teachers to take on various leadership roles, getting parents and learner involvement in the management of the school, the principal will have time to focus on instructional leadership.

2.9 THE 21ST CENTURY PRINCIPAL: POLICY PROVISION

The South African education system recognises the significance of the role the principal plays in the school as an organisation. As such, the role of the school principal as well as their functions and responsibilities are stipulated in various policy documents such as; SASA no. 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), The Employment of Educators Act No.76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) through the Personnel for Administrative Measures (PAM) (DoE), 1999) as well as the most recent policy document specifically dealing with the roles of principals, Policy on the South African Standards for Principals. In this section policies that are meant to ascertain whether the 21st Century is acknowledged in their specifications of the principals' role are interrogated.

2.9.1 The South African Schools Act

The leadership roles of the principal as stipulated in the South African Schools Act (SASA) are typically administrative in nature, making little provision for the school leader of the 21st Century. Some of the principal's roles and functions include; preparing annual reports on academic performance and resource allocation; assisting the SGB in their tasks; supervising teachers and learners; keeping school records; and managing teaching and learning resources as well as school equipment. The ideal 21st Century school leader, as already established, has knowledge and understanding of curriculum and instruction and is therefore able to influence it for the betterment of the school (Botha, 2004) as well as various other roles that support school effectiveness in the 21st Century. The only stipulation in the SASA which can be related to the view of school leadership in the 21st Century is found in Section 16A, subsection C (i). This section states that "*the principal of the public school identified by the Head of Department in terms of section 58B must annually, at the beginning of the year, prepare a plan setting out how academic performance at the school will be improved.*" This stipulation, by allowing school principals to have a strategic plan of how performance in their schools can be improved

may give them the ability to support and influence instruction, thus playing a leadership role. While the above section reveals principals as leaders of instruction, the overall stipulations of SASA do not recognise the ever changing context in which the principals operate.

2.9.2 Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)

Christie (2010) suggests that the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (1999) in terms of the Employment of Educators Act (1998) similarly to the SASA puts administrative functions at the centre of the roles of the principal while the leadership role is only referenced in passing. I disagree with this view as I contend that the PAM is a shift from the SASA. Contrary to the SASA, the PAM document stipulates richer functions and responsibilities for the school principal. There is recognition that 21st Century schools are greatly influenced by the ever changing environment and therefore a principal has a much bigger role to play than merely administrative tasks. The introduction of the principal's roles states that *"The ability of our education system to compete in an increasingly global economy depends on our ability to prepare both learners and educators for new or changing environments"*.

The roles in PAM are thus divided into six categories which are as follows;

- General/ administrative
- Personnel
- Teaching
- Extra and co-curricular
- Interaction with stakeholders
- Communication

Apart from the general and administrative roles which are managerial in nature, the other roles of the principal as stipulated envision a principal of the 21st Century. Firstly, by acknowledging the value of professional development in an ever changing context, which is stipulated under the personnel duties of the principal. Under this role, the principal is responsible for providing teachers with professional development opportunities and guidance as well as supervising performance. 21st Century Principals are expected to value professional development for themselves as well as their subordinates. Holland, (2004) and Galanz (2005), state that part of the principal's role as an instructional leader of the 21st Century, is to support the professional development of teachers. Secondly, the PAM stipulates duties for the principal that have an influence on instruction such as evaluation and appraisals of teachers. Under this role, the principal gains insight into the classroom practices of teachers in the school and provides them

with feedback that may assist in improving practice. Therefore, it cannot be dismissed as an administrative role as suggested by Christie, (2010). Further, through the role that communication role stipulates, PAM acknowledges that various stakeholders have interests in the school, thus the principal must continuously interact and communicate with other stakeholders in order to advance the schools they lead. Working with parents and communities has been suggested as one of the means school leaders can achieve school effectiveness in the 21st Century (Lemmer & Van Vyck, 2010).

2.9.3 Policy on the South African Standard for Principals

The most current policy document that expresses the direction the Department of Basic Education wishes to take with school leadership of the 21st Century, is the Policy on the South African Standard for Principals (DBE, 2015), in terms of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996). One major separating factor between this policy and older policies is that this document is implemented in the 21st Century. Therefore, it could be understood to mean an update of what the department regards as important in the role of the 21st Century principal. This can be attributed to deeper understanding of the 21st Century principals. Indeed, the policy is a great shift from the view of the principal as an administrator, as in SASA and minor leadership roles in PAM. This policy is really about the principal in a 21st Century leadership role. It is progressive and envisions a world class principal who can function like principals in developed countries..

Under this role, the principal is expected to, among other roles; lead through cultivating a culture of teaching and learning which fosters success in learners, understanding the curriculum and leading its continuous improvement. It also involves leading their schools into the future by encouraging and facilitating the use of Information and Communications and Technology (ICT). The use of ICT plays a vital role in 21st Century developments around the world (National Development Plan 2030 (NDP), 2012). As such, the principal's role as a facilitator of the use of technology is in line with the DBE's vision of a 21st Century oriented principal. The principal is further expected to be a strategic leader through in-depth planning of the best practices and frameworks that improve the school's academic performance. In this role, the principal is also expected to engage teachers, parents and communities to support, plan and make collaborative decisions about the school. This role is considered important in the 21st Century since bringing the different stakeholders together has been supported by research as one of the significant ways in which schools can thrive.

2.10 RECENT FINDINGS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE RURAL CONTEXT

Current trends in school leadership practices in South Africa are important for this study because they provide insight into some of the challenges affecting 21st Century school leadership. It is for this reason that I have chosen to review some of those findings. Since the rural context is the setting for this study, studies selected for this review were all conducted in the rural context.

One of the expectations of 21st Century principals, as established, is that they must be leaders of instruction (Wallace Foundation, 2013). However, a study that was conducted by Taole (2013), which sought to explore the role of the high school principals in providing instructional leadership within the rural context, found that principals viewed their role as that of managers and not leaders of instruction. They further held the assumption that teaching and learning was the responsibility of teachers in each learning area. The study also found that school principals consider their many roles in the school a hindrance to their leadership roles. They cited time constraints as one of the reasons they could not fully take on the role of instructional leadership. In another study conducted by Mestry and Singh (2007) on the perceptions of principals on the innovative role they play as instructional leaders, similarly to Taole (2013), they found that principals were overloaded with work. In addition to being expected to act as 21st Century leaders, their duties as managers and administrators did not change. Therefore, they did not prioritise instructional leadership in their schools. They considered duties such as curriculum management to be the responsibility of teachers and the School Management Team (SMT).

Du Plessis (2014) conducted a study on problems and complexities in rural schools in Mpumalanga Province. The study found that principals in participating schools felt marginalised. They felt that district officials as well as officials at state level did not have the full understanding of the challenges they faced because of their context and therefore could not provide sufficient support. They further felt alienated and far away from debates relating to education changes and policies of the 21st Century thus challenging their capabilities as leaders of curriculum change and instruction. Some of the other challenges found in the study are; poverty in rural areas, lack of resources and technology, curriculum challenges as well as a lack of qualified teachers. The findings from the above studies are an indication that principals in the rural context are at a great disadvantage because of the context they operate in. Therefore, if they are to overcome their challenges and compete with principals in different contexts for

school effectiveness, they must possess and acquire skills and understanding of their context and the tenacity to overcome 21st century challenges.

2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the influences of 21st Century technology and globalisation on teaching and learning, the rural context and the role of the principal were discussed. The understanding of 21st Century education by the Department of Basic Education as embedded in various policies was also discussed. Light was shed on the challenges faced by schools in the rural context and ways in which principals can be impactful in leading their schools towards overcoming those challenges. Three leadership theories the researcher considered important for 21st Century school's leadership were also presented. The next chapter will discuss the Complexity Leadership Theory as a framework for the study. This leadership theory will aid in providing an understanding of where school principals should place themselves and their roles in the ever changing world that we live in today.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed local and international literature on the 21st Century principal. Their challenges, the nature of education in the 21st Century as well as a closer look at principals' working in the rural context. This study is underpinned by the Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) which will be the focus of this chapter. This framework is important in aiding in my understanding of the 21st Century principals and the leadership roles they perform. CLT is further relevant in that it gives us an understanding of what leadership should be in complex times and the principals in this study shape their leadership practices for times such as these.

3.2 THE COMPLEXITY LEADERSHIP THEORY

Contrary to other leadership theories that have focused on the leader, Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey (2007), argue that the distinguishing factor for this model is its focus on leadership as a process. A process, they maintain, is emergent and takes various systems and agents to make leadership of institutions possible. Eppel (2009) contends that the word complexity in Complexity Theory means much more than being difficult as it explains different interacting parts of a system. It has been highlighted in the literature review that the leadership challenges and demands of the 21st Century are unique to the era; therefore, causing the examination of leadership as demands grow for leaders that can cope with the challenges (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Further, Hogue and Lord (2007), state that globalisation and rapid changes of the 21st Century make it necessary for organisations to capitalise fully on the strengths of their members. Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Marion, Seers, Orton and Schreiber (2006), assert that it is at the face of these new challenges and demands that new models of leadership, particularly the CLT were necessitated. They state that the 21st Century is the era of knowledge, characterised by adaptive challenges which cannot be solved through standard operating procedures. Instead, such challenges require exploration, adjustments and new discoveries. Therefore, the framework of the CLT, using a concept known as Complex Adaptive Systems is the best fit to deal with these challenges. As also noted in chapter two, part of the evolution of leadership in the 21st Century has resulted from the move by organisations away from bureaucratic structures of authority to flexible structures characterised by joint decision-making (Uhl-Bien et al, 2007). In 21st Century organisations, many decisions are made through

interactions and negotiations rather than through top-down leadership structures (Schneider & Somers, 2006). This means that in organisations such as schools, it is valued that stakeholders, in the name of parents, teachers, the principal and school communities engage each other and work together for the betterment of their schools. Principals within the CLT have a major role to play in how their schools thrive in the 21st Century context. School leadership is no exception to the leadership challenges and demands of the 21st Century. Technology has given birth to new ways of thinking and therefore skills that may have been sought after ten or twenty years ago may not suffice in today's digital world (Jerald, 2009). Therefore, making it clear that if children are to be successful in today's world, the knowledge they receive and how they receive it, needs to change. In that light, school principals being the leaders of change in their schools have a responsibility of seeing to it that the assets they have in their schools, in the form of learners and teachers are pertinent to attaining organisational success in the 21st Century. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs and Fleishman (2000), assert that for organisations to survive, they need to know how to control conflict, navigate changes and change their paths when necessary. Therefore, they maintain that there is a need for leaders who possess skills and capabilities to search for goals and paths suitable for prosperity. Further, Mumford et al., (2000) argue that rather than focussing on the leader's behaviours and the kinds of behaviours that make successful leadership, such as in charismatic or transformational leadership, what has become important are the skills and capabilities of leaders. Therefore, it means that in organisations such as schools, there is value in the principals to have the necessary knowledge and skills to move the school forward rather than certain behaviour. The above literature further suggests that the CLT is the best approach to achieve such kind of leadership because the approach is significantly different from other models of leaderships. Chan (2001) and Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) suggest that CLT is framed by a concept known as Complexity Adaptive Systems (CAS). This concept is discussed below.

3.2.1 Complex Adaptive Systems

Plowman, Solansky, Beck, Baker, Kulkarni and Travis (2007) describe this concept as networks or agents that are interactive and dependent on one another, bounded together in a professional environment by a shared objective, thereby working collaboratively to achieve it. They maintain that although these networks or agents are bound and work together, their structure is emergent and ever changing, depending on different situations in the shared environment. There are, therefore, different and overlapping hierarchies that develop as opposed to systems with bureaucratic structures of authority. The overlapping hierarchies can

manifest themselves in decision-making powers each of the separate groups of agents holds at a given time. For instance, teachers might have more power in making decisions concerning classroom instruction while the SGB holds more power in decisions concerning school finances. Boal and Schultz's (2007) understanding of CAS does not deviate much from the already discussed descriptions. They do, however, have a separate definition for "complex system" and "adaptive", which they later fuse together to explain the concept. They suggest that CAS has components that are intertwined and dependent upon each other, therefore forming a collective identity. Their dependency and support for one another cannot be explained through linear variables because they are emergent in nature and therefore not following a standardized pattern. Whatever is produced or not produced within the system, they understand to be a direct result of the holistic efforts and behaviours by all components concerned (Boal & Schultz, 2007). The "adaptive" part of the concept they understand to mean that through those components working together, can produce a behavioural pattern that works for them. This behavioural pattern is what allows them to adapt to the changes in the environment, therefore, Complex Adaptive Systems. This understanding of the concept of complex systems would therefore mean that in a school, leadership and school effectiveness are not burdens placed only on the shoulders of the principal. It is a collective effort requiring that all with a stake in the school take part in leadership in order for their schools to succeed. Schneider and Somers (2006), propose three interrelated building blocks to CLT which are; Non-linear dynamics, Chaos Theory and Adaptation and Evolution. Chan (2001), also proposes three properties which she calls; Emergent Order, Far from Equilibrium and State of Paradox. These properties or building blocks of the Complexity Theory in the definitions made by the authors are understood to mean the same things. Therefore, below is a table illustrating what each of the properties is referring to by the authors; followed by a synchronous description of both theories.

Table 3.3

Schneider and Somers (2006)	Chan (2001)
Non-linear dynamics	Far from equilibrium
Chaos Theory	State of paradox
Adaptation and evolution	Emergent order

Table 3.3 Properties of CLT adapted from Schneider and Somers (2006) and Chan (2001)

I. Non-linear Dynamics/ Far from Equilibrium

The non-linearity of CLT is seen in the lack of equilibrium that is brought about by the interdependency of the agents on one another as well as environmental factors. These factors lead the agents through a series of transitions through trial and error processes before they survive or fail. Schneider and Somers (2006) refer to these agents in a system as dissipative structures due to the fluctuating relationship these structures have with the environment. The ways in which the dissipative structures react to the environment may have effects on the system and therefore cause changes or no changes, both of which can either be a good or bad thing depending on the situation. However, they maintain that the emergent quality of systems lies in the ability for agents to interact than factors in the environment. Meaning that things do not just happen to the system but rather what happens is a direct result and reflection of how agents work together. Therefore, in organisations, the influences of the members and those of the environment play a role in successes or failures of the organisation. Therefore in a school, effectiveness is a direct result of the ways in which stakeholders work together to overcome the influences of the environment.

