



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

**INYUVESI
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**RE-IMAGINING THE STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE
RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS: A CASE STUDY OF STAKEHOLDERS VIEWS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Selvan Angamuthu Chetty declare that:

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20 March 2018

Mr Selvan Angamuthu Chetty 201508209
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Dear Mr Chetty

Protocol reference number: HSS/0213/018M

Project title: Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. A case study of stakeholders views.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 8 March 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the 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

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Date:.....

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late mum, Mrs Nagamah Chetty for having crafted my life's journey with her infinite guidance, love and support. Thank you for being my pillar of strength.

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ABSTRACT

After South Africa became a democratic state in 1994, the department of education was faced with a huge responsibility of transforming a divided, unequal and culturally oppressive education system into a single entity that would promote principles of democracy, redress, social empowerment and equity.

Fundamental to this new dispensation and the success of our schools was the appointment of school principals; this for the effective leadership and management of schools. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 provided a framework within which school governing bodies were required to make recommendations on the appointment of principals to the Department of Education after undergoing a selection process.

The purpose of the study intended to capture the voices of educators, parents and principals serving on interview committees on the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. This required the collective participation of circuit managers as resource persons representing the Department of Education. This diverse group was tasked with the enormous responsibility of adjudicating on who the next head of the institution should be. Clearly the inclusion of stakeholders needed to be applauded but certainly the working and the execution of such a responsibility was bound to present challenges.

Following a qualitative case study design embedded within an interpretivist paradigm the findings of this study were derived through focus group interviews. As a grounding to the research, the participants were presented with four labour relations grievance cases that emerged as a result of applicants that may have been aggrieved with the current process.

The Particularist approach together with the Universalist approach constituted the theoretical framework which assisted in analysing data in terms of the format, recruitment and selection of school principals.

The findings revealed that there are serious shortcomings in the current process on how school principals are recruited, selected and appointed at schools. There is a serious concern around the education department continuing to play a submissive role in this process, a

substantial lack of competence on the part of parents and educators to undertake this task and a continued existence of undue influence by the unions.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMC	Circuit Management Centre
DOE	Department of Education
DP	Deputy Principal
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ERO	Education Review Office
GB	Governing Body
HOD	Head of Department
HRM	Human Resource Management
IC	Interview Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LEA	Local Education Authority
NATU	National Teachers Union
NDP	National Development Plan
SASA	South African Schools Act No. 84. of 1996
SGB	School Governing Body
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

We have come to understand that paramount to a successful school is the appointment of a good leader. Various studies in leadership have clearly indicated the key role played by principals with regards to the quality of education in schools (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011; De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011). Understanding the link between leadership and quality education requires first-hand experience. Having been exposed in my field of employment to the various anecdotal accounts of challenges in the new processes involving staff appointment, I have decided to research the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. This chapter provides an overview of the study. It commences with the background to the study and then proceeds to the statement of the problem. The purpose and rationale for the study is subsequently discussed proceeded by the outline of the study. This chapter then culminates with the chapter summary.

1.2 Background to the Study

After South Africa became a democratic state in April 1994, the Department of Education was faced with a huge responsibility of transforming a divided, unequal and culturally oppressive education system into a single entity that would promote principles of democracy, redress, social empowerment and equity. The aim of promulgating the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) was to facilitate, “the devolution of authority and increase community involvement in decision making at school level through the establishment of school governing bodies” (Murphy 2002, p.96). The selection of high quality principals is indeed an area that requires the school governing body to play a leading role.

The pre-1994 era saw the department of education being completely responsible for the appointment of principals. Subsequent to this, the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) saw the education system give power to school governing bodies to

recommend to the Department of Education candidates suitable for promotion to management posts (Thurlow, 2003). The implications of this are far reaching in that parents, educators and members belonging to organised labour now play a direct role in making recommendations to the Department of Education in the appointment of principals. All of this is underpinned by the obligations of the State, as employer, set out in section 195 and 197 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the obligations of employers more generally are prescribed through the Labour Relations Act (1995), and the Employment of Educators Act (1998).

According to Portin, Alejano, Knapp and Marzolf (2006) leadership role is based on a commitment to lead for learning, which is to pursue a learning improvement agenda for the students in the school, and the school as an organisation. Good leadership in a school is the hallmark of a successful school. Principals of school must not only be competent in terms of effective leadership skills but must also display mastery in their understanding of curriculum and policy matters. The core responsibilities of principals of schools as espoused in the Employment of Educators Act 76 (1996) are a pre-requisite for the employment of principals. Like a chief executive officer of a corporate company, the success or failure of an institution is the unambiguous responsibility of the principal. This is why Bush (2007) postulates that there is an increase in recognition that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners. It therefore cannot be overemphasized that the recruitment and selection of high quality principals is a matter of paramount importance to organisational success. According to Doyle & Locke (2014) approximately one-fourth of a schools impact on academic achievement can be attributed to the school leaders, second only to classroom teachers. Further to this, it goes on to explain that highly effective principals raise the achievement of an ordinary student by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year, while ineffective principals lower achievement by a similar amount.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

While the education department must be commended for having brought parents, organised labour and educators into a process deemed critical, the initiative has certainly not been devoid of challenges. Dladla (2014) asserts that some parent members of the school governing bodies have low levels of education and are therefore not able to cope with the roles as stipulated by SASA. In many instances members of the interview committee are barely able to read the

questions to the candidates let alone understand and process their responses. The reality on the ground is that recommendations made by school governing bodies are almost always validated and approved by the Department of Education. The rise and fall of schools have more often than not been as a result of the appointment of principals. Clearly this is one of the most important responsibilities of the Department of Education.

Further to this, the introduction of teacher unions as observers may further compound the problem. Rather than playing the oversight role they have an interest in their members in general and one or two members in particular (Smith & Oosthuizen, 2011). This clearly compromises processes which require absolute objectivity. Given all of this, the focus of this study is to look at the structure and the format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to capture the voices of educators, parents and principals of schools, serving on the interview committees for the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. Further to this to provide us with an understanding of how this impacts on leadership and management of schools and finally to provide recommendations on how the current format and structure of recruiting and selecting principals can be improved.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

I have come to realise over the last 11 years, being appointed as a Circuit Manager that there are challenges and inconsistencies in the recommendations made by school governing bodies for the appointment of Principals to schools. This is so because the social realities of each school governing body are different. The importance of education can be reflected in controversies surrounding divergent ideological positions and the interests they represent (Mahmood et al., 2016). Having said that we need to understand that, on the one hand we need to recognise and acknowledge parents as being the custodians and fees paying individuals of schools. However, on the other hand we need to understand that they have a vested interest in their children's education and how schools are staffed. Further, we must understand that like we adopted outcomes based education from another country which had serious implications for our education by its failure, so too have we imported a model of staff selection that may work in countries that have the necessary human capital to do so, but may have shortcomings for us. The

effectiveness of school governing bodies as become a national question. Members of school governing bodies emerge from different backgrounds both socially and in terms of their vocation. Understanding the intricacies of education therefore becomes a challenge. It is with this in mind that Maote (2018) advocates that a special training unit for the training and induction of newly elected members of SGBs be established to ensure effective school governance. There seems to be a gap between the expectations of education on how the selection process to appoint principals should take place and what pertains on the ground. The area of recruitment, selection and appointment of principals has been explored by a variety of scholarship. Clearly it is a subject that has drawn attention both locally and globally. Two elements that hinder recruitment, are the shortage of qualified applicants and the lack of instruments or predictors to guide the recruitment, selection and hiring process (Ash, Hodge & Connell, 2013). It is a process that is fundamental to the success of an institution provided that it is advocated with the necessary transparency, fairness and diligence which the process requires. However, we find that there continues to be areas of dispute, dissatisfaction and serious challenges surrounding the process. I have identified this to be a gap in the research because not enough has been said about how these shortcomings may be averted or mitigated.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it proceeds to look at the structure and format of the process of recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. A greater understanding of this process will not only highlight the shortcomings, but provide alternatives for its improvement. Further to this, the study is significant because its findings may explore the area of competence of parents serving in school governing bodies, particularly in socio-economically challenged areas where the necessary education and or qualifications to fulfil this task may be areas of concern. Whilst it is important to look at the structure and format of the recruitment process, it is equally important to explore the implications of recruiting individuals that may be suitable or those that may not be suitable, bringing into perspective the significance of the study. One of the most critical aspects in the process of education management is whether you have identified the correct principal for the job. There are numerous examples of schools that have either improved drastically or deteriorated within a short period time as a result of this recruitment process. Sadly schools that are retrogressing may have to contend with the incumbent for a considerable period

of time. This is why we sometimes have two schools virtually on the same street; one with a very high enrolment and the other with an extremely low enrolment. Ultimately the findings of this study would point us in a direction to address some of these pertinent issues.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

- To understand what the participants explanation of the format is of the recruitment, selection and the appointment of school principals.
- To ascertain what the implications of this are for the leadership and management of schools.
- To establish what needs to be done to improve the current format and structure of recruiting, selecting principals.

1.8 Critical Research Questions

The research questions for my study are as follows:

1. How do participants describe or explain the effectiveness of the format and the structure of recruiting, selecting and appointing school principals?
2. What are the implications of the format and structure of recruitment, selection and appointment of principals for school leadership and management?
3. How can the current format and structure of recruiting, selecting principals be improved?

1.9 Delimitations / demarcation of the Study

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is a vast department comprising and incorporating 12 districts. I have limited my study to one district that being the Pinetown district. As a result of the province being so vast, circumstances and the contextual factors are different from one district to another. Further to this, some districts have schools that are found to be located predominantly in rural and semi-rural areas. The levels of comprehension and understanding of policy matters and the regulations governing the selection and appointment of principals may be different from one school to another. It must therefore be said that the study confines itself to a few principals, a select group of parents from school governing bodies and a sample of educators

that have been part of the selection process. The findings emerging from the study may in no way be generalisable to the whole of the 12 districts in KwaZulu-Natal. However, given the qualitative nature of the study it means that these findings may provide useful guidelines for further studies on this subject.

1.10 Organisation / outline of the Study

The study is divided into 5 chapters. A general overview and background of the key aspects of the study is provided for in chapter one. The study is introduced by placing on record the key role played by principals within a school. A brief background to the study is presented followed by the statement of the problem. The purpose and rationale for the study is supported by the current challenges and inconsistencies that exist in school governing bodies. The significance of the study is further highlighted by paying particular attention to the importance of good leadership and management in schools. The critical research questions point us in the direction of the study and how the research will unfold while taking into account some of the delimitations of the study.

Chapter two is presents a critical review of literature related to the study. It also provides a description of the theoretical framework used in the study.

Chapter three outlines the research design and methodology that is used in carrying out the study. It presents the methodological approach and methods used to collect data. Aspects covered in this chapter would include data analysis, sampling, trustworthiness, ethics and limitations of the study.

Chapter four is responsible for data analysis and discusses the data in line with the relevant literature and theoretical framework. Key themes that emerged from the data will be presented in this chapter.

Chapter five draws conclusions and summarises the study based on the data collected from the research questions. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations are made.

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented an overview on the entire study. The following chapter deals with the literature review and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided a background to this study. I also fleshed out the rationale and significance of the study, placing all of it in its correct perspective and context. Chapter two is twofold. The first part comprises of the literature review and the second part deals with the theoretical framework of this study. A literature review is a critical evaluation of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. After carefully applying my mind to this chapter, I decided to use my research questions as a framework to organise the reviewed literature. This will give this chapter both structure and meaning.

2.2 Literature Review

The following is a comprehensive literature review on the selection and appointment of school principals. The literature review commences with a broad understanding of human resources management and then proceeds to the involvement of school governing bodies in appointing principals. It then proceeds to the concerns around the appointment of principals. The literature review concludes with the successful and effective recruitment of principals.

