MANAGEMENT OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THREE MULTI-GRADE PRIMARY SCHOOLS: PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES

by

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DECLARATIONOF ORIGINALITY AND STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

Signed: _____

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STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

As the Candidate's Supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Rural multi-grade schools are mostly characterised by poor socio-economic background and cultural context. Teaching all seven learning areas to three or four grades in a single classroom simultaneously influence teaching skills and expertise of the principal and school management. The study sought to identify all barriers experienced by principals in managing and developing skills in rural multi-grade schools classrooms. The principal is also an educator in a two to three teacher school. The study sought to bring understanding in the management of such schools and the implementation of curriculum policy. Principals of rural multi-grade schools seem to be different in the manner they manage effective teaching.

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12 August 2015

Mrs PNP Zuma 212556664
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Zuma

Protocol reference number: HSS/0685/015M
Project title: Managing Performance and Appraisal in farm multi-grade schools: Principal and Educators perspective

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 9 June 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

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

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

Professor Urmilla Bob (University Dean Of Research)
On Behalf of Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr TT Bhengu
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my daughter Awande, my sons Thabani, Thandolwen-kosi(Tundu) and Bandile(Bandi-bandi). This work must serve as a stepping stone in inspiring you to greater academicheights. Take this baton and run with it.

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I would like to acknowledge the people who have been an inspiration and a pillar of strength in making this study a success.

I thank God the Almighty for giving me strength and courage to realise this dream. *We take our positions through prayer for God to fight our battles. (2 Chronicles 20vs17)*

I thank and acknowledge the unending support of my husband Mduduzi: Nxamalala thank you so much for being there for me at all times. My children Thabani, Awande, Thandolwenkosi and Bandile, your support and understanding kept me focused at all times. This study would not have been a success without the prayers of my mother Lungile (MaMdlalose) and my late father Philton Dube who mentored me throughout my schooling years. If it was possible in the late 80's for my father to complete a Master's degree, nothing could stand on my way .I am grateful to all members of my family.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CMGE	Centre for Multi-grade Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
PPN	Post Provisioning Norm
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SEM	Superintended Education Management
SMT	School Management Team

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Multi-grade teaching can be regarded as the optimum strategy and practice to reverse the negative trends in rural education and to enable access, equity and quality of education in previously neglected areas (Taole, 2014). This study sought to gain an understanding about the management of effective teaching and learning in three multi-grade primary schools situated on the rural outskirts of Pietermaritzburg within uMgungundlovu District. There are many issues that influence the extent to which teaching and learning can be regarded as effective or not. According to Little(2004), some of these issues include class size, organization of learners, curriculum provision, clustering, teaching strategies, resources, assessment, learner enrolment, educator training, education policy, legislation, parental community and teacher qualification reflect in the quality of teaching and learning. The role played by the principal as the educator and manager in ensuring that there is effective teaching and learning in the school is the focus of the study. In view of what this study sought to achieve, this chapter introduces the study and also the first chapter of the study. Among other things, this chapter discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, the focus and purpose of the study, the rationale for the study, research questions, the significance of the study, as well as the key concepts that underpin the study. Some of the key concepts that underpin this study include multi-grade school, multi-grade classroom, rurality, curriculum, methodology, as well as the theoretical framework. The chapter ends with the presentation of the structure of the dissertation and the chapter summary.

1.2 Background to the study

A third of South African schools use multi-grade teaching and learning (Joubert 2010). According to the Centre for Multi-Grade Education (2009), eight million learners living in rural areas are affected by multi-grade teaching phenomenon.Most of these schools are primary schools. Unfortunately, multi-grade schools do not utilise any specially adopted curriculum that accom-

modates their peculiar circumstances. Therefore, the way in which the curriculum is delivered is similar to any other school which is not multi-grade. The absence of recognition of multi-grade schools and multi-grade teaching has been studied by Joubert (2010).This particular scholar states that policy documents of South African Department of Education donot mention multi-grade schools. Similarly, the curriculum documents, the learning materials and other teacher training programs only focus on monograde schools and exclude multi-grade schools. By making such an omission, it seems as though various policy documents contradicts and ignore the provisions of the South African Schools Act, No.84 of 1996 which stipulates that education is fundamentally about assuring access, permanence and quality learning for all children particularly for disadvantaged poor societies (Republic of South Africa, 1996). In terms of curriculum and resource provision, the policy document seems to be catering for learners in the monograde schools and not for all learners in all types of schools.

According to the principles of the (RNCS) Revised National Curriculum Statement, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) which followed the RNCS, the curriculum must be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality and age (Department of Education ,2004).These policy documents further stipulate that special educational needs must be addressed in the educators' design and development of the appropriate learning programs. Resource material supplied to multi-grade schools do not seem to be specifically designed for multi-grade learning programs. The deployment of the school management teams (SMT), in particular the school principal who is the main focus of this study, does not seem to ensure that effective teaching and learning can happen in multi-grade schools. Examples can be drawn from the fact that the allocation of resources follows the same formula; time allocation for teacher- learner contact hours is the same for both multi-grade and monograde classroom. According to Taole (2014), this requirement places teachers in a multi-grade teaching context under severe pressure. Taole (2014) further argues that there is no time available for teachers to design such curricular and re-design national requirements so that the needs of multi-grade classrooms can be met. Brown (2008) questions the wisdom of applying a single grade national teaching syllabus in the multi-grade teaching situation which creates problems for multi-grade teaching.

The assessment outcomes and standards set in Annual National Assessment (ANA) seem to be across the board. It does not accommodate various learners with different needs. I think effective teaching and learning is compromised by the time that the multi-grade educators have available to teach all learning areas for three to four grades in a classroom. To make a bad situation worse, school principals in multi-grade schools have to do teaching on full time basis and also perform management responsibilities. These like any other school principal, are expected to supervise other teachers teach and also to have some time to teach, depending on the size of the school. This becomes difficult if not impossible to devote 100% of their time to teaching and also to management. Evidently, one of these two important activities is bond to suffer. The NCS and RNCS before it, envisage a learner that is developed to the full potential; a learner that is literate, confident, multi-skilled, and compassionate and has the ability to participate critically in society. In the context of the background that is provided in this section, the study sought to understand how school principals of multi-grade schools manage classroom activities in such a manner that the end product remains the one highlighted in the previous sentence.

It seems that the main focus of education is solely on monograde education despite the fact that multi-grade teaching is a reality in rural areas (Brown, 2008). It seems that the setting of multi-grade schooling is completely neglected. Policies implemented in schools need to take into account the importance of teaching and learning in relation to the school environment according to (Diamond, 2006). Multi-grade schools utilise policy documents designed for 'normal' or monograde schools but are implemented by one teacher per grade, which also includes the principals in many instances. Many grades in the classroom, requiring different learning outcomes and assessment standards to be achieved by all learners seem to be a challenge in multi grade type of schools. This study is based on the assumption that it is a challenge to teach many grades in the same classroom, and that such challenges are compounded by the fact that even the school principal does not usually have space to contribute to the alleviation of such challenges. Hence, there is a need to understand how they experience working within such conditions.

Christie (2010) perceives effective teaching and learning as being limited in terms of management by the principals. He argues that there is an idealised situation which he refers to as a

dream school and actual practices in the manner schools are managed. I think the main requirements for developing effective teaching and learning in schools is sound classroom practice from specialist educators. Due to the differences in school environments, it seems as not all schools offer curriculum in the same manner. The South African Standards for School Leaderships mentions that, the core purpose of a principal is to provide leadership and management in all areas of the school to enable the creation and support of conditions under which high teaching and learning takes place. I think school principals must be continually trained to assist them with the management of various contextual issues. Fleisch (2008) alludes to the fact that the classroom is the major source of crisis in primary schools. He further states that ineffective teaching methods and weak subject knowledge contribute to poor quality teaching. Principals of multi-grade schools seem to have less skills and technique of managing mixed age classrooms.

According to the Post Provisioning Norm (PPN), the number of learners in rural schools does not qualify the school for more than the stipulated number of the teachers.The number of educators and learners in rural schools creates the arrangement of mixed–age classrooms. The primary task of the principal is to ensure that teaching and learning takes place (Kruger, 2003). It is against this background that this study has an interest to understand the principals' strategies, challenges and experiences on managing rural multi-grade primary schools.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Thurlow (2003) alludes to the fact that the primary purpose of education management is to constantly improve the quality of teaching and learning. Thurlow's (2003) view is also shared by Diamond (2013) who argues that the quality of education is embedded in all classroom activities. To ensure that effective teaching occurs in the classroom, leadership and management in the school is important. To emphasise this point, Christie (2010) highlights the role that principals have to play, and argues that principals of schools are required to prioritise all five key result areaswhich are:leading and managing the learning school, assuring quality and securing accountability, developing and empowering self and others and managing the school as an organisation and working with and for community and fifteen core management criteria. Effectiveness of teaching and learning can be linked to the number of learner each teacher has to face. There is a complex relationship between the enrolled learners the school has and the number of teaching posts that are allocated to each school. The Department of Education uses a formula stated in the

Post Provisioning Norm (PPN). This formula works negatively for schools with very low learner enrolment such as those located in the farms or rural areas with a sparsely distributed population.

The enrolment of learners in rural schools more especially rural farm schools can be as low as one hundred learners in a school. The location of the school in low population density has few learners enrolling in the school. Such schools qualify for a stipulated number of educators according to the enrolment and not according to the number of grades that must be taught. Little (2004) confirms that schools in which the number of learners admitted to a class exceed official norms on class size, necessitating the combination of some learners from one class grade with learners from another grade. A combination of grades in single classroom constitutes what is called a multi-grade classroom. This is the notion of multi-grade classroom that is used in this dissertation. To cope with this phenomenon of multi-grade classroom, educator must recognise the heterogeneous grouping and meet the demands of the new strategies, different from those for a single -grade teaching (Taole, 2010).

It seems to be a challenge to the educator to facilitate and monitor development in such circumstances. This situation also applies to school principals as they operate as full time teachers and principals at the same time. The question: what management strategies do these principals employ in order to ensure effective teaching and learning? The main question driving this study is about how do such principals experience working within such hostile environments?Anecdotal evidence suggests that expectations in terms of policies such as NCS do not seem to be realised. For examples, it is unimaginable that learners can be developed to their full potential; that learner that can effectively be made literate, confident, multi-skilled, compassionate and has the ability to participate critically in societywhen they have not been adequately exposed to an environment where effective teaching and learning can occur.

I think that learning activities in the classroom need to address different mental abilities. Diamond (2006) perceives effective teaching and learning as the ability to engage the learner in learning strategies and practices that promote active engagement, independence and autonomy. The scholar further argues that the implementation of the curriculum with limited resources is challenging to achieve effective teaching and learning. It is the interest of this study to under-

stand the concepts underpinning the management of effective teaching and learning in the context of rural multi-grade primary schools. Day (2000) cited in Harris (2005) alludes that principals are faced with complex reform paradoxes and tensions like the new imposed curriculum which reduces the educators abilities to determine and act upon the student needs. I think that multi-grade schools principals are faced with the worst case scenarios in terms of curriculum adaptations and reform. I think that the challenge faced by such school principals redefines equal and quality education for all learners.

1.4. Purpose of the study

According to Hallinger (2003), the main predictor of learning outcomes remains the socio-economic context in which both the school and the learners are situated. The role that principals do and should play has been extensively researched even here in South Africa like Christie (2010) who stipulates the core responsibilities of the principal. Kruger (2003) who views instructional leadership and its impact on the culture of teaching and learning who stipulates the core responsibilities of the principal. This study sought to gain some insights about school principal's experiences of managing teaching and learning in multi-grade teaching context. In addition, the study also explored how teaching all seven learning areas to three or four grades in single classroom simultaneously influence growing skills and expertise of the principal and the educator. The study sought to identify some of the barriers experienced by principals in managing and developing skills in teaching and learning under such classrooms. It intends to understand how principals of rural multi-grade schools manage quality teaching and learning. The study will view the integration of classroom learning activities, support, monitoring and assessment. Harris (2005) views principals as instructional leaders who should be more focused on being ambassadors of teaching and learning.

1.5 Rationale for the study

Perceptions of multi-grade educators regarding teaching in South Africa are that it is demanding and more complex than monograde (Joubert, 2010). It highlights that both monograde and multi-grade schools are found in rural areas and also that most rural schools are found in remote areas away from the towns and are located deep in communities that are affected by seriously poor socio-economic conditions. Taole (2014) states that educator's feel they are isolated and neglected.

Du Plessis (2014) highlights that due to isolation, student teachers from universities never choose such schools to do practice teaching. Stoll and Reynolds (1997), cited in Middlewood(1995) recognise the enormity of socio-economic and cultural contexts as specific factors that generate improvement for particular schools. I think that contextual issues such as the ones cited above can negatively affect education offered in farm schools. On this issue, Thrupp (1999) states that required outcomes can be negatively and significantly affected by factors defining the school.

Research shows that the rural nature of these challenges seems to be neglected. A few countries around the world give multi-grade schools the attention it deserves like India and Tanzania.There seems to be lack of knowledge and understanding of what teaching and learning entails in such schools and the kind of support that they require. The experiences I had as a principal and educator of a multi-grade school is that there extremely inadequate time to achieve all the learning outcomes and the assessment standards for all learning areas for four grades in one class, in one year.

1.6 Significance of the study

Rural farm school children are categorised under the previously disadvantaged sector of the education community. According to Taole (2014), multi-grade teaching schools form the most neglected sector of the education system around the globe. She further argues that the manner of addressing and providing access to education for learners in remote areas is multi-grade teaching needs to be recognised and be given the attention it deserves. This study will draw attention of the reader to the rural contexts which remain a challenge for education change in South Africa. Joubert (2010) states that there is evidently a lack of political interest in the rural world and that rural people have no political voice thus they lose out. The study has the potential to share knowledge and understanding regarding the experiences of principals in rural areas of South Africa of their unique contextual factors that might hinder effective teaching and learning. This issue has been acknowledged by scholars such as Joubert (2010)that most of the rural school learners lack skills and multi-grade schools do not seem to solve the illiteracy in rural communities. This study can inform researchers about how school principals that are affected by multi-grade school are coping or think the situation can be overcome.

1.7 Research questions

Core question

What are the school principal's experiences of effective teaching and managing multi-grade classrooms?

Subsidiary questions

1. What do school principals understand about effective teaching and learning?

2. What strategies do school principals utilise to monitor effective teaching and learning?

3. As principals and managers, what challenges do they encounter in teaching and managing multi-grade classrooms?

4. How do these challenges influence the management of teaching in multi-grade classroom?

1.8 Key concepts

The key concepts on focus in this study discussed are multi-grade school, rural, multilevel teaching and learning and curriculum.

1.8.1 Multi-grade school

According to Boonzaier (2008), a multi-grade school is a school with limited resourceswhere one teacher teaches all the learning areas to learners which are in two or more grades. Learnersare a combination of two or more grades in a single classroom. Some classrooms have a combination of grades in different phases. Learners in multi-grade classrooms are not taught in separate classrooms like in monograde classroom but they are mixed ages, mixed abilities and in different grades. They are all present in the same classroom with one educator (Du Plessis, 2014). It is the learner enrolment in a school that determines the formation of such classrooms. Strauss (1999) alludes to the fact that the majority of farm multi-grade schools do not enroll more than one hundred learners. The number of learners can be as low as nine learners for the whole school because of the scattered surrounding community.

1.8.2 Rural

In the context of this study, ruralrefers to those areas that are on the outskirts of towns and cities. Rural schools refer to those schools that are located in rural areas .Rurality in relation to schooling in the South African context is a termused to describe the availability or non-availability of resources and poorteaching and learning in the primary schools according to Joubert (2010. The isolating conditions of work and the poverty of the communities served by multi-grade schools reinforce teachers' negative attitude to the school (Ames, 2004).