Chan (2001) suggests that this lack of equilibrium in systems is necessary and further states that equilibrium can lead to the death of systems. She gives an example of a heartbeat, where the intervals are irregular and disorderly manner and that is perfectly healthy. However, regularity in heartbeat can mean the opposite. Therefore, suggesting that disorderliness and a lack of balance is what allows systems to function well. The non-linearity 21st Century organisations in schools can be seen in the constant policy changes as external environmental pressures (Yilmaz, Kilicoglu; 2013), such new performance standards for teachers are the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) or assessment standards for learners like CAPS. These changes require that schools move differently and adapt, they require that teachers learn these new ways of doing things. Learners will also be affected in the instruction they receive, so they too must adjust. The challenge of the rural context as established, can be the lack of resources that are suitable for navigating these changes, therefore the role of principals and how they view non-linearity of the 21st Century is essential if they are going to lead schools through it.

II. Chaos Theory/ State of Paradox

Schneider and Somers (2006), state that the Complexity Theory and Chaos Theory are different theories but the Chaos Theory informs the complexity as both have un-linear characteristics. They suggest that in order to adapt and evolve, a level of chaos is necessary. Similarly, Cilliers

(2001) suggests that CAS are neither chaotic nor homogenous, they have structures that can function with stability at times and with volatility at other times. Schneider and Somers (2006), suggest that changes that organisations are often forced to deal with in the 21st Century are part of the chaos theory, therefore making some characteristics of the Chaos Theory relevant to CAS. Organisations experience chaos as they move through one direction to another. In schools, this is manifested in changes in curriculum and pedagogical approaches that were brought about by international education reforms. These reforms have taken place in countries such as Australia, United Kingdom and South Africa. Schneider and Somers (2006), state that there is more chaos in organisations as it forces and allows systems to evolve and adapt to environmental changes. However, they maintain that there is a need for balance between chaos and order if organisations are to adapt and evolve in ways that lead to survival. Adaptation and evolution is also discussed in the next paragraph. Chaos in schools within the rural context can take different forms, one example can be learners who must cross a river in order to get to a school, their challenges may include not being able to come into school when it is raining and the river is full.

Consequently, the 21st Century principal has the role of ensuring that the school overcomes such chaos. This level of chaos, although unfortunate may be necessary for the school to develop new ways of doing things, such as having catch up plans or creating materials that can be given to learners to do at home. In this way, chaos would have inspired innovations and new ways of thinking. The balance that Schneider and Somers (2006) state is essential to ensure effectiveness, will therefore depend on how the principal as a leader and the various agents interact and their ability to find solutions in such challenging situations.

III. Adaptation and Evolution/ Emergent Order

Schneider and Somers (2006) suggest that adaptation and evolution refer to the ability by systems to adapt to changes and evolve into whatever is necessary for success. Further, they stress that the ability to adapt and evolve is not possible for all systems. The capacity to evolve is dependent on among other things, the chaos level of the systems. For instance, systems that are too chaotic may be unable to maintain their behaviour, thus unable to adapt and evolve. Systems with too little chaos may lack the ability to coordinate new behaviours due to their rigidity, thus also resulting in failure. Further, what is vital in the ability to evolve is the self - organisation characteristics of the agents and subsystems within the system and those playing a role in adaptation and evolution or failure to do so. Chan (2001) states that from the interactions of the agents in the system, emerges a pattern that cannot be broken down and

explained in individual agents but together they create that pattern which in turn serves them in how they adapt. She suggests that these agents are interwoven in such a way that they become unpredictable in their influences of one another and thus the whole system. She gives an example of cells of an embryo, each having its own functions but these functions having an impact on the developing embryo. I compare these agents of a system to a car engine with its many intricate parts each playing a role, some major while others play minor roles. However, each part has an influence on the engine and subsequently the car because in order for the car to be fully functional, all parts must work together. In a school setting, these agents comprise of the principal, teachers, learners, parents, community leaders and whole school communities. The ability for each to play their role has an influence on the entire functioning of the school. For instance, parents may be involved in what one may consider minor roles such as buying stationery while teachers play roles more directly linked to instruction but, for instruction to take place resources such as stationery are vital.

These three properties of CLT emphasise the emergent nature of the theory, the interactions of the subsystems and agents in a system and their influence on the system, as well as the unlitary and lack of equilibrium experienced in those systems.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE LEADER IN CLT

As important as collective efforts are in the CAS, the role of the principal is still regarded by Boal and Schultz (2007), as pivotal. Similarly, Uhl- Bien (2007) asserts that the role of a leader remains important as there are no organisations without a bureaucracy. They suggest that the idea that organisations should have no bureaucracy is flawed as an organised structure in an organisation is sometimes necessary for direction. They do, however, maintain that there needs to be a balance between bureaucracy and new organisational structures such as negotiation and interaction. For instance, a study conducted by Willer (2009), found that hierarchy and bureaucracy in organisational structures was a motivating factor for some workers as they were motivated to climb the ladder in their organisations. Therefore, due to the need for organisations to have hierarchies, there is a need for a leader to direct the collective efforts that are facilitated by CLT. Uhl-Bien et al., (2007), suggest three approaches of leadership that correlate positively with CLT. The approaches are administrative, adaptive and enabling leadership and below I focus on each approach.

3.3.1 Administrative Leadership

The way in which Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) define administrative leadership, it is different from and should not be confused with the task of being a manager as defined in chapter one. Leaders in this role are key and active players as they perform functions such as; organise, plan, build visions and acquire resources to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, it is not complacent management where they perform only administrative tasks that have no direct function in the knowledge acquisition and effectiveness of the organisation. My understanding of this concept, as defined by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007), is a combination of leadership and administration functions with the vision of effectiveness in mind. This means that the managerial role of the principal has a place in the 21st Century as planning and coordinating organisational activities and safe guiding resources is vital. However, one must acknowledge that being a manager alone will not suffice in handling the pressures of the era. Further, they assert that administrative leadership is hierarchical in nature, following a top- down structure. In this role, the leader can either foster adaptation or impede it through their leadership approaches. For instance, leaders who make decisions consider the creativity, learning and adaptability of subordinates and choose to include them in decisions regarding those dynamics. Other decisions will be made by the leader alone and may not negatively affect the structure or functions of the organisations and the whole system.

3.3.2 Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership as the term suggests, refers to the ability of the leader, through performing certain functions, to adapt and influence adaptation in the organisations they lead (Uhl-Bien et al, 2007). This concept of adaptation in the 21st Century has already been discussed in this chapter however; the focus so far has been on understanding the adaptive environment and what it means to leaders, not practical ways in which leaders can influence adaptation. Uhl-Bien et al., (2007), suggest three ways in which leaders play the role of adaptive leadership. They are; Network dynamics, emergence and multilevel adaptive leadership. The emergence leadership manifests itself in the CAS and is more about interactions and collaboration in organisational structures rather than following a hierarchical structure. Below is a detailed description of the adaptive leadership processes.

3.3.2.1 Network dynamics

Uhl-Bien et al., (2007), suggest that in a dynamic system of many agents working together, in a rapidly changing environment, what emerges is adaptive leadership. They have the ability to thrive under difficult circumstances and ensure that the whole organisation thrives under their direction. According to the authors, the leader develops mechanisms for survival such as catalytic behaviour as a means to survive. Similarly, Schneider and Somers (2006) suggest that a leader within the CLT functions as under an indirect catalytic process. This will be discussed later in this chapter. Further, Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) stress that the product of adaptive leadership in organisations is creative emergence, learning and adaptivity. To demonstrate the processes and relationships that occur between mechanisms and different contexts in adaptive leadership, they use a system they call “the emerged dynamic” which is shown below.

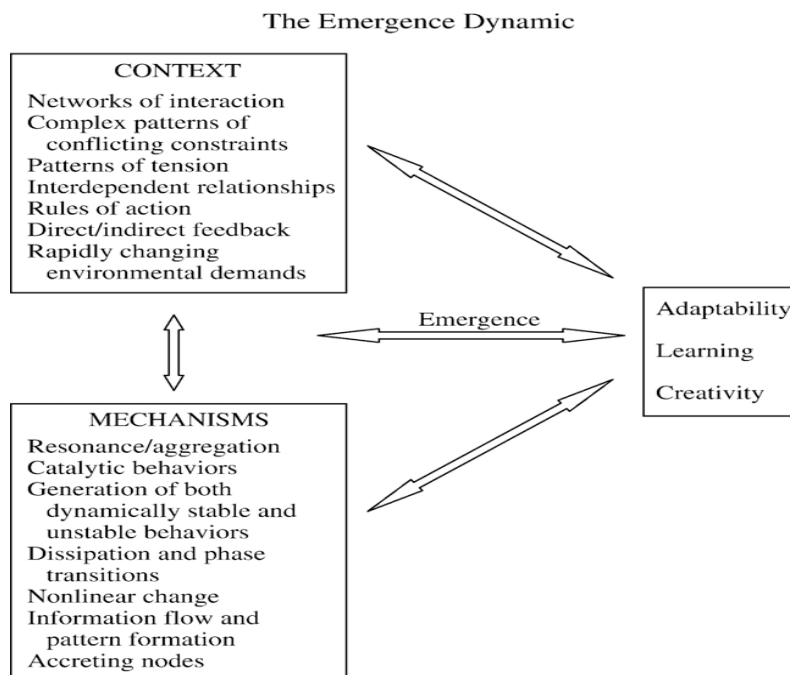


Figure 3.3 The emergence dynamic. (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007).

3.3.2.2 Emergence

The idea of emergence in a complex system has been thoroughly discussed. However, the manifestation of this concept in leadership has not been established. Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) suggest that this leadership output is not based on a single individual or leader. Rather, it is seen in interacting agents of a system as shown in their ability to adapt to environmental stimuli. Meaning that in adaptive leadership, the emergence nature of agents interacting is understood

as an important part of adapting. The leader understands that members of the organisation should be moving in unison in order to triumph over changes that may threaten the organisational structure or effectiveness. The principal of the 21st Century therefore has a role of ensuring that educational changes are understood and implemented similarly across the whole school. Further, the principal should have an understanding of the leadership roles played by various stakeholders internally and externally as well as how it affects the functioning of the school.

3.3.2.3 Multilevel adaptive leadership

Multilevel leadership is understood to take on different hierarchical structures in the organisation which Uhl-Bien et al., (2007), refer to as outputs. First as upper level management where the concern is dealing with emergent challenges and needs of the organisation, thus concerned with acquiring resources and strategic planning. Secondly, through the output of middle level management which is concerned with planning, organising productive structural activities, allocating resources and knowledge needed to innovate, learn and adapt. At different levels, adaptive leadership is therefore concerned with providing planning and resources that will work together to improve the organisation.

3.3.3. Enabling Leadership

Enabling leadership as found in CLT framework is important in 21st Century organisations. This is because enabling leaders foster conditions that allow adaptive leadership and adaptation to occur. Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) assert that the interactions that occur between agents is not enough without interdependency, as already suggested by Schneider and Somers (2006) in their argument of self-similarity. Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) suggest that enabling leaders can facilitate interdependency among agents through putting rules in place for professional autonomy. They maintain that these rules are not top-down authoritative rules enforced on agents but rather means of encouraging cooperative problem solving. Instead of taking every problem to the leader to solve, agents will be forced to work together in finding solutions, therefore depending on each other for organisational success. Some of the functions of enabling leadership are its ability to foster positive, internal tension (Uhl-Bien et al, 2007). They argue that internal tension creates an imperative to act and strategise, thus fostering adaptability. Uhl-Bien and Marion (2009) suggest that tension is good for organisations as it puts agents under pressure to the point where they can adapt in order to survive the pressure. Yilmaz and Kilicoglu (2013) suggest that when dealing with the changes imposed on organisations by environmental

changes, some members embrace the change and look forward to it which others will resist as they fear the unknown. They further state that one of the reasons for resistance to change may be the lack of resources as members may fear that their limited resources will prevent them from succeeding in implanting the changes. Therefore, a principal who can foster positive tension in their role as an enabling leader will affect how teachers and learners overcome their resistance and embrace the change they have no choice but be a part of.

3.3. 4 The principal as a strategic leader within CLT

Another important role of leaders of the 21st Century within the CLT is that of strategic leaders in terms of Boal and Schultz (2007). The strategic leader understands that in an organisation, they are not the only leader but that the leadership of all other components is required and essential. According to these authors, the strategic leader performs the following functions;

- Focus on influencing the connections of the different components in a manner that structures their activities and cooperation
- Ensure that interactions between the agents are frequent and constructive
- Make it possible for agents to access information easily
- Facilitate working together and strategic problem-solving between the components working together at a given time

In a school, the principal as a strategic leader could achieve these through arranging frequent meetings for parents to meet with teachers, SGB with parents, teachers with learners and other meetings to meet the needs of their school as they emerge. They can also be strategic in using different approaches to ensure that the content of the meetings is beneficial to the components as well as serving a holistic purpose to the organisation. The strategic leader also has the responsibility of ensuring that there are constant and fruitful interactions among parents and teachers.

3.3.5 Leadership Through an “Indirect Catalytic Process”

Like Boal and Schultz (2007), Schneider and Somers (2006) suggest that in CAS leadership, the leader’s role is important as they lead through an “indirect catalytic process”. In this role, the leader creates an atmosphere of self-similarity where the different components of the organisation can value their role and find a way to work in a manner that is adaptive to change

and beneficial to the organisation. They suggest that self-similarity is a critical characteristic of CAS and state that the concept is the connectedness of systems of items such as fern leaves or broccoli with different parts representing qualities of the entity's whole. Self-similarity can manifest itself in the way members of an organisation have a group identity and think about the needs and objectives of the organisation above their own, therefore being able to adapt and evolve to the environmental challenges they face (Schneider and Somers, 2006). Boal and Schultz (2007), suggest that the concept of self-similarity fosters the spirit of resource sharing. They suggest that organisations may be able to share a vision and use resources together as opposed to competing against each other, that way it leads to more productivity and better allocation of resources. In a school with a principal who can strengthen these relationships among components, teachers from different departments may be able to sit together and decide where funds allocated for books should go. Instead of splitting the funds among the departments, they may collectively, through understanding their holistic approach and their role in it, decide that one department needs more books than others. Therefore, schools in the rural context as well as their principals will benefit from taking advantage of this approach due to the limited resources. The principal as an indirect catalyst of these interactions can teach self-similarity and can further foster the principle with other organisations near the school and the school communities. Involving them in the school and finding ways of making them see the school as their own and its successes as their own, will ensure that they support the school with resources.