2.2.1 Human Resource Management

Human resource management is by far the most significant aspect of an institution or organisation, considering that the most important resource of an organisation are its people. Ideally, among other things, people bring creativity, diversity and energy to an organisation. The process of selecting people thus becomes the most important human function for an organisation. Thurlow (2003) affirms that since the most important resource are people in organisations pertaining to education, then appointing competent people is the most important task that managers have to take. In the context of my dissertation that would be directly linked to the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals.

Having understood the critical nature of the task in hand, in appointing leaders there is very little or no room for error. If for some reason the wrong principal in a school is selected, it becomes

almost impossible to train and develop them because in many instances they are incorrigible. It is on that basis that Mathis and Jackson (2005) argue that good training will not remedy or make up for bad selection. In many instances, appointments of principals in leadership positions are for long periods of time. Once a person is appointed to the position of being the head of the school, it becomes very difficult if not impossible to relieve him or her of the position. It is with this in mind that Mathis (2005) advocates that it is better to hire hard and manage easy.

One cannot exclude and be oblivious to the significance of human resources management in schools particularly in the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. Human resource management has consistently shown that the formal policies that organisations espouse are not always a good guide to the way they are implemented in practice. Human resource management policies often have unintended consequences which are not fully considered in the decision making process (Newell & Scarbrough, 2018). Making the assumption that all school governing bodies in all schools have the capacity to officiate over the selection and appointment of school principals may be a case of disingenuity.

2.2.2 Involvement of school governing bodies in appointing principals

It has been found that there is a low level of meaningful contact between school and parents. Apathy exists on the side of parents, low expectations on the side of principals and teachers, and an organisational structure facilitating parent-school interaction is lacking (Michael, Wolhuter & van Wyk, 2018). Currently in South Africa, authority being devolved to school governing bodies is based on the principle of distribution of authority to lower levels and the decentralisation of power. Tleane (2002) argues that a governing body is a creature of the law, which has been created to lend expression to the notion of partnership between parents, learners, educators and the state. Therefore, members of the school governing body are now in possession of rights which invariably is transferred into authority and power as well as duties which manifests itself into responsibilities and obligations. It is therefore imperative that as decision-makers, it is important that those that are responsible for the crafting of legislation, clearly outline and define the role and the extent of involvement of school governing bodies in the selection of staff.

Governing bodies in line with section 20 of the SASA (1996), play a critical role in the recruitment, selection and appointment process by making recommendations to the Head of

Department. This necessitates that School Governing Bodies (SGBs) establish staff selection committees as prescribed in the departmental procedure manual. It is imperative that these committees be chaired by an elected member of the school governing body, must involve and include members of the SGB, members of organised labour and a departmental nominee serving as a resource person. The Act allows for the SGB to co-opt members into the selection committees provided that they have the relevant expertise to fulfil their responsibilities. Notwithstanding all of this, it is the responsibility of the Department of Education to workshop staff selection committees on processes and procedures to be followed in the selection process. The different stages of selection include the receiving and management of applications, sifting, shortlisting, interviewing and ratification. The selection committee is involved with shortlisting, interviewing and drawing up a list of the scores of those that are interviewed. The SGB then ratifies the list of candidates in order of preference and a submission is made to the Head of Department for appointment. Ngcobo and Ngwenya (2005) argue that making such recommendations is tantamount to a formal appointment as the Head of Department in education can only question the decision of the SGB if gross irregularities in terms of protocols and procedures are reported. In the event that there is a grievance or dispute on proceedings then members of the selection committee may be called to lead evidence in these grievance or dispute committees.

2.2.3 Concerns around the appointment of principals

Since the promulgation of the South Africans Schools Act No.84 of 1996 concerns arose around the appointment of principals. The National Development Plan launched in 2012 stresses the importance of making the right principal appointment. Nationally processes governing appointments are expressed in the Personnel Administrative Measures document. After applicants that meet with the minimum appointment criteria are shortlisted interviews are conducted. These interviews are conducted by selection committees at school comprising parents, a departmental representative who may be a principal and union representative whose role is to observe that due process is followed. Thereafter, a recommendation is made by the selection committee to the SGB for ratification and forwarding to the Head of Department of the province who is responsible for the final appointment. Several reports have been forthcoming over the years of undue influence and interference by the unions beyond their scope of

responsibility of serving as observers. School Governing Bodies too have been the centre of controversy over the years with allegations of bribery and cronyism and that they seriously lack capacity to interview and make the right selection (Taylor 2014; City Press 2014). In trying to improve the appointment process for principals the NDP recommends reducing the undue influence of unions in the appointment process while providing increased support to SGBs to fulfil their responsibility.

In a recent study conducted in the schools in New Zealand it was found that the areas of concern around the appointment of principals are similar to that of the South African context. The capacity of individual boards and trustees to fulfil complex governance tasks is an issue of ongoing concern, that officials and researchers know relatively little about (Robinson, Ward & Timperly, 2003). The Education Review Office (ERO) conducted a summary of governance findings in 673 schools (545 primary and 128 secondary) between January 2005 and March 2007. They concluded that 60 percent of boards sampled were governing their schools well, 33 percent needed to identify areas for improvement, and 7 percent required ‘targeted’ interventions, to bring about significant ‘improvements to quality of governance practice’ (ERO, 2007, p.1). In schools that required targeted interventions the Education Review Office attributed poor governance to the lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including poor personnel management practices, a lack of good quality and non-compliance with legislative requirements.

According to Anderson, Briggs and Burton (2001) school governance in the United States of America is different from that of the Republic of South Africa in that education in the USA has very limited influence by the federal government and is the responsibility of the various states. Uniform standards is therefore absent in the system of school governance in the USA. Decisions that are undertaken by school governing councils on issues pertaining to personnel, is viewed by many as an infringement and undermining of collective bargaining and teachers rights in the USA.

In the United Kingdom, the system of governance is somewhat similar to that of the Republic of South Africa in that community structures are represented in school councils. The aims and objectives of policy initiatives in both countries is based on maximising parental participation in the making of decisions including staff through school governing bodies (Arnott & Raab, 2000).

The South African Schools Act (SASA) No.84 of 1996 section 20(1) has common elements to the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1998, in Britain particularly sections 41 to 47. According to this school governing bodies are duty bound to perform numerous tasks including that of the selection of educators to be appointed to the relevant vacant posts. On completion of the selection process the committee makes a recommendation for the preferred candidate to the Local Education Authority (LEA). It is worth noting that the major difference is that unlike in South Africa, in Britain a departmental representative must attend and actively participate in all selection meetings to obtain principals and deputy principals.

It is a fact that students in the United States perform at lower academic levels (Gonzales, et al., 2008) and is a discussion in the coffee shops and media. A shift in attention and focus will be required by students, educators, parents and communities so that schools can be transformed from institutions of compliance to deep learning institutions. Research has shown that the second most important contributing factor after instructional quality to student achievement and learning is principal leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). It has come to be known that student achievement is impacted on by the leadership that principals provide. It is therefore incumbent on superintendents and school boards to hire principals who have an idea and understanding on how to achieve high academic standards in schools. School boards and superintendents have alluded to the fact that having effective principals depended on effective recruitment. According to the Board of Labour (2010-2011), there will be an increase in new jobs in respect of principals by almost ten percent going into 2020 informed by growth in learner enrolment of school-aged children. Two of the most important contributions that superintendents can make to the success and high performance of districts is the task of how they recruit and select school principals. The achievement, welfare and security in all faculties, staff and schools are the responsibility of principals. A thorough involvement is required by all superintendents when it comes to the hiring of principals as this is undoubtedly a high-stake proposition.

2.2.4 Successful and effective recruitment of principals

While the successful selection and recruitment of principals can be extremely time consuming and challenging, structured support and an effective process can lead to principal satisfaction and the election of the most qualified candidates (Normore, 2004). The following steps listed below are generally included in the effective recruitment and hiring of principals which should be completed by consultants, by superintendents of leadership teams or superintendents. It must be said that the use of consultants can either be for the entire process or for part of the process. It is of paramount importance that all steps of the process should be documented in the event that there are questions about biasness and fairness. Ideally, the process of hiring principals should span over a period of 12 months (Clifford, 2012). Fundamental to the success of the recruitment and hiring of principals are the following three processes, namely pre-screen process, screening and interviewing process and follow-up selection process.

2.2.4.1 Pre-screen Process

After having identified committees, they need to be trained so that they fully understand the needs of the school. Throughout the entire process of selecting principals, these committees will play a supportive role and give feedback and input to the superintendents. One of the more crucial areas would be to identify both the preferred and the required qualifications for the principalship. As part of advertising the post the announcement of the vacancies must be made in appropriate places such as the district websites. Information on website should be easily available and accurate. Use state networks, regional and national networks, professional associations and graduate leadership programmes to solicit applications and spread the word. All applications received must be kept in an organised manner. It is important to respond to each letter of interest and include all relevant information.

2.2.4.2 Screening and Interviewing Process

An initial screening of applications must be conducted where one considers candidates based on experience and credentials. Make contact with the references of candidates that qualify. Interviews should be conducted as a second-step screening. A behavioural, structured or situational interview process should be conducted when candidates are interviewed. In these interviews candidates are asked to provide details about hypothetical situations that might arise

in the future or particular past experiences. Consistency is important and all candidates must be asked the same questions with the option of follow-up or probing questions. A high level of validity, reliability and legal defensibility can be obtained from the structural format interview of actual experience. Traditional resume-driven interviews are less productive and are unable to predict successful job performance (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2008). An answer guide reflecting particular interview questions to cover each standard in the critical practices framework has been designed (Ash, Hodge & Connell, 2012). Committees should independently rate candidates' performance in terms of the answer guide and record responses. After the process of combining ratings and discussing candidates answers a shortlist of three to five candidates should be identified for the purpose of follow-up interviews and on-site visits.

2.2.4.3 Follow-up Selection Process

District officials or consultants may visit candidates in their current institutions to ascertain how they are functioning in their current jobs. After administering any follow-up questions, superintendents and their teams can go ahead and rank the top candidates. Finally, the superintendents and their teams should discuss top candidates and select a new principal.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework that is used by researchers to examine the issues raised will dictate to a large extent, the nature of the issues identified and the method of analysis conducted. A theoretical framework forms a particular vision of the world and a particular dimension from which to identify and study phenomena. It is responsible for providing researchers with a set of concepts that is structured so that the problem under study can be tackled (DeLoy & Gitlin, 2010). Working without a framework or working with a framework that is theoretically flawed may undermine or compromise identification and analysis of issues raised. The theoretical framework within which the research will be located will be centred around two theoretical approaches, namely the particularism approach and the universalism approach. These will be used as a lens for this study. Both these approaches will be discussed and expanded on with the aim of understanding the approach that underpins the current process within the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal. The reason for this is to consolidate a premise and explore which approach applies both in practice and theory and to ascertain the extent to which the leadership and management of schools are accordingly affected.

2.3.1 Particularist Approach

According to Foskett and Lumby (2003, p. 70) the particularist approach in candidate selection is “shaped by the personal affiliation of the players, for example kinship, religion, ethnic or political similarities”. This affiliation takes centre stage when recruitment and selection takes place at the expense of being objective and acting in the best interest of what is educationally sound. “The pervasive tendency to act in a particularist manner in selection, promotion, etc is part of the general malaise of corruption that is very rampant in African society and organisational life” (Akinussi 1991, p.167). Clearly the very individuals that have been tasked with putting their children first, compromise them with impunity day-in and day-out. ‘The practice particularism has given rise to vociferous accusations of ethnicity, favouritism, nepotism and the like in selection’ (Akinussi 199, p.168). Notwithstanding the fact that these practices take place in almost all work environments, the consequences of this in education are dire.

Particularism points in a direction where relationships come before social codes which are abstract, so that appropriate behaviour and norms are dependent on a particular context. In particularistic societies, social relations rely on strong, cohesive group ties informed by principles of tradition, conformity and benevolence (Uslaner, 2002). Gleaning from this it becomes abundantly clear that in situations like this it becomes extremely difficult to apply yourself objectively. However, it must be stated that benevolence and material gain seem to be the order of the day in many of the processes that unfold. Particularist attitudes have been interpreted as conducive to lower civicness and higher prevalence of corruption (Lumby, 2006). The indoctrination and malicious influence that individuals have in other aspects of society seem to permeate that of education.