1.8.3 Multi-level teaching and learning

Teaching of students or groups having different level of achievements in a class room by an educator at a same time is called multi-level teaching. In multi-level teaching, a teacher teaches the content to the learners of different learning levels or skills or abilities. All learners do not possess the same level of learning ability. As a result, a teacher applies appropriate approach, technique, and learning method to enhance the students' achievement skills. The assessment standards that must be attained through teaching and learning is not the same for each grade in the same classroom.

1.8.4 Curriculum

There is no specific curriculum and material resource for multi-grade schools. Principals and teachers do not have enough time to re-design national requirement to fit multi-grade context (Taole, 2010). Brown (2008) emphasises that the application of the single grade national teaching syllabus in the multi-grade situation creates challenges. Brown (2008)further emphasises the fact that a syllabus needs to be prepared specifically for multi-grade context.

1.9 The structure of the study

In this section, the structure of the whole dissertation is summarised.

Chapter One

This chapter provides an orientation to the study and gives the introduction of the study and the chapter. It discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, focus and purpose of the study, rationale, research questions, significance, research, key concepts in the study.

Chapter Two

This chapter reviews scholarly literature on the management of teaching and learning in rural multi-grade primary schools. This study forms part of a wider discourse around the issue multi-grade classroom, multi-grade schooling and its management challenges. The chapter also discusses the theory that frames the analysis of the study.

Chapter Three

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that was used to gather information that would address the research questions.

Chapter Four

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the data as it emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the three principals.

Chapter Five

This chapter presents the findings of the study but begins with the study summary. Recommendations are then drawn from the findings made.

1.11. Chapter summary

Chapter One has outlined the purpose of the study and the first chapter. It has then discussed the background of the study, statement of the problem, focus of the study, key research questions, the significance of the study, clarification of key concepts, and the structure of the paper. The next chapter will discuss the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study and provided details about the background to the study, the rationale for the study as well as the statement of the problem. Research questions and key concept that guide the study were also posed. This chapter reviews literature on multi-grade schooling, multi-grade classes and other related matters such as effective teaching and learning, particularly within the context of multi-grade teaching. The concept of farm multi-grade primary schooling and the role of school principals in managing multi-grade schools in the context of are also addressed. In addition, the literature is viewed to provide theoretical perspectives to the main question: What are the school principal's experiences of teaching and managing multi-grade classroom? Therefore, it aims at bringing a conversation among various scholars about the implementation of the curriculum provision policy. The emphasis is on rural multi-grade schools.

The chapter also provides a discussion about factors and notions of education which affect management of effective teaching and learning in rural schools. As part of literature review, this chapter pays special attention to the notion of multi-grade teaching, global practices and trends, multi-grade education in South Africa, `instructional leadership, the concept of effective teaching and learning, the management role of the principal, the educator, the learner, the curriculum, instructional resources, challenges of multi-grade education and parental involvement.The chapter then discusses the theoretical framework which provides a lens of viewing and understanding the issue of effective teaching and learning in the context of multi-grade schools in the rural farm setting.

2.2 Multi-grade teaching

According to McEwan (1998), the term multi-grade teaching is not universal but this scholar also acknowledges that it is a widespread practice which is not limited to any particular locality.Multi-grade teaching has been practised in developed and non-developed countries

(Boonzaaier, 2009). It refers to a setting where the teacher is responsible for teaching of different grade levels in the same classroom. It is a challenge to the educators to offer education which in the context of the rural settlement (Daniel, 2004). Multi-grade schools are mostly situated on farms. They have low number of learners formulating the school enrolment. Usually, there are two to three teachersin the whole school. Strauss (1999) alludes to the fact that the majority of farm multi-grade schools do not enroll more than one hundred learners. Learners are taught in groupings of different grades, constituting different mental abilities and ages in a single class-room with one teacher. The Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) which determines the number of ed-ucators in schools does not allow for the employment of more educators. Therefore, oneteacher is usually responsible for children of different grade levels at the same time (Joubert, 2004). He further identifies many terms in the literature that describe this set in teaching like combination of classes; and these include forced mixed-age classes and un- graded classes. Joubert (2004) further explains that these settings arise through necessity or pedagogic choice. I think that the number of learners in each grade, the classrooms available, teachers employed in the school compels the schools to embark on the combination of classes.

Rural multi-grade schools are located on different environmental settings of farms and villages (Boonzaaier, 2009). Most of such schools are primary schools which accommodate two groups of learners from Grade One to Grade Seven in only two classrooms. Sometimes, they have no accessibility to electricity, phone network, and have poor infrastructure and lack of knowledge (Little, 2005).

The existence of such schools indicates the significance in providing education in rural areas where a few educators have an interest to teach in such backgrounds. According to Birch and Lilly (1995), this type of teaching is not new in the history of education. Multi-grade teaching seems to be an old form of teaching in small schools. It is not a modern strategy for farm rural schools.Haingura (2014) confirms that each school has its meaning to multi-grade teaching which relates to its environmental background. Little (2006) specifies that understanding of the term multi-grade teaching differ in meaning from country to country, communities and contexts. Scholars collaboratively agree that this form of teaching draws real meaning from its environ-mental background.Haingura (2014) argues that the term can be referred to as combination class, composite class, vertically grouped class, family-grouped class, multi-aged class, consecutive

class and double class. I think that the variation in the usage of the term has significance to the different contextual issues of schools. Brown (2010) argues that multi-grade classroom has variations in age and differentiations in learners. In a single classroom there are different combinations according to grade, age and ability.Scholars seem to have similar meaning of the term multi-grade teaching. Hargreaves (2001) argues that the term multilevel fail to capture the actual meaning of the multi-grade class with the integrated curriculum. Little (1995) describes multi-grade as teaching learners of different grades, ages and abilities.

2.3 Global practices of Multi-grade Education

Boonzaaier (2009) argues that almost 30% of the classrooms worldwide are multi-grade. Multi-grade schools in Africa tend to show poor academic results, which gives a negative image about the quality of teaching and learning offered in these schools. Bennett (1980) confirms that even today there are still small village schools with two teachers and one of those is the principal in many countries across the world. Miller (1991) claims that there are many countries in Latin America and Asia which are achieving success with multi-grade teaching approaches.This means that multi-grade teaching does not necessary equate poor quality of teaching.Veenam (1996) presents statistics about different countries with multi-grade classrooms across the globe. India and Peru seem to have the highest percentage of the multi-grade classroom compared to other countries of the world. In 2000 a quarter portion of all the primary schools in England were classified as mixed year because two or more curriculum grades were being taught in the same classroom according to (Boonzaaier, 2009).In other countries the teacher- pupil ratio cause the formation of multi-grade classrooms as the school cannot allocate a teacher in each classroom.

Beukes (2006) views multi-grade education on a global scale as education that has minimal interest. According to Beukes (2006), very few publications mention these schools. They are usually treated as normal schools. They are seen as affordable, second rated such that no parents would like their children to go there. Parents have the right to choose the education environment for their children. Mouton (2003) further states that underdevelopment of such communities perpetuates more poverty. It reported in 1988, Australia had about 40% of schools in the Northern Territories had multi-grade classes. During the year 2000, it is reported that in England,almost 25% of all classes in primary education were classified as 'mixed year', which means that two or more curriculum grades were being taught by one teacher; 25% of all the learners were studying

in mixed year classes. In the context of India,about 80% of primary schools had two or three educators in 1996. Primary schools have five curriculum grades, which means that if learners are to do most of the prescribed school day, then some teachers must be responsible for two or more grades for some part of each day.

2.4 Multi-grade Education in South Africa

Little (2005) states that the circumstances facing the rural schools in South Africa arise through necessity rather than choice as it may be the case in other parts of the world. Schools in rural communities have special needs. South Africa is committed to quality education for all. I think that the challenge is the reality of different contextual factors facing rural multi-grade schools. Multi-grade schools are also referred to as forgotten schools (Boonzaier, 2009).This scholar further emphasises that multi-grade education is most prevalent in rural primary schools. These schools are situated in poverty stricken communities. There is low incidence of government support, minimal and inappropriate teaching resources and limited access to feeding schemes and school transport. The doors of learning and the culture of teaching has not yet become a reality for poor deprived communities. According to Joubert (2009), despite the growing number of education officials, they often ignore multi-grade schools.It seems there is lack of knowledge and less training in the departmental officials on this type of education.

Boonzaier (2009) states that ensuring Education for All (EFA) is an urgent task for the South African community.I think this task can be achieved by re-enforcing compulsory education policy.According to Juvane (2007), there is a low level of awareness among decision makers, of the impact of illiteracy in rural communities.One of the goals outlined by EFA is that all children with a special emphasis to girls and children in the difficult circumstances like schools in rural areas,have access to quality, free and compulsory education (Daniel, 2004). Interventions must be made to balance the differences and achieve the goals of education. Little (1995) suggests that linking schools with the community, which enable teachers to improve quality and relevance of education, is not happening in most multi-grade schools.

Juvane (2007) alludes to the fact that ,while multi-grade classes are a solution for educating rural people in African countries, the governments tend to focus on improving conventional schools, often leaving the development of multi-grade schools to local initiatives. It seems that farm own-

ers where most of these schools are situated have no interest in the education of learners. These schools thus tend to show poor results, which in turn give them a negative image. Multi-grade teaching now calls for a broader operational and technical definition to address problems and issues facing most educational systems (Juvane, 2006). Due to enrolment issues less, resources are invested in such institutions. These unique conditions therefore pose concern in this study which focuses on the provision of effective teaching and learning and its management. The availability of education is relatively difficult in rural areas where the population density is low and where schooling does not easily fit with the patterns of rural livelihood and the lifestyles (Daniel, 2004).

Mouton (2003) confirms that home background may have disadvantages such as the lack of parental interest in education, poverty, poor nutrition and the difference between home and school culture, and theymay form part of the challenges. The enrolment is more affected by long distances children walk to school under all weather conditions and unsafe circumstances. This study views learner in the classroom with the combination of many grades and learning as a problem to improve under such conditions. Learner absenteeism and drop out is very high. The educator's ability to manage the curriculum programme is hindered by the inflexibility of the curriculum. Multi-grade teaching refers to settings where the teacher is responsible for teaching children of different grade levels at the same time. Thomas (1992) alludes to the fact that multi-grade teaching encompasses teacher development, curriculum reform and language issues. Emphasising the extent of marginalisation that is suffered by multi-grade schools,Joubert (2010) argues that 30% of multi-grade schools in South Africa are left to fend for themselves. Joubert (2010) further argues that policy documents make no mention of multi-grade classrooms. This has implications for the manner in which such schools get support from the Department of Education. Joubert (2010) further emphasises the remoteness of these schools and the socio-economic conditions as contributory factors that engender negative attitudes among the educators. Learners in these schools are deprived by the places which they are born. Rural multi-grade learners end up being labourers in the farms. Du Plessis (2004) specifies that due the isolation student teachers from universities never choose such schools to practice teaching. This might exacerbate the marginalisation of multi-grade schools. I think that the combination of farm multi-grade schools to boarding establishments might be the option to offer better education for learners in the rural commu-

nities. Davids (2014) states that farm multi-grade schools are characterised by extreme disadvantages of inadequate facilities, absence of infrastructure and untrained teachers.

2.5 Effective Teaching and Learning

According to Joubert (2009), all African governments are committed not only to providing education to all learners but also to ensure that it is the best that the country can afford. Therefore Joubert (2009) suggests that multi-grade education must contribute to the global goal of quality for all. Quality of teaching and learning is a culmination of the organisation of learners, educators, the structure of the curriculum, quality and quantity of learning and teaching material and assessment (Little, 2004). This scholar further says that general issues of quality teaching arise in lesson preparation, teacher training and qualification. Little (2004) identifies the need for teachers to learn continuously to develop their knowledge and skills. It seems to be a challenge for an educator who has limited time to further the qualifications. I think that the educator who wishes to improve the professional qualification might be faced with the challenge of where to register since few institutions of higher learning offer or even recognise this type of teaching (Joubert, 2009).

Diamond (2006) argues that learning must be aimed at the individual learner's needs. Quality learning must develop intellectual, personal and social aspect of the learner. Educators in multi-grade classrooms are responsible for two to three grades. It seems as educators have limited time to address the individual ages, abilities and needs of the learners. Diamond (2006) argues that classroom activities must engage all learners of different grades. It is of interest in this study,that the educator has to design activities for each lesson that address all the grades in the classroom

In an ordinary monograde classroom set up, quality education is characterised by learners who engage in relationships of communication with each other for learning purposes and the mutual construction of knowledge and enhancement of learning activity (Diamond, 2006). I think that the enhancement of learning through communication and discussions might be ideal for such a classroom where the teacher sometimes shifts the focus to other grades. However,the learners in these classrooms are not in the same level of engaging in a productive discussion and the confidence to express themselves and report back about their previous knowledge, and what they have learned informally at home or their feelings. Diamond's (2006) chief goal of education which is

promotion of learner independence and autonomy seem to be a challenge to develop learners through teaching in rural multi-grade schools. These learners do not seem to possess technological devices like the cell phone, computers or network which engage them intellectually, socially and emotionally with the global knowledge and conversation. Diamond (2006) further states that teaching and learning should take into account what the learner knows already in order plan the next step.

Joubert (2010) states that the policy document of South African Department of Education make no mention of multi-grade schools. Curriculum, learning materials and teacher training programmes focus on monograde schools only. It seems that the practice in multi-grade schooling contradicts the spirit of the Schools Act which stipulates that education is fundamentally about assuring access, permanence and quality learning for all children particularly for disadvantaged poor societies (Republic of South Africa, 1996). In terms of curriculum and resource provision the policy document seems to be catering for learners in the monograde schools and not for all learners in all types of schools. According to the principles of the (RNCS) Revised National Curriculum Statement and the NCS, the curriculum must be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality and age. This policy document further stipulates that special educational needs must be addressed in the educators' design and development of the appropriate learning programme. However, Multi-grade schools do not get support from the departmental officials (Joubert, 2009). It seems to be a challenge to receive Equal Education for All (EFA) in multi-grade schools. I think there is lack of focus on such schools.

2.6 The principal and the management role

Christie (2010) argues that effective management is essential for the functioning of schools. This is more so in rural multi-grade schools which face a number of challenges that go with being a multi-grade institution and being rural. It has been emphasised by various scholars that school principal play a crucial role in ensuring the proper and effective functioning of the school (Harris, 2005; Bhengu &Mthembu, 2014). Scholars such as Coleman (2005), Christie (2010), and others suggest that the primary task and central purpose of the school is teaching and learning. However, Bush (2006) puts this issue into proper perspective by arguing that there is limited evidence of principals' instructional leadership. This is no contradiction with the previous argu-

ments made in this section. However, what this means is that the role that principals play is a supportive one wherein, they ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place. The implications thereof are that besides the actual teaching task of the principal, he or she has to ensure that all other stakeholders play their roles fully. This expectation puts even more pressures on the shoulder of the principal because, there is less staff to supervise, actually, in the context of multi-grade schools, the principal has to do much more than a principal in a monograde schools, mainly because this principal is expected to pay special focus to both teaching and supervision duties equally. Principals in multi-grade schools are also educators.

It seems as if the workload limits the principal to carry the instructional management role for the whole school. Sergiovanni (1998) refers to instructional leadership as pedagogical leadership. This scholar further argues that instructional leadership manifests itself in the social and academic development of the learner. Multi-grade schools are expected to have the same learner development and attainment according to action and learner performance. The impact of instruction on learner achievement and the quality of teaching and learning is the basic concern of this study. Harris (2005) confirms this view by arguing that instructional leadership influences teaching and learning. The principal who is accessible and visible in the school premises indicates support on the activities occurring in the school. Coleman (2005) alludes to the view that the key concerns of instructional leadership are the curriculum, teaching and learning, monitoring of learning.

Principals face a major challenge of creating the culture of teaching and learning (Kruger, 2003).The culture of teaching and learning is a way of delivering quality in the classroom. Chisholm and Vally (1996) identify the educators who have tension, low morale, demotivated and less desire to work as having the poor of culture of teaching and learning. It is the principal's instructional task to motivate and promote instructional climate (Kruger, 2003).The principal must manage educators in a motivational way by identifying good performance and acknowledging it.