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the CLT has aided in understanding that the role of the principal should be as a school leader of the ever changing 21st Century world. School leadership, as already established, requires that principals adapt to changes and lead the changes in their schools and continue to thrive. Further, because the assets of the 21st Century are the people (Uhl-Bien et al, 2007), in schools the assets will therefore be the teachers, learners, principal as well as stakeholders outside the school. The principal therefore is an asset that must lead other assets towards success. The methodology, analysis of data and presentation follows in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the complexity leadership theory which is the framework for the study. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that were used to answer the research questions. The research paradigm guiding this study is discussed first, followed by a discussion of the research design and data generation methods and analysis. Strategies that were employed to ensure trustworthiness of the study are then explained. Finally, the ethical considerations made in the study will be addressed. Literature was used throughout the chapter to justify the methodological and design choices made during the enquiry. The methodological process is tabulated below followed by descriptions.

Table 4.1 Design and methodology

PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTION	Interpretive paradigm
RESEARCH DESIGN	Qualitative
METHODOLOGY	Case study
SAMPLING AND POPULATION	Five school principals working in the rural context
DATA GENERATION METHODS	Semi-structured interviews Observation
DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE	Inductive content analysis
ADDRESSING TRUSTWORTHINESS	Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity
ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	Permission letters, informed consent, clarity of research purpose and intentions

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Paradigms in research refer to social worldviews that guide the way in which the research will be conducted (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). These include the ways in which data is collected or generated, the types of questions or observations that are used to generate data as well as how the findings were interpreted (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

This research is located within the interpretive paradigm. This type of research paradigm is founded on the belief that in research, in studying human behaviour, such as in education research, there is no single reality or truth in how and why people behave or act the way they do, but rather there can be multiple realities and truths (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 20007). This means that participants under study, may have divergent views about one phenomenon. For example, teacher's perceptions of their principal may differ significantly based on their experiences in working with the principal or own biases. Similarly, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), state that the interpretive paradigm, unlike the positivist paradigm, does not begin the enquiry with a theory or hypothesis. Rather, the objective is to generate a pattern of meanings from the views of participants. In this study, the leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context in the 21st Century were based on the experiences and subjective views of participants. There is no single truth or reality to how these principals view themselves and how they position themselves based on those views. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm is considered the best research approach for the study as it allows for the understanding of participants from individual perspectives and in so doing, answering the research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2010), state that in the interpretive paradigm, the researcher's main concern is not objectivity but rather interpreting data as it applies to the context. The study involved participants who were bound by their rural context in one school district with very similar challenges and circumstances.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the qualitative research design seeks to gain an understanding of certain phenomena through understanding the feelings, behaviours and perceptions of the population being studied. They further stressed that words are imperative in understanding the qualitative phenomena as they allow voices of participants to be heard. Therefore, it is words that are used in data generation and interpretation of qualitative study, rather than numbers as in a quantitative study. Similarly, Fossey et al., (2002), state that the aim of qualitative research is to give the participants the privilege to interpret their realities from their own perspectives. The in-depth views of the participants were important in understanding where they placed themselves in their reality, therefore it was their voices that were used to generate data and answer the research questions. Furthermore, qualitative enquires takes place in natural settings that are not manipulated in any manner. This means that things are left to occur naturally without adding or subtracting any factors (Bodgan & Biklen,

2007). The natural setting in this enquiry was the participating schools in their rural context. Therefore, all fieldwork was conducted at the schools. The intention was not to quantify their voices but rather to understand the what, why and how of their leadership. These characteristics of qualitative research design strengthen its compatibility with the interpretive paradigm, thus it was considered the best design for the study. In conjunction with the interpretive paradigm and qualitative research design, the case study approach was used in this study. A discussion of the case study as well as justifications for using it in this enquiry is detailed below.

4.3.1 Case study

A case study is an enquiry that focuses on an in-depth understanding of a single phenomenon or unit of analysis that is bound by its context and unique in time, setting and characteristics of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This can be one group of people such as high school teachers, a group of construction workers or a single concept or event (Baxter & Jack 2008). The unit of analysis in this study, as mentioned earlier, was school principals bounded by their context of school leadership in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province in the 21st Century. According to Yin (2004), one of the reasons for choosing a case study is when the focus of the study is answering “why” and “how” questions. Indeed, in this enquiry, the focus understood “how” and “why” questions that would provide an understanding of the leadership practices of the participants as well as their challenges. In addition, Yin (2004), states that another reason to choose a case study is to get a close, in-depth look at a particular situation. This enquiry hoped to get a close and in-depth look at the role of the principals from their perspectives. This method therefore became the best method for this enquiry.

One of the challenges in case study is sampling. Qualitative research sampling, unlike quantitative research sampling, has no prescribed rules and structures of how many samples are enough to answer the research questions (Oppong, 2013). This level of flexibility means that there is room for errors in selecting samples. Some may be too few while others too many, thus negatively affecting the trustworthiness of the findings. Therefore, this research was also concerned with selecting an adequate number of cases that would reflect on the realities of those being studied. The researcher also kept in mind that data would be subjective from case to case, as each participant described their reality the way they understood it. It was the discretion of the researcher to decide how many samples they considered adequate to answer the research questions and ensure trustworthiness without causing saturation. According to Fossey et al., (2002), saturation refers to situations in which newly collected data becomes

redundant as it does not result in new themes or patterns that will enhance the study. The researcher, therefore, considered the context of the study and the research questions in selecting a suitable number of cases to sample. It was decided that five cases were adequate to get a broad perspective without saturation.

4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Population in research refers to the total target group that the researcher is interested in studying, such as social groups, organisations and results of the study can be generalised (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). The population in this enquiry comprised of all high school principals leading rural schools in the five district municipalities of the Limpopo Province. Five schools and their principals were sampled in one district in the province. The sampling process involves selecting a group of participants from the population and using it in the research to represent the entire population (Yount, 2006). Further, the sampling process was meticulous in selecting the right group of participants for the study in order to avoid misleading findings that may not represent the population being studied (Yount, 2006). For instance, if the sampling for this enquiry was random, it would have included principals in the urban context. The findings could not have been accurate to the context being studied as the leadership practices adopted what it said about their understanding of 21st Century leadership requirements, as well as how they addressed the contextual challenges may have not represented the context being studied.

Therefore, careful consideration was given to this process to ensure that participants and their settings had similar characteristics in order to qualify for the classification of population. Selecting the best participants was achieved by employing a combination of the purposive and convenience sampling methods. Fossey et al., (2002), state that purposive sampling is concerned with selecting sources that are rich with information that is needed to answer the research inquiry. Selecting information-rich sources requires that the researcher thinks critically about the population in order to sample carefully from it (Silverman, 2013). Based on the fact the research questions pertained to principals, particularly in the rural context, it was principals in the rural context who were fit for the purpose. It was established in this enquiry that there was no other source richer with information than the principals themselves in providing data that would be suitable for answering the research questions. In conjunction to the participants, the context that bound them was important in the sampling process. The research sites in the name of the selected schools were thus also selected to fit the purpose. Four similarities in characteristics of the schools were visible, they were;

- In the rural context
- High schools
- Classified as non-school-fee paying schools under the Amended Norms and Standards for School Fund (DBE, 2011)
- Under the same school district

One the participants qualified based on purpose, the second criteria was based on convenience. Convenience sampling was used to select participants that fitted the purpose but were also easily accessible to the researcher by distance. Convenience sampling is beneficial to the researcher in that it is cost and time efficient. According to Dörnyei (2007), in Farrokhi (2012), convenience sampling does not simply mean participants that are most conveniently situated to the researcher, they must first meet a purposive criterion. From there factors such as willingness to participate, geographical proximity from the researcher and availability are considered for the convenience of the researcher. Geographical proximity was a driving factor for selecting the cases; therefore all five cases were in locations near to the researcher's place of residence.

4.5 DATA GENERATION METHODS

Two data generating techniques were employed in this study. The first technique used was in-depth, semi-structured interviews followed by observation. A discussion of these two methods follows below.

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

All interviews were scheduled for one hour which was also discussed and agreed to by all participants. According to Oppie (2004), in-depth interviews allow the researcher to ask probing questions that require participants to think, reflect and talk. Therefore, they provide a holistic understanding of their views, feelings and perceptions of their reality. In this study, getting participants to think, reflect and talk is important because the enquiry was interested in the how and why questions and words were vital in answering these. Giving participants the opportunity to talk about their reality provided insight of the meanings and understandings they attached to their leadership role in schools within the rural context, in the 21st Century. What they consider to be challenges in their roles and how the meanings and understanding influenced their leadership practices mattered.

According to Fossey (2002), the structure in semi-structured interviews is imbedded in the interviewer leading the direction of the interview through prepared questions. This is unlike unstructured interviews where the participant takes the lead by telling their life stories the way they want to tell them. For the purpose of this enquiry, setting a form of structure was necessary to answer the research questions. However, the questions were open-ended and thus allowed the participants the opportunity to speak as length. To further encourage participants to speak at length, both English and Sepedi were used during the interviews. This decision was based on the knowledge that all participants spoke Sepedi as their home language although they were also able to communicate in English. The use of home language was considered important for two reasons; the first being that it would help build good rapport with the participants and make them feel relaxed enough to talk freely. Secondly, using a language they were more comfortable with would allow them to express themselves better and more accurately, thus providing more information. It was then that the researcher followed up with questions that were not on the guide depending on the responses. Another important process in conducting qualitative interviews is to use an interview guide to determine the sequence of the interview (Versland, 2012). He argues that it aids in staying within the topic of discussion. Therefore, an interview guide was prepared prior to the interviews and followed in carrying out the aforementioned steps. After the preliminary data analysis process, the researcher decided to go back into the field to interview three of the five participants for a second time. This decision was based on the discovery that some of the questions may not have been clear to the participants therefore they did not respond to what was asked. As well as one participant who was too brief in his responses so it was felt that rephrasing the questions would provide detailed responses. The questions remained the same but were only phrased differently. The reason for this was to avoid setting them apart from the other participants thus affecting the trustworthiness of findings.

4.5.2 Observation

According to McMillian and Schumacher (2010), observation in research entails the researcher spending time in the field, closely observing the participants in their natural settings as they go about their tasks and systematically taking notes of all that is happening within the context being studied. Further, they state that the observation technique is classified into two types, known as participant and non-participant observation, depending on the role of the researcher and purpose of enquiry. In this enquiry, the researcher took on the role of non-participant observer. There was no involvement of the researcher in activities of the participants being

observed, however the role only entailed observing the participants as they went on with their day-to-day activities. The researcher spent four school days with three of the participants and three days with two of the participants. With the first three participants, the researcher was satisfied with the amount of data generated after three days while it was felt that more time is needed with the other participants, hence the unequal number of observation days.

Cohen et al., (2007), state that the richness and uniqueness of this type of data generation technique is the ability to generate data as and when it happens and thus giving the researcher first-hand accounts of the phenomena being studied. Cohen et al further state that observations are effective in understanding the phenomena beyond what is being said by the participants. In semi-structured interviews for example, the researcher only gains insight from what participants are willing to say and what can be deducted from their words, but with observations the researcher can see accounts directly. Using this technique in this study allowed insight into how the meanings and understandings that principals attach to their role influenced how they lead their schools. By observing them as they performed their leadership roles in the school, how they interacted with teachers, learners and other school stakeholders, significance data were provided in understanding the leadership practices they adopted. Further, insight into how their practices manifested their knowledge of the requirements of a 21st Century leader would be gained. The observations of principals performing their duties brought insight into these contextual challenges beyond what they considered or were willing to share. Similarly, to the interviews, a guide was scheduled for the observations. Factors in the leadership practices of the principal that the researcher considered important to observe included; daily routine (if any), interactions with teachers and learners as well as how they dealt with emergent problems. Suitable times for both researcher and participants were arranged and the researcher was at the schools observing, from seven in the morning until the end of the day. The number of observing days was agreed upon with participants as between three to five depending on how much data were collected each day. Three out of the five participants were observed for three days while two were observed for four. Throughout these observations, the researcher was careful to take notes systematically so as not to forget important information that emerged.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

The qualitative data analysis method was used in analysing data in this study. The process of analysing qualitative data attempts was to make sense of the raw data as a way of understanding the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of the participants being studied (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). Hoepfl (1997), states that qualitative data analysis involves organising and

reorganising data and breaking it down into smaller and manageable pieces to find patterns within the data. To achieve this purpose, the qualitative technique of content analysis was therefore employed. Patton (2002) states that content analysis attempts to take qualitative data and illuminate it in order to find consistencies and meanings from it. This process can sometimes involve looking at themes, recurring words and patterns in speeches or written text. Making sense of it in order to decide what is important and worth presenting as findings was essential (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). There are two techniques to content analysis; inductive and deductive. Inductive data analysis was selected as the appropriate technique for the study as it aligned with the data analysis objectives for the study. This is because inductive data analysis allows data to be analysed by finding significant patterns and themes, without any set frameworks or methodologies that may restrict what is considered as findings (Thomas, 2003).

Further, McMillian and Schumacher (2010) note that inductive data analysis breaks down data and groups it into categories and codes based on similarities and differences and things that stand out from both verbal and written field notes. Indeed, in this study a lot of time was spent arranging and rearranging data into codes and categories. Further, data were put into smaller segments and labels, therefore providing an understanding of themes and commonalities as well as differences and trends among the participants. This process also allowed discarding of data that were considered unimportant to answer the research questions. Once all these analysis processes were completed, the results were presented as findings.

4.7. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF FINDINGS

Trustworthiness to qualitative research is what validity and reliability are to quantitative research. It is the measure of truthfulness with which the research findings can be considered. Guba (1982), introduced four constructs which he suggests can be used to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. The constructs are; Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Conformability. This study made use of these constructs to enhance trustworthiness of findings.

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the closeness between what is measured and what the study intends to find (Shenton, 2004). This implies that data collection methods must be designed in a way that will accurately measure what the study aims to discover. Therefore, to enhance credibility, the

researcher has the responsibility to thoroughly analyse the data generation methods selected and ensure that they end up with the most suitable one for the enquiry in terms of Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki¹, Utriainen¹ and Kyngäs (2014). In this study, the research questions were used as a guide to the development of interviews and observation schedules. This ensured that what was observed and asked during the interviews was relevant to the enquiry. Further, the triangulation method of data generation was used. According to Lacey and Luff (2007); Baxter and Jack (2008) triangulation refers to the use of more than one data generation and analysis methods in order to gain a better understanding of the perspective. This method of collecting data is a powerful tool for enhancing credibility (Cohen et al, 2007). Using observation and interviews therefore ensured that the researcher gained not only what he was willing to hear from participants but also how what they said related to their behaviours. In addition, literature was used to better understand the research enquiry and this became a very effective tool in formulating appropriate interview questions and the observation schedule. Furthermore, the sampling method of purposive sampling ensured that participants that were selected for the study fitted the purpose, thus enhancing credibility. As stated earlier, the interviews were conducted in Sepedi and English. This ensured that participants understood all the questions and this allowed them to express themselves fully and in-depth, therefore giving more credible accounts of their realities.