According to Gronn and Lacey (2010) there is a trend emerging in the replenishment of leaders where there is an increase in predilection in some primary and secondary government schools in some states in Australia in how they go about making the appointments for the candidacy of the post of principal in that internal candidates, that is candidates within the school are nominated as opposed to external candidates. In the display of this particularist approach there is literally an attempt to reproduce the past leaders in all aspects such as styles, attributes, skills and temperament rather than taking the responsibility of adopting a view that is objective and transparent in the selection of leaders. Whilst there may be an avowed commitment of the

authorities in education to explore the system that entails merit-based appointments, some notion of who may be fit seems to be in the upper-most minds of those in charge of selection. As we may all well know, fit is tantamount or conducive to cloning (Gronn & Lacey, 2010). The interpretation of what may be fit to one panel may not be the same for the other. Hence the reinforcement of the particularist approach is worth noting. In many instances, where there is a likelihood of tension between imperatives that are conflicting pertaining to universalism (merit) and particularism (suitability) in recruitment the tension will be resolved in favour of particularism when institutions and organisations attach a high value to cultural uniformity (Herriot, 2002). When schools adopt a particularist approach and appointments are made on the basis of who the applicants know rather than what the applicants know, this offers little solace to unsuccessful candidates other than the fact that it may account on the side of the candidates belief that the process of selection is corrupt.

While there may be many instances where principals are appointed based on their quality of teaching, particularistic tendencies prevail in many instances. “ In Nigeria and Botswana principals are not even appointed based on criteria of teaching quality since political connections may be the dominant factor in their appointment” (Oplakta, 2004, p. 434). In Kenya, Herriot et al. (2002) affirm that many head teachers have been identified as leaders in schools on the basis of dubious qualifications often of a personal nature rather than relevant experience and proven skills in the field of management. In South Africa while many principals hold qualifications in management, in many instances it is found that the focus is on achieving accreditation rather than improving schools (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Hence many of the managers would seek institutions where standards are compromised to further their qualifications.

2.3.2 Universalist Approach

The universalist approach is referred to as ‘best practice’ and promotes achievement of high organisational performance, irrespective of company strategy and in all contexts, through a high commitment model (Storey, 2014). The reasons for this is simply that it is based on a model that is transparent, objective and universal. Universalism attempts to treat all people the same. The law is applicable to everyone including those that are powerful and rich. It further goes on to accept people that are different.

It is sometimes extremely difficult to determine choices that are most ethical. If something for one person is not right, then the status quo must apply to every other person. The universalist approach is responsible for equal standards for all employees. The universalist approach is said to be the most frequently used approach in Western countries (Foskett and Lumby, 2003). The exclusion of biasness and favouritism is what directs this approach which is underpinned by objective criteria for selection. According to Foskett and Lumby (2003, p71) this approach involves a selection process ‘which attempts to match applicants to objective criteria, because it is both more fair, and therefore more motivating and also more successful in identifying the best match to the vacant post’.

The universalistic approach finds favour in many countries and states, for example in the three states of Australia namely Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria. In Tasmania for example, promotion and appointment are made on the competence and the capacity of an individual to fulfil his responsibility. This in essence is to preclude the use of patronage, discrimination, nepotism and favouritism as an underlying basis for selection and decision making (Department of Education, Tasmania, 2004 p.2). One of the fundamental requirements and a general rule for local selection is that applicants are required to send documentary material about themselves including the names of referees in the schools of their choice. Thus those applying for principals vacancies in Queensland a 3000 word statement which focuses on the selection criteria, a two page resume and a task activity verification sheet. Site visits are part of the undertaking for candidates if they are shortlisted and finally an interview by a small panel of selectors where the candidate is interviewed.

According to Thurlow (2003) since a candidate cannot be summed up by an interview only, one needs to consider other assessment techniques before making the final choice so that it provides an opportunity for more information to be gained. These assessment techniques include and are not limited to candidates having to perform a particular task, short presentations on subjects pertaining to education, the writing of reports on information given to an individual, observed group discussions that require close observation of individuals in a group discussion around a given topic on education, a role-play simulation where candidates are called upon to enact the role in the job they have applied for, and finally where candidates are expected to complete tests that depicts general intelligence together with skills and aptitude and areas related to their

personality. Thurlow (2003: 73) points out that this approach to selection has been gaining favour in the educational world but may not have spread to all parts of the world. A case in point is the selection process in our very own department of education in South Africa.

2.4 Chapter Summary

The first part of this chapter focused on the literature review unpacking areas of human resources management, the state of school governing bodies, concerns around the appointment of principals and successful and effective recruitment of principals. Thereafter, the second part was my theoretical framework which looked at the Particularistic approach and the Universalistic approach and its impact on recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. The next chapter will encapsulate my research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the methodological design of the study. In the previous chapter I presented the literature review and the theoretical framework which guided the course of my study. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the research design and methodology that I used to generate data. Just as was presented in my literature review, my research questions were used carefully to establish the best method to acquire data. The research paradigm is discussed in this chapter. The research paradigm in my study is the interpretivist paradigm. This is followed by the qualitative approach that my study took. The methodology is then discussed wherein case studies were chosen. The section thereafter dealt with the data generation and the selection of participants. This chapter concludes with the last three sections which entails trustworthiness, ethical issues and the limitations that my study is subjected to.

3.2 Research paradigm

Having to work with different individuals from different social and ethnic backgrounds my world view migrated from facts and statistics and wanting to remain objective. I began to be mindful and see like Lincoln and Guba (1985) put it, the different realities and the different ways to create meanings. I became more receptive to knowledge and always tried to understand that around me there are people that emerge from different contexts. My reason for using the interpretivist paradigm is that I need to work with principals of schools, educators and parents of learners and attempt to understand and find meaning about their lived experiences and interpretations as the study answers the research questions (Bertram and Christiansen 2014; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Having understood all of this, it is clear that the interpretivist paradigm is the appropriate paradigm for this research. Members of the interview committee are going to construct their own reality based on their performances and prejudices and their interaction with the applicants, department officials and unions during the selection and interview process, therefore the study is best suited to the interpretivist paradigm (Check and Schutt, 2012). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that in the interpretivist paradigm,

researchers work closely with their participants to generate data. . The lived experience and interpretations of the participants is of paramount importance to my research. The principals, educators and members of the school governing body are going to construct their own reality based on their performances and prejudices in their interaction with various stakeholders, therefore the interpretivist paradigm best suits this study (Check & Schutt, 2012).

3.3 Research design

In qualitative research, the underlying view is that meaning is constructed socially by individuals in interaction with their world (Merriam,2003). In this study principals, parents, educators, and the applicants interact with each other through the selection process. Through this interaction it gave me an excellent outlook to what the process of selecting principals entails. The researcher being central to the activities being conducted is another feature specific to qualitative research (Merriam, 2013). I have been a key participant in the process of generating research data and conducting the data analysis. Being the instrument in the study, gave me an exceptional advantage of the verbal and non-verbal communication (Merriam, 2013) which extensively contributed to the analysis that followed. Qualitative research includes gaining an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. It provides insight into the problem. Data is generated and analysed qualitatively because of the use of focus group interviews. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) assert that a qualitative study is about generating in-depth data which I find useful in my study which is then analysed as per the responses of the focus groups.

3.4 Research methodology

My study was going to understand the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. It was therefore my understanding that a case study be used as a methodology for my study. Nisbet and Watt (1984) assert that a case study is a specific instance that is designed frequently to illustrate a more general principle. One of the reasons this methodology was used is because it provides a unique example of real situations with real people enabling one to understand ideas more clearly. It must be said that a case study can get to the bottom of a situation in ways that are not always reliable with numerical analysis. Case study is a research where the researcher “explores in-depth a program or event, an activity, a process on one or more

individuals” (Creswell, 2003, p.15). The case in this study was the participation of principals, educators and parents in selection processes for the recruitment and appointment of principals of schools. Through the use of focus groups they were able to describe and relate their experiences as a result of their involvement in the selection process and being elected members serving on selection committees. A case study provides a “distinctive example of real people in real situations which enable the readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply representing them with abstract theories or principles (Cohen, et al., 2011, p.289). Furthermore, Rule and John (2011, p.4) argue that a case study “is a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge”.

3.5 Selection of Participants

The quality of a piece of research is not only about the methodology that is used, but also about the suitability in the sampling. The selection method was purposive. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) indicate that the sampling would be purposive because I have chosen the subject with a specific intention. Further to this, participants were chosen in such a way that they will assist the study to achieve its objectives as outlined in chapter one. The participants for the study have been purposefully selected as they were within the specified context (Rule & John, 2011). In choosing the four principals for the research, I had to ensure that each of them had been appointed within the last 8 years. I had to ensure that there was representivity in terms of gender because there are implications for both males and females in the selection process. The educators that were selected also required careful consideration as they had to serve in the school governing bodies and have the necessary experience in the selection process. The third focus group was made up of parents and a selection of parents from different socio economic standings was necessary to get an overview of the parents understanding of the process. In many cases purposive sampling was used in order to access ‘knowledgeable people’; those who have in-depth knowledge of particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise and experience (Ball, 1990). The group comprised of four participants in each group. Just before the selection process can take place I had developed a relationship that was cordial with the participants through having informal discussions to enhance confidence in them.

3.6 Data generation

Rule and John (2011) argue that case studies involve analyses based on multiple perspectives that not only focuses on participants perspectives but on perspectives emanating from their interaction with each other. Focus groups then seemed an ideal data generation tool in this case study that could achieve this objective. Therefore data was generated through focus group interview so that in the least amount of time, multiple perspectives could be derived from participants in just one setting (Cohen *et al*, 2011). It was from the interaction of the group that the data emerged. Focus groups are contrived settings, bringing together a chosen group of people (Hyden & Bulow, 2003) to discuss a particular given theme or topic where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes. The groups were presented with the outcomes of four labour relations case that had emerged as a result of processes for the appointment of principal having been disputed. The participants interacted with each other rather than the interviewer so that the participants' views could emerge.

The following 4 grievance cases were used in my research to generate data. The location or setting is in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, in the Pinetown district. These were four grievances that arose as a result of applications made for the position of principals in the various human resource management circulars. The two areas that were highlighted to the participants of the research were the issues in dispute and the recommendations made by the grievance committee. It must be noted that there is a high level of grievance lodged according to the district officials. In my research I will outline the four grievance cases as a foreground to generate data in my research. Having listened to the four grievance cases, the participants were able to process some of the areas of challenge within the selection and the recruitment process. They were given to understand that the areas of concern that pertain to processes that they may be involved with are also areas of concern in other parts of the Pinetown District and the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. When interacting with the questions put forward to the focus group, experiences and comparisons were shared. As proposed by Greeff (2011) and Cohen *et al.*, (2011) the focus group interview concerned itself with the product of group interactions, comparisons of group members experiences and perspectives, agreements, contestations and generalisations.

3.7 Data analysis

Data was systematically organised after completing the interview process, so that it could be subjected to data analysis that is qualitative as part of the process of searching for meaning. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe qualitative data analysis as a process whereby the researcher organises, accounts for and explains the data. The analysis of data began with it first being transcribed. Having transcribed the data from the field, the purpose of data analysis was to make sense of accumulated information. According to Vithal and Jansen (1997, p. 27) data analysis includes three steps. The scanning and cleaning of data, followed by the organising of data and finally re-presenting the data in different ways. I began by reading the data from the focus groups. Thereafter checking for inaccurate, incomplete or irrelevant data followed. The data was then organised by counting, describing, comparing and categorising the information. Finally, in the analysis of data it was of paramount importance to honour the paradigmatic stance of the study to ensure that data is presented in the most objective way possible while keeping true participants views of realities (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Thayler, Evans, McBride, Queen & Spyridakis, 2007). The data was eventually be presented as per the responses of the participants in the focus group interview.