2.7 The educator

Multi-grade teaching is a strategy to address teacher shortages in small remote school (Taole, 2014). Teachers in multi-grade classes teach all the grades and all the learning areas usually in

the same classroom. They travel long distances from their homes to school. There are no incentives they get for teaching in such areas (Boonzaier, 2009). This scholar refers to these educators as having the pedagogy of poverty. Educators are frustrated and poorly motivated. I think that are educators are negatively affected by the environmental and contextual background they work under. They carry the workload which they cannot complete over a period of one year. In this description of the educators and their hostile environment, I am including school principals who are the main focus of this study; they are negatively affected in just the same manner as other educators. Little (1995) confirms that educators who are not trained cannot comply with the challenge which multi-grade teachers are expected to work with. Little (1995) further states that educators lack time because they spend a lot of time preparing lesson plans. Some educators focus on some learning areas such as Languages, Numeracy, Science and Technology.

The multi-grade environment demands that teachers use creative ways of handling their classes. For instance, Stone (1994) argues that the key teaching strategy for multi-grade setting is the usage of a process approach to teaching. Learners must be treated as unique persons, with varying developmental and learning styles. The educator in the multi-grade class is overloaded with the number of issues. It seems that the needs of the learners in this set up are a challenge for the educator to address. Talking about some of the challenges faced by the teachers, Beukes (2006) for instance, argues that the gifted learners get bored easily and they need tasks that will challenge their minds. Beukes (2006) further states that it is difficult to keep track of the needs of learners of more than one grade simultaneously. Teachers must work hard in designing open-ended, divergent experiences in preparing learners for the vast range of developmental abilities (Stone, 1994). Some learners find it hard to be actively and meaningfully involved in the learning activities. Therefore, teachers should be aware of multiple intelligences, abilities and learning styles of learners (Beukes, 2006). Planning for multi-grade classroom must be appropriate. However, multi-grade teachers have no special training about how effective planning must be done in terms of their peculiar circumstance. Birch (1995) argues that the reasons for multi-grade teaching's continued disfavour should be attributed to the dominance of the present paradigm of schooling as encapsulated in the single-graded approach and ignores the realities of multi-grade classrooms.

Boonzaaier (2009) suggests that activity based learning might be more suitable for the teacher to use in the multi-grade classroom. The teacher can use the cards successfully in group learning, self-learning and peer group leaning. In a two-teacher school, the timetable must be followed effectively. Boonzaaier (2009) states that when the teacher handles one grade in a class, the other groups must be given group-work based activity. The gifted learners may get the opportunity to assist with monitoring the slow learners. The teaching and learning material are prepared by the educator in advance. The activity based learning approach seems to be the best that can be used by the multi-grade educator.However, in rural areas educators might find it challenging to implement due to their peculiar circumstances under which they operate. For instance, the time it takes to prepare for the lesson for the educator who has the administrative duties is limited. All educators in South Africa have had formal training in different approaches of delivering lessons in the multi-grade classroom (Joubert, 2004).In this ideal approach, group discussions should predominate in the multi-grade environment. Educator who has been trained to implement the approach in an effective manner remains trapped in workload.

2.8.1 Educator Qualification

Pre-service and in-service education and training for teachers is important for multi-grade educators (Little, 2005).I think continuous training can give support to the frustrated educator of the multi-grade classroom. Lingram (2007) and Burns (1997) argue that for multi-grade teachers to be effective in their teaching tasks, they must be better trained. There is a need for on-going professional development. Brown (2008) states that teacher programmes must not only focus on monograde teaching. Teachers experience un-favourable conditions which determine effectiveness in implementing the curriculum policy. Davids (2014) suggests that multi-grade teaching requires professional training in order for the teacher to cope with the challenges of coordinating learning in one class, execution of professional duties and adaptation of the monograde curriculum to be used effectively in the multi-grade set up. He further confirms that multi-grade teachers must be trained to create favourable teaching and learning environment.

2.8.2 Educator support

The education system seem to give inadequate attention to the proper functioning of rural schools by not filling the vacant posts, through the lack of physical facilities and lack of training

for supervisors of schools. Boonzaier (2009) further attests to the inattentiveness of education officials to the needs of such schools. It seems that most departmental officials have appropriate experience of handling and supporting monograde classroom but do not have adequate experience of doing the same to multi-grade classes. Similarly, they cannot give much assistance in classroom management, teaching strategies and the learning content in multi-grade scenarios. Boonzaaier (2009) further alludes to the fact that content workshops combine monograde and multi-grade schools. It seems that the departmental support system does not focus on these kinds of schools. The support material does not have information on multi-grade supervision, monitoring and evaluation but it is expected that officials have to ensure that the National Curriculum Statement is implemented. Curriculum advisors need to understand the background and the circumstances of the multi-grade schools. Thomas and Shaw (1997) state that support for multi-grade teachers in rural areas can be achieved by decentralising the education system with determined incentives and systems of accountability. I think that the accessibility of these schools is one of the hampering factors. Most are found in deep rural areas. Critical issues relating to multi-grade schools and rural education are not being addressed adequately (Boonzaaier, 2009).

Effective multi-grade teaching requires external support from the departmental officials (Davids, 2014).Official visits to such schools will expose the problems that educators encounter on a daily basis. Brown (2010) confirms that the school requires support from the departmental officials and the community where the school is located. I think that the Department of Education can support the educators by for example, paying the rural allowance, adopting the appropriate curriculum and teaching and learning resources which is not the case in South Africa. Schindler (1997) states that support can improve the quality of teaching and learning.

In India support is offered in a number of ways such as through funding, providing teaching material and employing educators (Schindler, 2007). The South African government employsteachers according to the number of learners and not the needs of the school. Taole (2014) attests to the isolationof multi-grade school and its context, the social issues, economic issues, cultural and the lifestyle of surrounding communities to unpack its pattern.The main understanding of the contextual and the geographical issues is how they affect the whole pattern of the school performance and its functionality. All training institutions in South Africa focus on monograde classes (Joubert, 2010), thus   it affects the patience and drive of an educator who has to learn how to

teach a unique classroom with more than one grade. It is interesting for this study to say that no external person who has never taught in the multi- grade classroom can fully understand the processes and dynamics of such unique organisations. It seems that the quality of teaching and learning is affected by factors surrounding the community.

Social reality of farm school educators in relation to the concepts mentioned above reveal their experiences and how that manifests itself in their teaching and the engagement with the learners. Support from external organisations, official resource centres and communication programmes are difficult to reach such areas that are far away from the towns. It seems that this perpetuates the isolation of these teachers. Thomas and Shaw (1997) recommend the creation of opportunities for multi-grade teachers. The creation of opportunities for multi-grade teachers to meet, exchange experiences and collect resources is also recommended in the literature (Thomas &Shaw, 1997).In rural outskirts communities of practice can hardly be formulated if the *status quo* remains. Training for pedagogical advisers in multi-grade teaching methods and materials is seen as essential for the provision of these support activities (Schindler, 1997).

The recent literature on multi-grade classes points to the importance of national policy in delivering effective multi-grade teaching (Schindler, 1997). Schindler (1997) recommended that the first step would be to persuade governments and legislators of the advantages of multi-grade schools. Drawing on the experiences of many developing countries. Thomas and Shaw (1997) recommends that there should be two stages in implementing a multi-grade programme. The first would be a pilot phase and then an expansion phase. In the expansion phase, national policy decisions are necessary regarding the creation of a decentralised administrative system; the provision of teacher training in multi-grade techniques, the recruitment and support of multi-grade teachers, curriculum adaption, and the development and allocation of resources to multi-grade schools. Teacher training and curriculum and materials development seem to be the two most important areas requiring national policy.

The support of school principals for multi-grade teachers ranges from ordinary advice on how to implement multi-grade teaching effectively, to staff development training in multi-grade teaching at school level or at cluster level (Haingura, 2014). Most of the support offered to multi-grade teachers is based on class visits coupled with positive feedback. For a two teacher school class visits seem to be a burden. They imply that the principal must neglect her class and spend

time in other classroom. School principals carry the responsibility and accountability to the Department of Education on multi-grade teaching and promoting the education standard in general.

2.9 The Curriculum

Policy documents of the South African Department of Education (DoE) make no mention of the multi-grade schools. (Joubert, 2010). Teaching and learning materials and educator training are all geared towards monograde classroom. Multi-grade schools use the same curriculum, conditions of service, national legislation and policies as other public schools in the country (Taole, 2014).This suggests that the curriculum is prepared for monograde schools context. Educators have to prepare and use teaching material like work schedules and assessment activities that practically suits monograde classroom. The time frames stipulated in the schedule cannot be attained when one educator has to teach two to four grades in a single lesson. They have to redesign the curriculum to fit their context (Brown, 2008). I think that educators battle to make teaching fit their contextual situation. Educators find it time consuming to simplify the curriculum and the lesson plan so that it fits more than one grade in a single classroom.Boonzaaire (2009), notes thatthe National Curriculum Statement (NCS) does notaccommodate teaching of more than one grade in one class. The application of a single grade teaching syllabus in multi-grade teaching situation creates challenges. The main problem arises with achieving the goals of each lesson.Taole (2014) further specifies that the syllabus is not structured for multi-grade and it places a heavier workload on educators as compared to single grade teachers. Multi-grade education is implemented by teachers who were trained for monograde teaching and learning.

Educators in multi-grade schools cannot manage their classrooms effectively and have no control of more than one grade during classrooms activities (Taole, 2014). Scholars such as Brown (2008), Joubert (2010) and Du Plessis (2011), to mention a few, collaboratively confirm that classroom management has many demands on the educator. They have to take full responsibility for effective management of everything that happens in the classroom. Boonzaaier (2009) confirms that curriculum implementation in rural setting is planned to be the same as urban schools. This scholar further suggests that the problems can be solved by providing children and teachers with teaching and learning resources specifically for multi-grade environment and train educators to deal with that environment. The current curriculum does not make provision for such schools. It is expected of a multi-grade teacher to complete all the assessment standards and the

learning outcomes as the monograde educator. I think that learners are compelled to learn the curriculum not in their grade if they are mixed together. Boonzaire (2009) further arguesthat the syllabus of a grade cannot be completed in a year. This scholar states that the curriculum of a grade lies between grades. It implies that the work schedules overlap over the years as it is a challenge to complete them over one year period. Miller (1991) confirms that one of the greatest difficulties in promoting multi-grade teaching is the inflexibility of grade-based curricular. In most small schools the teachers are required to cover all the material for any one year for all students enrolled for that year. Curriculum, learning materials and teacher training are issues which need to be viewed in the teaching and learning of such schools.

2.10 Learner and material–centred strategy

This study is about school principals' experiences of managing effective teaching and learning in the context of multi-grade schooling. It is therefore important that important issues such as curriculum delivery are addressed. Numerous scholars have highlighted the fact that teachers who work in multi-grade context were not trained to work in those contexts. We have also seen that currently, there is no effective support that adequately addresses issues of multi-grade teaching. Therefore, it is important we can learn from literature about how learners and materials can be integrated in a way that appropriately addresses individual learners' needs. This section focuses precisely on such issues; it deals with learner and material- centred strategies.

The curriculum is translated into self- study graded learning guides. Learners work through the material at their own speed with the support from the educator and structure assessment tasks. According to Colbert (1993), learning is constructed as involving a relationship between learner, learning materials and the teacher. Learners with low mental capabilities who require more the support the educator might find it hard to understand the subject content. Individuality of the learner in a mixed grade and differentiated age classroom is a challenge for the educator.

Joubert (2006) argues that specific changes must address the curriculum issue. Children in these schools must be part of the education system and not be marginalised by the curriculum which does not fit their situation. Hargreaves (2001) suggests that the crucial issue is that the curriculum must be relevant to the rural people's needs. Adaption of the curriculum must recognise that

pupils are developing at different rates and the focus must be on learner outcome rather than content achievement. It is unfortunate learners in multi-grade learners are not exposed to all the content in their grade due to limited time. Juvane (2007) argues that educators must be trained to be facilitators and not keepers of knowledge. If learners can take responsibility of the subject matter it will reduce the workload of the teacher who divides his attention amongst all the grades in the classroom.

Rowley (1992) argues that the curriculum must be flexible given the nature of multi-grade teaching. This scholar further states that the key concept of an ideal model of a multi-grade classroom is flexibility. It seems that the educator must assess the grouping in the classroom to be able to present the learning content in a manner that will address the heterogeneity in the class. Miller (1991) confirms that in most small multi-grade classes or schools the educators are required to cover all the material for any one year for all the learners enrolled for that year.

Thomas (1992) identifies the concept of integration as crucial in dealing with the multi-grade curriculum. Thomas (1992) stresses the integration in multi-grade teaching which involves pupils from different grade levels and competencies. It also involves integration of the subjects such as science and mathematics. Little (2001) confirms that educators face a challenge in integrating some of the learning areas

Joubert (2005) alludes to the fact that the structure of the curriculum is the same for both urban and rural areas. The focus of this study is on the principals' experiences of how they manage effective teaching and learning in the multi-grade teaching set up. Juvane (2005) argues that the designed curriculum lacks the relevance and is dysfunctional when applied to the socio-economic needs and cultural lifestyles of multi-grade teaching learners and their communities. Ames (2004) confirms that improving the curriculum content by developing subject matter in a way which makes it relevant to the social conditions of the communities and the needs of learners is important. Taylor (1997) states the curriculum and the basic programme used in the rural primary schools determines the appeal to learners and their effectiveness at meeting basic learning needs,however the material resources do not accommodate the learners such that the content is interesting and relevant to them.

2.11 Instructional resources

Educators need to be provided with resources if effective teaching and learning is to be attained (Little, 2005). My view is that appropriate resources give educators a guide in the achievement of assessment standards. Coetzee, *et. al.* (2008) states that the resources often operate as the lens through which the learners view the learning area and the lesson. A key aspect in managing teaching and learning in a multi-grade classroom is the provision of curriculum resources and teaching material appropriate for different grades in a single classroom. Taole (2014) argues that resources form an integral part of successful teaching and learning in any teaching context. Educators have to improvise and adapt to their teaching situation. They should utilise what is available to ensure learning is meaningful. I think that concrete learning material is essential for primary school learners to enhance more understanding of the learning content.

Boonzaaier (2009) confirms that schools in rural areas have poor infrastructure and limited facilities. These schools receive less financial support from the government due to school enrolment thus principals cannot procure all the instructional resources they require. Learners are not taught in an environment that enhances their minds. Taole (2014) states that the educators must be provided with everything they need as their teaching tools. Textbooks are not enough for the few learners. The educators cannot make copies to give work because there schools cannot afford the photocopiers. It is evident that teaching and learning is compromised by the conditions and the availability of supporting resources. Some resource material the principal get from the officials and the subject specialists does not address the needs of learners. They are mostly for mono-grade classes.

Educators in such schools require more resources for planning their lessons. Successful strategy for multi-grade teaching depends on adequate supplies of learning materials to support individual and group- based learning (Little, 2004). This enables the teachers to spend time with groups of learners while other learners work alone in pairs and in small groups. Work books delivered to all primary schools by the DBE (Department of Basic Education) in South Africa for individual learners can serve the purpose of engaging learner while the teacher is still busy with other groups. However, the workbooks were developed for each of the core curriculum subjects and not all learning areas. Little (2004) emphasises that the existence of materials does not guarantee effective learning but it is the manner in which they are utilised by the educator which forms an

impact on the learning process. Self-study materials must be of the highest quality and relevance, and must be used by educators in the integrated strategy.Resource material for self-study must not be viewed as the substitute for the educator.