4.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability by the research findings to be generalised and used in other situations and contexts. According to Merriam (1998), establishing transferability in the interpretive paradigm is not possible because of the acceptance of multiple realities and truths, since the concerns here are specific to a particular group being studied.

Although the concern was not to transfer findings in this study, a thick description of findings was provided as well as a clear description of the context under study, this allowed others to learn from the study context and apply it in similar contexts.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the level with which future research on the same phenomenon can be repeated and achieve similar results (Shenton, 2004). To ensure this, a field log as well as a field journal as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) were kept. Keeping a field log ensured that the researcher logged all meetings, times, dates, places, participants, activities for

all data collected each time. Further, all decisions made before, during and after data is generated were recorded in the log. This became an essential tool in data analysis as the researcher did not depend on memory for anything that occurred throughout the entire fieldwork; therefore nothing that was observed or planned was left out. Due to the wealth of information that was provided in the analysis of processes, the researcher was confident that dependability was achieved.

4.7.4 Conformity

According to Polit & Beck (2012), conformity refers to the level with which data accurately depicts the information as provided by participants and is further analysed in a way that reflects on reality rather than tales invented by the researcher. Further, Elo et al., (2014), state that conformity refers to objectivity in research findings which lies in the potential for congruency in data accuracy, meaning and relevance when the study is conducted and analysed by two or more other independent researchers. Log keeping proved essential even achieving this level of trustworthiness as it afforded the researcher accurate accounts of times and dates as well as other important information. For instance, when observations were conducted, more than the inclusion of what principals were doing, it was important to support it with times. Examples are; what time they came to school and when they left. Further, the direct words used by participants in the interviews were often captured in quotation marks throughout the study. According to Elo et al., (2014), using quotation marks ensures that there is a connection between the data generated and findings as well as ensuring that what is reflected in the study is indeed the voices of participants.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first step towards ensuring ethical considerations in the study was to apply for permission from the Limpopo DBE to conduct the research in the public schools of the province. The letter to the DBE contained a slightly different topic to the one write in the study. This is caused by the fact that research is not a linear process and it is bound to be adjusted in the process. The title of the study was amended due to the experiences in the field work process. This should not be considered as a breach of ethics and the change did not have any impact on ethical elements of the study and the questions asked. Once permission was granted, schools were approached in order to prepare for the data gathering processes. Letters explaining the research enquiry and data generation methods were sent to schools as well as further explaining in person and asking access to their schools. Secondly, principals were approached as participants

in the study. It was explained to participants before they agreed to take part that their identity as well as that their schools would be protected using pseudonyms when presenting findings. In addition, it was also explained that all information they provided during the enquiry would be used only for the research purpose and that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any point in the study should they so desire.

Permission was sought from the participants to conduct research in their schools and for their participation in the study. The nature of the research as well as the questions to be asked in the enquiry was made clear to both the DBE and the participating school principals. The researcher also assured the participants about confidentiality and privacy by explaining that any information discussed during the interviews or gathered through observations would be used only for the study. It was also explained that their identities and those of the school would be kept anonymous using pseudonyms in the report. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding anything they needed clarity on. The above strategies for ensuring ethical consideration are suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). Further, the researcher's contact details as well as those of the supervisor were also included in the letters requesting permission; therefore participants had the opportunity to contact either one for further clarity before or during data generation. The final step before embarking in the fieldwork became applying for ethical clearance from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Ethics Committee where the researcher is registered as a student.

4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the methodology and research design used in answering the research questions. The qualitative research method was employed through case studies in order to generate data to answer the research questions. Five samples were selected to participate in the study where interviews and observations conducted. These techniques provided sufficient data to answer the research questions. The following chapter will present and provide the analysis of the research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology used in the study. This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The chapter begins with a detailed profile of the research sites as well as participants. The details of the sites and participants are important in having a better understanding of the context that was explored. The profiles are followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings. To provide evidence and to ensure that the meaning from participants is not lost, the researcher used verbatim quotes from the participants' voices in the presentation and discussion of findings. To protect the identities of the participants and those of their schools, pseudonyms that were used in the data generation process will continue to be used to report the findings in this chapter. Findings will be presented according to the following three main themes which are guided by my research questions.

- The daily leadership practices adopted by principals in a rural context.
- The extent to which leadership practices of principals' manifest awareness of what is required from 21st Century principals.
- How principals address daily leadership challenges that come with the rural context and the 21st Century.

5.2 PROFILING THE RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

This section details the research sites and participants.

5.2.1 Research sites

The five sampled schools were located in the Polokwane Local Municipality of Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. The schools were between 20 to 30 kilometres from Polokwane and serve learners from neighbouring villages. All five were no fee schools as they

fell under quintile two of the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (ANNSSF) (DBE, 2011). The ANNSSF stipulates five school categories based on social status. Quintile one being the poorest schools in the country and quintile five being the most resourced. Therefore, the schools in the study belonged to the second poorest category of quintile two. In addition to receiving one hundred percent funding from the Department of Basic Education, the schools were also part of the School Nutrition Programme by the department which provides meals for learners during the school day. Details regarding the number of learners enrolled at each school are in Table 5.2.1 below.

Names of schools	Principal	Number of learners
Lion	Participant 3	520
Leopard	Participant 1	661
Cheetah	Participant 1	783
Elephant	Participant 4	655
Hippo	Participant 5	1400

Table 5.2.1 Learner statistics per school.

The table above shows that the number of learners in each school averaged at 650 while school five was an outlier with 1400 learners. To understand the daily leadership practices of the participants and how they addressed challenges, it was important to also have knowledge of factors that could lead to challenges such as the number of learners.

5.2.2 Participants

The profiles of participants are detailed in Table 5.2.2 below.

Participant	Number of Years of teaching	Number of years as principal	Highest qualification
Participant 3	34	17	BED (honours)
Participant 1	31	12	BED (honours)
Participant 1	25	3	BTECH (Edu Man)
Participant 4	24	2	BTECH (Edu Man)
Participant 5	35	2	SPTD

Table 5.2.2. Details of participants.

The table above shows that all principals had over twenty years of teaching experience, with two having been in the school leadership position for over ten years. The number of years they had been teaching shows that one of the characteristics participants had in common, in addition to leading rural schools, is that they were not novices in the profession. However, the information also shows that although they were well experienced teachers, three were relatively new to the principalship position. Their qualifications also show that four out of five participants had post-graduate qualifications. Literature on 21st Century leadership and school leadership suggests that to empower themselves and be abreast with the evolving world, leaders have to be life-long learners. Therefore, considering their post-graduate qualifications it was evident that the participants considered improving their skills through education as important.

5.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The three themes as discussed in the introduction of this chapter are used to present and discuss the findings. These themes were formulated from the research questions and they are; the leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context; the extent to which the leadership practices manifest their awareness of what is required of a 21st Century principal and finally how principals address the daily challenges that come with leading schools in the rural context and the 21st Century.

5.3.1 THE DAILY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ADOPTED BY PRINCIPALS IN THE RURAL CONTEXT AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH PRACTICES MANIFEST PRINCIPALS' AWARENESS OF WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM 21ST CENTURY PRINCIPALS

Several themes explaining the daily leadership practices adopted by participants were generated through data analysis and are discussed in this section. Data revealed that performing management tasks was an important part of the daily leadership practices adopted by participants. Participants also included teachers in the decisions of the school as part of their practices, particularly as it related to teaching and learning. It also emerged that participants included parental involvement in their daily practices as it relates to instilling and maintaining discipline within their schools. Findings of the second theme revealed the practices adopted by principals such as the involvement of parents and teachers in decisions and plans of the school, reveal their awareness of some areas of 21st Century leadership requirements. While other areas such as their methods of instilling discipline which do not promote or protect instructional leadership, reveal a lack of awareness in other areas that relate to 21st Century school

leadership. The researcher drew the conclusion that principals have awareness in some areas but lack in others.

5.3.1.1 Preforming management tasks

The interviews revealed that the prioritised daily leadership practice by the participants is the performance of management tasks. These include planning, organising, managing and controlling through steps such as ensuring that teachers carry out agreed teaching plans and various other managing and controlling tasks such as financial management. When asked what their daily leadership practices were, participant 1 explained that his daily practices included controlling, managing and planning. These include resource management of physical and human resources as well as performing school financial duties. He stated; *Well my first job is to manage the resources which are the teachers, the physical resources and the finances of the school. Therefore, I see to it that all the resources are in order. That the learners have teachers and a place to sit when they are taught.*

Participant 2 had a similar description of his daily practices as a leader of his school. He stated, *I use the four basic operations of managerial admin in my leadership practices, they are "POLC" which means that as a leader you must plan and after planning you must organise, you put things in place and then we come back and lead. As a leader and overseer you must now show them where we are planting. When they join, and follow you, it is then that you monitor and control.*

Participant 2 further explained that one of the tasks he performed in the school and considered important was that of financial management. Because of this role, he conducted meetings with the finance committee and other committees involved. He also took care of financial records as well as organising other matters of the school relating to finance. He stated; *One of my most important roles in the school is financial management. I therefore work with the SGB and the finance committee a lot to ensure that I direct the school finances to be used wisely for the benefit of the school. It is also my duty to keep financial records in order.*

Participant 3's response did not deviate much from the others, she described her daily practices as including the performance of management tasks. She said in response to the same question; *My daily tasks include overall management. Which means I must see to it that the school runs*

smoothly. I do so through monitoring teachers and learners, checking that teaching and learning takes place.

Participant 4 also described his practices as involving monitoring to see to it that everything was done appropriately. He said in response to the same question; *I do a lot of planning in a day. Setting school targets, term plans, meeting with HOD's and then taking plans to teachers. Everything that is planned in the school must involve me. I also meet with parents and other stakeholders of the school, I attend SGB meetings and I control the happenings of the school.*

The verbatim words of the participants reveal an agreement in their practices that management tasks are a priority. The observations also revealed that all five participants spent most of their time in their offices doing paperwork that was related to planning and organising. Interactions with the stakeholders and teachers were also observed but the priority remained the performance of management tasks. Participant 5, for instance, was observed organising his files and filling in various documents on each of the four days that were spent with him. On one occasion, participant 3 was observed working on his computer for over two hours; he informed me that he was planning for term four.

The amount of time principals spent performing management tasks as well as their declaration that it was their most important task as school leaders was an indication that they understood the significance of their role in achieving school effectiveness. This understanding was in line with literature that effective leadership is a requirement for schools to be effective (Leithwood et al, 2006). However, there's also the argument in literature suggesting that although the significance of management tasks is essential to school effectiveness and ensuring organisational goals are met, too much focus on management tasks can also prove problematic. Botha (2013), Mestry (2013) and Du Plessis (2014) suggest that in some schools the administrative roles take centre stage thus preventing the principal from performing their leadership duties in the school. This argument therefore suggests that in the 21st Century, the principal has got a much bigger role to play that goes beyond managerial tasks. Their role as instructional leaders, curriculum and interaction between stakeholders, as suggested in literature (The Wallace Foundation, 2013; Botha, 2004) can suffer while principals are busy with managerial tasks.

The verbatim words of the participants below therefore serve to support the findings that in these schools, although management tasks were prioritised, they were for the benefit of the

schools. This also answers the second research question about the extent to which leadership practices manifest awareness of requirements of 21st Century principals.

When participant 4 was interviewed about how he ensured that the school was effective and learners were performing, he connected this role to his managerial tasks. He explained that he sets targets and works with teachers so that the learners could achieve. He stated; *I plan alone first and set my own target that I want then school to achieve. Then I call the SMT and HODs then we agree and then we take it to the staff, because remember we want them to own it. Work with them to say let's give learners tests monthly in order to check how far we are to that target and work towards it.*

Similarly, participant 2 saw the road to effectiveness as one that could be attained through his role of planning the school programme and working with teachers to ensure that the plans were realised. When asked how he ensured effectiveness he stated; *Planning is very very important. At the beginning of the year one must plan and have a year plan and from there it will show that for this month we will do one two and three. So, for example if we say in December before we close we must have done allocations of teachers. That allows us to have order and know the direction we want to take.*

Similarly, participant 1 stated; *Part of my daily activities are diagnosing when there are problems in the school and finding solutions. For example, one of the things I must do when learners are not performing is outsource. Outsourcing means bringing in a teacher from another school that learners are not used to and having them teach whatever is giving us a problem.*

The tasks of target setting, outsourcing and having yearly plans that guide the processes of the organisation have a great impact on instruction. They show a commitment to learner achievement by participants as well as the importance of planning that directly links to learner achievement, thereby revealing that principals understand this aspect of instructional leadership. There are numerous aspects that make up the theory of instructional leadership as discussed in chapter two. Prytula et al., (2013), state that the tasks of a principal as an instructional leader include; monitoring, modelling, mentoring and coordinating the school programme among other tasks.

The theoretical framework of the CLT also indicates that the administrative role of the principal is not to be undermined as it plays an important role in school effectiveness. The roles performed by participants of financial management, monitoring, resource management,

organising and planning the school programme are vital to school successes. However, the leader of the 21st Century within the CLT is one expected to make a balance between performing management tasks and leadership tasks that allow the organisation to thrive into the 21st Century. Uhl-Bien et al, (2007) refer to this balance as administrative leadership. The tasks of the administrative leader as similar to the roles performed by participants in this study such as structuring tasks, managing resources, planning and coordinating the activities of the organisation, the administrative leader's role extends beyond those. The extension relates to the manner in which the leader performs all the previously mentioned tasks. In this role, the leader should be able to use strategies that enable the organisation and its members to evolve and adapt to environmental changes through keeping in mind the need to be creative, learn and adapt by the members of the organisation.

Uhl-Bien et al., (2007) further suggests that the abilities of principals as administrative leaders who can achieve managerial and leadership roles will either foster or impede adaptation in the organisations they lead. Adaptation, as stated in chapter three, is important in 21st Century organisations as they operate in a rapidly changing and sometimes chaotic environment.