3.8 Ethical issues

There are three ethical principles that need to be followed according to Bertram and Christiansen (2014, p.66) and these are autonomy, non- maleficence and beneficence. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) assert that autonomy is where you must get consent from those participating in the study. All participants or subjects have the liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. Non-maleficence speaks to the fact that the study does not harm the subject or any other people. Beneficence is where the study must be of benefit to the subjects where possible (Bertram and Christiansen, 2014). These ethical issues was carried through my entire research. Ethical clearance was applied for and granted by Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a result of the magnitude of this study. A letter was also sent to the KwaZulu- Natal (KZN) Department of Education requesting permission for selected schools to participate in the study. Permission was also granted by the Head of Department in KZN. Further to this a consent form was signed by principals, educators and parents granting consent to participate in the research.

3.9 Trustworthiness

It is impossible for research to be one hundred percent valid or trustworthy but researchers need to constantly pay attention to improving the validity and the trustworthiness of their study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010, p105). By asking the same questions during interview process to the different subjects, trustworthiness is ensured. This according to Conrad and Serlin (2006) would help create consistency and would enhance the trustworthiness in the data collection process. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that the researcher should not be biased in anyway so that the trustworthiness would be safe guarded. When dealing with trustworthiness the researcher must consider four criteria: dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.9.1 Dependability

Lincoln and Guba(1985) assert that there exists a close relationship between credibility and dependability. They further argue that all processes pertaining to the study should be reported and by so doing it provides a platform for the researchers in future to be able to repeat the work for the purpose of the study and gain the same results. To ensure that this was the case, I validated my data through my participants during data generation.

3.9.2 Credibility

All interviews were transcribed meticulously after they were recorded. This provided a platform to substantiate the information as being correct and truthful. Participants were met before and after the interview process. After interviews, transcripts were forwarded to the participants to verify data which provided an opportunity to change any information they believe may be incorrect and to ensure details were valid and reliable (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

3.9.3 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which results of the research can be applied in a similar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My study took the responsibility of ensuring information was provided pertaining to the type of participants, the location of the schools involved in the research, situation.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the researchers comparable concern to objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My data interpretations were at all times backed by evidence thus addressing confirmability. My audio recordings were transcribed and participants were given transcriptions to verify that it was correct. Lincoln and Guba (1994) endorse this as member checking. Steps were taken to ensure that the findings were as a result of the ideas and experiences of the participants rather than my preference.

3.10 Limitations

The limitations of the study are the characteristics that impacted or influenced the findings of your research. One of the limitations of the study was that it is confined to a particular circuit management centre which caters predominantly for schools that were previously disadvantaged. The recruitment and the appointment of principals could mean different things for different people. Being a circuit manager and a researcher may not have allowed individuals to speak their mind and thus adopt a more conformist approach. To minimise limitations, the study used triangulation. Another limitation when working with focus groups was that one or two individuals may have dominated the discussions not allowing for full participation of others. A further limitation was that the study being done may not be a true representation of all circuits in South Africa.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter encapsulated the research design and methodology that I used to generate data in my study. It proceeded to discuss the research paradigm which is the interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative approach that my study took. The methodology was then discussed and the case studies were explained. Thereafter the data generation plan and the selection of participants were explained. The last three sections dealt with the ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations that my study experienced. The next chapter will focus on the case studies and the focus group interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction.

The previous chapter laid the foundation for the research methodology including methods for data generation in order to answer the research questions. This forms the blueprint for the study. Chapter four focuses on the discussion of the findings, from the data generated through focus group interviews. The purpose of this study was to closely look at the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. At this juncture it is essential to reiterate that the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do participants describe or explain the effectiveness of the format and the structure of recruiting, selecting and appointing school principals?
2. What are the implications of the format and structure of recruitment, selection and appointment of principals for school leadership and management?
3. How can the current format and structure of recruiting, selecting principals be improved?

To ensure that the voices of the participants are not lost, quotes are used verbatim in the analysis of data and in their presentation.

4.2 Data analysis and discussion

In this section the data will be analysed and discussions will emerge from this. The response from the participants will enhance the discussion and analysis.

4.2.1 The voice of principals in their appointments

4.2.1.1 Structure and format of the appointment of principals.

The question put forward to the focus group was: Having been appointed to the position of principal through the current structure and format, do you think that the structure and format enables schools to appoint competent principals? The probe: You may extend your response to experiences outside of your school.

Mr Singh responded as follows:

Having been exposed to this kind of a system, I think for a long time we've been proposing changes to the system that will allow it to be more effective. Cos I've been to many interviews, and we found that the structure of the interview doesn't allow the governing body of the interview committee. The time frame I feel in terms of the interview and structure, doesn't allow one to get their best possible candidates because there are lots of limitations and gaps that will prevail, and over a specified short period it is very difficult to know the value of the true candidate.

Being part of the focus group Mr Govender responded as follows:

The concern I have with the present structure and format is the lack of competency among the selection committee. When it comes to the appointment say the national director of prosecutions, you'll have people from the legal background doing it. Why can't that be done for education which is about the most important profession of all professions. Because there are people sitting there as housewives, as clerks, although they may be competent in their fields, engineers, but they are not competent in education. So my view is that the current system doesn't allow us to make the best choice possible. Although it is the only tool available, but I think there should be competent people who are with an education background, especially for principals. The instrument hasn't changed drastically from the last 24-25 years. The document hasn't changed in terms of to suit the current situation in education, so I feel that is also an outdated system.

Doctor M wanted to talk specifically to the structure and format and this is what she had to say:

Currently the structure is as such that a candidate is asked 5 questions in a specific amount of time that you have to respond in, and I find that you ask this question and to get an in-depth knowledge of that person you have to have a follow up on certain things that the candidate would say at the meeting. Which currently the system does not allow for that because you get certain questions for example, what would you do about discipline? You can learn up that answer, its available and you can just come and indicate but if you question the person okay on this scenario, what would you do? You would get an in-depth understanding of what the person is about rather than giving you knowledge that is freely available on the internet or

wherever it is. So I have a problem with that and I also have a problem with the time that is given. You know you are given 3 minutes and you actually stress the candidate because you busy ringing this bell and you've got few seconds left to say etcetera, you are not able to give a good account of yourself.

Mr Pillay the fourth principal had the following to say:

Whilst I agree with most sentiments that raised by all, those are valid points, I also believe that some, very few appointments done by the governing body are legitimate, went through the correct process and they've made, yes a good appointment because principals are the principals are the CEO's of the school. You know the success or the failure of a school depends on the principal and some School Governing Bodies, those that have good people on their governing body who knows the process, did some appointments that we are proud of because they've turned their school around. But sadly we look at the majority of schools around us we know how those appointments were done, if even it was a person out of town. After a few years when you follow the bloodline or follow the flagship line, we find they've come in because of the influence of certain people on the School Governing Body and you can see the quality of the schools. So on the points raised, yes we agree they need qualification. The system of scoring is a hopeless system because it is difficult for people to score because they haven't been trained. If we looking at a person that is a cleaner and security and works in a factory, you know what, dignity of labour is a huge thing for us teachers, we respect that but they haven't been trained in how to score. How to score? What is important in a school? How is the school run? We are just following a constitutional demand from the country that these bodies be formed and appointed. The principal needs to be appointed by the Department of Education and they got to study that candidate's teaching ability, his administrative ability throughout the period and only the department knows that. People on the governing body do not know that.

The structure and format of the appointment of principals has been in existence for the last 22 years since the promulgation of the South African School Act 84 of 1996 (South African Schools Act, 1996). The structure and the format of the process requires eligible applicants to apply through a publication in a Human Resources Management bulletin. The eligibility for applications to the post of principal requires you to have 7 years of experience as an educator. The sifting process is undertaken by the Department of Education to establish if there are any

technical defaults in the application. The applications are thereafter forwarded to a selection committee elected by the school governing body for the process of shortlisting and interviewing. Five candidates from the total applications are short listed and these candidates are subjected to an interview. The interview comprises 5 questions of three minutes each and the process is thereafter concluded.

Principals are saying that the time allocated for the interviewing of candidates makes it difficult for the interview committee to sufficiently assess the candidates. They believe that this presents certain limitations in terms of the format. They further go on to say that the format of the interview does not allow the interview committee to ask any follow up questions in terms of the responses that the candidates present. This is directly supported by the literature review that articulates clearly that HRM policies often have unintended consequences which are not fully considered in the decision making process. The principals are also concerned that the current structure and format has been in use for the last 24-25 years. One of the principals alluded to the fact that there are a few appointments that are good and may have helped turn the school around although he went on to say that the majority of the appointments may be questionable. The principals went on to say that selection committees are rigidly following the department policy and this may not be assisting the process.

4.2.1.2 Implications of unworthy appointments to schools

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Do you think that schools are adversely affected if school principals are appointed without having the necessary pre-requisites to be an effective principal? The probe: If yes say how. If no, provide reasons to support your answer.

Mr Govender responded as follows:

Yes, we have seen schools blossom as a result of right appointments, but on the other hand we have also seen schools that really went downhill as a result of wrong appointments. So I think that schools could either be made or can be adversely affected as a result of poorly appointed quality of principals. So I would say yes.

Mr Pillay had the following to say on this subject:

Most definitely. In order to hold the position of a principal, I believe you need to know what comes at the bottom, you need to be a class teacher, you yourself should be an exceptional class teacher because later on you going to walk in a classroom to do classroom visits. You must know what it is about. You need to be a head of department so you know how to supervise things and a deputy and ultimately when you reach that post of principal you've been down the ladder and you know what it is and you can deal with people. You know the good and the bad, not only know about dealing with bad things, you know how to take your teachers to another level, you'll know how to take those who are not performing up to standard how to help them, so the pre-requisite I believe that leave the other stories, that you need to serve down, we've seen people that have gone from level 1 to 7 the only important thing about that was the salary but your service delivery in terms of the positions you hold doesn't equip you because you haven't been through the other ranks so most definitely yes, the pre-requisite are necessary.

The probe to the question was if yes say how, if no, provide reasons to support your answer and the response by Doctor M was as follows:

I absolutely agree with my colleague that spoke just now that to gain experience at the different levels, there's different things that you get competent in as a head of department as a deputy principal and if you have this gap you find that you are not able to supervise when you are in the principal's post. You certainly will not be able to and curriculum is one of the most important things that drive the school. If you don't have the curriculum right you're not going to be producing the results and yes you need to have been an excellent teacher, you would know exactly what makes the class tick so for you to give advice you would know all the tricks around that and when you go into the HOD's position, well exactly what it is that you got to build, you know your team building at a smaller level then you go into DP you know you had a larger number of people so that is invaluable experience. And if you don't have that you certainly going to be, it may take you there eventually, let's say it takes you 5 years to gain those skills, what happens in that gap in that school.

This is what Mr Singh had to say about this subject:

Generally I would go with yes, and I agree with everything that's being said, everything that's being said is valid, but I think in South Africa we sometimes have to look at things in context as well, look at some of the communities we serve, far outlying rural communities they don't have access to this kind of you know where you help people who have the necessary expertise and the qualification for the job, but you might have a person who's there and has the will to serve, so I think in cases like that, with the adequate and right support we can develop somebody because we got to take context into account but generally I would agree that if you don't appoint the right person, the school is definitely in trouble.

Administration and management experience is one of the pre-requisites in individuals aspiring to become principals (Bush et al., 2011). Knowledge about the different levels of operations would guide a newly appointed principal in terms of work (Bush & Oduro, 2006). A good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of level one educators, heads of department, and deputy principals would assist in executing your responsibilities as a principal (Botha, 2004). Further to that a principal needs to have some idea on how to respond to his immediate supervisor which is his circuit manager and understand the organogram of the Department of Education (Bush et al., 2011).