The educator plays a vital role in using all methods and material resources (Little, 2004).School textbooks should be educator led. There is evidence that in a class where there are four grades with individual learners having different abilities the educator still has to play a vital role in driving the utilisation of learner material. It still poses a challenge for the multi-grade school educator who is overly committed with the workload. Learners in the rural schools mostly farm can hardly be left alone to work on their own. They require the constant assistance of the educator. Boonzaaier (2009) suggests that educators benefit from the resource centres where there are central teaching resource material and the collaborative groups. Communities of practice are vital for professional development of educators (Wenger, 2012). The issue of geographical situation of rural multi-grade schools creates a challenge to utilise resource centres which are normally in the urban city and town centres. Educators from far areas find it a challenge to constantly meet with other educators in resource centres.

2.12 Challenges of Multi-grade schools

Veenam (1990) has generated five main categories of challenges that are experienced by multi-grade schools.The five categories are the design of effective instruction, classroom management, practice of teaching and learning, use of instructional time and formulation of goals. I think that teaching and learning, which is the core business of a school is compromised in such circumstances. Research has shown that the performance level of learners in multi-grade schools is two years those of their counterparts in monograde schools (Gasperini, 2003).It is evident that the time that teachers spend in one learning area is not near to the actual allocated time but there is high expectation that the learner must have achieved all the learning outcomes and the assessment standards required by the Annual National Assessment (ANA) which is compulsory and similar in all primary schools. The challenge highlighted above includes the principal who has to be an educator on full time basis and also has to perform management duties. Joubert (2005) argues that the non-availability of sufficient time restricts the rural multi-grade educator and learner to cover the curriculum extensively. Haingura (2014) confirms that one of the challenges fac-

ing multi-grade educators is insufficient time allocated to each learning area. I think that the time allocation is suitable for the monograde classroom and creates a challenge when the multi-grade educator has to teach all the learning areas within the same specified time. Educators even spend more time planning for the different groups in the classroom. The planning time is more than that of the monograde classroom. Haingura (2014) further argues that limited teaching time results in inadequate attention paid to the learners who are struggling and leads to the poor acquisition of knowledge and skills.

The educators carry the burden and the workload that is practically challenging to cover. Jackson (2009) confirms that there is simply no time to address all the state mandated standards and benchmark in the majority of the learning areas. The small number of learners influence pupil teacher ratio. When one teacher is absent from school, the other teacher has to combine all the learners into a multiphase classroom or give them work in their classroom. It seems the combination of classrooms creates more frustrations for the educator. Such circumstances raise a question regarding the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of education generally. It does not seem that the principal of the school can carry all the instructional management values like driving the mission and vision of the school, support all instruction activities, identifies learners with learning difficulties and give the necessary support (Hallinger&Leithwood, 1992).

Given the multi-grade classroom setting, multi-grade teachers are required to plan more intensively than their monograde counterparts. Multi-grade teachers are required to organise the classroom and meet the needs of each grade of learners without compromising the learning of any particular group of learners. The effective coordination of all the class activities of the multi-grade classroom is another challenge. According to Haingura (2014), managing multi-grade classes, where multiple activities are likely to occur at the same time, is important for creating favourable conditions for learning. In addition, bringing different grades together in one classroom is a challenge on its own. Multi-grade teachers are expected to ensure that effective teaching and learning are taking place in such classrooms. This expectation seems to ignore the fact that multi-grade schools face more challenges than those of normal schools. Some of these challenges include having to keepall the grades in one classroom and on task throughout the school day, and also having to deal with the shortage of resources. In the context of Namibia, Haingura (2014) notes that multi-grade schools in that country have to deal with the lack resources in terms of

permanent structures, clean water, chairs and desks, and teaching material. Such an experience is similar to the one we have in South Africa, and it tends to undermine the quality of teaching and learning.

2.13 Parental involvement

Parents of learners in farm schools are workers in these farms. Most of these parents were also learners in these schools. The level of education is low (Boonzaaier, 2009).It seems that most of the parents who are affected by this situation cannot support their children with their homework and assignment as they are illiterate. The distance from home to school is another variable which has an impact on the parents' involvement in the education of their children. Boonzaaier (2009) further alludes to the fact that a huge challenge is that some families have to travel away from home due to seasonal work in the farms. Parents seem to have lack of interest in the education of their children as most do not turn up in parents' meetings. Parental level of education and poor involvement in school issues raises a question in this study of effectiveness of teaching and learning that happens in the multi-grade schools located in the farm communities. Schools seem to have problems with the maintenance of school building, cutting of grass and playgrounds. It seems that the educators carry the burden of ensuring the school environment is conducive to the daily activities done, with less support from the community. Parents do not understand the importance of their children's education. The socio-economic status of the surrounding communities is extremely poor. Farm communities are characterised by poverty. There is little influence they can have in the progress of their children's education. Parents are demotivated in involving themselves in school activities.

2.14 Theoretical framework

Hallinger's (2005) instructional leadership theory informs the understanding of the management and leadership role of the rural primary school principal. Information obtained from the principals was scrutinised using this model as a lens of analysing the principals' curriculum management role. Hallinger's (2005) definition of instructional leadership is firstly premised on the belief that the instructional leader must set up the vision, mission and goals of the school. Gaziel (2007) emphasises that the mission and goals must be communicated continuously during assemblies by using data on student academic performance and that classroom objectives are con-

sistent with the school goals. Leithwood (1994) reinforces the importance of coordinating the school goals with the curriculum.

Secondly Hallinger defines instructional leadership as managing the school's instructional programmes by supervising and evaluating instruction. This relates directly to this study in the sense that principals are expected to supervise and evaluate the teachers' as well as their own instruction. Dwyer (1984) concurs with this idea by emphasising that an instructional principal must develop the school learning programme by protecting the instructional time. Southworth (2009) further shares similar sentiments as Hallinger's second component of instructional leadership that the principal must model effective instruction. This notion of modelling instruction assumes that the principal should also teach and should be a good teacher for others to emulate him or her. Time and instructional issues are the key aspects for understanding the quality of teaching and the principal's role in this study. Eisner (2002) alludes to the importance of the instructional time that the principal must spend in the classroom.Leithwoode*t.al.* (1995**)** refer to it as high visibility. The principal's visibility is referred to as walkthroughs (Downey, 2006). Informal walkthroughs build a positive instructional culture. According to Heck (1992), the idea that principals should be frequent visitors to teachers' classrooms has become particularly identified with instructional leadership. I think that the principal must not be confined to his or her office and employ a no-go area approach, but needs to be available to the teachers and must be accessible. This also has implications for the time that the principal has to monitor teaching and provide support while at the same he or she is expected to spend more time in the classroom as it is the case with multi-grade schools.

Hallinger's third component of instructional leadership is that the principal must promote a positive culture. Instructional leadershipgenerally is defined as the class of leadership functions directly related to supporting classroom teaching and student learning (Murphy, 1988). Murphy's (1988) definition confirms Hallinger's component in the model that teaching climate must be maintained by providing support and incentives for teachers and learners. Day (2006) argues that the practices of the principal must acknowledge and reward good work, provide feedback to teachers and significantly influence the sense of efficacy and commitment. Hallinger's instructional model principles presented will form the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning this study and formulating the basis for understanding the quality of teaching and learning

in the multi-grade classroom and its management. This model is useful in terms of analysing the work of the principal as part of ensuring that effective teaching occurs. More details on this matter are presented in Chapter Two where the discussion on theoretical framework is made.

2.15 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented a review of literature in relation to the study. I have presented scholarly texts on the concepts of management of effective teaching and learning in relation to the rural multi-grade schools and the research question. All aspects influencing the processes of multi-grade teaching and learning and management in South Africa and global trends have been discussed, the roles of all education stakeholders, the state, the principal, the educators, the parents have been discussed.Towards the end of the chapter, the theoretical framework that underpins the study was discussed. The next chapter focuses at the research design and methodology guiding this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed the literature pertaining to multi-grade schools generally and multi-grade teaching in particular. This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that was used in generating the data for the study. In presenting a discussion on methodology, the chapter begins with research paradigm, research design, method of sampling, data gathering methods and data analysis technique that was used. This is followed by a discussion on measures of ensuring trustworthiness that were used. To conclude the chapter, a discussion of ethical considerations is made.

3.2 Research paradigm

The study is located within the interpretive paradigm. The study was focused on contextual issues of rural multi-grade schools and how the principals experienced their own leadership in these schools. According to interpretive paradigm, the researcher presents realities from the perspectives of the participants being researched (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2011). In terms of this paradigm, the researcher needs to understand the experiences and perceptions of principals in their natural settings. In the context of this study, information gathered was within the real world of the principal, which is the rural multi-grade school.

Interpretive paradigm enabled school principals to reveal their subjective meaning of their experience of managing multi-grade schools, and in that way, they were able to construct their reality.In this paradigm, researchers rely on the views of the participants and the meaning they attach to their actions. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) confirm that the researcher attempts to make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring in interpretive paradigm. The aim of the researcher is to understand the phenomena of managing effective teaching and learning from the perspectives of principal of multi-grade schools, as well as the meaning they attached to the policy which makes provision for such schools.

3.3 Research design

Qualitative case study design was used because in-depth written text of a particular case which is three rural multi-grade schools was dealt with. Creswell (2007) describes a case study as the single instance of a bounded system such as a school. Rural multi-grade schools are bounded system in a unique geographical context. These types of schools experience and implement education policy in a unique manner.Birley and Moreland (1999) emphasise that a case study gains understanding of the phenomenon in an exceptional and complete way. Multi-grade schools implement curriculum of different grades at one time. Yin (2012) concurs with Creswell's (2007) description that a case study is a bounded entity. The rurality of the multi-grade school defines it in a different manner when compared to urban monograde school. The monograde schools implement curriculum policy in a normal practice as stipulated by the Department of Education. Lather (1991) describes the case study approach of seeking to understand the setting as interpretive and qualitative. Ontological and epistemological assumptions are that there should be interactions with the participants in order to inductively generate meaning and examine the detail of the social reality.I share Simmons'sviews (1996), cited in Cohen, *et. al*. (2011) that the contribution of the case can bring new understanding of education as the study intended to reveal the manner in the implementation of curriculum provision policy. Data in the form of text gave an in–depth description of social reality in rural primary schools. Robson (1993) views a case in the same perspective as this study when he describes the study as a strategy for doing research which involves an investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence. This study intended togather information from the principals about their schools through semi-structured interviews questions, documents reviews, and the researcher's field notes. The researcher gains understandings by engaging in a dialogue with the principals. Through this design, the truth is negotiated between the researcher and the participants as they engage in the face to face interviews (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (1999)). Through case study designs, a descriptive study such as this one utilises the findings to stimulate new explanations and provide accurate profile (Neumann, 1997).

3.4 Methods of sampling

Three rural multi-grade primary schools with grades ranging from Grade R to Grade 7 were selected as research cases. The research data was generated from the selected schools. The schools were situated on farms owned by white farmers. They were under-resourced, had low enrolment and ranked with low standards of quintiles in the grading of schools.Purposive sampling is described by Neuman (1997) as used by the researcher when selecting unique informative cases. The three schools were typical of the population studied. A small scale population was identified because I as the researcher had no intention to make universal generalisation of the findings. The principal also carries the load of teaching in the classroom. The three participants gave an in-depth coverage of the main issues indicated in the statement of the problem and the research questions.

According to Cohen *et. al*. (2011), the hand-picked selected cases are unique. They were targeted because they would provide rich information that would help address the research questions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that purposive sampling enables the full scope and the complexity of the issue to be explored.

3.5 Data generation methods

Data required for a descriptive analysis of this study will be generated from three rural schools. Data collection is guided by the researcher's positionality with the research participants. An interpretive assumption relates the researcher and the cases in a subjective, participatory dialogue and interconnected relation. The researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions qualify this study to use the following data collection methods.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Face-to–face semi-structured interviews were conducted at the time and venue convenient to the participants. The interview sessions were organised in such a way that teaching and learning was not interrupted. Engaging with the research participants in an open empathic manner allowedthe researcher to make sense of the principals' experiences as they occur in the real world, contextual setting. Semi-structured interviews allowedthe research participants to provide detailed answers and formulate responses using their own ideas and words (Dunn, 2010). Semi-structured

interviews were preferred due to their usefulness for follow-up questions and probes. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in the participants' responses and follow-up questions. Rephrasing of questions facilitates communication and relieves the tension of the participant (Terre Blanche et.al. 1999). Questioning will allow expression of personal attributes. Interviews will be tape recorded to avoid interruption of writing responses down and to facilitate the interaction between the researcher and the participant. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participating principals to reveal their views and feelings, as well as their experiences regarding the management of multi-grade classes (Bester, 2005).

3.5.2 Documents Review

Documents that are kept in a school can be an effective source of information about a variety of aspects of the school. In the context of this study a number of documents were reviewed, and these included work schedule with completion dates indicated, learner exercise books and the number of written activities. Minutes of subject meetings, feedback of classroom observation, class visit schedule, syllabus coverage tracker and the monitoring tool. These documents were believed to contain important information that would enable me as a research to obtain an understanding about how the principals were able to monitor teaching and ensure curriculum coverage.

3.5.3 Principals' and school profile

I think the needs of the educators and learners in the school underpin and determine the quality of teaching and learning. Available infrastructural facilities, support, educator knowledge are critical issues in improving learner engagement in a school. The principals were requested to fill-in the tabular principal's profile form (Appendix C) which would elicit more details and understanding of the research site. Data generated from the profile indicatedthat the principals' qualification and training andsupport that they received and he requires in terms of workshops and departmental visits, number of teaching years. The profile indicated the school's number of classrooms, availability of a staff room, library, office, the learner enrolment, allocation of educators(PPN), the combination of grades in a multi-grade classroom, school ranking according to DoE school classification, availability of employed security and administrative personnel.

3.5.4 Observation

The researcher will formulate field notes as she observes the research site, educators, learners and teaching and learning. The researcher will observe the working environment and make field notes.

3.6 Data analysis

It is always important that the data that has been generated can be made to be consumable, and therefore, it has to be understandable. According to Cohen, *et. al*. (2011), the researcher must selectively analyse aspects of the events and the participants' actions. The data has to addresses the research questions and has to be highlighted. Before data was analysed, it was transformed from a voice recorded words into written text. In that regard, I had to repeatedly read the transcripts of the interviews in order to acquaint myself with the content of the data. According to Moody (2002), qualitative data analysis involves transforming the generated and tape recorded data into written text using the process that is commonly known as data transcription. In the context of this study, recorded interviews of the principals were also transcribed into written text.Neuman (1997) states that qualitative data analysis entails an examination of the patterns in the data, paying particular attention to thesimilarities and differences in the case studies. The analysis involves sorting, evaluating and comparing (Neuman, 1997). Similarities in the data that has been generated were identified and specified. Recurring themes in the interview responses were noted and was utilised to establish patterns and connections in the data. The themes formulated were then grouped into categories.This means that qualitative data was summarised and organised into thematic focus areas.This was done in order to synthesise and interpret data from semi-structured interview in order to converge on an accurate representation of reality (Polit and Hungler, 1995).In relation to the theoretical framework data will be analysed to find relations and common perspectives in the manner participants understand their real world. Data will then be analysed and understood under the lens and focus of instructional leadership theories as the conceptual and theoretical framework.

3.7Ensuring Trustworthiness of the findings

It is always important that the results of any study can be trusted as credible. Similarly, it was deemed to be very important that the results of this study can also be found to be credible. To

ensure trustworthiness of the findings, I used the framework that was developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This framework was meant to be an alternative way of ensuring trustworthiness as opposed to those terms that are normally used by quantitative researchers. These terms are credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibilityis described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as referring to some assessment about the extent to which the research findings represent a somewhat believable theoretical interpretation of the original data coming from the participants. To that end, I employed a variety of techniques. For instance, in ensuring that the story that was coming through from each school principal from each research site was accurate, I did a cross-checkby also referring to what emerged from the documents that were kept in each school. This technique is referred to by many scholars as triangulation of methods (Creswell, 2011; Cohen, *et. al*., 2011).Data was generated through the use multiple techniques such as semi-structured interviews, documents reviewer as well as field notes. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) confirm that trustworthiness can be ensured by utilising a number of techniques and also by tape recording the interviews and transcribing them *verbatim*.Furthermore, I made sure that I explain to each research participants that they would reap no benefit for participating in the study. In that way, they were aware that there was no need to please me and that their participation in the study was voluntary.