5.3.1.2 Inclusion of teachers in planning and decisions

The study revealed that another leadership practice adopted by the participants in their leadership of 21st Century schools in the rural context was the inclusion of teachers in school decisions-making processes. Principals revealed that part of their daily practices included working with teachers in decisions and plans of the school as a way of ensuring that everyone knew their part and organisational goals were met. To gain an understanding in the inclusion of teachers in planning as explained by principals, they were asked to explain the nature of the interactions and collaborations. Participants explained that they included teachers in day to day planning that pertained to what was taught in the classroom, school development plans, instilling and maintaining discipline. One participant further explained that they collaborated with teachers in mentoring novices to ensure that they settle into their roles smoothly.

Participant 2 stated; *We have meetings to share ideas with teachers. Teachers are also encouraged to make proposals of any plans they have that will improve the school. Then we take it to the SMT to help come up with a way forward on the idea. For example, we had the issue of learners moving around during school hours so we came up with a movement card. Which is going to monitor the movement of learners. Every time they leave the class they must*

do so with the permission of the teacher by giving them the card to carry with. Now that one cannot succeed without the involvement and understanding of teachers.

When participant 4 was asked the same question about the nature of his interactions with teachers in his daily practices, he too emphasised the issue of including teachers in decisions relating to the school. He stated; *Whatever I plan, I plan with them because that way they feel a sense of ownership and when something fails, they will no longer see it as yours but theirs too. You first plan with them and motivate them towards that goal that you were all responsible for setting. When something is yours you don't want to lose it, you want to protect it.*

Participant 5's views on involving teachers in planning is similar to that of participant 3 in that he did not want his followers to view some of the decisions he made as his and his alone. Further, he reported that he involved them so that they understood each process of their duties even during his absence; there was no confusion in the direction they were supposed to take. He stated; *If you are a good leader, you must work with your followers nicely. You must not work alone because nobody works in isolation. Everything must be done as a group so that they don't say no that's for the principal. You must share your vision. So, that even on days I'm not here they know that this is the vision, we plant going in this direction.*

Similarly, participant 5 stated; *The decisions we make, let's say at the beginning of the year, we all sit down and check how we should plan our term, our year, our month, our first week. As well as who should be doing what and when. Then teachers decide who should be given which role. My role is to ensure that the school is moving forward to achieve those goals we set.*

Established from the interview with participant 5 was also that the involvement of experienced teachers in mentoring novice teachers was valuable. The role of ensuring that mentorship occurred was considered very important amongst the roles that principals enacted on a daily basis. She stated; *These new teachers who have just arrived can pose a problem. When the teacher gets into the field, if you just take them like a qualified teacher and leave them to teach, the time you realise they would have been far away from the goal. So I make sure that the experienced teachers as well as I must be close to them to give them long term mentoring*

Observations also revealed that participants involved teachers in various decisions and processes of the school. For instance, participant 1 had a serious issue of a grade nine learner who was eighteen years old and tired of schooling. He had been forced to continue with schooling by his mother. This issue involved the circuit manager intervening and convincing

the learner to stay in school. On one of the days the researcher was observing, participant 1 held a staff meeting in the morning to speak to teachers about what was discussed with the circuit manager. The researcher's impression was that this was not the first time the principal and teachers had discussed this issue because they were making reference to previous discussions. He also provided a platform for them to give ideas on how to move on with this matter.

During observation on participant 3, the researcher also witnessed the involvement of teachers in a disciplinary matter that also involved parents on two separate occasions. In the first incident, the principal called the learner as well as four teachers to his office to discuss the learner's behaviour. Teachers were asked to tell the mother of the learner about interactions with him and how he behaved in their classes. The second incident involved the principal, parents, a learner as well as the learner's class teacher. Both incidences revealed that the principal saw value in involving teachers as the people who taught learners and would therefore have more knowledge about their behaviour.

What these findings suggest about the extent to which leadership practices manifest awareness of 21st Century principals is that participants understood that in the 21st Century, there was a need to plan and make decisions collaboratively for schools to thrive. Issues that emerged in this theme and relate to literature include; Distributed leadership, self-similarity and joint-decision making. As already stated earlier in this chapter, self-similarity involves making agents of a system see the organisation as theirs and thus its failures and successes. Therefore, the agents work towards a common goal of making the organisation thrive (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Allowing teachers to be part of decision-making was an important part of self-similarity as they regarded themselves as responsible for implementing them.

Distributed leadership was also considered as important by participants although data analysis shows that it was limited on the scale. The ways in which participants involved the teachers in the school planning, share ideas with them and as participant 4 said, share a vision with them, are evident that participants see valued in Distributed leadership. As stated in chapter two, Distributed leadership involves making decisions and processes as a collective rather than the task of a single leader (Spillane, 2006). Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009) contend that hierarchy in 21st Century organisations does not work therefore Distributed leadership was created with the belief that for organisations to succeed, the different role players must have a say in what takes place as well as the manner it takes place. The findings therefore agree with

the literature on the value of collaboration between principals and teachers in 21st Century school leadership.

The theoretical framework suggests that in a system of an organisation such as a school, there is interdependency on each other among the agents (Plowman et al, 2007). Hence, meaning that due to the interdependency, the ways in which the different agents work together has an impact on the successes and failures of the organisation (Chan, 2001). This theme, therefore, shows that participants had an understanding that in order for their organisations to succeed, there is a need for their subordinates to be involved in decisions and other leadership processes. However, the limitedness of the Distributed leadership in the practices of the participants was seen in how they did not involve teachers in seeking solutions for challenges such as lack of resources. This challenge and how principals coped with it, will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.3.1.3 Parental involvement

In addition to involving teachers in the decisions and processes of the school, participants explained that working with parents was one of the daily practices they adopted in their leadership. To deal with challenges such as behavioural problems, participants often relied on parents' intervention to solve problems. They explained that they interacted with parents through school meetings, inviting individual parents to the school as well as getting teachers and parents to collaborate in solving learner disciplinary problems. It also emerged from one participant that parents were encouraged to come to the school to attend meetings so that teachers could use the meetings to tell them how their children were doing in the school. This involved advising them to come in whenever they wanted to enquire about their children. It also emerged that participants saw an important part of involving parents to make them aware of the school plans as well as teaching and learning goals. Further, they asked them to get involved at home by ensuring learners acquired the skills they were supposed to learn, as well as visiting the school to follow up with teachers in order to see that plans were carried out.

Participant 2 stated; *The involvement of parents includes having them help us in the discipline of the school and attending meetings. In those meetings you can tell them where the strengths and weaknesses of the learners lie. So, that they may come in and help. Also, I deliberately have an open-door policy, to say people you don't have to come when you're called, come in whenever you can to check on your children's education.*

Similarly, participant 4 stated; *We give parents the assessment plan at the beginning of the year and explain that although we assess learners annually, this is what we will be doing quarterly and if you feel like something is not going well you should come to school and ask us what the problem is. Parents who follow through with their children at home and the teachers therefore help us to perform at the end of the year.*

In the same way, participant 5 believed that parental involvement as well as the involvement of community members and leaders was important towards dealing with the various challenges experienced in the rural context. Further, she believed that learners in the 21st Century have discipline issues that cannot be fully dealt with without the involvement of parents. She stated; *Parent involvement is important particularly in this era because learners are overruling the parents at home and bring the same disrespect to us in the school. So, we include the parents to say hey people, we are having these issues so help us resolve them.*

She further added that there was a desire by the school for the community to be involved; *As I mentioned the issue of taverns, those tavern owners are parents as well, they are part of the community and they should help us by not having taverns near the school. Community leaders such as pastors and headmen and professionals should also get involved in helping us improve the school.*

Participant 1 also mentioned that he valued the involvement of parents and included them in some school decisions including the invitation of a teacher from another school to help matric learners understand a concept they may be struggling to understand. In order for outsourcing to be successful, parents had to pay, therefore he includes them. However, he also made it clear that since rural school parents did not have knowledge about education, they did not always see the importance of outsourcing. He stated; *We try to involve parents when we want to outsource. Out sourcing means that because the learners might be too used to me because I've been teaching them for the past four years so they may not take me seriously. So we ask someone else to come in, not to teach them anything differently, it is only to consolidate what you've already told them. But parents don't always see it as important.*

The analysis of second method of data generation, observations played an important role in these findings that principals valued parental involvement. During participant 1's problem with that learner who did not want to be in the school anymore, as discussed in the previous section, the mother had been called to the school more than twice. One of the occasions she was called in was when the circuit manager came to intervene. Secondly, she was also called when the

boy continued to have disruptive behaviour even after swearing to change his behaviour and continue with school. It is also the researcher's understanding that participant 1 would have called the parent prior to involving the circuit manager in the matter.

In the previous section on teacher involvement, there is evidence from the observation that participant 2 was involving parents in matters relating to discipline. Two sets of parents were involved in discussing the behaviour of their children and finding solutions. In addition, participant 2 also involved parents in planning a camping trip for academically weak matric learners. On one of the days the researcher witnessed a meeting between him and some of the parents of the aforementioned learners, this was a meeting where he had invited all parents concerned. During the meeting, he explained to parents that it was important to call them in rather than inform them through letters. More than the fact, that he needed them to contribute financially for the trip; he explained that he needed them to be around so he could explain the importance of the trip.

Participant 1 was also observed sending learners home to call their parents for various reasons such as continued disruptive behaviour and not bringing books to school. One incident involved a boy with a very similar case with participant 1 who, had outgrown school and lost interest in it. The researcher did not observe the interaction with the boy's parents but when the boy was called into the office on the day he was present, participant 1 asked him why his mother had not come to the school as they had instructed the boy to go and call her the previous day. Further, the same participant also asked the boy for his mother's contact details in order to call her and discuss the behaviour with her.

Findings reveal that participants saw value in including parents in plans and decisions of the school, therefore they made an effort to be inclusive. Parents were included in matters relating mostly to discipline. Their involvement was through being called to the school when there was an issue with an individual learner attending school meetings. Few parents even made the effort to voluntarily go to the schools to enquire about progress of their children. Participants also encouraged parents to check books and term plans.

The participants' willingness to involve parents in school matters reveals that there was an awareness among them about the importance of parental involvement in 21st Century schools. There is a growing body of research suggesting that in order for learners and schools to succeed, parents have to be actively involved (Lemmer & Van Vyck, 2011; Cankar, Deutsch, & Sentočnik, 2012). The benefits of parental involvement include academic achievement,

educational aspirations, general wellness of learners and improved attendance (Mestry & Grobler, 2007). However, the CLT used in the study has emphasised that in the 21st Century, organisations benefit from working collaboratively in solving various problems they are faced with. CLT is founded by the belief that in organisations, the members act as interacting agents of a whole system. It is their interaction that has an influence on the outcomes of the organisation (Chan, 2001). Therefore, there is a need for a leader who is able to facilitate the interactions among the agents to ensure that the organisation thrives (Boal & Schultz, 2007). Contrarily, parents in the schools have only been involved on a limited scale of discipline, which does not foster adaptation and evolution required for 21st Century organisations to thrive. There was no collaboration between the schools and parents or communities in any manner that could help gather resources for the school such as donations from community members, fund raising and other approaches. Principals therefore lacked the awareness and ability to bring the different agents of the school together to find solutions to the various problems that relate to the rural context.

5.3.1.4 Maintaining discipline

Findings also revealed that participants adopted the enforcement of discipline in the school in their daily leadership practices and considered it an important part of their job as leaders. Some of the disciplinary issues that these schools had to deal with related to learners. They included, disruptive behaviour during lessons, not attending lessons, fighting, not wearing proper school uniform as well problems of substance abuse. The issue of discipline was further related to the teachers in the schools through not performing their duties and absenteeism from work. This required that principals had to deal with these issues daily to ensure that the school functioned properly. It emerged that the role of monitoring, as described by participants, manifested itself in the role discipline enforcement. It also emerged that one of the challenges in his role was the behaviour of both learners and teachers. Participant 1 stated; *The role of the principal in the modern times is very challenging because you know we are advancing in an era where people know their rights. I therefore have to make sure I instil discipline so that work gets done and children don't get out of hand. People are afraid of going an extra mile because they are depending too much on those rights. This applies to both the learners and the teachers. Teachers these days are affiliated with unions so you can't tell them anything.* (Participant 1)

When participant 5 spoke about her role of general management, she elaborated that general management included the role of monitoring, a role she took very seriously. When the

researcher asked her what she monitored, she explained that part of her monitoring was to make sure that learners wore the right school uniform. She shared various stories of learners who came to school without proper school uniform and how she had to spend a lot of time chasing them to ensure that this issue was resolved. She stated; *I monitor attendance and punctuality in the morning. Both learners and teachers. I must also make sure that learners are wearing proper school uniform in order to keep our school clean.* (Participant 5)

Participant 4 also had a similar view of his daily leadership practices as they related to discipline, he stated; *Learner and teacher absenteeism is a problem and therefore a priority in my role and daily practices. When it comes to teachers it is difficult because they are adults, if they come to you and say sir I am sick you can't argue with them. So that's my biggest challenge because as a leader you want learners and teachers to be in school every day.*

In addition to this statement, participant 4 also mentioned that the issue he had with teachers regarding discipline was that sometimes teachers were present at school but not teaching. It was therefore his duty to ensure that they did this. He stated; *Sometimes even when they are at work and they know it is their lesson they don't go to class. I therefore have to call them and ask them about it in order to ensure that they teach.*

Participant 3 stated; *As I have told you earlier, some of the posts go unfilled for a very long time. Therefore, there are classes where we have forty learners. They end up taking advantage and giving teachers a hard time. So, I must be there to help teachers deal with them because some of the new teachers are not that much older than some of the boys in the school.*

Issues of substance abuse in schools Leopard, Elephant and Hippo were also brought forward as well as the threat they posed on school orderliness and discipline. Principals considered this a big challenge to the discipline of the schools as they explained that when learners were under the influence of substances, they did not attend lessons, were aggressive and caused problems for other learners and teachers. In the pursuit of further understanding the daily leadership practices adopted by participants, it became important to ask them about the challenges they faced on a daily basis in their leadership practices. The researcher asked them what some of their daily challenges were. Participant 1 who was principal of Leopard school, explained that one of his challenges as a leader of his school was the fact that some learners were abusing illegal substances. This created a disciplinary problem for him as they did not attend classes but rather spent their day in dilapidated mobile classrooms that were behind the rest of the classes. He explained that he worked with teachers to identify such learners, work with parents

to agree on getting the learners professional help and finally referring the learners to Substance Abuse Treatment and Services (SANCA). He stated, *Another one of our challenges is drug abuse here in the school. The dilapidated mobile classrooms I told you about have become a harbouring ground for these learners who are using drugs in the school. So we have a group of teachers who identify these learners, bring them to me and with the permission of the parents we refer them to SANCA for professional help.* (Participant 1)