Principals are unambiguous about the fact that any individual aspiring to become a principal needs the relevant experience in the other levels of management so as to be effective in the position of principal. Principals are also of the view that having a strong curriculum background is essential for successful management. One principal has a different view in that he believes that one must be mindful of the contextual factors when recruiting principals particularly in rural areas. The view that came out strongly was that principals must be strong classroom practitioners and have a good understanding of what takes place in the classroom.

4.2.1.3 Educators eligibility

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: What is your view with regards to the participation of educators in the process that requires the appointment of the principal? The probe is: should they be part of the process, explain. If not why would you say so.

Mr Govender responded as follows:

I think that educators should not be included in the process for the appointment of principals for the simple reason is that if you sitting as a scoring member you have a vested interest in a particular member from your particular school. If the appointment is made, if you are part of the process where the internal candidate was appointed there would be a sense of, I owe you a favour, you scratch my back and I will scratch your back. From my experience and observation especially in the circuit when educators sat as observers, it has caused an erosion in the unity among the educators. We find that among the staff it self there was nepotism and I don't think that the process would be fair. I will support educators being part of the process as observers, merely as observers but not as scoring members of the interview committee.

Mr Pillay had the following to say:

I think we need to protect our educators and allowing them to sit in a process like this we really put them in a bad situation because if the principal does not get appointed he's got an issue with the educators or the other he can train his educators to know what's going on. It also creates a bad environment for the school situation where the teachers are set apart from their colleagues should the principal be obtained or given the post and you find that the principal is not a friendly person to the staff. Those teachers get labelled, you were part of the process, you appointed him, you helped that, so I think teachers should be out of this process. You appointing, yes, a professional person you must give that to the department of education because they supposed to have the skilled professional people coming to deal with this. Why are they giving their duty, absconding your duty and giving it to the teachers. Many teachers stress levels went high, they got sick because of the school promotion selection, so I think we should protect our teachers and not allow them on this.

Doctor M responded in the following way :

You know I want to say that when you look at the business world when someone's being appointed, let's say directors being appointed, let's say directors being appointed, the people that would sit in that panel would be the chief director and above. You would not get below that level appointing someone into a higher post and for some of the reasons my colleagues have mentioned. It creates a lot of difficulty and problems in the staff, also from my personal experience when you acting in a post and you know that these candidates or these educators are

going to be sitting in your interview, you find that it creates tension. You walking around on egg shells, and these are level one teachers in your staff now and you supposed to be the principal, you not even able to lead and manage properly because there's this thing at the back of your mind that they're going to be evaluating you, so it doesn't lead to a very good situation in schools. So I would say certainly not, why is someone at a lower level evaluating you, so it does not lead to a very good situation in schools. So I would say certainly not, why is someone at a lower level evaluating you, you need to be someone at a higher level to evaluate someone in that particular post.

After considering the probe that says, should they be part of the process, explain? If not, why would you say so? Mr Singh responded by saying:

I would say no because it can affect the process negatively. If we had to have a teacher there I would then say that, that person to serve mainly as an observer capacity and giving possibly background information to the school because I think when you doing an interview for a principal then you only have the GB and the department rep there so that teacher can serve as an observer and mainly give background information in terms of the logistics and the advances and things that prevail in the school.

The South Africans Schools Act 84 of 1996 makes provisions for educators to be formally elected onto the school governing body (South African Schools Act, 1996). Their responsibility in the SGB is to represent the interest of educators (Karisson, 2002). This means that educators can be elected into any one of the sub-committees of the school governing body. One of the sub-committees of the SGB is the selection or interview committee (Karisson, 2002). This committee presides over the selection of educators, heads of department, deputy principals and principals for the school.

Principals believe that educators that are scoring members of the interview committee have a particular bias towards applicants from their own school. This is supported by the particularist theory where Gronn and Lacey (2010) affirm that candidates within the school are nominated as opposed to external candidates. Further to that principals are saying that educators involvement in the process affects the unity of the staff and it sets educators apart from each other. Principals believe that if educators must serve at all, then they best serve as observers to the process. There

is also a strong feeling by principals that the Department of Education must take over the process because it seen currently as though they are abdicating their responsibility. Principals also feel that officials that are on a higher level than the principal must undertake to do this process.

4.2.1.4 Change or status quo?

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: The department of education may be contemplating reviewing the current process. What are your views in this regard? The probe is: Should the status quo remain. If not why do you believe change is necessary?

Mr Govender had the following to say:

I think change is necessary, the status quo shouldn't remain. I believe that due to the magnitude of the appointment of principals they should be. Assuming that in the Pinetown district there were 50 principalship posts being advertised, there should be at least about 10 selected teams of qualified, experienced academics in education that are designated. They are given this team of shortlisting, of interviewing and doing the process. 10 teams to do only for the principalship, you can have your different teams from different areas not to go and create any bias. If you are having, assuming Trubel primary school you'd make sure that you select people from the Durban area, from the Chatsworth area, not to have bias, so for me the status quo shouldn't remain as a result of the current flaws in the system.

Mr Singh responded as follows:

Although I advocate for a change, but I'm hesitant. I'm not very optimistic because taking the current component of politics into account, everything is in favour of our politics, and my fear is that now, if this task is taken away from the governing bodies and given to the department, then in the end of the day politics will rule and we might find ourselves in a worse situation. So I'm saying that our current state, look at our education system, look at our province, we can't get some simple things right and I've read and I've heard the stories of things that are permitted because the people are hungry for power. I'm afraid now, that we want change, yes. But we want the change to be structured where it's going to be beneficial to that school or that community. So there must be a complete degree of transparency in this process, my fear is that the change in the status quo could negatively impact the quality of leaders.

This was the response given by Doctor M:

It is actually a tough one when you look at it because yes I certainly would like the process to be reviewed. I would want the process to be reviewed but how it should be reviewed is a big question. As my colleague as indicated if you transfer the entire thing to the Department of Education what would be their hidden agenda. Would it be about bringing a balance in terms of race that you going to have, are you going to force this process so that would be for me a concern in terms of that and also the quality of people that that would be doing these interviews as well because equally as you may not have the quality from the parents, from the department of education if you are going to use clerks or whatever it is, I mean what is their understanding. It has to be people with some experience with how a school is run. And also to look at the vision of that community where the school is located in and with the current system there's issues with the suitability and vested interest of people that are in there as well comes to play. So I believe in order to make the change you need to actually open this topic up for debate, get input from different people on how you going to turn this thing around. We don't want a short cut way of forming committees. There has to be a lot of thought as to how it's going to be very very objective and in selecting the correct candidate.

After carefully looking at the probe, which says, should the status quo remain, Mr Pillay responded in the following manner:

You know we need to embrace change, but we must embrace change not because we want to change things, the change must have a positive effect. Too often we are afraid for change because it's going to change the comfort zone that we are in. We live in a different country. We don't find this kind of situation in any other country in the world. We in South Africa we are different, our schools need to see that change. We've given the school governing bodies an opportunity, a long opportunity, 20 somewhat years to get it right. They haven't got it right so they can't continue with it, seriously they have shown that they don't have the ability to appoint principals, that is the truth. Now the Department of Education that has qualified personnel must use the personnel. They can look into private sector and other avenues to get professional people even if they have to be trained. They must have their ducks in a row and this process done properly because we all are saying that we are failing the education system. We have principals that are failing the education system also because of what is happening in our schools. Are we

embracing the change that is taking place in our schools? We move from a school with fully children of one race now it's mixed up, now the ratio has improved, what are we doing? Is it showing in our teaching? Is it showing in our management? Or are we afraid to embrace that change also. That body that gets elected to change the system must know exactly what they want because education is not a tool to be played with.

Doctor M wanted to further add to the discussion and this is what she said:

One aspect that has been missing from the discussion is about females and the number of female principals. From my personal experience I found that when you look at the panels you know that I've been subjected to over a period of time, they are mainly male dominated and there seems to be this thinking and this is through my personal experience, you know especially when you look at high schools the belief is that a female is not capable of being appointed to a high school as well, so that is also an issue that needs to be looked at.

The current process of appointments has been in existence for the last 22 years. The involvement of parents in making recommendations was informed by getting parents to take responsibility of schools (Mncube, 2009). This initiative is practised in different countries throughout the world (Levin, 2007). Over the years the Department of Education has been involved in extensive training programmes to ensure that parents and educators are adequately equipped for the task at hand (Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Principals are of the view that the status quo must not remain and that there should be change. They are of the belief that this process must be undertaken by skilled and trained academics that have the necessary experience and are competent. This is strongly supported by the literature review which suggests that district officials or consultants may visit candidates in their current institutions to ascertain how they are functioning in their current jobs. While principals are advocating change one of the principals raised a concern that if the process is taken away from the school governing body then there is the potential that political appointments may take place if the department of education presides over this process. This would then be contrary to the universalist approach as espoused in the theoretical framework which is based on a model that is transparent, objective and universal. Universalism attempts to treat all people the same. Principals are also of the understanding that too much time has gone by in the last 20 years and

school governing bodies have still not got this process right. One principal raised the issue of gender and indicated that the selection committees are male dominated and perceptions out there by these committees are that females cannot make good high school principals.

4.2.1.5 Parents and the task at hand

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Are the parents in your community adequately equipped to undertake a task of this magnitude? The probe is: You may also make reference to parents in surrounding schools.

Mr Singh had this to say:

You know I had the opportunity of being interviewed for the current post and the chairperson of the interview committee with no disrespect to the profession that the person does, he was a security guard, and the gentleman was sitting opposite me and he was making inappropriate gestures you know like signs to me and I couldn't like fathom it out. So what crossed my mind is that is this the panel that's interviewing me now for such a responsible position. So I would concur and say that our parents are not adequately trained and equipped to fulfil the following functions and maybe we can look at the department in terms of what support are we giving parents to fulfil this kind of function.

This is what Mr Govender had to say:

With due respect to the DOE especially the Billy Nair Circuit, Mafukuzela-Gandhi CMC, when we have these processes there's a process of empowering our governing bodies, the IC. But that is not good enough you know as much as we want to criticise the IC and parents who sit on the committees, they are human beings and are there for a reason. Sometimes they are forced to sit there and we pity them because basically they lack the knowledge. They lack the know-how and the competency so personally I don't think my community or the communities around us they are sufficient or adequately prepared to take on this challenge. No matter you can have so many empowerment sessions but the fact of the matter is that you still end up with matters that are inconsistent due to the fact that this is beyond their capacity.

The probe allowed for the participants to make reference to surrounding schools. These were the views of Mr Pillay:

I think most of the committees including the one that I come from are not adequately equipped to carry out this task. I think the major criteria that prevents them from carrying this task out properly is the language barrier. If you are living in an area like mine the majority of people come from two main settlements, the rest of them come from the surrounding areas or flats where parents are unemployed, there's no food, things like that. Many of them have not been to schools themselves, now they are sitting here and are using high terminology in appointing a principal. They don't understand the terminology yet they speak English, but they don't speak English the way, the way an interview is conducted so it makes it difficult for them. Most of them will tell you, in my area when we have to do an appointment when we call for the SGB representatives, they'll tell you that's too heavy for us and honestly we can't do it. They'll give you an honest version, they are not equipped and you'll know when you sitting and appointing a principal. They choose the questions a few minutes before the interview takes place and these people don't understand the interview and yet they are scoring.

Doctor M responded as follows:

I actually agree with my colleagues in terms of the committee, you know the parents being on the interview committee and being absolutely inadequate. And again I am speaking from personal experience where people who are interviewing you are unemployed in the community, they're housewives and have absolutely no idea. You know they've not even completed school and you as a candidate that is seated there, you don't know where to pitch what you are saying because you don't know whether they're are going to understand the answer that you giving and you know at what level you talk. And then you're in a dilemma because part of the committee are possibly teachers that are there or maybe a circuit manager is there who's at a different level and you don't know where to pitch what you're saying in order for that understanding to come through.