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability is another criterion that is advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that can be used to ensure that the trustworthiness of the findings can be enhanced. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability refers to an evaluation of the quality of a comprehensive process of generating and analysing the data. To ensure the dependability of the findings, Cohen, *et. al*. (2011) suggeststhat researchers need keep an audit trail of all activities that are undertaken during the research process.To address the issue of dependability, I made sure that a detailed description of all the actions that were undertaken was made. Such descriptions includeda detailed explanation about how the study was introduced to the participants, as well as the description of the participating schools' and the participants' contextual factors.

3.7.3 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe transferability as the extent to which the research can be applied to other contexts that are similar. To address transferability issues, I provided a detailed description of all steps I took in the study. These included giving a detailed description of the context of the schools and the participants. I provided a detailed description of the methods of sampling the schools and also the manner in which I negotiated gaining access to the research site as well as how I analysed the data that was generated. This was done in order ensure that any researcher who followed after me and wanted to conduct a similar study in the same contexts, would understand the context of this particular research and thus improve the chances of credible replication.

3.7.4 Conformability

Conformability is one of the four criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and it has to do with qualitative researchers attempting to ensure that the findings have not been undermined in any way, especially by threatening the study's objectivity. However, it is commonly acknowledged by qualitative research community that objectivity is not the ultimate goal of research; rather, what is of concern to qualitative researchers is to that human biases that we all possess should not interfere with the reality of the participants.

One of the ways in which I had to ensure thatconformability can be obtained was to do member-checking. This technique was done during the interview process.During that process I had to constantly check the extent to which my interpretation of what the participants were telling me was accurate. On addition, I had to use a digital voice recorder in order to ensure that an accurate record of the content of the interviews was kept and also that the interviews were transcribed *verbatim* (Maree, 2007; Cohen, *et. al*., 2011).Furthermore, I sought permission from them to use the voice recorder and also explained that the purpose of using it was to ensure that the stories they were telling me was not misinterpreted. After completing the transcriptions, I returned transcripts of the interviews so that they could confirm or refute the content. By so doing, I ensure that conformability was enhanced.

3.8 Ethical issues

It is important that the manner in which research is conducted complies with ethical standards. There are many ethical issues that have to be considered when conducting research. One of the considerations is that permission has to be obtained from gate keepers. For example, before I could embark on this study, I had to seek ethical clearance from my institution. Ethical clearance was requested from the ethical committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. With regards to soliciting gate keepers' permission, I first wrote a letter to the provincial Department of Education asking for permission to conduct research in their schools. I also wrote letters to the principals asking for permission to conduct research in their schools and also asking them to participate in the study. I was also aware that each participant has his or her autonomy. I wrote letters to each one of them asking them to participate in the research. The fact that their participation in the study was voluntary was explained and also that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research without any negative consequences befalling them. After they had accepted to participate, I gave them informed consent forms to sign as a sign to show that they understood what the study was about and that they understood their rights as participants. It is also important participants are protected against any form of harm. Terre Blanche, Durrheim andPainter (2008) emphasise the importance of observing the principle of non-maleficence by the researchers. One way in which this can be done is by protecting the identities of the participants. In order to ensure that the identities of the participants were protected, I used *pseudonyms* instead of their real names. Also, in the discussion of the research sites, I had to ensure that any information that might uncover the identity of the schools was removed from the profiles of the schools. In the next chapter where the data is presented, no real name of the school has been used.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a detailed discussion about the research design and methodology that was used in generating data that would help answer the research questions. The next chapter presents the data that was generated after the analysis had been done.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with issues of research design and methodology. This chapter presents and discusses the data that was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews with three principals of multi-grade primary schools. The presentation of data is done thematically as they emerged from the analysis and the themes are mainly about the managing experiences of principals in the rural multi-grade primary schools. The views of the principals have been presented in the following eight themes: (a) Principal's understanding of effective teaching and learning in multi-grade schools (b) strategies of monitoring effective teaching and learning (c) management of instructional time (d) management of resources (e) classroom management (f) educator training and support (g) challenges of implementing effective teaching (h) learning and learner socio-economic background. Before the data is presented, I thought that it will be useful to first present a brief profile of the participants so that the meaning they attached to their situation could also be contextualised.

4.2 School Profile

 The unit of analysis is the principal of the rural multi-grade primary school. The two schools were situated on the land owned by the farmers. One school was a rural multi-grade primary school which was located within the municipality area. So, two of the three schools were located within the municipal area but in the rural community while the other school was located in the farm owned by a white man. What is common all three research sites is that they were located on the outskirts far away from the cities and towns. They were all characterised by one common feature, namely, rurality and isolation.

4.2.1 Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A

She has teaching experience of seven years in this school. She has no formal education for teaching multi-grade classroom. The school is situated on the farm. The school was established in 1983 to provide formal education for children of farm workers. It is surrounded by valleys and hills overlooking plough fields and its surroundings include the grazing area of the livestock belonging to the farm owner. The school buildings are a conversion of what used to be a shed for horses. It has electricity and running water from the boreholes. The enrolment of learners reached the maximum of 63 learners in a certain year and thereafter fluctuated to lower numbers. There are two educators, the principal and the nutrition support personnel. There are three classrooms. Grade R and Grade1 are accommodated in the first classroom, Grade 2 and 3 in the second classroom and Grades 4,5,6 and 7 in the third classroom. There is also a store room which was once a cottage for educators and a little office with two rooms; one used to store books and teaching material. There is no sight of any household in the vicinity. The location of the school describes the particular nature of its rurality.

4.2.2 Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B

She has teaching experience of 9 years in the multi-grade classroom. She has qualifications for a monograde classroom. The school where she teaches is described below.

The winding dirt road up the rocky hills leads to the school build on a farm. After a long travel, then you come across board portraying the name of the school, and the South African flag give an indication from the road where the school is situated. Its infrastructural buildings are old with worn out roof iron sheets. There are three classrooms with two educators and a principal. Septic system toilets are on a separate building. The school location and its situation best describes what Boonzaier (2009) refer to as South African "forgotten' schools. A building a few metres away is the educator cottage. It is difficult to access. I observed that my arrival as an outsider captured the interest of learners. The size of the school in terms of learner enrolment can be best described by viewing all learners forming a line to receive their meal for the day. There are 61 learners.

4.2.3 Mr Zulu, Principal of School C

Mr Zulu has been the principal in this school for 5 years. He is a qualified educator. He was only trained for a multi-grade classroom. The buildings of the schools are good looking. The Senior

Phase (Grades 4, 5, 6, 7) building has recently been renovated and the Foundation Phase (Grades 1, 2, 3) utilise the old building. The classrooms are neat. The school is surrounded by a few rural households. It is situated on the road where there is access to transport for educators. There are three educators and a principal. Due to the number of learners and educators the school offers multi-grade education. The environment of the school is more conducive to teaching and learning when compared to the other two schools in the study. There is electricity and municipal running water in the taps. The toilet facility used is the pit system.

4.3 Principals' understanding of effective teaching and learning management in multi-grade schools

The first theme to emerge from the analysis is about school principals' understanding of effective teaching and learning. The participants were asked about their understanding of effective teaching and learning situation. The following discussion reflects the participants' views about their understanding of what it means to have effective teaching and learning situation in the school. Principals gave their descriptions of the meanings they attached to effective teaching and learning. There were some similarities in the manner in which the principals they viewed learning outcomes as the output of effective teaching and learning. Learning outcomes remain the core objectives of the classroom activities. The school principals indicated that the learning outcomes were the pillars of effective teaching and learning. This is what Mrs Xulu, the principal of School A had to say:

> "I understand the learning outcome as the goal or objective of the lesson if I may put it that way. Each lesson has the long term and short term objectives. To me the learning objectives represent the outcomes of the lesson. The learner must have achieved that skill and or knowledge at the end of the teaching period. I think that those are the criteria the subject advisors should look for when they analyse the results to see that learning has occurred in a proper way." (**Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

The view expressed by Mrs Xulu above were corroborated by Mrs Yellow the principal of School B, when she said that learning outcomes were the factors that determined effective teaching and learning situation in a school. This is what Mrs Yellow had to say in that regard:

*"I think effective teaching and learning is the engagement or exercise of the teacher and the learner that will have learning outcomes specified by the department of education. I think this must be achieved on the daily basis when the teacher is in class with the learners. Effective teaching is the accumulation of what the teacher does in each period which yields good results at the end."***(Mrs Yellow, the principal of School B).**

Contrary to the previous two participants, Mr Zulu the principal of School C emphasised the view that teaching has to be aligned with the school vision and mission statement by being purposive and be congruent with the school's vision and school's mission statement. Mr Zulu expressed the view that the vision and mission of the school help influence the attainment of effective teaching and mission statement of the school. This is how Mr Zulu explained his thinking about his understanding about effective teaching and learning situation:

*"To me effective teaching and learning is the kind of teaching and learning that has the purpose and develops from the vision of the school. It must make learners to be independent citizens of South Africa."***(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

The views expressed by the three principals suggest that their views were bound by their conceptions of roles and responsibilities, which in their views entailed being ambassadors and pioneers of effective teaching and learning. They viewed themselves as accounting officers in the centres of developing learners-the schools. According to them, learner development occurs through the processes of teaching and learning. It is evident from their voices that their understanding of effectiveness was focused on the link between outcomes and teaching and learning.

In addition, Mrs Xulu and Mrs Yellow, Principals of School A and School B respectively, further described their understanding of effective teaching by associating it with the assessment standards. Their views were that assessment standards to be achieved in each lesson reflected in the activities that the educators give to the learners after effective teaching. These principals also understood the effectiveness of teaching as the ability of the learners to do classroom activities. This is how Mrs Xulu, the Principal of School A put it:

"I can describe the assessment standard as the learning competency that the learner must reach so I can say she has acquired the knowledge in that topic."

Expressing similar views as Mrs Xulu above, Mrs Yellow, the Principal of School B had this to say regarding the connection between effective teaching and learning and Annual National Assessment (ANA):

> *"Effective education in the classroom is linked to the assessment standards that prepare the leaner for Annual National Assessment and to be a better person in future"***(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

These principals indicated that the writing of the Department of Basic Education's ANA as the benchmark and the yardstick of testing whether teaching and learning in the classrooms was effective or not, was good approach. Mrs Xulu emphasised the need for the learners to be taught to be ready for the assessment. This is what she had to say in this regard:

> *"ANA is the assessment that the learners write from the department of Education to test their performance. It is set by the external examiners or subject advisors I 'm not sure. It is a way of checking how we teach the learners and the knowledge they have acquired. It focuses on Literacy and Numeracy "***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

It is evident from the participants that effective teaching had the common goal of preparing the learners for the achievement of learning outcomes and the assessment standards.

It seemed that the principals' descriptions of effective teaching and learning determined the purpose of their management and also how they played their roles in the schools. According to both Mrs Xulu and Mr Zulu, policies meant for promoting teaching and learning such as the National Curriculum Statement were essential documents to implement effective teaching and learning, This is how Mrs Xulu explained it:

> *"I can describe the work program as the schedule or the departmental document given to the teacher for all the learning areas, like as I teach English in Grade 3 the schedule indicates all the topics and sub-topics that I must cover in a week, a month and the year. It also indicates the level of difficulty that I must reach for that grade. It is our guideline for doing the work."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

The views expressed in the extract above were also shared by Mr Zulu, the principal of School C when he responded like this:

> *"It won't be effective if it is not guided by departmental policies. To say it is effective we need to check that it is in line with the policies."*

It is evident that principals' understanding of effective teaching and learning formed the basis of management activities in the schools and how they set their school goals and objectives.

Hargreaves & Hopkins(1993) collaboratively agree that effective teaching and learning is the result of the accomplishment of educational goals stipulated in the policies.I think that every institution plans and set goals in accordance with the departmental policies.

Given the manner in which the three school principals understood effective teaching and learning, the next section pays particular focus on how the principals monitored teaching in order to ensure that the goals they had set for the schools were actually achieved.

4.4 Strategies of monitoring effective teaching and learning in multi-grade schools

There was unanimity among all three principals about the strategies that they used to monitor teaching and learning as a way of ensuring effectiveness of teaching. Four strategies dominated and these included the use of the learners' written work, complexity of the assessment standards, focusing on implementing departmental policies andmanaging instructional time. These are discussed below.

4.4.1 Monitoring learners' written work

The data indicated that monitoring the learners' written work was a common strategy that was used by the principals in order to ensure that instructional progress could be assessed. All three principals acknowledged the enormity of the workload and the contextual issues in multi-grade schools concerning curriculum provision and the time-frames for completion of work. They made efforts to check all the aspects covered and the amount of written work in relation to the schedules and departmental policies. This is how Mrs Xulu explained her strategies:

> *"It is difficult and a challenge to manage but there are ways I normally use. To check that teaching and learning is done, we designed a submission policy. So every two weeks I check learner exercise books, the amount of work covered, the topics which have been taught and the activities given to various grades per lesson. I also check the planning files. It is a big challenge for the educators to do planning for multi-grade classrooms, but I just check what they have written whether it is in line with the departmental policies and whether it follows the work schedule Class schedules prepared all the terms in a year, give an indication of how our learners perform."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal ofSchool A).**

Similarly, Mrs Yellow expressed similar views about the learners' written work, schedules and the amount of time available for the multi-grade teacher to use. This is how she put it:

> *"I request exercise books and learner work. Written work gives me an indication that classroom activities are done although at most of the times the work schedules are ahead in terms of dates to the classwork and homework due to the fact of time constraints versus the amount of work that must be done. Multi-grade educators find it hard to cover all the planned work within an hour. They seem to be behind the scheduled time in aspects that must be taught. I always motivate and share ideas of the better options to address the workload. I believe learners must be attended at all times, I check that contact time is used profitably to the benefit of the learner."* **(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

It is evident from the three participants that the amount of written work in the exercise books can be the indicator of the level of teaching and learning in the classroom and the topics in the work schedule that have been covered. Mr Zulu shared similar views as Mrs Xulu and Mrs Yellow that the key monitoring strategy used was the written work. This is what Mr Zulu had to say in this regard:

> *"To manage the work of teachers I ask them to bring files then when I pick up something, I write it down. It becomes an aspect, like written work, the consistency of giving activities and the following of the work schedules and subject policies. I call a meeting and I workshop educators, if there is an aspect that need our attention."* **(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

Day (2006) highlights that managing teaching and learning programme involves assessment of learner written activities. This can be done when the principal view learner books to be able to make positive inputs and creative ways to improve conditions for teaching and learning. It is through this engagement that the principal have a view of what is happening within the classrooms during each lesson.Hallinger's(2005) definition of instructional leadership clearly indicates that the principal has the task of supervising and evaluating instruction utilising various strategies of which learner written work is the essential one. Grey (1999) reports that tracking student progress is a key task for leaders of schools in challenging circumstances. I think it is the key task because learner achievement is the core business of any educational institution.

4.4.2 Complexity of the assessment activities

The National Curriculum Statement stipulates that suitable assessment methods that accommodate divergent contextual factors must be used (Department of Education, 2003**)**. This policy document further states that the learners must demonstrate clear indicators of efficiency in the manner they apply their knowledge and skills and make judgements and provoke further learning. On this issue Stone(1994) suggests that successful multi-grade classroom requires educators to see the learners as individuals on the learning continuum.