Similarly, to the drug issues at Leopard school, Participant 5 of Hippo school also expressed that one of her major challenges, as a school leader was that learners were abusing substances. She too had come up with plans and strategies to deal with this issue. She explained to the researcher that the school had asked the police to set up a satellite station in the school to ensure that they were always there to help deal with this issue. She says; *We have a drug issue here in the school and it is a problem for me because when they are done smoking, they go back to classes and cause problems for us. We have asked the SAPS to set up a satellite station here at the school but they won't. Or at least to come in once in a while and search the learners, that way they will be scared to bring drugs into the school. But until that happens, I am the one who has to deal with them*

When I discovered that one of the major discipline issues in two of schools was related to drugs and the effects this had on the daily leadership practices by principals, the researcher wanted to find out from the other participants if this was also their reality and how it was affecting their daily leadership practices. Participant 4 was asked if his learners had drug problems in the school and how he was dealing with the issue. He explained that his school was no exception to the substance abuse epidemic and was therefore creating problems for him as a leader of the school. He expressed that once high on the substance, learners were disruptive and sometimes aggressive, scaring their peers and teachers. As a result, dealing with this problem was included in his daily leadership practices. He stated; *The big boys that don't want school anymore sit at the toilets smoking and then they become aggressive. You just never know what they may do, even the teachers are afraid of them. According to SASA this is not an issue to be dealt with domestically. Therefore I must make sure that I open police cases and call their parents to school to deal with this.*

In addition to the findings revealed by the interviews, the observations also revealed that maintaining discipline was an important daily function of the principals. The days that the researcher spent while observing Participant 1, it became clear that many teachers sent their

ill-disciplined learners to him so that he could personally reprimand them. Three learners were sent in by a teacher one morning, one for misbehaviour and two for constant absenteeism. Participant 1 spent about twenty minutes reprimanding the three learners. On the second day at the school, a learner who was 21 years old and in grade eleven was also brought in by a teacher who asked participant 1 to deal with him regarding disruptive behaviour in class. Participant 1 took it upon himself to check all the learner's books, asking him about his behaviour and then reprimanded him. On the same day, an HOD came in with a grade twelve learner who had been refusing to do his portfolio task that he said he had submitted but had been lost by the teacher. The teacher had called the HOD but when both failed to convince the boy to do his work, they took him to participant 1 who was able to get the boy to do it.

Participant 1 was also observed dealing with various discipline issues in the school. On the first day of observation, he called in a group of five boys in the morning and explained that at the end of the previous day as he was leaving the school, he had observed a large group of learners forming a circle about 300 meters from the school. When he went to investigate, he discovered that a fight had erupted and had to take one of the boys to the clinic as he was badly injured. Therefore, that morning he called the two who had been fighting as well as their witnesses. Upon calling the boys to his office, the principal spent one hour and twenty-five minutes with them. During this time, he asked both sides and witnesses to tell their version of events. At the end, he spent some time reprimanding them for their behaviour and reminded them about the importance of education. The following day he was also observed spending time with two boys who had been fighting during break.

Literature reviewed in chapter two suggests that one of the roles of the 21st Century principal is to create an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning to occur (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Therefore, the findings reveal that principals are concerned with creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Mestry and Khumalo (2012) assert that an environment that is disciplined and conducive to learning refers to one that is free from any disruptive behaviour on the part of learners that may otherwise have a negative impact on teaching and learning. As Participant 4 mentioned, some of the teachers were afraid of these aggressive boys who were high on substances, therefore this threatened the role of the principal as a creator of a conducive environment. What the findings reveal about the extent to which leadership practices manifest awareness of what is required of 21st Century principals is that there is awareness that there is a need to monitor and instil discipline as a way of creating an

environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Therefore, these findings are in line with literature on one of the roles and practices that principals should perform.

5.3.1.5 A harm to instructional time

The issues of discipline in the schools has forced principals to seek methods of including discipline in their daily leadership practices and enforcing it at all costs, sometimes, at the cost of teaching and learning. Findings revealed that participants often took learners out of classes to go home and call parents or other reasons that kept them from classes. As already stated in the previous section, principals have a rightful duty of ensuring that the environment of teaching and learning is conducive, however, sending learners to call parents during school hours means that they miss lessons. This, therefore, contradicts another importance of the principal as a leader of instruction and one who protects instructional time (Prytula et al., 2013)

During interview with Participant 5, when she explained her role as a monitor, she also shared a story of a boy who constantly came to school wearing boots instead of proper school shoes. Her ways of dealing with this issue was forbidding the boy from attending any lessons until he could come wearing school shoes. The boy insisted on various occasions that he did not have school shoes, further bringing his uncle to the school to explain the problem. Participant 5 told the researcher that the uncle was angry and shouting at her but she would not back down, it was going to be school shoes or nothing. This she says went on for months until she found the contact details of the boy's father in her files and was able to call him. It was then that they bought shoes for the boy and he was able to resume classes. She stated; *There was a boy I had an issue with for the whole of last year, he would come in wearing boots and claimed not to have school shoes. I asked him to call his parent, he didn't. So, I told him you can't go to class. He complained but we made him miss lessons because he didn't bring his mother. The uncle came here shouting and saying this boy is going to fail, I told him, no he will not fail. Go home with him and bring him back when he has shoes.* (Participant 5)

Observations with participants also revealed that a lot of instructional time was spent on discipline related issues. During the observation of Participant 1, when a teacher sent in three learners to his office to discuss behaviour and absenteeism, Participant 1 spent over thirty minutes with all three learners. Even when he had finished talking to the others and was on the third one, they were not released. He reprimanded them, asked questions, reprimanded further and then released them.

The inability to protect instructional time was also evident when observing Participant 4. There was a man who came to his office requesting that a boy be released for family related matters. The man explained that he was a boyfriend of the learner's mother and had been sent by the mother. Participant 4's only concern was that the man was not the boy's biological father. Once the boy was called and he agreed that he knew the man, he was released. This happened before ten in the morning. Participant 4 did not ask the man how long they needed him for and if it was not possible for him to come back to the school nor did he advise him that if it was important for the boy to be in school during instructional time.

During the four days spent observing Participant 1, learners spent a considerable amount of time answering for their behaviour when they should have been attending lessons. The five boys that have already been mentioned were in his office for one hour and twenty-five minutes. Three of those were witnesses but stayed the whole duration of the meeting, missing out on learning.

As already stated, literature shows that the instructional leadership role of principals includes the protection of instructional time (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; The Wallace Foundation, 2013; Prytula et al., 2013). This means that instructional leaders see value in learners being in class during contact time unless there are serious issues that cannot be avoided. This includes not holding meetings during instructional time, making sure that teachers and learners are in class and learning occurs when it is supposed to as well as not taking learners out of the class unnecessarily.

The findings, therefore, demonstrate that as far as being instructional leaders who safeguard instructional time is concerned, principals lack the full awareness of this role. Of course, it has already been revealed in the findings that principals ensure that teachers are in class teaching and learners learning as part of enforcing discipline. However, ensuring that teachers are in class and teaching is not sufficient without ensuring that learners are in class except in very special cases where issues cannot be delayed or avoided. In the case of participant 5 and the boy without school shoes, taking into account the socio-economic status of the school community, it is not surprising that some learners genuinely cannot afford school shoes. Also taking into account the fact that the boy made an effort to come with his uncle to explain the issue; the researcher does not believe it was more important for him to have proper school shoes than attend classes.

Issues that have emerged in this theme include that participants adopt the performance of management tasks in their daily leadership practices and consider this an important part of their roles as principals. They spent most of their time in their offices carrying out this role. The involvement of parents, particularly as it relates to school discipline is adapted into the leadership practices of principals as they see value in parents helping schools to solve disciplinary issues. Further, the findings in this theme also showed that principals give teachers the professional empowerment and autonomy by involving them in planning regarding teaching and learning, disciplinary issues and procedures as well as when dealing with parents.

Further, the findings revealed that there are various discipline issues in the schools, which make principals to adopt strategies of dealing with them in their daily leadership practices. Some of the ways of dealing with discipline issues affect teaching and learning as they require taking learners out of their lessons to discipline them.

5.3.3 Challenges and principals' responses

The aim of asking this research question was to explore the challenges faced by principals working in the rural context as well as understanding how they dealt with them. Therefore, to answer this question of how they deal with challenges fully, the challenges are presented in detail and discussed, followed by how they were addressed by the participants. It emerged that one of the challenges faced in the schools was the lack of teachers, lack of adequate parental involvement, inadequate security and lack of support from the Department of Basic education. Below is a detailed discussion.

5.3.2.1 Lack of teachers

As stated in the introduction, to find out how participants address their daily challenges, it was important to understand those challenges. Among the many challenges that related to their context, participants expressed that it came out among the schools that filling vacant posts was a challenge. Posts become vacant due to resignations and other factors such as retirement or an increased number of learners, which required more teachers. When asked about her challenges, Participant 5 said on this issue; *Post provisioning is a huge issue in Limpopo. Right now those forms I was filling regard our temporary teachers. They started working here in April (4*

months) and they have not been paid a cent. They tell us to never ever engage a teacher without their approval. (Participant 5)

Participant 3 also expressed that the lack of teachers and posts that were left unfilled for too long was a big challenge in his role. He also explained that by law, they could not appoint a temporary teacher without the approval of the department, which could sometimes take months. He stated; *One of our biggest problems is a lack of educators. Right now, we have three vacant posts If you want to ask for a temporary educator, they will say it must be approved by treasury. But while we wait for approval learners are without a teacher.*

During the observation on Participant 1, he also complained about lack of teachers in his school. The deputy principal came to his office to speak to him, when he left the participant was told of his position in the school. He also told the researcher that he was supposed to have two deputies but the post had not been filled for months. This he said, increased his workload.

When Participant 5 was asked how she was dealing with it, she admitted that this was a very tough issue and one she was not coping very well with. She stated; *I can't really say we are coping with this issue, because we cannot hire teachers ourselves. So learners are left without teachers. Your conscience will eat you knowing that parents went to work leaving you with their children and you've left them to play without a teacher. (Participant 5)*

Participant 3's response to the follow up question of how he was coping with this challenge also made it clear that it was not a problem he knew how to deal with, effectively. He explained that his solution was to have teachers taking more classes and sometimes even teaching for more hours than they are supposed to. He stated; *You know even if you ask other teachers to take more lessons it becomes impossible because our class sizes are already large. So I teach more classes than I should, teachers teach more lessons but we are not coping. It is impossible to cope when you are three teachers short. (Participant 3)*

At Participant 1's school, the post that had been left unfilled for months was that of deputy principal, so he only had one instead of two. His approach of dealing with it was performing his duties and those that would otherwise be performed by a deputy, thus, adding to his workload.

The ways in which the principals dealt with this challenge included the provision of support for teachers such as using the knowledge that classes were crowded to help with instilling

discipline in the classrooms. Another method used to deal with this challenge was to notify the department about the shortage and wait for them to appoint teachers.

According to the Action Plan 2014 document: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025 (DBE, 2014) one of the issues that is attributed to a lack of teachers in the rural areas is the unattractiveness of the conditions in rural areas for teachers, thus, leaving posts unfilled and causing an excess number of learners per class. Apart from the reasons already stated by participants as effects of not having teachers, Kremer, Chaudhury, Rogers, Muralidharan, and Hammer (2005) suggest that the lack of teachers in schools also perpetuates learner absenteeism. Learners realise that they are often not taught or they are crowded in classes and do not receive the attention they need in order to learn, they may also stay away from school. Further, Participant 3 was quoted in the section about discipline saying that one of the issues causing discipline challenges was attributed to overcrowding in the classes and that happened when there are not enough teachers.

The findings reveal that principals lack the human resource and support from the Department of Basic Education to be able to deal with this issue effectively. The challenge, as already established, is not that they cannot find teachers but rather that it is not up to them to appoint teachers. As Participant 5 stated, even upon appointment, temporary teachers sometimes go for months without receiving payment. The view of this challenge in the theoretical framework reinforces the idea of different agents interdependent on one another and working together for the benefit of the organisation (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). The principals cannot fully address this issue without collaborating the other agents in the form of the Department of Basic Education stepping in and playing their part in appointing teachers on time as well as paying temporary teachers on time in order to keep them in the school.

5.3.2.2 Adequate parental involvement

Findings revealed that principals valued parental involvement and that some parents did not get involved in matters relating to discipline. However, it was also revealed that the number of parents who got involved is low and the involvement was limited in scale and did not provide adequate support to schools.

Participant 5 complained that parents did not get involved in the school as much as she would have liked them to be, she was quoted as saying that parents should get more involved in the

school particularly those who are professionals because they as a school could not change the school alone. She stated when referring to a problem of taverns near the school that made teaching difficult *Parents with learners in the school should also help us realise the vision of the school. Learners are writing exams while there's music coming from the tavern. It's unacceptable. So they need to get involved and help us in by complaining and making sure things change.* (Participant 5)

Participant 1 also complained about the lack of adequate parental involvement at his school. When he was asked the same question regarding parents, he explained that some considered it fruitless and a waste of their time to attend school meetings. Therefore, even when there were matters requiring their input or assistance, they were often not available. Earlier he was also quoted as saying that parents often did not assist with outsourcing even when it was for the benefit of the school. He stated this, regarding their willingness to get involved; *Realistically speaking the relationship between parents and the schools is far apart. If you call a parent to come here about the education of their children, according to them it is a waste of their time. When you call meetings also they find it to be fruitless.*

During observations of Participant 1, on the day that he called parents to discuss the camping trip for matric learners, as stated in the first section of this chapter, the turnout had been lower than 40%. When the researcher asked participant 1 if he had received any apologies from parents, he said he had not. To probe the participants about their role in solving this issue, they were asked how they encouraged parents to get involved. Participant 3 stated; *Sometimes if you divide them into grades to come get reports at the end of the term, some show up. Or if there is a problem with a child and you call the parents they do come but generally they don't.*

In addition to explaining that he also asks parents to fetch progress reports from the school, Participant 1 had another approach he believed was the best way of ensuring that they availed themselves when he needed them. He explained that he attended functions in the village even though he was not a member of the community and built good rapport with parents so that when he called them for a meeting or their involvement was an issue, they would see him as a friend and attend. He stated; *There are things that are minor but can motivate them to get involved. I attend their functions here even though I'm not a member of the village. If they invite me to the local authority meeting or an event and I am available, I go. That way they see me as one of them and when I call they will say here is that our person, let's go and support him.*

The observations also revealed that principals often called individual parents to the school to discuss issues relating to the behaviour of their children. The importance of parent involvement has already been discussed in the previous section.