Parents have always played a supportive role in their children's education over the years (Mncube, 2009). Initially they served in parent committees and later in parent-teacher associations. The roles and responsibilities then was to support the school and to see how best to improve the circumstances that schools find themselves in (Mncube, 2009). Since 1996 when the SASA was promulgated the roles of parents became more clearly defined in terms of governance

which included financial management and the selection of staff at school (South African Schools Act, 1996). The DOE has offered training in areas pertaining to governance.

Principals believe that the parents that sit on the interview such as security guards and housewives are not competent to deal with the task at hand. They go on to indicate that some have not even completed school. Principals are of the view that in many cases parents are forced to take on this responsibility even though they lack the knowledge. This is supported by the literature review that advocates that the DOE has a responsibility to workshop staff selection committees on processes and procedures to be followed in the selection process. Further to this principals believe that language is a problem because parents don't understand the terminology used in education. Principals have had experiences where parents have indicated that they cannot do this process. Principals have confirmed from their personal experience that as a lack of knowledge and understanding of the parents it is difficult to respond to questions in the interview. They don't know where to pitch their response to questions in the interview.

4.2.1.6 Regular or pre-meditated?

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Do parents and other stakeholders have a preferred candidate prior to the process taking place? The probe is: What influences this?

This is what Mr Govender had to say:

I think to be fair to parents assuming there's a vacancy of a principalship in the Tongaat area, the parents may not have a preferred candidate from the list that has been applied for but possibly the stakeholder may have a preferred candidate be it the department nominee or the union representative's because they know the candidates better than the IC themselves. So I think in certain more established communities there may be a preferred candidate on the part of the community but more often than not I think they are preferred candidates on the part of the stakeholders and that is not a good thing. The question doesn't demand our view on that but I think what influences the department nominee because he knows what's best for the school from the academic point of view, the parents may not know the candidate as well as the department nominee or the union.

This is what Mr Pillay had to say:

I think most people know who they want to appoint. Very, very few people have an open system where they're looking for the best. Many governing bodies have taken into consideration, firstly they may look at in-house because these people have carried the school for a long time and they have seen changes that the particular person could have brought to the school. Better the devil you know than you don't know. Similarly they know also that there's no candidate in school because the school has been static and nothing has been done. They want to see change, so they try and bring other people in to make school a much better place. So in that instance also they have preferred candidates outside the school, so somehow they know who they want. In our modern scenario the unions play a big role also, they also have their preferred candidates, so it's a tussle out there, governing body, the unions but a preferred candidate is always there amongst somebody.

This is what Doctor M had to say:

I also believe that parents and the stakeholders already have a sense of the person they are looking for prior to the process taking place. It's either because you know the process who are teachers that's going to be sitting on your staff, who the parents are. What happens is possible candidates is already posturing well before that, and making sure that the parents know them and they feed the parents with information about what happens in the school. And the sad part is sometimes you may be feeding positive information, sometimes negative, building castles of themselves when it doesn't really exist. And because some of these parents, I'm not saying all, some of the parents are not qualified, they're easily influenced. They are not able to discriminate on the information that is given to them, whether it's correct or they've been manipulated in a very sly manner and therefore they come with this knowledge to the interview.

Mr Singh responded as follows:

I believe that parents and other stakeholders have a preferred candidate at mind. The thing about this if there's harmony in that candidate between parents and stakeholders then all goes well. The dispute and challenges arises when there's a difference in opinion in terms of who they want and also there's a lot of influences that also comes to play as Doctor M has said. So in the end of the day, no matter what system you have I think the preferred candidate is going to be from the person's vested interest point of view. It questions maybe the department nominee will

have an idea of the candidates that's coming for the meeting in terms of who they want but the parents will want a particular candidate depending on certain influences that have been applied.

During the shortlisting stage all applications are read so that the selection committee can score each application (Lumby et al., 2003). The names of candidates are not disclosed so as to avoid any interference with the scoring. A maximum of 5 candidates are shortlisted for the interview process. Questions are prepared on the day of the interview and each candidate is expected to respond to 5 questions. Principals believe that the union representative and the department nominee may have a preferred candidate based on the fact that they know the candidates emerging from the different schools. This is further supported by the literature review that speaks about the recommendations of the NDP that suggests that there should be a reduction in the undue influence of unions in the appointment process while providing increased support to SGBs to fulfil their responsibility. The interest by the department nominee is based on what is best for the school. Principals are of the view that there is quite a lot of posturing by candidates once they know who is going to be on the selection committee. Principals acknowledge that there is a tussle between parents, unions and department and if there is no harmony and that is where the disputes set in.

4.2.2 The educators perspectives

4.2.2.1 My role

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Selection committees at schools now include educators being part of the selection process. Do you think educators should be included in a process that entails the appointment of school principals? The probe is: If yes, why do you believe so. If no, why do you believe they should not?

Mr R. Naidoo responded as follows:

I have had experience sitting in this selection process where educators were part of the panel and my personal feeling after the outcome of the decision is that, I think the individuals of the interview panel should be competent and well trained but more so they must have had the experience that was applied for in order to know what that job description entails. So an educator will not have much experience managing but will be assessing and scoring on someone

that's going to be occupying a management position. So in that regard I feel educators should not. And anyway the educators will come from the school itself, where you generally will not get an educator unless the person is a teacher on the school governing body from another school, that serves on that interview scoring panel, but if the educator is from the staff, there's also a problem of there being biased towards a certain applicant. If we have two or three applicants from the school that had applied for the position there will be generally that kind of leaning towards a particular applicant and generally you'll have lots of discussion with staff members as well, and so in other words the appointments is like more or less pre-determined before the commencement.

On the same question Annie Naidoo responded in the following manner:

I beg to differ with the previous speaker on one aspect. I think being an educator, you under a principal in any school and you know how the school is run and what expertise a person in management needs to have to run that school properly. I agree with one point that he said that an educator should not come from that particular school, but an educator from another school is fully aware of what calibre a principal should have, to run that school properly and I think the educator is in the position to form part of the panel.

Mrs Moodley had the following to say:

Yes I do agree that educators should be part of the process as we are very knowledgeable of the process, the whole process to be followed with regards to appointing a principal, but I will have to agree with mam that it should be an educator from a neutral school, we should have somebody sitting neutral and not from your own school.

Mrs Stevens responded as follows:

Yes I do agree that educators should be a part of the panel, they obviously au fait with school governance. If you had to compare a parent and a teacher, I think the teacher would be the better option, because at the moment we have parents sitting on this committee and they've numerous issues with regards to school governance and knowledge about school policies, and very often the parent is not equipped to make a good choice, I also think that the teacher should be a neutral teacher from another school so that the element of bias is eliminated.

In terms of SASA 84 of 1996, section 23(2)(b), educators at the school form part of the elected members of the governing body (South African Schools Act, 1996). As a result of being elected members of the SGB educators are elected onto the interview or selection committee. Educators believe that they do have a role to play in the selection committee for the appointment of principals but educators must not be part of the selection process in the schools that they are currently from. One educator was of the view that they should not be part of the selection committee because they have no experience in management. There may be a tendency to discuss this with other educators and this may result in the outcome being pre-determined. This affiliation finds favour in the particularist approach that speaks about this affiliation taking centre stage when recruitment and selection takes place at the expense of being objective and acting in the best interest of what is educationally sound. Educators also believe that they are more knowledgeable on school matters than parents.

4.2.2.2 Educators experience of principals leadership.

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Being currently supervised by principals that have directly emerged from the current process, how would you describe the current leadership provided by principals? The probe is: You may comment on your experience in your school or schools in your district.

Mrs Stevens had the following to say:

If we look at the current process, it's a lot of, the interview process itself, it's just based on the way a candidate answers questions. So if you have a candidate that's very eloquent, his answers will be really good. How much do you really know about how the candidates run a school? So I feel there is an element of window dressing sometimes. A candidate may shine in the interview and we sort of propagate this idea that if you well-spoken and you answer your questions properly, you know, you are the perfect candidate, but how does that candidate perform? Does the performance match his actions? Do the actions match his performance at the interview? You find a lot of principals have got the post and thereafter are not performing as well as we thought they would because they were generally a good speaker.

Having listened to the probe that things may be different in your school but what is the general outlook pertaining to this matter, Mr R. Naidoo had the following to say:

At my school we, I must say that leadership is of a high quality and I have certainly learnt from leadership at my school but I do agree that when we look at the broad background at other schools and the way they operate and you know these discussions do come up in meetings and so on that the process really needs to be looked at in the school and the actual panel. The composition of the panel has to be looked at very carefully so that you put the best person for the job in a leadership position.

Annie Naidoo said the following:

I don't agree with the current process, simply because I've found that the selection committee sometimes made up of some political affiliations you know that the principal has some standing in the area.

Mrs S. Moodley responded as follows:

I'm speaking for my school. My personal experience with our new principal that came in. It did take time for the principal to actually adjust because he came from a high school. But I must say that the process that was followed, the way he had come in, it has actually been positive for our school, whilst we may discuss the actual things that happen and while mam said the interview process, your best speaker somehow gets through and may lack in the leadership but I must say for us its worked, and I would say that it's been leading us from this process has been a positive one for us.

Educators are directly supervised by principals and are constantly exposed to their leadership (Botha, 2004). An integral part of a successful school is good leadership by the principal of the school (Bush & Oduro, 2006). Good leadership has resulted in the quality of education improving in schools (Bush & Heystek, 2006). The academic performance of learners in schools fluctuate from school to school (Ensor, 2003). The role of principals in management and administration impacts schools directly (Bush & Oduro, 2006). Educators are of the view that principals that are eloquent and speak well at interviews don't necessarily perform well after they are given the post. They are generally just good speakers. Educators also believe that political influence may have resulted in some appointments based on the standing of the individual in the community. This finds favour within the theoretical framework based on the Particularist Approach that indicate that schools adopt a particularist approach and appointments are made on

the basis of who the applicants know. This offers little solace to an unsuccessful candidate other than the fact that it may account on the side of candidates belief that the process of selection is corrupt.

4.2.2.3 Educators and their support for current format

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Having understood and being a member of the selection process do you continue to advocate that this process continues in its current format? The probe is: If yes provide support for your response. If no, what are the possible alternatives?

This is how Mr R. Naidoo responded:

I definitely feel that this format has to be changed, whereby we have an interview panel made up of either 3 members or 5 members. I feel that especially in the case of the principal position, if we start there, the department should take ownership of the appointment. Based on their knowledge of educators and deputy principals in the area, our subject advisors need to get involved in the process or someone in the position of a principal and above to be part of the committee. I do feel that the current SGB component, I'm not saying they all not competent but there are lots of SGBs that need to be really trained to a higher degree before they can make an appointment on a principal of the school, thank you.

Annie Naidoo responded as follows:

I think when a SGB sits in the appointment of a principal, they maybe top performers in their business sector and in their jobs but they don't understand what it requires to lead a school in this current climate. Although the department appointed principals before and there were numerous problems. When we look at the last 20 years the problems have escalated to a level sometimes you think of a point of no return. I think there should be a combination. Departmental officials who are fully qualified and other components must be made up of a educator and probably one community or parent component.

Mrs Stevens had the following to say:

I think for many years now I've disagreed with this entire process. I think it's flawed for so many reasons. One is the incompetence of the panel itself because of the members that

sometimes sit on the panel. And sometimes they are not adequately trained, new members are brought into the governing body and they are asked to sit on this panel and the training occurs half an hour before the process itself. And also there's this aspect of seniority versus ability when it comes to selecting a principal, a principal who's advanced in age or a candidate that is advanced in age is somehow deemed to be better than a younger candidate simply because of the seniority. I think ability needs to come in as well, and I obviously advocate an impartial interview committee from the department of education itself. Maybe an independent body in each circuit that's appointed to handle interview processes and selection processes. Also the questions and the sections. You see that candidates come in with rehearsed answers and it's like you know indoctrination or some sort. You don't really get to see the true value and worth of the candidate because they are so restrained by the questions and the sections. The recommendation I have would be, the interview process should be a more holistic one, where you go into the workplace and interview other people that the candidate has worked with and look at the evidence of the candidates work, and I think would be a better representation of the candidates worth.