The combination of grades in the single classroom with one educator responsible for developing the knowledge and skills according to learner abilities seem to be a challenge in such classrooms. Principals' views indicated that the complexity of activities in each multi-grade classroom is a strategy of ensuring that each grade was assessed effectively. This is how one of the three principals put it:

> *"I also check as we have many grades in a classroom whether the* educator *gives different activities according to the grades in the classroom. Some topics differ much in the level of complexity, questioning need to range from low order to higher order questions. I think that is what makes teaching more effective."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Mr Zulu seemed to share similar viewsas those of Mrs Xulu and further argued that the learners in the multi-grade classroom could be a combination of phases, which must be given appropriate assessment activities. Mr Zulu explained like this:

> *"I give them different activities appropriate for their grade. Older learners sometimes assist other grades. We plan with the idea that the Grade Sevens do not belong in the intermediate phase. We give them work that range from lower order to higher order questions. At least they are of a bigger age. While the teacher is busy with other grades you can return and check and guide them. They are at an advantage because they can work on their own. We ensure that we do not give them intermediate but just work in the same class."***(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

The complexity of the different assessment activities given by the educator for different grades needs more planning and preparation by the educator. The educator has to prepare different

marking rubrics and memoranda. Older learners sometimes neglect their work to assist lower grades. Educators in multi-grade schools cannot manage their classrooms effectively and have no control to classrooms activities (Taole, 2014).Data from the participants about their classroom management is evidence that the educator could hardly cope with such enormous work load. Du Plessis (2011) confirms that classroom management has many demands on the educator.

4.4.3 Focus on departmental policies

One of the education policies that provide guidelines on teaching is the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) before it. It is an expectation of the government that NCS had to be implemented similarly by all the schools across different contextual situations. However, it is evident from the responses of the participants that the departmental policies were not designed for multi-grade schools but they had to be used as guidelines also in multi-grade settings. Participants explained the situation like this:

> *"To monitor instructional work I basically follow the departmental subject policies, work schedules and CAPS documents but they are designed for monograde schools. I just use them as a guideline even if they do not fit perfectly in our situation"***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

The views expressed by Mrs Xulu in the extract above were also shared by Mrs Yellow indicated that she also used the policies as a guideline and not as prescription.

> *"The department provides us with policies, schedules, learner workbooks and the CAPS document which stipulates the work that needs to be covered by the educator to make the learner ready for the next grade. I use these policies when I check the work of educators and learners although they are designed for monograde schools and not for us."***(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School** C**).**

The views expressed by the principals seemed to be in line with the findings of other researchers. According Christie (2010), the core management criteria of school principals is that they are leading and managing learning in schools. The curriculum is implemented through learning. Harris (2005) confirms that instructional leadership influences teaching and learning. Hallinger's (1999) third component of instructional leadership is that the principal must monitor the progress of learners, supervise and evaluate instruction and co-ordinate the curriculum. In the context of multi-grade schools where there are no HODs who manage curriculum provision as in big

schools, the principal has the full responsibility of co-ordinating the curriculum implementation. Instructional leadership generally is defined as the class of leadership functions directly related to supporting classroom teaching and student learning (Murphy, 1988). The study looked at the experiences of principals and how they ensured effective teaching and learning within the multi-grade context. Participants in this study explained how they managed the curriculum provision in their schools as instructional leaders.

4.4.4 Management of instructional time

Time seemed to be a crucial resource in the management of the multi-grade classroom. The educators were faced with the daily dilemma of teaching two to four sets of work schedules in a single classroom and giving different activities appropriate for each grade. Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A indicated that group work was the main strategy she utilised to keep the learners occupied while she worked with other groups. This is what she had to say:

> *"I normally give them project work or artwork when I have to attend the principal's meetings. I request the other teacher to monitor them. When I am present I focus on the each grade and give group work as I have mentioned above"***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of-School A).**

Mr Zulu, Principal of School C utilised the same strategy used by Mrs Xulu. This is how he explained this strategy of using groups and split the time allocated for the learning area in the composite time table:

> *"In monograde I would use an hour but in multi-grade I spend 15 minutes per grade. Some factors impact negatively. Once you develop a new concept you move to another grade and let them do their respective work. That's the story. Let us start with monograde, when I was teaching in a monograde school, I was teaching English grade 6.It was easy because the focus was one grade. But here in a multi-grade it is difficult to plan and allocate time because you have to teach across the grades. To plan you do it for each grade but teach different grades."***(Mr Zulu, Principal of School A).**

Mrs Xulu further indicated that she taught similar topic for all the grades to integrate the two curriculums in her class. This indicated the strategy she utilises to manage the available time.

> *"I teach one topic for all the grades and give different activities according to the specific grade."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Teaching a similar topic to all the grades seemed to be a popular method utilised by the principals of the three schools. Mr Zulu had this to say:

> *"When I go to the class one has to ensure that time is followed. If you teach nouns in Grade 4 like countable and uncountable nouns, in other grades you will have go further at different levels and you must design on different activities for each grade. It is a lot of work even if its small numbers in the classrooms. You can just mix grades around."*

A common management strategy used by Mrs Xulu and Mrs Yellow,respectively, was to change the composite timetable time allocations now and again and use extra time to teach learners. She indicated that starting the day at the correct time assists them. This is what they had to say:

> *"It also helps to write letters to the parents when the school closes early when all teachers attend workshops or meetings. We just make them aware of why at times the school is forced to close early. That loss time we try to cover it by doing extra lessons. Our co-curricular period which appears in our composite time table, we use it for reading and remedial work. Division of the available time for the day I ensure that the timetables are followed accordingly in the school;otherwise it will mean other learning areas are neglected and they fall behind, by the time we write our assessment we will have a problem of lot of work not covered. Time is always a problem to manage. A day just goes quickly and fast. What also assist us is that although we stay far from school, we are always early to start the day at 8am. I even notice that the learners listen and concentrate better when it is still in the morning. I always stress the importance of morning lessons in terms of using time profitably"* **(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Mrs Yellow shares the same sentiments of using the composite timetable as the tool to manage and maximise instructional time in her multi-grade school.

> *"We do not have extra -curricular activities during teaching and learning time. I monitor that the school starts the first lesson on time on a daily basis. I also check learner exercise books if teaching and learning occurs according the composite time table. I usually take walks around the school to ensure that learners learning activities are continuous in all the classrooms"* **(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

Scholarly views indicate that time and instructional issues are the key aspects for understanding effective teaching and the principal's role in any schools. Eisner (2002) argues that one third of

the principal's time must be spent in the classroom which Leithwood,*et. al.*(2002) refer to as high visibility. The principal's visibility is referred to as walkthroughinstructional time is one of the main instructional leadership strategies. The responses of the principals indicated that they carried a lot of workload. They are educators, school administrators and carry management duties. They communicate with the district office, parental community, and nutrition programme supplier. It seems that they have limited time for curriculum adaption and redesign. Du Plessis (2014) states that education policies, CASS (Continuous Assessment), CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy) and NCS (National Curriculum Statement) are policies for monograde schooling. Boonzaier (2009) confirms that the time teachers spend teaching a learning area is not near to the actual allocated. The planning time is more than that of the monograde classroom.

Sentiments shared by the participants about the curriculum seemed to be in line with the findings by other researchers. Multi-grade educators have to re-design the curriculum and the teaching material to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment standards. It is difficult to implement a curriculum that is designed for the monograde school system within the multi-grade context (Du Plessis, 2014). All the learning outcomes and the assessment standards cannot fit in a years' work for all the grades in one classroom.

4.5 Management of Resources

The responses of principals concerning the material resources indicated that teachers struggled in terms of obtaining sufficient resources that would ensure learners receive effective teaching and learning. The principals viewed the shortage of teaching material as the main challenge that multi-grade teachers faced. There were limited material resources that the principal provided to the educators through TLSM (Teaching and Learning Support Material) resource procurement. It is the task of the principal to provide all the necessary material resources required for effective teaching. It is evident from the responses of principals that the procurement of material resources in the three primary schools was not sufficient for educators to provide the curriculum. In presenting a discussion on the management of resources, four broad categories of resources are used, namely, procurement of material resources, learner workbooks, multi-media resources and wall charts, posters and pictures, and these are discussed below.

4.5.1 Procurement of material resources

The data showed that the three principals viewed the procurement of material resources as a challenge for their schools. For instance, Mrs Xulu, the Principal of School A indicated that the material resources in the schools were minimal. The main problem had to do with the formula that was used in the procurement process. This is what she had to say in this regard:

> *"The Norms and Standards determine the school budget; we are Section 21; we have minimal budget allocation; we cannot budget for all the material resources we need for teaching and learning. I think material resources affect us in providing the curriculum. They are mostly minimal; but we try to accumulate them over the years. In the multigrade classroom the educator has to use multi books in a single lesson period to accommodate all the grades. Sometimes it is a challenge to manage when you are in class."*

Similarly, Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B experienced a challenge in terms of providing enough material resources to support effective teaching. She added that the number of learners created the challenge of the shortage of books. This is what she had to say:

> *"We cannot order as much as we require. It is the department that determines how much we get through their policy of Norms and Standards. It is based on the number of learners in the school. Since we have a small number of learners we do not get enough. Sometimes the official suppliers of books in schools are more expensive, maybe we would get more if we bought from the bookshops. I think that is one of the issues in our school as a multi-grade which affects the quality of teaching and learning. The Norms and Standards are minimal since there are few learners in the school. Our budget needs are high. School funds are insufficient."* **(Mrs Yellow, principal of School B)**.

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On the same vein, Mr Zulu, Principal of School C viewed the availability of resources as the scarce and insufficient. Homework seemed to be a challenge when books are not available for all learners. He explained like this:

> *"Because of the number of learners in our school the Norms and Standards allocation we receive as the Department of Education (DoE) provide us with minimal material resources we require to ensure that there is effective teaching and learning. We cannot order everything. We are always short of textbooks and reading books. This poses a chal-*

*lenge to educators when they need to give homework to learners."***(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

It seems the multi-grade schools are incurring a long existing challenge of procuring sufficient teaching and learning material resources, which can hardly be resolved due to school enrolment.This challenge raises a concern in this study about the possibilities and the extent of effective learning of the primary school learners.

Little(2005) thinks the provision of the educator with appropriate teaching and learning material will make teaching effective.

4.5.2 Learner Workbooks

The participants' responses about the workbooks indicated that most learners were not competent with using the workbooks alone without the assistance the educator. Some of the content knowledge and illustrations were abstract concepts for learners living in the farms. Most of the examples in the textbooks and the workbooks were hard to grasp as they did not relate to their own situation. It is evident that the educators carried the heavy load which required continuous supervision and support. Multi-grade classroom learners needed to be educator led. This is how Mrs Yellow put it:

> *"Teaching material and learner books are not specifically for multi-grade schools. Sometimes examples made in the workbooks are too abstract for learners in the rural areas. We have to explain some of the concepts like the ocean or sea-how big it is and the amount of water in the sea.Many have never seen the ocean before."***(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

Principals indicated that resources received from the Department of Education were suitable for monograde classrooms and less useful for the multi-grade classroom. My own informal observations during one of my visits to the school was that different grades had different textbooks and workbooks used simultaneously in the same classroom. Ensuring effective teaching and learning under those circumstances seemed to be demanding where the educator had to manage four different workbooks simultaneously.

Coetzee,*et.al*. (2008) state that resources are often the lens through which learners view the learning area and the lesson.Therefore, successful strategies for multi-grade teaching depends on the adequate supplies of learning material to support individual and group based learning (Little, 2001). Sufficient resources will enable time for educators to spend on other grades while others are engaged with classroom activities working on their own. Self- study learning as a strategy and approach to teaching seem to be ineffective in such a scenario of multi-grade learning (Beukes, 2009).

4.5.3 Multi-media resources

The use of multi-media was found to be a very rare occurrence in these schools. During my visits to one of the schools, I noted that learning content was displayed by the educator utilising the chalkboard. There was no overhead projector (OHP), disc player or television set to assist make visual illustrations to the learners in order to make learning easier. It emerged during my discussion with the principals that the issue of multi-media was a huge problem for the schools. On this issue, Mrs Xulu had this to say:

> *"Electricity availability is not constant. We normally have cut off water supply from the dam or muddy water comes out. If there is no electricity I cannot make copies for learner activities."* **(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Similarly, Mrs Yellow, principal of School B expressed the view that there were problems in utilising the multi-media resources to enhance effective teaching and learning. She even went further to say that there was also a lack of expertise in using various materials such as the educational videos. Mrs Yellow had this to say:

> *"Our television set and the overhead projector was stolen during a burglary over the holidays. We do not have a photocopier. The old computers are not in the working condition. We lack in multi-media resources. We cannot expose our learners to educational videos. I subscribed to the multi-media library in town. Sometimes there is no electricity to use such material."*

In School C there were old computers that were donated by the local municipality but were not in the working condition. There was a lack of multi-media resources. Nevertheless, the principal had a personal laptop which he utilised for school administrative purposes. The narratives from

the two extracts above indicate that there were also some socio-economic as well as criminal issues. For instance, some computers that the school B had bought had been stolen together with the OHP.

4.5.4 Wall charts, posters and pictures

Wall charts and posters are some of the teaching/learning aids that are essential and each classroom needs to have them. During my visits to these schools, I noted that that teaching material in the form of wall charts, maps, pictures and learner artwork were available in some classrooms. Projects were also available in certain classrooms. However, it is not evident as to how these teaching resources were utilised to the benefit of the multi-grade learners. Paintings and other individualised activities were sometimes used to occupy the learners when the principal was committed with other administrative duties. At times learners did not get adequate attention of the educator as they deserved it. This was more noticeable in Mrs Xulu's case as she taught in the Foundation Phase. It is very difficult to understand how Grade Two and Grade Three learners can be left to work responsibly on their own when the principal educator is engaged in other essential departmental duties. It is also a concern for this study that the considerable loss of contact session will negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning. Explaining how she coped with both demands of teaching and managing the school, Mrs Xulu said:

> *"I normally give the learners project work when I have to attend the principal's meetings."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Sometimes the principal would be in the classroom but not teaching, instead, she would be doing administrative work. Sometimes she would be away from school to attend principals' meetings and/or workshops. It is evident from the school background and the availability of educators that the educator in another classroom can offer supervision while also attending to his or her own classroom.

4.5.5 Organisation of resources

The data indicates that there were sample books from various publishers and some were supplied by the Department of Education. It is evident that these books were not used most effectively to the benefit of effective teaching and learning. Teachers seemed to have the resources with no instructional expertise to utilise in the classroom. There seemed to be insufficient time for an overloaded multi-grade educator to organise and keep book lending records. It is apparent that some

of the material resources received never address the needs of the multi-grade classroom. These books were in the office, in School A; I saw some of the books stacked in the shelves and some in boxes. In School CI noted that some reading books were full of dust in the classroom cupboard. Mrs Xulu indicated that she did not get time to organise the books into a small library. This is what she had to say:

> *"Time to plan, prepare and compare available material resources is very scarce. Keeping the lending records is a challenge and it is time consuming. I have a lot of workload."*(**Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Little (2004) emphasises that the existence of materials does not guarantee quality of learning. Self-study materials must be of the highest quality and relevance, and must be used by educators in the integrated strategy. It did not seem that Mrs Xuluhad the time to lend the books for self-reading. Insufficient reading raises a concern in this study that literacy skills of multi-grade compromised by the inability of the educator to use all methods to effectively teach the learner.

4.6 Classroom management

Responses from the principals indicated that educators and principals experienced challengesin managing multi-grade classrooms. Principals argued that their situation posed a challenge to school management. They had to manage learner developmental needs, clustering and groupings, phase combinations in one classroom, complexity of learning activities, age difference. The classrooms as described by Mrs Xulu, Mrs Yellow and Mr Zulu, Principals of Schools A, School B and School C respectively were multi-grade, multi-phase and multi-age. This means that there was a combination of grades, phases and ages in one classroom. Learners formed groups according to grades in all three schools.