Findings reveal that participants deal with the challenges of lack of adequate parental involvement by calling them directly, dividing them into different grades for meetings and asking parents to fetch progress reports instead of giving them to learners, then holding meetings on those days.

As already stated, parental involvement is important for numerous reasons. Therefore, it is evident that although principals did not have the full awareness of how to utilise parental involvement in matters beyond discipline, they found working strategies to engage them in school meetings.

5.3.2.3 Adequate security

When posing the question of what their challenges were, participants expressed that due to the limited security in rural areas, they were often victims of burglaries. Meaning that even when they were provided with some technology and other resources that cater for 21st Century teaching and learning, they were not able to secure them. Participant 1 explained that a big disadvantage was that the school was in the outskirts of the two villages it served, therefore thieves could easily come in at night without fear of being seen or heard. This issue made it very difficult for the school to have long term resources. He stated; *“There are gangsters around the school so when we get things they get stolen. We can have computers and overhead projectors but they get stolen. Our school is in the outskirts of the village so it is hard.”*

Echoing the same sentiments, Participant 1 also mentioned theft was one of his challenges as possession of resources was an important part of instruction. He stated; *Our other challenge is burglaries. You may find that we have one computer, boys come and steal it to use it to play music instead of using that one computer to produce doctors and engineers and that takes us back.*

Participant 5 also said when she was answering to the same question about her challenges *One of the other challenges that come with being a rural school is the limited security. As you can see I am sitting in an office without a computer. We had one here and thieves came in through the roof and stole it.*

Further to what was expressed by other participants, the issue of burglaries also came up during the observation on Participant 4. The researcher noticed that the strong room of the school had been broken into because the wall had a large hole that appeared to have been a result of drilling. When asked about it, he explained that thieves had come in and stolen printers.

The participants addressed this issue in two ways; reporting the matter to the police obtaining a case number and sending the report to the circuit office so that they may follow up. Participant stated that; *When you come in in the morning to realise that the computer was stolen, you call the police. There's nothing else we can do because we are not here when they come.*

Participant 1 also said; *“By law we are supposed to call the police when such things happen so we do. But so far there has never been an arrest.”* Further, Participant 1 also explained that apart from opening a police case, he had also taken steps to complain to the circuit office with the hope that they would provide solutions for the problem. He stated; *I have spoken to the circuit manager about this issue on several occasions that people please help us. We are in the middle of nowhere here and we are struggling. But they never do anything. The department has no security in mind when they are thinking about schools.*

During the conversation with Participant 4 about the drilled wall and stolen printers, he also made a call to the police to ask for a case number about an unrelated case of theft. He explained that he was getting the case number because he was expected to send it to the circuit office so that they could follow up.

The lack of security in these schools was a big problem because it meant they were far from overcoming their lack of resources. Therefore, it meant that the learners in these schools would continue to be unequal to learners in schools that acquired and maintained resources. Two of these schools as already mentioned were in remote areas in the outskirts of the villages they served, away from any businesses or homes, therefore they were more vulnerable to crime.

The ways in which participants dealt with this issue included reporting the challenges that came with lack of adequate security to the department, proposing solutions in some instances and reporting cases to the police. The CLT emphasised on units to work together in a 21st Century organisation. Therefore, the ability for these principals to seek outside help for these challenges and follow up, reveal that they saw value in working with other stakeholders to find solutions fit for the 21st Century.

5.3.3.4 Support from the Department of Basic Education.

Findings revealed that participants were frustrated by the DBE and felt that they did not receive adequate support. With issues already mentioned such as the shortage of teachers, which is the responsibility of the department, most of the schools were without functional libraries and other basic resources such as furniture. The participants made it clear that the department was failing to provide schools with these resources. Participant 1 complained that his school had been left with dilapidated mobile classrooms that were becoming a danger to the learners at school since they were used for criminal activities. After sharing their views, participants were asked if they received any assistance from the DBE. Participant 3 said in response; *Our circuit manager tries to help us. He will fail where he does but he tries. The issue of teachers is not up to him. But we submit to him and he must take it up so it doesn't always work.*

Participant 4's response to the same question was; *Oh I don't even what to lie to you, when it comes to problems we have in the school they don't always help.* Participant 1 also shared the view that the department did not provide sufficient support for schools. He said that in his experience they presented themselves to the school when there was a serious problem. He stated; *Generally speaking the department doesn't support schools. They only show up when there is a serious problem, otherwise they are far from us.*

Participant 5 said this about the same issue; *There are internal and external issues we experience that affect the internal health of the school. Unfortunately the department doesn't always help us. When they do, in most cases they come much later than they should.*

Participant 1 also shared the same sentiments as the other participants when answering this question, his response was; *Well my classes are crowded right now. We need a new block in the school. They don't provide such. My teachers don't have a place to sit. In terms of the resources, the department doesn't provide anything. we were last supplied with chairs and desks in probably 2006.*

The next question posed to participants was aimed at understanding their role in addressing this issue. They were asked how they were dealing with this problem. The interviews revealed that principals have always made the department aware of their issues by writing and calling them constantly without any help. Participant 5 added; *We normally write letters to them or if it is an urgent matter we call them. The circuit manager is aware of all our problems. They just say we got your letter and we will respond but they never do.*

Participant 1's approach to dealing with them also included writing letters and calling them when there was a need. Nevertheless, he too felt like they are unable to help so he said that he found it easier to try and win the community and work with them than depend on the support he never received from the DBE. He stated; *I don't see them being very effective even in other schools I've worked in. So you as a leader might find ways to be involved with the community. To win community and rather work with them to solve the problem we have.*

In the same tone, Participant 4 also expressed that his role in addressing the issue was to let the department know of the issues in the school and leave it to them to solve it. Although like the other participants, his view of how they handled grievances was not a positive one. He stated; *We always go to them and ask for help. We make sure that nothing happens in the school that they do not know about because I represent the HOD in this position. So we complain to them, when we open police cases we give them the case number.*

Participant 1 said on the same issue *We always inform them. I have told them that my classes are crowded we need teachers, we need libraries shelves, we need desks. All these complains they know about.*

Literature shows that the Department of Basic Education has had a hard time providing support for school principals and often left them stranded and unable to perform their duties. According to a study conducted by Du Plessis (2014), as discussed in chapter two, principals in the rural context feel unsupported by the department in dealing with many of the challenges they experience due to their context.

Findings, therefore, reveal that principals play their role in addressing the many challenges they have in their schools by writing letters and calling the department when there is a need. However, many of the challenges are beyond the control of principals as they depend on the support and assistance of the department.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The study sought to explore the daily leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context. As well as understanding how their daily leadership practices manifest their understanding concerning the requirements of school leadership in the 21st Century. Moreover, the study sought to explore the challenges experienced by principals in their daily leadership practices as well as how they addressed them. The first research question revealed that principals perform various managerial tasks in their daily leadership. Further, they also spend

their time instilling and maintaining discipline as a way of creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Principals also collaborated with parents and teachers in processes and some decisions of the school regularly. The second research question revealed that principals understand the purpose of performing administrative tasks and the contributions these tasks made to leading effective schools. They plan, organise and monitor processes in order to ensure that teaching and learning is effective. Further, it was also revealed that principals see value in working with teachers and parents in decisions and processes, hence there is collaboration. However, the level at which the collaboration of teachers and parents is limited in scale, does not always support teaching and learning. Therefore, this reveals that principals are unaware of the role they are supposed to play in achieving this. The second research question also revealed that principals are not aware of their instructional leadership role as it relates to the protection of instructional time. The third research question revealed that principals have many challenges that they face in their daily leadership practices and work hard to involve the Department of Basic Education to find solutions. This, therefore reveals that principals understand that 21st Century organisations have different stakeholders that play different roles in order to succeed. The next chapter will summarise the study findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented and discussed the study findings that were generated from semi-structured interviews and observations. This chapter begins by presenting a summary of the study, followed by a summary of findings, which are presented under different themes using the research questions. After the summary of findings, study conclusions are drawn and recommendations made based on findings.

6.2 STUDY SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to explore the daily leadership practices that are adopted by principals in the rural context as leaders of the 21st Century. Understanding the extent to which the adopted leadership practices manifest their understanding of the requirements of 21st Century school leadership is essential. Further, the study also aimed to investigate how principals were addressing challenges brought on to their schools. The motivation for the study was based on the observation through literature that 21st Century instruction and the role of the principal in the era have taken a different turn from previous eras. Principals are expected to have more knowledge of instruction and curriculum, have leadership skills that go beyond administrative tasks and lead their schools to effectiveness in an ever-changing environment. However, the hardships of schools in the rural context are no secret, therefore creating more challenges for those who lead them. Consequently, it became important for the researcher to explore the aforementioned research questions.

In order to have a clear understanding of the issues the study wished to explore, the researcher reviewed literature on leadership in the 21st Century as well as instruction of the era and how the changes have had an impact on instruction and school leadership. Further, the rural context being the setting of the study, wherein the researcher also reviewed literature on the relationship that the rural context of South Africa has with the 21st Century and how schools in the rural context were affected by various environmental factors of the century. Further, South African education policies were reviewed to find out their expectations of what principals in the 21st Century were supposed to be, as well as comparing the policies to the various literatures on the

same topic. The literature review also presented and discussed popular leadership models as they relate to school leadership of the 21st Century. Furthermore, in the literature review, an insight into what some of the challenges of principals working in the rural context were presented in order to help me gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Also reviewed were the different theoretical frameworks pertaining to leadership of the 21st Century. The theory that related to the study topic was the Complexity Leadership Theory. This theory was therefore discussed in detail as it relates to school leadership.

The study centred around the interpretive paradigm, various research methods and designs were studied and it was decided that the best research approach to answer the research questions was the qualitative research design. Within this design, the case study method was used and five cases sampled. Semi-structured interviews were used as a primary method of data generation while observations were used as a secondary method of data generation. The literature review and theoretical framework were used to analyse data and answer research questions. Three themes were used to present the findings based on the research questions. The study findings are summarised below.

6.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study aimed to explore three questions, the questions were therefore used as themes to present and discuss the findings. To summarise the findings for each of the research questions, the questions are restated below. Questions one and two will be discussed together while the third question will be discussed separately.

- What are the daily leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context?
- To what extent do the leadership practices manifest awareness of what is required from 21st Century principals?
- How do principals address daily leadership challenges that come with the rural context and the 21st Century?

6.3.1 WHAT ARE THE DAILY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ADOPTED BY PRINCIPALS IN THE RURAL CONTEXT? AND TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES MANIFEST AWARENESS OF WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM 21ST CENTURY PRINCIPALS?

Five leadership practices that are adopted by principals were revealed in the study. They are; the performance of management tasks, inclusion of teachers in planning and decisions of the school, parental involvement, maintaining school discipline as well as harming instructional time.

Literature identified requirements and expectations of principals as leaders of schools in the 21st Century. Among those expectations, there are theories of instructional leadership, distributed leadership and transformational leadership as discussed in chapter two. The theory of instructional leadership puts emphasis on the principals of the 21st Century as a leader of instruction. One that understands instruction, curriculum and various other issues that relate directly to teaching and learning. The Wallace Foundation (2013) suggests that an instructional leader is one who shapes a vision for the school, creates a conducive environment for teaching and learning, a professional developer who motivates and cultivates leadership in their subordinates as well as managing people and processes of the school.

The theory of distributed leadership is in line with the CLT framework as both put emphases on members of the organisation working together to solve challenges of the 21st Century and achieve organisational goals (Uhl-Bien, 2007). The basis of this theory is that there is no single leader in 21st Century organisations as different members have different roles to play that lead to success or failure (Spillane, 2006). Also explored in literature was the theory of transformational leadership in which the leader of the organisation has a role of motivating the members to work hard, to see the organisation as theirs and work hard to ensure that organisational goals are met. The transformational leader influences the subordinates to think more about shared goals than their individual goals, therefore benefitting the organisation. In the CLT the concept of self-similarity (Chan, 2001) was also discussed. Within this concept, members of an organisation identify themselves as one within the organisation. The resources gathered, the efforts put and the collaborations are all directed at meeting the needs of the organisation and thriving as a group.

The findings of this research question suggest both an agreement with literature and a contradiction. This could mean that some of the findings were revealed to agree with literature while others did not. Principals understand the importance of performing management tasks

such as planning and monitoring as a way of keeping their schools in order, thus creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Further, principals see value in maintaining discipline for both teachers and learners. This view supports the suggestion in literature that principals of the 21st Century have a role to play in creating a conducive environment. The maintenance of discipline for teachers by ensuring that they are in classes and teaching shows that principals understand the importance of instructional time.

Further, principals also see value in including different stakeholders in the processes of the school. They included teachers in planning and decisions that relate to instruction and included parents in matters relating to discipline and therefore, showing evidence of distributed leadership. However, two issues emerged that proved a weakness in the roles of the principals as school leaders of the 21st Century in the rural context. The use of parental involvement was revealed to be limited to discipline while many other ways in which parents may be used for, were not evident. The CLT framework suggests that organisational challenges, such as lack of resources as in the schools, are challenges that should be dealt with through the collaboration of different members of the organisation. In schools, this should include parents. Therefore, principals lack the awareness on how they should get parents involved in helping with solutions for the various challenges that are experienced within the rural context. Further, the findings revealed that principals, in their efforts to maintain the discipline in their schools, disrupt instructional time. Learners are often taken out of classes for extended periods in order to be reprimanded, sent home to call parents or become witnesses in brawls, thus missing out on learning. This finding contradicts literature that principals in their instructional leadership roles should protect instructional time, by not only ensuring that teachers are in class teaching but also ensuring that they do not remove learners from classes unnecessarily or for long periods.

What the findings reveal about the extent to which daily leadership practices manifest awareness of requirements of 21st Century principals is that, principals have some areas that reveal an understanding of the requirements of their roles while still lacking in others.

- How do principals address daily leadership challenges that come with the rural context and the 21st Century?

6.3.2 HOW DO PRINCIPALS ADDRESS LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES THAT COME WITH THE RURAL CONTEXT AND THE 21ST CENTURY?

Literature identified several factors that stand in the way of quality teaching and learning in the rural context. In the South African context, the main challenge that is faced by schools and principals in the rural context is the lack of proper infrastructure and resources as well as the shortage of qualified teachers (Du Plessis, 2014). Further, literature also identified lack of support by the Department of Basic Education as one of the main challenges. In terms of revealing what the challenges are, the study did not deviate much from what was known in literature. The schools are challenged by poor infrastructure, which leads to inadequate security, shortage of teachers, lack of adequate parental involvement and lack of support from the DBE. One finding that was discovered in the study was the issue of substance abuse in the schools that threaten the orderliness of the schools and leads to principals spending a lot of time on the issue.