On whether the current format should change Mrs Moodley responded as follows:

Yes definitely, the current format should be changed and I agree with what mam says here. We should look at having a combined ability of people sitting in, coming from the department, school and the community sitting in this process.

Educators have served in selection committees now for the last 22 years. Educators believe that the format has to be changed. There is a view by educators that the department of education should take over this process. Educators further believe that members of the panel should be of a higher level than that of principals. If SGB's are going to be involved then they require a lot of training. This is supported by the literature review that speaks about a recent study concluded in New Zealand where it was found that there is a lack of capacity of individual boards and trustees to fulfil complex governance tasks. Educators are saying that the level of problems emerging from the current system is escalating. Educators are of the view that panels are incompetent. Questions and sections are very restrictive to the panel.

4.2.2.4 Stakeholders making a difference

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: What in your view seems to be the reason for stakeholders having an interest in the appointment of principals at schools? The probe is: Highlight what you think may be some of the reasons.

Annie Naidoo had this to say:

We have seen stakeholders sitting on the governing body and appointing principals to further their own interests, be it in the community, be it political affiliation and as soon as they appoint that principal, the principal is made aware that I had a say in your appointment, and the principal is then held ransom and feels an obligation to not upset that parent or body of parents who has appointed him. He is afraid to take any decisions because these people have appointed him and very often it's not in the best interest of the school, it's in the interest of the small body of parents that has appointed him. Its suiting their child, its suiting some religious affiliation or political affiliation and I think that's a really dangerous situation because the larger percentage of the school fraternity is suffering because of that.

Mr R. Naidoo responded as follows:

I agree with mam with regards to those aspects that she has mentioned and I do feel that this SGB needs to be reviewed. The role of the SGB has to be reviewed. I would like to understand that they should be concerned mainly with the enhancement of the education process and the improvement to the quality education at the school, but from the number of parent meeting we have to discuss these kind of issues, we find that they only come to meeting when it's the appointment of a particular teacher or principal or deputy but thereafter we don't see their presence as often as possible. Even at meetings I know I can speak for our school we will see at least 50 percent of them attending, so in my view I feel that the SGB's role has to be reviewed.

Having listened to the other responses this is what Mrs Moodley had to say:

As a matter of fact , I would like to say that, you know sometimes principals are appointed because you know the person or you, you had some experience with them or you met them out of school and when they are appointed you getting some personal interest in that appointment and I just have to agree with mam because it is very dangerous because it becomes a personal thing

you know when principals are appointed where your stakeholders have a personal interest in them.

As a public institution education requires public participation. The preamble to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 talks about a partnership involving the state and learners, parents and educators in accepting joint responsibility for the organisation and its governance (South African Schools Act, 1996). The nature of the partnership does not imply that all partners have to agree on certain issues and that there is no room for contestation on important aspects (Van Wyk, 2004). The responsibilities therefore must be leaning at all times to want to improve the opportunity for children to receive quality public education. Educators are of the view that stakeholders want to further their own interests and therefore they want to be part of this process. This is clearly supported by the theoretical framework that states benevolence and material gain is seen to be the order of the day in many of the processes that unfold. The appointed principals are thereafter obligated to these individuals and decisions taken thereafter are not in the interest of the school. Educators continue to remind us that religious and political affiliation seems to play a major role during these appointment processes. Educators have observed that attendance to meetings by members of the SGB seems to be good only when appointments need to be made. Educators are of the view that SGBs must be reviewed.

4.2.2.5 Educators in response to parent participation

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Do you think parents are well placed to undertake a process of this magnitude? The probe is : If yes, provide support for your answer. If no, what would be your recommendation?

Annie Naidoo had this to say:

I feel very strongly about this. I feel that the parent component should just be made of one person but shouldn't be the deciding factor. Parents have a very important role to play in education right now. They must instil in their children values, respect, making sure that assignments and homework is completed so we not saying that they shouldn't have a stake in the school but their priority should be their children which we are seeing a moral degeneration of children. But where it comes to the appointment of a principal I certainly feel that parents are not well equipped to make that decision.

On the issue of parents this is what Mr R. Naidoo had to say:

I also want to say it with respect that parents, there may be some parents that have the capacity to sit in a panel, at an interview session and be able to score but the large majority of cases most parents are just simply not competent to handle such a process and especially handling the position of the principal of a school. Of course we do have SGB educators and we understand that at school levels and the department doesn't usually get so much involved in the appointment of SGBs, we get the principal together with the SGB to determine that but certainly I feel that parents are not placed in a position to be able to manage the process of appointing a principal of a school.

Parents have always been an integral part of their children's education over the years (Mncube, 2009). The concept of parent committees has been with us for a long time and as served as a structure to uplift the school (Levin, 2007). Since the promulgation of the South African Schools Act the role of parents have become formalised and requires a great deal of competence and understanding particularly in areas of governance and to a certain extent professional matters (South African Schools Act, 1996). Educators are of the view that parents are just simply not competent to handle a process that is of the magnitude of appointing a principal or any candidate for promotion. Further to this there seems to be a focus on power wielding rather than concentrating on the task at hand. Educators have alluded to the fact that there may be one or two parents that are up to the task, but that is not good enough. The one educator indicated that the focus of parents should be around values, respect, homework and assignments. A lack of this by parents is resulting in moral degeneration among learners.

This is what Mrs Moodley had to say:

Oh definitely not. Parents are definitely not well placed to undertake this process and my recommendation would be that they should not be in the majority put on this process. So definitely not in this process. They are not knowledgeable to be undertaking such a magnitude.

And finally this was the response from Mrs Stevens:

Unfortunately I think that most parents on the SGB have the same kind of approach. We find that there seems to be power wielding individuals that don't always put the needs of the

school first. The SGB in my opinion needs a bit more training so that they are aware of their role function at school. And I agree choosing a principal or any candidate for promotion process there's a huge responsibility and parents are not always adequately equipped to choose someone that would add value to their school.

Parents have always been an integral part of their children's education over the years (Mncube, 2009). The concept of parent committees has been with us for a long time and as served as a structure to uplift the school (Levin, 2007). Since the promulgation of the South African Schools Act the role of parents have become formalised and requires a great deal of competence and understanding particularly in areas of governance and to a certain extent professional matters (South African Schools Act, 1996). Educators are of the view that parents are just simply not competent to handle a process that is of the magnitude of that of appointing a principal or any candidate for promotion. Further to this there seems to be a focus on power wielding rather than concentrating on the task at hand. Educators have alluded to the fact that there may be one or two parents that are up to the task at hand, but that is not good enough. The one educator indicated that the focus of parents should be around values, respect, assignments and homework. There is an increase in moral degeneration among learners.

4.2.3 The dilemma of parents

4.2.3.1 The current system

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Having participated in this process do you believe the current process being used is assisting schools in the appointment of principals? The probe is: You may provide a response relating to your participation in this process.

This is what Mr Anderson had to say:

I believe in terms of what we've just heard in terms of case studies, I think there's quite a few irregularities and maybe the current system does not work in terms of appointment of principals. I think maybe the department of education should head that part of it as they would have a set criteria and they would have more or less, they'll understand what the aim would be to employ a principal.

Mrs Naidoo responded as follows:

I think at the moment certain governing bodies are not prepared enough to appoint principals. They don't know how the school should be run, what are the responsibilities of the principal and in certain governing bodies there's a lot of nepotism after listening to the case studies. It's as if candidates before the interview, candidates have already been, they know who the candidates are going to be.

Miss Maharaj at the following to say:

Having been part of the process, I also feel that the department should handle this part especially because the principal is the head of the institute, the accounting officer and he needs to either make the school or he can break the school. In this case the appointing of a principal should be of utmost importance because even the parents that serve on the governing body do not have an idea of exactly how the process should be. They come into the interview room expecting the principal to do the entire process and they're not aware of exactly what should be done. In cases like these members of the governing body should be work shopped and educated on exactly how the process should go.

I do believe that this process should be handled by the department, especially in selection of principals. Most of the time parents that are on the SGB are not equipped enough to understand the requirements of a principal, or maybe they're not work shopped and because of their lack of knowledge and misjudgement so they tend to go according to personalities more than professionalism. So I think when it comes to principals, this should definitely be taken on by the department itself.

The previous components of the research with both principals and educators have adequately covered the aspect of the current system or the status quo. This section attempts to get a perspective from the parent component. Parents are of the view that the current system does not work. They believe that the Department of Education may be well placed to undertake this task. This is supported by the literature review that draws our attention to a major difference between South Africa and Britain. In Britain a departmental representative must attend and actively participate in all selection meetings to appoint principals and deputy principals. Further to this there is an understanding that the SGB does not have the capacity to undertake a task of this magnitude. Having listened to the case studies one parent believes that this process has the

potential to lead to practices of nepotism. She believes that selection of candidates may be premeditated. One of the parents indicated that parents tend to look more at personalities rather than on professionalism.

4.2.3.2 Parents on educators role

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: What are your views on educators being part of a process to recommend the appointment of a principals at schools? The probe is: If supported give reasons. If not why would you say so?

The response by Mr Anderson was as follows:

The principal post is a top post. He is the CEO of the school. He's making his decisions, now an educator who he would normally employ is now looking at what is the criteria in interviewing or selecting a principal, so in my opinion I don't think that educators should be part of that process.

This is what Mrs Govender had to say:

Educators shouldn't be a part of that process to recommend especially coming from the same school, because some educators would probably want to recommend from their own school so they not opened to others from other schools so they want to just choose from their school only.

The response from Mrs Naidoo was that:

I also think that educators should not be part of the process when appointing principals because the educator is in the same school as maybe that so called principal was an educator or a DP, whatever, they know each other, they could be friends, and I think there will be a certain amount of nepotism.

Miss Maharaj had the following to say:

I also agree with your points because educators also have a tendency to influence members of the governing body when it comes to appointing a person in charge of a school and sometimes parents serving on the governing body feel that they need to please the educators that

are there and they also feel like if Mr so and so is appointed as principal they would look bad if they did not recommend or add to the scores of that principal, so maybe senior member in department should sit at this interview.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 has made it possible for educator representatives to work closely with parents elected on the SGB (South African Schools Act, 1996). Many responsibilities therefore become shared responsibilities both as parents and educators (Mncube, 2009). One of those responsibilities is to be elected onto the selection committees for purposes of making recommendations on the appointment of staff (South African Schools Act, 1996). Educators have the right to be elected into these sub-committees as a result of being on the SGB. Parents therefore have acquired a good understanding over the years on the kind of preferences or prejudices that educators may have in terms of staffing. Parents immediately spoke around the different levels that exist in a schools hierarchy. They recognised the principal as being the chief executive officer or the head of the school. Parents believe that if educators are subordinates to the principals of schools then educators cannot and should not be responsible for selecting the principals of schools. Further to that, parents believe that educators should not be part of the process because they have a particular bias towards staff in their own school for appointment which is construed as being nepotism. One parent was of the view that educators tend to influence parents in their decision making when making recommendations of appointment for the position of principals.

4.2.3.3 Parent perspective on parent participation

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: What are the reasons for parents and communities wanting to be part of this process? The probe is: Is this related to building good schools or are there other factors?

Mr Anderson responded as follows:

Let's not take away that parents and communities do a fantastic job on the school governing body and from experience I think parents play a vital role. However, I think in this process parents should be excluded or maybe observers to see the fairness of the appointment of a principal. It could be both sides as well where the involvement of parents and communities would be the upliftment of the school and to make sure there's a correct person in there. Then

there's other factors that could influence this when they know the principal, they know the educators, they know the interview committee and could influence this negatively. So maybe just to draw a line maybe parents and communities should not be in the process as well.