4.6.1 Clustering and groupings

Participants indicated that groupings and clustering of learners were done according to the number of learners enrolled for each grade. For instance, in School A, School B and School C, the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4, 5, 6) and the Senior Phase (Grade 7) were taught in a single classroom. The time allocation of periods of the Intermediate Phase according to the NCS policy is similar from the Senior Phase (Grade7) but the learning content and the variety of illustrations

differ as the grades progress. Mrs Xulu explained how she combined grades in her classroom. This is what she had to say:

> *"I teach Grades 2 and 3. They are seated in groups according to their grades."*(**Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Drawing from the above extract, it is evident that in School A, the Foundation Phase was mixed in a single classroom. These learners did not seem to be taught the curriculum that is appropriate for their age. Mr Zulu had this to say:

> *"I teach Grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. They seat in their respective groups. I have a combination of grades, phases and ages."*(**Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

Data generated in this study about the combination of grades in the senior and intermediate phases suggest that the assessment criteria of the NCS and the end product learner envisaged by the Department of Education could pose a challenge to achieve in this form of a classroom with the different grades. Clustering and grouping deprives the learner of progressive learning and progressive cognitive and emotional development. It seemed the educator found it more of a challenge in addressing the needs of the learner when the various grades in a single classroom. This is what Mrs Yellow said in this regard:

> *"I think the clustering of the classroom is a challenge. It becomes difficult for the teacher the individual needs of each learner. Different ages, learning abilities of learners cannot be addressed as we spend a lot of time to explain the different activities for various grades."*(**MrsYellow, Principal of School B).**

It is evident that the grouping of learners and the presentation of the lessons and activities somehow combined the four curriculums into one in a single period. The data indicated that the context did not permit the learner to master the subject content for the appropriate grade as all grades were taught in the same space. The context did not allow a clear difference in the presentation of the curriculum. For instance, in School A, Mrs Xulu indicated that Grades 2 and Grades 3 were taught in the same space. Grade 2 learners needed to master and build a firm basis of what they had learned in Grade1 in Literacy and Numeracy.The cognitive levels of development in the Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners did not seem to be the same. Unfortunately, learners need the support of the educators with undivided attention.

4.6.2 Classroom discipline

It is established in the literature that learning occurs effectively where there is order and discipline. To that end, Mr Zulu, Principal of School C indicated that he sometimes utilised other learners to manage classroom activities. Mr Zulu's response indicated that the educator sometimes lost attention and focused on the activities that were done by learners in class while assisting other groups. He relied more on other learners to maintain discipline in the classroom. This is what he had to say:

> *"Group leaders assist other learners in different groups. Some learners understand work better than others. They assist me while I'm still busy with the other grades."***(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

I think that group work that is not closely monitored by the educator tends to have challenges in discipline issues. Learners at this age might fail to properly manage their peers. Mrs Xulu raised the issue relating to the concentration levels of learners in multi-grade schools. She explained that:

> *"Most learners walk long distances to school. They come to school tired and they cannot concentrate."* **(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Learners of older ages and higher grades seem to dominate other learner as they use the same floor space. The natural structure of the multi-grade classroom is such that educators are more likely to ask learners to help one another as compared to monograde classes (Beukes, 2009).Discipline issues become apparent in such competitive situations where there is group work. Prosocial behaviours including sharing, taking turns and helping each other are more apparent within the multi-grade classes (Katz, 1993).

4.6.3 Curriculum Adaptation

Curriculum implementation posed a challenge in the multi-grade teaching. The curriculum overload requires each learning area to be given its time to achieve the expected outcomes and assessment standards. Curriculum utilised by multi-grade and monograde educators is similar while the contextual factor of available contact time is not similar. A multi-grade educator needs to teach the learning content of two to four grades within a specified period. Mrs Yellow indicat-

ed that Mrs Yellow made the following comment, "*All the time is needed to complete the year's curriculum*".

The views expressed by Mrs Yellow in the above extract were shared by Mr Zulu when he said that the curriculum of many grades was a challenge to complete within a specified time. He emphasised that he could not teach all topics within the specified schedule within the given time. Therefore, some topics were neglected, as he adapted the curriculum in order to fit the available time. This is how he explained this:

> "*Not all the topics can be taught in the learning areas. I end up choosing what I think is important and integrate with other learning areas. I cannot teach everything.*"**(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

Educators spend a lot of time adapting the NCS curriculum to fit the needs of the multi-grade school. The participants claimed that they could not do all the necessary assessment tasks and the learning outcomes.

Participants indicated that it was expectation that a multi-grade educator did everything that a monograde educator did. It is evident that one year's syllabus could not be completed by the multi-grade educator. The NCS pose a challenge to implement in this set- up. For instance, Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B indicated that focusing only on the learning outcomes of the learning area made it difficult to complete the assessment standards in one year due to the lack of time. Some principals and educators could not develop their own planning that would address all the learning areas, learning outcomes and assessment standards. It is a challenge for one educator to teach six learning areas in four grades in a single year. She explained it like this:

> "*I think the curriculum specified for each grade in a year cannot be sufficiently taught because I have to address the learning content of three grades. Sometimes learners do not concentrate on the questions for their particular grades. It ends up causing confusion in the classroom and learners loose direction.*"**(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

Similarly, Mr Zulu, Principal of School C confirmed that the curriculum needed to be redesigned by the educator so that it could fit the multi-grade context. He explained that:

"Educators from monograde schools receive the planning schedule from the department of education and follow it, but in our case we have to make our own planning which is time consuming." **(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

It is evident that the classroom environment was more like the survival of the fittest among the grades in the classroom striving for the attention of the educator. Learners seemed to be deprived by the combination of grades, the opportunity to master their appropriate grade level and develop cognitively in a systematic process. Mr Zulu further explained that "*Some intelligent learners can answer and assist learners in other grades"*. Mr Zulu's statement suggested that the learner in a multi-grade classroom focuses on all the learning content not prescribed for his or her grade by the NCS.

4.7 Educator training and support

The frequent revisions that are made to the department's policies and regulations contributed to the need for the continuous training and the cascading of new information to the educators. Implementers of new policies i.e. the educators must be equipped with all the skills and expertise they need. The multi-grade educator needs support and more knowledge of how to deal with contextual factors of a classroom with a combination of grades. Similarly, principals need support and more knowledge of how to deal with contextual factors of a classroom with a combination of grades and also how to effectively supervise teachers in carrying out their teaching responsibilities within the context of multi-grade schooling. The principals' experiences in relation to training and support needs indicates that was a need for continuous professional development that would assist bridge the gap between the initial training knowledge and the specialist knowledge requirements of multi-grade teaching. The next section provides a detailed discussion of this important requirement.

4.7.1 Continuous professional development

The data has revealed that there was a serious lack of external support that can assist in keeping the teachers abreast of current developments in the area of multi-grade teaching. The need for continuous professional development training was emphasised by the participants. The three principals that participated in this study cast some doubts about the usefulness of the training

workshops that were organised by the Department of Education in the province. Their doubts were based mainly on the fact that they focused solely on monograde schools. Some of the workshops were meant for administrative management issues. The principal of School B works very far away from the venue where the workshops were usually held and she used public transport. It seemed that the meeting venues were not easily accessible. Secondly, the workshops did not address the needs of the multi-grade classroom. Multi-grade education differ from normal schooling in the teaching and learning approach, time tabling and time allocation, classroom organisation and management as well as lesson planning and preparation. For instance, Mrs Xulu, the principal of School A mentioned that she always needed continuous support of the Subject Advisors and that the workshops provided needed to focus on the contextual issues of the multi-grade classroom. This is what she had to say:

> *"I always need them to call workshops specifically for the multi-grade classroom. They do call workshops but these mostly address the needs of the mono-grade classes. They must visit our school more often to assist us with planning. We need more training to equip us with skills. They have designed the annual teaching plans for all subjects in monograde. It would be better if they could do the same for multi-grade. The SEM(Superintendent Education Manager) has organised the principal's workshop to develop us in IQMS. He also promised another workshop for educators. We hope there will be a workshop that addresses our challenges."* **(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

The sentiments expressed in the excerpt above were also shared by Mrs Yellow, principal of School B when she said that she needed the support of the departmental officials with issues specific to teaching and learning. She explained it like this:

> *"I always need them to call workshops specifically for the multi-grade classroom. They do call workshops but it mostly addresses the needs of the multi-grade classes. Subject advisors are departmental officials but they themselves have no experience of teaching multi-grade classroom and they offer limited support in terms of methods of planning and teaching."* **(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School C).**

Mrs Yellow further explained why most officials neglected this sector (multi-grade teaching) and why the frequency of their visit was unsatisfactory. This is what she said:

> *"This school is far from the district office. It is not easy for the officials to come here and give us support. I need them to come more often to have a look at these challenges we*

*have in this school. At least if they come they will know all our problems and why our learners do not cope in ANA test. They come just once a year, other departmental officials come for nutrition and infrastructure."***(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B)***.*

Departmental officials need to bridge the differences between the two forms of education through continuous professional development training and workshops. Joubert (2010) alludes to the view that multi-grade schools face unique challenges and specific developmental needs. In – service teacher training should target areas where it is mostly needed to develop teacher's subject content and pedagogic content related to specific curriculum areas and based on the contextual factors. Participants in this study indicated that there was a need for workshops and training for managing the multi-grade classroom. Joubert(2010) further confirms that there is a lack of policy guidance for these teachers. More student teachers from universities do not choose these schools to do teaching practice teaching due to the isolation of these schools. Du Plessis (2014) confirms that multi-grade educators live in isolation because they do not seem to interact with young prospective student teachers from universities who could bring new educational perspectives to the school. The shortage of multi-grade educators is that they always apply for posts in monograde schools due to the great burden placed on them.

4.7.2 Lack of support from Department Official

In this section, principals share their experiences about the support they receive or do not receive from the Department of Education officials. It is expected that officials of the Department of Education such as Subject Advisors form the support structure for the schools. It is a normal practice that educators' and principals' teaching and learning challenges are addressed by the Subject Advisors. Multi-grade schools were situated far away from town in the villages or farms in remote areas and these areas hardly get the attention they deserve, usually because of their location (Bhengu, 2005). Thereforethe problems of such schools were hardly communicated to the higher levels of education management. On this point, Taole(2014) states that multi-grade educators are left in isolation to fend for themselves. The Department of Education seem to neglect this form of schooling.According Mrs Xulu, one of the participants, commented that officials did not often come to her school for support. This is how she put it:

"At least once a term we are visited by the subject advisor or the departmental official." **(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

The views expressed in the above extract were also shared by Mrs Yellow who confirmed that the officials of the Department of Education did not visit the multi-grade schools in the outskirts of townfrequently enough. This is how she put it:

"We are visited for teaching and learning support at least once a year. An official who came last term wanted to check on our toilet facility." **(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

Similarly, Mr Zulu, the principal ofSchool C confirmed that the frequency of the official visits was not satisfactory, yet these officials were aware of the challenges faced by such schools. Expressing his exasperation at the slow pace of the visits, this is what he had to say:

"They [Department of Education officials]come once or twice or never come. We phone them or go to their offices. But we expect them to come here. They call workshops for monograde schools and not us. If they come to school they will look at the problems. Sometimes the whole year they never come. Most departmental visits by officials are on the school's administrative issues and not on planning and curriculum provision." **(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

All three principals were unanimous in their view that they needed more support from the Subject Advisors. Workshops conducted by the officials seemed to address both monograde and multi-grade education at the same time and were inadequate to address their particular needs. Multi-grade principals voiced the need for training that is directed specifically for the management of their contextual circumstances. It seemed that most Subject Advisors did not have adequate experience of this form of education and thus there was limited support and knowledge that they could offer. Inaccessibility to such schools also influenced the number of visits to the schools. The data generated indicated that the quality of teaching and learning multi-grade classroom seemed to be compromised by amongst other things, their contextual circumstances.

4.8 Barriers to implementing effective teaching and learning

There are many barriers that were identified which affected the implementation of effective teaching and learning in the three primary schools. The review of literature had indicated that principals encounter a number of obstacles as they manage teaching and managing in multi-grade schools generally and multi-grade classrooms in particular. Responses from the principals of all three schools suggested that the main cause of the challenges pertaining effective teaching and learning and the implementation of the instructional programme revolved around the availability of educators and the allocation of funds to run the school. These barriers included the post provisioning norms (PPN) policy, norms and standards, learner socio-economic background, parental involvement and lack of departmental transport support.

4.8.1 Post Provisioning Norm

Post provisioning norms policy emerged as a barrier to the provision of effective teaching in multi-grade schools. In terms of this policy the allocation of teaching posts is based on the number of learners enrolled in the school. Due to low learner enrolment figures, these schools were allocated few teaching posts and these could not match the number of subjects that are offered in the schools. The consequences of this reality was that classrooms had to be combined so that more grades could be accommodated in just one classroom instead of two or even three classrooms. The number of educators appointed in the three schools (School A, School B and School C)was much lower compared to the number of grades taught. The data suggests that in all three schools effective teaching and learning was compromised by the PPN policy. This is because it did not consider contextual factors of multi-grade schools which werefrom monograde schools.Expressing her views about how this policy affected her school, Mrs Xulu had this to say:

> *"The number of learners does not allow for more educators. We work with what the department give us, no matter how needy we can be for more educators. That is the reason why we combine the grades in one classroom; it is the number of educators. There are no educators for each grade. Our PPN Certificate just gives us the allocation of one principal, one educator and one special educator for Grade R."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

I also saw the PPN certificate which had been issued by the provincial Department of Education for School Aand it showed that the school's learner enrolment stood at 37 learners.Such an enrolment meant that School A qualified to have only two educators and a special post for a Grade R educator.

The views expressed by Mrs Xulu above were also shared by Mr Zulu, the principal of School C. He too, viewed the number of educators in the school as a negative factor that undermined the provision of effective teaching. This is what Mr Zulu had to say:

> *"It is a small school with small number of learners in the classroom. This means there are fewer teachers. One educator has been declared in surplus. She must leave the school. We cannot do our best. Teachers have a burden; they need to cater for all grades. The pace is sometimes slow. Slow learners need to be given attention and other learners are neglected. It is a challenge. The enrolment has not dropped; it's just that it is not going up."*

Most educators always apply for transfers to monograde schools which are closer to their homes. Most of the time teachers travel long distances to school. To avoid long distance travels, some teachers stay within the school premises. For instance, the principal of School B and the educator stayed in the staff cottage which was located within the school premises.

4.8.2 Norms and standards

Norms and standards policy was also found to be posing a barrier to effective teaching and learning in the three primary schools. In terms of this policy, the allocation of funds in a school is also based on learner enrolment the school has. The enrolment of learners in multi-grade schools poses a permanent contextual factor due to the location of the schools. The three schools had small rural communities around them; thus the enrolment in all the three schools hardly increased and the PPN certificated showed this reality. Therefore, the allocation of books was also minimal and that posed a permanent challenge. Mr Zulu of School C indicated that the funds they can utilise to buy teaching and learning material each year was minimal. Mr Zulu, the principal of School C had this to say:

> *"Because of the number of learners in our school the Norms and Standards allocation we receive as the school provide us with minimal material resources we require to ensure*

that there is effective teaching and learning. We cannot order everything. We are always short of textbooks and reading books. This poses a challenge to educators when they need to give homework to learners."

The views expressed by Mr Zulu above were also shared by Mrs Xulu, the Principal of School A. He emphasised the fact that when enrolment figures are low, the funds that are allocated in terms of the norms and standards policy are also small and cannot match the school budgetary needs. This is how he put it:

*"The Norms and Standards are minimal since there are few learners in the school. Our budget needs are high."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School C)**.

The situation depicted in the above extracts is based on the fact that the total number of learners in a school determines the number of educators that the school can have. The trend in the PPN certificates of the three schools indicates that over the years the number of educators has just been two or three. It is only in School Cwhere the certificate indicates that at some stage there were five educators. However, with the consistent decrease in learner enrolment, the number of educators in the school had to be decreased as well.

4.9 Learner socio-economic background

The data indicates that the socio-economic conditions of the learners had negative effects on the teaching and learning situation in the schools. All three participating schools in this research seemed to have similar contextual factors that were different from their urban schools. The extent of poverty could be witnessed by the fact that some learners did not even have school uniforms. During some of my visits to the school I noted that most learners were not in their proper school uniform. School shoes were not worn and the learners wore jerseys of different coloured and designs; clearly, those were not part of the school uniform. A few of the learners had school bags to carry books to school; most used plastic bags. This suggested that the socio-economic situation at their homes was not favourable. Most parents worked as farm labourers and few could afford to buy proper school uniform for their children.