The strategies used by principals to address the challenges include getting relevant stakeholders involved. The Department of Basic Education is often engaged in many of the challenges, the police are engaged when it comes to criminal matters, parents are involved through meetings and personal calls to the school to discuss discipline. What these findings reveal is that principals understand that in the 21st Century, the organisation does not have one main role player but there are parents, teachers, the department and the community in the form of the police that are available to help them deal with their challenges. Therefore, these findings do not contradict literature on what the principal should be doing in the face of challenges.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.4.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education

The findings of the study revealed that principals working in the rural context face major challenges in their roles, one of them being the lack of support from the DBE. Principals shared various stories of complaints they have lodged with the department and yet received no help. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that the department should provide more support to schools by working with them to find solutions. It is also clear that there is lack of transparency on steps taken to assist schools. It is also recommended that where immediate solutions are not possible, schools be notified of progress made regarding their complaints. For instance, the issue of dilapidated mobile classrooms in one school, which poses a danger to

learners and everyone else in the school, has not been resolved in a long time nor has there been any communication about it, therefore proving lack of transparency.

Further, based on the findings that principals are unaware of their roles as school leaders of the 21st Century, it is recommended that the department should provide adequate training to address this issue. Principals should be trained on how to meet the standards stipulated in the Policy on South African Standards for Principals (DBE, 2015).

In addition, the issue of drugs in the schools also pose many dangers for everyone in the schools and is not an issue schools that should be expected to deal with, on their own. There is a need for intervention by the department regarding this. I therefore recommend that once statistics have been taken as they have in all schools in the study, steps should be taken to solve this problem. Due to the prevalence of these issues, it is recommended that a representative be appointed for the sole purpose of assisting schools with drug problems. That way this epidemic could receive the attention it urgently requires.

6.4.2 Recommendations to the school principals and others in similar contexts

Based on the findings that principals are not fully aware of what their 21st Century roles in schools are supposed to be, I recommend the following:

- Life-long learning
- Partnerships
- Utilising parent involvement
- Distributed leadership

6.4.2.1 Life-long learning

There is a growing body of literature which suggests that, to be a successful leader in a time that is rapidly changing; one must always be abreast with the changes. It is suggested that to achieve this, one must be a life-long learner and always look for opportunities to learn and improve their knowledge. Enrolling in post-graduate studies on leadership is one of the ways to achieve this. However, taking in to account the fact that many principals complain of a lack of time, enrolling for short courses can be another way of ensuring that even without a lot of spare time, one is still aware of what is going on in the 21st Century leadership.

6.4.2.2 Partnerships

Partnerships in 21st Century organisations are vital. First, with parents and school communities who are part of the interacting agents of the school system. Where possible, the researcher recommends that principals form partnerships with other principals in urban areas nearer to them in order to share knowledge. Further, forming partnerships with colleges and universities near the school has worked well for one of the participants in the study. I therefore recommend that principals should find higher learning institutions that are willing to partner and get involved with them. Further, it is recommended that principals research about a programme called Partnerships for Possibilities and get involved in it. This programme encourages business leaders and principals to work together in improving their schools. There are also various courses and workshops that are provided within the programme and will be beneficial to principals. Within the programme, there is emphasis on quality education, improving school environment and encouraging engagements between parents and teachers. These are the roles that the study has established and they are important in leading 21st Century schools, therefore principals stand to gain from this.

6.4.2.3 Utilising parent involvement

The study revealed that parents in the rural context are reluctant to get involved in schools. Further, it has also revealed that principals do not utilise parental involvement wisely. It is therefore recommended that schools establish parental involvement committees. This committee should comprise of SGB members and teachers. The role of the committee should be to set up structures and opportunities to get parents to be more involved in the school. The role of the principal should be to ensure that they encourage and work with the committee in identifying those opportunities where parents can be involved. Parents who have skills or knowledge pertaining to a certain problem in the school can be identified and asked to help. For instance, a police officer who is a parent in the school can give a talk about the dangers of drugs. Fund raising events can also be organised and involve parents in order to assist with the issue of the shortage of resources.

6.4.2.4 Distributed leadership

The findings revealed that the level with which principals delegate and interact with teachers in decisions-making processes at the school is limited. It is therefore recommended that principals empower their teachers by working closely with them to find solutions for various challenges in the school. Getting teachers in various committees that are aimed at improving

the school is one way of empowering them and giving them leadership roles within the school. As already suggested, one of the committees that should be established and led by teachers is the parent involvement committee. Based on the needs of the individual schools, other committees should be established and led by teachers.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The study was conducted in one district of the Limpopo Province, using only five participants. Thus, the researcher recommends that a study on the same topic be explored on a larger scale. The perspectives of the parents on what their role is in the school as it relates to processes and decisions of the school were also not heard in this study, therefore it is further recommended that a study be conducted that allows the voices of parents and other stakeholders to be heard.

6.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Numerous studies have been conducted on challenges in school leadership within the South African context as well as others on the challenges schools in rural contexts face due to the lack of resources. However, when the researcher was doing the literature review, she discovered that studies combining the rural context, 21st Century expectations and the principal's roles from their own perspectives were scarce. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that this study could shed insight into how principals see themselves as leaders of the 21st Century in a challenging context. Further, the study exposed a challenge in schools that are situated in the rural areas that so far have not received the attention they deserve, that being the issue of substance abuse among learners.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to explore the daily leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context within the 21st Century. The daily leadership practices adopted could shed light into the extent to which they understand the requirements and expectations of the role of the principals in the 21st Century. Furthermore, the study also aimed to understand the challenges experienced by principals in this context as well as how they have addressed them. The ways in which they address the issues could also shed light into the awareness of their roles within the 21st Century. The findings of the study revealed that principals have some awareness of what the requirements of their roles are supposed to be as leaders, while in other areas they lacked the full awareness.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

PO BOX 299

MMAKGODU

0779

10 July 2016

The principal

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN THE SCHOOL

I S.S Maifala, a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, hereby request permission to conduct a research study in your school. I intend to interview the principal about his/her roles in a study titled “Leading 21 st Century Schools: An exploratory case study of leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context.” The purpose of the study is to explore the leadership practices you adopt on a daily basis as well as how these practices manifest awareness of what is required from you as school leaders of the 21st century.

Data collected will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed for any other purpose except for the study. The name of the school will never be showed and mentioned in any manner, instead pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants.

For further inquiries in this regard, kindly contact my supervisor, Dr P. Myende at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (031- 260 2054).

Thanking you in advance.

.....

Selaelo Maifala

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

PO BOX 299

MMAKGODU

0779

10 July 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I S.S Maifala, a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, hereby request you as a principal of the school to be a participant in a research study to be conducted in the school. The study is titled “**Leading 21st Century Schools: An exploratory case study of leadership practices adopted by principals in the rural context.**” The purpose of the study is to explore the leadership practices you adopt on a daily basis as well as how these practices manifest awareness of what is required from you as school leaders of the 21st century.

I have requested permission from the Department of Basic Education to carry out the research in the province and use principals as participants should they wish. If you agree to take part in the study you will be interviewed once and observed for a period of one week. Data collected will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed for any other purpose except for the study. Your name will never be mentioned and showed in any manner, instead pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of all participants.

For further enquiries in this regard, kindly contact my supervisor, Dr P. Myende at the University of Kwazulu-Natal at (031- 260 2054).

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Selaelo Maifala

APPENDIX C : INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Research participation

04 August 2016

I, MASHOENE ND (full name of participant) Principal of
KGAKOA SEN-SEC (full name of school), hereby give my permission to
be a participant in a Masters' study conducted by Selaelo Maifala under the topic of "Leading
schools in the 21st century: An exploratory case study of principals' meanings and understandings
of their leadership roles in the context of rurality".

Signed



Date

5.08.2016

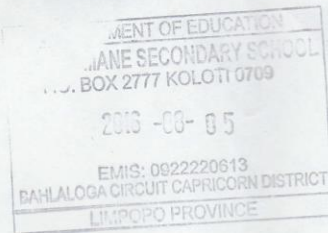
Research participation

04 August 2016

I, MOLOTO MOJA BENJAMIN (full name of participant) Principal of
MAMOLEMANE SEC-SCHOOL (full name of school), hereby give my permission to
be a participant in a Masters' study conducted by Selaelo Maifala under the topic of "Leading
schools in the 21st century: An exploratory case study of principals' meanings and understandings
of their leadership roles in the context of rurality".

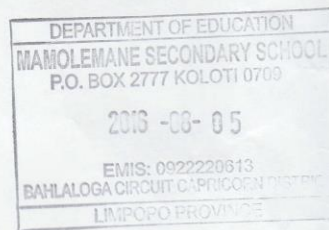
Signed

M. Maifala



Date

05/08/2016

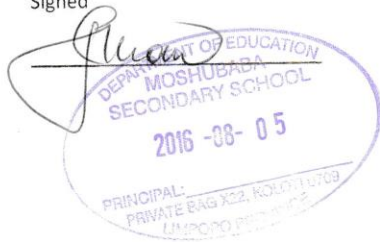


Research participation

04 August 2016

I Molekane HT (full name of participant) Principal of
MOSHUBABA (full name of school), hereby give my permission to
be a participant in a Masters' study conducted by Selaelo Maifala under the topic of "Leading
schools in the 21st century: An exploratory case study of principals' meanings and understandings
of their leadership roles in the context of rurality".

Signed



Date

05/8/2016

Research participation

04 August 2016

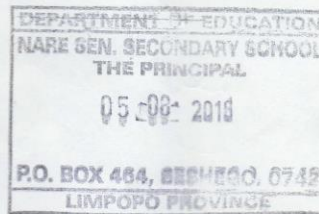
Mathatho Harrison (full name of participant) Principal of
Nare Senior Secondary (full name of school), hereby give my permission to
be a participant in a Masters' study conducted by Selaelo Maifala under the topic of "Leading
schools in the 21st century: An exploratory case study of principals' meanings and understandings
of their leadership roles in the context of rurality".

Signed



Date

05/08/2016



Research participation

04 August 2016

I, Phaleng m.A (full name of participant) Principal of
Mmamafa sec school (full name of school), hereby give my permission to
be a participant in a Masters' study conducted by Selaelo Maifala under the topic of "Leading
schools in the 21st century: An exploratory case study of principals' meanings and understandings
of their leadership roles in the context of rurality".

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MMAMAFA SECONDARY SCHOOL
2016 -08- 05
P.O. BOX 730, LADANNA, 0704
LIMPOPO PROVINCE

Signed

M.A. Phaleng (m.A)

Date

05/08/2016

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Introduction by researcher to participant
 2. Signing of consent form
 3. Credentials of the participant (qualifications, teaching experience, principalship experience)
 4. Interview questions
 - 4.1. What are your daily leadership practices in the school?
 - 4.2. How much time do you devote to each of these tasks?
 - 4.3 Out of all these roles, which do you consider the most important?
 - 4.4. How much do you think the performance of the school is linked to your leadership?
 - 4.5 What challenges do you encounter that constrain your leadership role?
 - 4.6. Which challenges do you think are related to the rural context?
 - 4.7 What kind of support do you get from the department of education in your leadership roles?
 - 4.1.8 What kind of support do you require that they are failing/unable to provide?
 5. The participant is free to share and discuss anything that may not have been covered in the questions and they feel is relevant.
- End of interviews

APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

1. Observation times: from 07:00 hours to end of day (when principal leaves school).
2. Number of days observing: minimum of three per school, more will be arranged as needed to collect more data.
3. Questions guiding the observation:
 - 3.1 How do principals spend their day in the school?
 - 3.2 Do they have a routine? What is that routine?
 - 3.3 How do they interact with teachers?
 - 3.4 What type how do they interact with learners?
 - 3.5 What kind of issues and possible challenges do they deal with in their position?

**APPENDIX F: LETTER TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM DEPARTMENT OF
BASIC EDUCATION**

PO BOX 299
MMAKGODU
0779
07 July 2016

Head of Department: Education

Application to conduct a research study in the Limpopo province.

My name is Selaelo Sylvia Maifala, a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I hereby request your permission to conduct a research study in five schools in the department of education in the Limpopo province. The title of the research is **“Leading schools in the 21st century: An exploratory case study of principals’ meanings and understandings of their leadership roles in the context of rurality.”**

I further request your permission to conduct interviews with the principals of these five schools. The interviews will be conducted outside school contact time.

For further enquiries in this regard, kindly contact my supervisor, Dr P. Myende at the University of Kwazulu-Natal at (031- 260 2054).

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Selaelo Maifala

APPENDIX G: DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION LETTER



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ref: 2/2/2 Eng: MC Makola PhD Tel No: 015 290 9448 E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

Maifala S
PO BOX 299
MMAKGODU
0779

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research has been approved. Topic of the research proposal: "LEADING SCHOOLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' MEANINGS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE CONTEXT OF RURALITY"
3. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
 - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with the Circuit Office and the schools concerned.
 - 3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.
 - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the fourth term.

Request for permission to Conduct Research: Maifala S

CONFIDENTIAL

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

- 3.5 During the study, applicable research ethics should be adhered to; in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
- 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.
- 4 Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
- 5 The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes.



MUTHEIWANA NB
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT (ACTING)

08/07/16

DATE

Request for permission to Conduct Research: Maifala S

CONFIDENTIAL

APPENDIX H: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT

Pho Z

Editing Services

10 Kudu Heights
5 Gwai Place
Faerie Glen
Pretoria
0081

Email: tzengele@unisa.ac.za
Cell: 084 602 8634

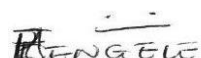
05 April 2017

DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT

I declare that I have edited and proofread the Master of Education Dissertation entitled: **LEADING 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ADOPTED BY PRINCIPALS IN THE RURAL CONTEXT.** by Ms S Maifala.

My involvement was restricted to language editing, proofreading, sentence structure, sentence completeness, sentence rewriting, consistency, referencing style, editing of headings and captions. I did not do structural re-writing of the content. Kindly note that the manuscript was formatted as per agreement with the client. No responsibility is taken for any occurrences of plagiarism, which may not be obvious to the editor. The client is responsible for the quality and accuracy of the final submission.

Sincerely,


ZENGELE

Prof VT Zengele (B.A., B.Ed. (Hons), PGDE, M.Ed., D.Ed.)
Associate Member, Professional Editors Group

Professional
EDITORS 
Group

APPENDIX I: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

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