The schools had extremely low learner enrolment which hardly increased over the years. The learners walked long distances from the neighbouring farms and this may have contributed to

high level of absenteeism. They ultimately dropped out in the second term. I also checked class attendance registers and I noted that some learners take long breaks but some come back to school at a later stage. Some learners come back the following year. This is evidence that there are gaps in the provision of teaching and learning. There process of curriculum provision is inconsistent.

The data indicates that there was a lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. This is despite the fact that parents are essential stakeholders in ensuring the quality of education in schools.Whenparentstakeinitiativeintheeducationoftheirchildren,childrenperformbetter(Ndlovu, 2011). However, the level of illiteracy among the parents in the community played a negative role in the continuation of learning at home.When parents have formal education, they are usually able to support their children with their homework at home. However, in the context of this study, it seemed that the rural farm school educators did not receive the support they deserved from the parents. When Mrs Xulu, the Principal of School A was asked how the family background of the learners affected teaching and learning, this is what she had to say:

> *"The school is far from households and homes; learners walk long distances to school. They come to school tired and they cannot concentrate. Most parents are labourers in the farm. They have low level of education and they do not involve themselves in the education of their children."***(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

The views expressed by Mrs Xulu above were also shared by Mrs Yellow, the Principal of School B when she confirmed that parental involvement in her school was minimal. Such a lack of support from the parents was believed to be associated with low level of literacy. This is what she had to say:

> *"Parents are farm workers. Most are illiterate and they do not involve themselves in the education of their children."***(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

Similar views were expressed by Mr Zulu when he said that parental support was lacking and that such lack of support was going to negatively affect teaching and learning situation. This is how Mr Zulu put it:

"Parents are not employed. They rely on imaliyeqolo [social grant]. They can't afford but we always expect them to support us when we go for educational excursions. They are unable to support the school. Teaching and learning is affected by the type of parents we have. The circuit manager proposed that the school must be closed and learners taken to another school. Parents refused and defended that the school must continue." **(Mr Zulu, Principal of School C).**

The data has indicated that due to long distances that the learners travelled to and from the school, there was a need for leaner transport that is provided by the provincial Department of Transport. For instance, Mrs Xulu indicated that in School A, learners walked long distances to school although there is transport that was provided for by the Department of Education. This is how Mrs Xulu put it:

"Another challenge is that the departmental transport helps us but some learners stay in the scattered neighbouring farms which are not in the route of the school bus. Seven learners from the farm over the hill are brought by their farm owner with a car every morning. Some learners walk long distances even Grade R and Grade One." **(Mrs Xulu, Principal of School A).**

Mrs Yellow, the Principal of School B indicated that their application for transport support to the department of Transport had not yet been successful. Her belief was that if learners could be transported to and from school, the problem of them walking long distances would be solved once and for all. Emphasising the need for learner transport, this is what she had to say:

"We applied long time ago,but we did not get any response from the Department of Education. We need to make a follow up." **(Mrs Yellow, Principal of School B).**

The above extract indicates that the problems of learner transport had not been solved by the Department of Transport for rural schools on the outskirts where learners stay far from school. The school was experiencing continued learner transport problem as some learners walked long distances under unsafe places and in various weather conditions. This scenario contributed to them coming to school tired.

4.10 Chapter summary

The chapter has provided a detailed presentation and discussion of the data that was generated from the three research sites. Data has been discussed in relation to the key research questions and the instructional leadership theory. The chapter discussed the data generated guided by the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the analysis. The next chapter provides the findings and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented data that was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews and documents review. The data was discussed using the themes that emerged from the analysis of the transcribed voices of the three primary school principals. This chapter presents the findings that were arrived at after analysing the data that had emerged. Before the findings are presented and discussed, a study summary is done. Thereafter the findings are presented and discussed using the research questions. From the findings, recommendations are made. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

5.2 Summary of the study

The study sought to understand how the principals from the three schools experienced and coped with the conditions in the rural multi-grade institutions as they managed effective teaching and learning. Their experienced of performing their tasks was the main focus and therefore, their voices were crucial in telling their own stories. One of the major assumptions underpinning the study was that contextual issues of such schools had a major influence on the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The literature that was reviewed also highlighted the important role that the environment within which the schools operate plays. It was therefore important to also understand how the environment affected the work of the principals and how they interacted with the environment. More importantly, I also wanted to obtain some insights about how the principals conceptualised multi-grade schooling generally and multi-grade teaching in particular. Because of that focus on managing and teaching in multi-grade schools, the bulk of the literature seemed to focus on teaching in multi-grade schools and the difficulties that principals encounter as they both teach and monitor teaching with a view to achieve effective teaching and learning situation in their schools. The data that emerged after the analysis largely confirmed what the literature had revealed. The next section deals with the presentation and discussion of findings and the research questions are used to discuss the findings.

5.3 Presentation of findings

As highlighted in the previous sections, research questions are used to present the findings and these questions were as follows: (a) What do school principals understand about effective teaching and learning?(b) What strategies do school principals utilise to monitor teaching and learning?(c) As principals and managers, what challenges do they encounter in teaching and managing multi-grade classrooms?

5.3.1 What do school principals understand about effective teaching and learning?

Findings indicate that principals had a nearly similar understanding of the phenomenon of effective teaching and learning. The principals' voices indicated that the departmental policies form the main guideline in teaching and learning. They had strong views about thework schedules which stipulate the topics that must be covered in each learning area; their views were that such schedules mainly focused on the monograde schools and neglected contextual issues defining the multi-grade classroom. Data indicated that principals view the learning outcomes and objectives as essential in defining the effectiveness of the process of teaching and learning the assessment. In a lesson the educator must move learners to the next level of development by attaining the objectives each day. The principal also understood the importance of the management role they were supposed to playin order to ensure that educators do achieve the outcomes.

The meaningthat the principals attach to effective teaching and learning is reflected on the assessment standards and the learning competencies of each learner. I must also state that found it strange that their understanding of effective teaching was limited to preparing the learners for the Annual National Assessment examinations. These principals took the national tests as the yardstick to measure their schools' performativity.

The school mission and vision seemed to form the core purpose of the school and its guideline. It is evident that the role of the principal in managing teaching and learning is reflected in the skills and the school ethos the learner achieved after engaging in the classroom activities. The implementation of the departmental CAPS policy was indicated as essential in implementing purposeful teaching and learning.It emerged that the multi-grade rural school principal related the poli-

cies to the implementation issues which influence multi-grade teaching. It further confirms scholarly arguments that have been presented earlier.

The research findings also indicated that principals used their understanding of the phenomenon of teaching and learning to define the schools' strategic goals. It is evident from their responses that learners in the rural areas needed special management skills to achieve the goals of the school and what department of education envisages for all learners in South Africa.

5.3.2 What strategies do school principals utilise to monitor teaching and learning?

Research findings show that participating principals in the three schools used almost the same strategies to monitor teaching and learning. Learner written work seemed to be the common strategy utilised to check what happens within the classrooms in each period. The number of activities done in class was used by the three principals to check the topics that have been covered in the work schedule. All three principals have indicated that in the case of the multi-grade time constraints posed a challenge in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement. The multi-grade educator did not seem to find time to implement all activities.

The principals in multi-grade schools used the complexity of the activities to ensure that the learners of different grades in each classroom got the teaching content that was appropriate for their age and grade. It is evident that each grade was managed differently by the educator and the principal as the instructional leader employed different strategies which were believed to be in line with the contextual issues and which were different from the monograde schools. Principals from multi-grade schools encountered similar challenges in procuring sufficient resources from the department of education due to their allocations. This tended to hinder the implementation of effective teaching and learning in a similar manner for rural multi-grade schools.

5.3.3 As principals and managers, what challenges do they encounter in teaching and managing multi-grade classrooms?

Principals indicated that there were a number of challenges which compromised the effectiveness of teaching and learning in rural multi-grade schools. Challenges faced by the three schools seemed to be common in the manner they affected the principals' management role. The school enrolment affected the allocation of educators and the school funds according to the Department

of Education's Post Provisioning Norm and Norms and Standards policies. Multi-grade policies were given a few educators making it practically challenging to teach clustered classrooms. The number of educators in the school resulted in the combination of grades to one classroom.

The involvement of parents was found to be poor and as literature suggests, the quality of teaching and learning tended to be negatively affected by the lack of parental support to the schools. Most parents were farm workers who were themselves illiterate and as they worked onthe farms, they did not have the capacities to make any contribution that could assist improve the quality of teaching of their children. To aggravate the problem, learners stayed far from the schools and walked long distances. These schools seemed to be characterised by a high level of learner drop-out rate according to the data gathered from the documents kept in the schools.

5.4 Recommendations

Multi-grade schooling seems to be a form of schooling that is available in most of rural and farm schools. This form of schooling needs to get the attention it deserves to ensure equal education for all. Educator and principal training are essential in handling such classrooms. The literature has demonstrated that multi-grade schooling does not and should not equate poor quality education as the data has shown. Drawing from these bodies of knowledge (literature and the findings of this study), it is recommended that a new dispensation should be established in the country whereby, special training is provided for the teachers who operate within multi-grade environment. Secondly, there is a need for the Department of Education to make special provision in the PPN that will ensure that multi-grade schools do not suffer the negativities they currently experience in terms of the post allocations.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the study and it began with a summary of the study. The findings have been presented according to the research questions. Recommendations were thus discussed drawing from the voices of the three principals in the study.

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Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane Tel: 033 392 1004 Ref.:2/4/8/455

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Ms PNP Zuma
PO Box 101467
SCOTTSVILLE
3209
Dear Ms Zuma
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS
Your application to conduct research entitled: **"MANAGING PERFORMANCE AND AP-PRAISAL IN FARM MULTI-GRADE SCHOOLS: PRINCIPALS AND EDUCATORS",** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:
1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programs are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the
Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 15 June 2015 to 31 July 2016.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu- Natal Department of Education.
UMgungundlovu District

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Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 19 June 2015
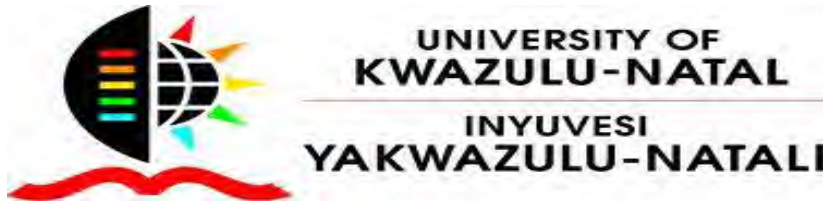
APPENDIX B- PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT'S RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Time of interview:

Date :

Place:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

1. What do you understand about effective teaching and learning?

2. As you are managing a multi-grade school, what strategies do you utilise to monitor effective teaching?

3. How do you manage instructional time?

4. What factors do you think affect the curriculum provision policy in your school?

5. What are the challenges of teaching in a multi-grade school? How do you deal with these challenges?

6. Do you meet with other schools to assist and share ideas on planning and classroom management?

7. What support do you need from your subject advisor or the department?

8. What is your school's mission and vision? How do you communicate that with your school community of educators, learners and parents?

9. What do you do to monitor instructional progress?

10. What are the contextual factors and socio-economic background of the school? How do these affect teaching and learning?

11. Do you have achievement days in your school? How do you identify learners who perform well and learners who need more instructional assistance?

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APPENDIX C: PRINCIPALS' PROFILE

PRINCIPAL'S PROFILE

Name	SCHOOL1	SCHOOL2	SCHOOL3
Number of years as the principal	3years	6 years	5 years
Number of teaching years in the multi-grade school?	7 years	9 years	5 years
What is your qualification in teaching or managing multi-grade classrooms?	Primary Teachers Diploma. ACE	Diploma Bed (HONS)	Master of Education
What workshops have you attended to assist with multi-grade classrooms?	Curriculum content workshop was conducted.	I attended only management workshops	One workshop since 2012 for teaching and learning.
What assistance do you get from the subject advisor?	Give advises on ANA examinations	Workshops were not specifically for multi-grade teaching	Workshops normally focus on monograde school

What means of transport do you use to school and to the circuit office?	I use my car. It is very far ,I spend a lot of money on petrol	I use a bus sometimes taxis. I am forced to be late for work.	I use my car. I live in households nearby the school.
Do you have access to the internet? Do have skills to access education information?	Network problems are inconsistent. I am able to use the internet.	There is no cellular network. I go near the gate to receive calls.	Network is rarely a challenge. I use internet to download important information

APPENDIX D: Letter requesting permission from the principal to participate in the research.

The Principal,

REQUEST FOR YOUR PERMISSION TO BE THE PARTICIPANT IN THE STUDY

I am Phindile Nokuthula Pearl Zuma, a Masters student in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at UKZN. I am required to conduct research in schools as part of completing the degree. I hereby request you to be a participant in my study. The topic of the study is: **Managingeffective teaching and learning in three multi-grade primary schools: Principals' experiences.** The purpose of this study is to understand in depth how principals in primary multi-grade schools experience the management of effective teaching and learning considering their school contextual factors.

The study will conduct recorded interviews with educators that will last for approximately an hour at the time that is convenient to the participant without disturbing teaching and learning. The following information is given to you so that you can make a decision whether you wish to partake in the study. You are free to decide not to partake or withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this research, researcher or the UKZN.

Your participation in this study is voluntary .The information given by you will remain confidential between you, the researcher and the UKZN.Do not hesitate to ask any question about the study before or during participation .I will be pleased to share the results with you after the research is finished. However your name will not be related with the research findings in anyway and your identity as a participant will be known only to the researchers.

There are no known risks and /or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information about the experiences in qualitative research, the opportunity to participate in the study.

UKZN Research Office can be contacted in the following contact details regarding this research.

Supervisor:

Dr. T.T. Bhengu

Tel: (031) 2603534

APPENDIX E: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL TO REQUEST PERMISSSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOL

The Principal,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am Phindile Nokuthula Pearl Zuma,a Masters student at UKZN(Edgewood Campus).As part of my study I am required to conduct research .I hereby request for permission to conduct research in your school.

The title of my research is **Management of Effective Teaching and Learning in three multi-grade primary schools: Principals' experiences** .This study aims to understand how multi-grade principals experience management of effective teaching learning in their context.

Participants will be interviewed for approximately 50-60 minutes. The interview will be conducted at the time convenient to the participant and will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice recorded. Participation will be voluntary.

The will be no financial benefits as a result of participation in the research project. Identity of all participants will not be exposed. Name of the school and that of participants will not be exposed. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews.

Do not hesitate to ask any question about the study before or during participating .I will be pleased to share the results with you after the research is finished. However your name will not be related with the research findings in anyway and your identity as a participant will be known only to the researchers.

UKZN Research Office can be contacted in the following contact details regarding this research.

Supervisor:

Dr. T.T. Bhengu

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MANAGEMENT OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN
THREE MULTI-GRADE PRIMARY SCHOOLS: PRINCIPALS'
EXPERIENCES

[Phindile Nokuthula Pearl Zuma]

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Multi-grade teaching can be regarded as the optimum strategy and practice to reverse the negative trends in rural education and to enable access, equity and quality of education in previously neglected areas (Taole, 2014). This study sought to gain an understanding about the management of effective teaching and learning in three multi-grade primary schools situated on the rural outskirts of Pietermaritzburg within uMgungundlovu District. There are many issues that influence the extent to which teaching and learning can be regarded as effective or not. According to Little (2004), some of these issues include class size, organisation of learners, curriculum provision, clustering, teaching strategies, resources, assessment, learner enrolment, educator training, education policy, legislation, parental community and teacher qualification reflect in the quality of teaching and learning. The role played by the principal as the educator and manager in ensuring that there is effective teaching and learning in the school is the focus of the study. In view of what this study sought to achieve, this chapter introduces the study and also the first chapter of the study. Among other things, this chapter discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, the focus and purpose of the study, the rationale for the study, research questions, the significance of the study, as well as the key concepts that underpin the

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