Mrs Naidoo had the following to say:

I think parents want to be part of this process, they want to become involved with their children's education and they want to be part of the process but when it comes to appointing a principal I think parents should be more observers, it should be done by the department.

This is how Mrs Govender responded:

Parents wanting to be a part of the process is quite normal in our schools because they want to know who's going to be leading their children so they feel it's important to know who comes on board but with regards to appointing the principal then I don't agree with parents on appointments.

The following was a response from Miss Maharaj :

I also feel that parents play a very important role in the school and the school as a whole serves the community and parents need to be part of this process but when it comes to the interview committee or appointing of principal. I feel that parents should have their place where they can observe or they can impact. But in many cases there are principals that have educators with the ability to lead a school as well but they do not get that post because they are not afforded that opportunity because parents have their say. Where as in the department, the department knows the quality of the teacher and given that opportunity they will definitely be good principals. So I feel that parents that are serving on the governing body if they want to be part of the interview process they should come in as observers like the union.

In the last 20 years parents have become increasingly involved with their children's education (Mncube, 2009). A large part of this participation and involvement is as a result of parents having to have to fund their children's education in that school fees payment has become compulsory (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The roles and responsibilities of parents vary in terms of governance and constant training and capacity building programmes are required to empower parents for the task at hand. While parents tend to carry out these roles as required, not all

parents contribute (Msila, 2007). We have come to realise that schools can barely get a quorum to schedule a meeting on electing governing body members or adopt the school's annual budget in some cases (Karlsson, 2002). The view by parents is that they be excluded in terms of their participation in the process that deals with the appointment of school principals. In the literature review it is stated that two of the most important contributions that superintendents can make to the success and high performance of districts is the task of how they recruit and select school principals. This clearly supports the participant's views in this research. They go on to extend that point by indicating that the entire community should be excluded from this process. At most parents and the community should serve as observers in this process. Parents however, would like to make the distinction that they don't be entirely excluded from the responsibility of governance, because parents play a vital role. Parents believe that the process for the appointment of principals must be conducted by the department of education.

4.2.3.4 The view of parents on unions

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Are unions providing the necessary support to ensure that there is fairness and transparency in the process? The probe is: Provide your own experiences in this regard.

This is what Mr Anderson had to say:

I think from my experience in the governing body and being on the interview committee there were cases where the union would have a representative there and they'll be cases where the union rep wouldn't just show up so if they are present then I'm sure they would show their fairness and their support. What happens to union reps that are not there? So that's a question that would obviously wouldn't be answered to my fullest, because in some cases they are there to support and in some cases they are not.

Mrs Naidoo responded briefly:

I think unions are trying but the observers that are chosen, there is a big question mark about them.

Miss Maharaj made the following response:

I think at every interview process, the unions are informed timeously about the time and the interview with whether it's the principal or a HOD and I also feel that the union should be there. I feel that if the union is represented at that interview they will make sure that everything is in process and its going accordingly, and I feel that's also one of their duties because serving on the last interview I felt that they were of great help to me.

Mrs Govender had the following to say:

Unions are there to support but sometimes not in all fairness because most of the times they want to lodge a dispute. From my experience its always disputes but then I feel that they disputing because now they don't like the person that's been appointed or they can see its going in the direction somebody is, so there's always a dispute. For some reasons the unions are always fighting each other, so sometimes it goes in a way where everyone is happy and sometimes it's a dispute. Most of the time it's in dispute because they already know now who's getting the position so they're just there to make sure that they don't get that position. So that's where the problems come in because now parents sitting on the governing body, selecting are confused cause now they don't know whether to listen to unions and go in their way or just follow the process in interviewing.

The Department of Education has over the years embarked on a consultative process in terms of collective agreements and matters pertaining to the interests of educators (Jackson et al., 2006). Educators through their unions are represented in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) on matters of interest in terms of their conditions of service (Education Labour Relations Council, 2005). Depending on the number of educators belonging to each union, representation is given to them on scale of that ratio in all structures of the Department of Education where educator representation is required (Lumby, 2003). Unions are also aligned to political affiliations and therefore the interest of educators is based on a broad political affiliation (Lumby, 2003). Unions are given 5 working days notice when invited to processes for the appointment of principals. Parents are of the view that the participation of unions in the selection process is very inconsistent. Their non-attendance sometimes impacts on possible inputs and support they could have made available to the selection committee. It must be said that the absence of union members from the selection process requires more discipline and reprimand from the higher structures of the union. Further to this, the selection committee are well within

their rights to continue the selection process even though the unions are not present. One parent indicated that unions are of great help. This statement may be supported by their understanding and experience of the process involving the recommendation for the appointment of principals at schools. There seems to be a strong view by parents that if unions are not satisfied with the recommended candidate then they will find a reason to dispute the process. This assertion is strongly supported by the case studies that were presented to the participants. There is also a thinking that their support or choice of candidate is premeditated. Parents have alluded to the fact that there is sometimes a lot of disagreement and fighting between unions as each union would like their member to be recommended and not necessarily the best candidate.

4.2.3.5 Parents and their understanding of leadership

The question put forward to the focus group is as follows: Do you fully understand the core responsibilities of a principal and what his role as a leader and manager entails? The probe is: If yes, provide some information to support your claim. If no, does this disadvantage you in understanding this responsibility?

This is what Mrs Naidoo had to say:

I don't know what the responsibilities of a principal are, that is why if they want the governing body to choose a principal they need to workshop the selection committee on what the responsibilities of a principal are. Right now that is not being done and principals are not being chosen properly.

Mr Anderson responded in the following manner:

As far as the parent component is involved we know that the principal should know everything but whether that proves true we cannot tell, because from a parent component part of the governing body is we are not given a job description by him and neither do we know fully what his job entails so this is the critical part of the governance of the school. And I think that the best people to make this judgement are the department because they understand fully the Principal's responsibilities and what needs to be done on a day to day basis.

Mrs Govenders response was:

I think as the parent component we fully understand the responsibilities of a principal, as a role to the question. What is a role as a leader and manager entitled, depends on how he manages his school. So educators are more enlightened and not the parents. We are not there for him to manage us, so when we choosing as well it is important we always look for experience. Is he an experienced principal coming from that field of responsibilities like deputy or head. It can't just be you know for me I feel if you're choosing a principal you have to look for those important points. You can't just choose a teacher who had no experience as HOD wouldn't make sense, we understand the responsibility of a principal and his function in the school as how he needs to lead his school for further success. So, but when it comes to being a leader or manager, that should come more from the staff and people he's managing rather than the SGB so that is why I don't agree with the SGB appointing principals.

Miss Maharaj had the following to say:

I feel that the principal is most important person in a school, because if a parent enters a school or, the department official or the parent or whoever it is the first person they look for in a school is the principal. Because he is now the accounting officer of that school, he's accountable to the department of education which is his employer, then he's also responsible for the finances of the school, for the management of the teachers and the discipline of children. And he has to be a person who is a role model, he has to be an experienced educator because he is going to be in charge of educators who are professional people with their degrees. He also has to be a people's person because he needs to know how to communicate with parents, children and with the community. Because he is a principal coming in he has to build this relationship with the community so that when he is there people are now going to look up to him. This is the principal of a school. He has to be able to manage the educators in a way where he doesn't discriminate where he makes sure he brings out the best in educators and just not have a favourite. He also has to be a principal that commands respect from the children of the school and from the community as a whole and how he represents himself to the community, to members of his governing body is going to tell exactly how the school is going to look in the years after he comes and takes on that role.

In the last 22 years parents have become more acquainted with the work of the principal of a school as a result of their participation in school governing bodies (Karlsson, 2002). Principals

serve as departmental representatives in school governing bodies thus articulating the views of the department in general and the views of their office in particular (Bush et al., 2011). The roles and responsibilities of principals is articulated clearly in the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (Bush et al., 2011). This is further enunciated in the South African Schools Act of 1996 under professional matters of the SGB (South African Schools Act, 1996). Whilst parents have worked closely with the principals of schools we find the lines to be blurred sometimes with parents wanting to usurp the roles and responsibilities of principals (Van Wyk, 2004). This shows a clear lack of understanding of the role that parents themselves have on their own responsibilities within schools and school governing bodies. A large part of the confusion is around the issue of power. Parents sometime want to assume the authority and function of principals and in cases where this cannot be done, and then they aim to undermine the authority and power of the principal. Parents are of the view that they do not fully understand the roles and responsibilities of principals and as a result of that they are not in a good position to choose who the principal of a school should be. Parents further extend this thought by accepting that educators and or the Department of Education is well placed to understand the roles of principals and it is therefore imperative that they make the call. Even though parents do not fully understand the role of principals they are strongly of the view that principals must come with a great deal of experience and understanding of the operations and functioning of a school which will inadvertently determine their success in leadership at the school. A lack of favouritism amongst educators and a good relationship with the community are pre-requisites for the role of principalship, according to parents.

4.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter I presented and discussed the data that was generated through the use of focus group interviews. I analysed and interpreted the responses presented by my research participants. The chapter had started with a presentation of the 4 case studies that set the platform for the research. The next chapter will encapsulate a summary of all the previous chapters. I will then proceed to do my final conclusion, and lastly my recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction.

In the previous chapter I analysed, discussed and presented the findings generated through the focus group interviews in response to my research questions. This final chapter of my study will consist of a summary of the study. Here I will do a synopsis of each chapter and what were the key learnings. Following this I will focus on the conclusions around my research questions. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by making recommendations that emerge from the study.

5.2 Summary of the study

The study sought to revisit the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. Chapter one set the platform for this study. It provided a background and contextualised the nature of the study, extending far back as 1994 and the promulgation of the South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 (SASA). Chapter one then went on to present the statement of the problem. It deliberated on the possible shortcomings of school governing bodies and teacher unions in terms of the execution of their responsibilities. The purpose or the rationale for the study was then explained in detail in chapter one. It got us to understand that there seems to be a gap between the expectations of the Department of Education and what pertains on the ground on how the selection process to appoint principals should take place. Chapter one then went on to give us an understanding as to why this study is significant. It explained that a greater understanding of this process will not only highlight the shortcomings but provide alternatives for its improvement. The objectives of this study and the critical research questions were then listed out. The critical research questions form the driving force of this study. Every study has its delimitations and chapter one exposed us to the delimitations of the study so as to give us a more accurate perspective of the study. Having worked with chapter one, I have come to realise what a deep involvement I have with this study from a social, personal and work related perspective.

Chapter two constituted a comprehensive literature review together with a theoretical framework for the study. My three critical research questions were used as a framework for my literature review. The first part of my literature review spoke to the aspect of Human Resources

Management. The process of selecting people becomes the most important human function for an organisation. HRM has consistently shown that the formal policies that organisations espouse to are not always a good guide to the way they are implemented in practice. The next part of the literature review focused on the state of school governing bodies. The responsibility of the Department of Education to workshop staff selection committees on processes and procedures is highlighted. The third part of the literature review deals with the aspect of concerns around the appointment of principals. Aspects of the National Development Plan are used to enunciate and emphasise the growing concerns around the appointment of principals. The literature review proceeds to highlight similar trends internationally by using examples of recruitment in New Zealand and the USA. The literature review concludes with outlining processes of successful and effective recruitment of principals. The theoretical framework used in the study was centred on two theoretical approaches to selection and recruitment. These were the particularism approach and the universalism approach. The theoretical framework was used as a lens for the study. Both these approaches were dealt with explicitly. These approaches were looked at both nationally and internationally.

The main focus of chapter 3 was the research design and methodology. I used the interpretivist paradigm as my research paradigm. The lived experience and interpretations were of paramount importance to my research. My research design that I used was qualitative gaining an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. Case studies were used as a methodology for my study which provided me with unique examples of real situations with real people in the Pinetown District. My data was generated using focus groups, a form of group interview. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. There were four participants in each of the designated groups. There was total compliance in terms of trustworthiness and ethical issues. It is interesting to note that the research study has provided me with an opportunity to understand and relate with principals, educators and members of the SGB in a manner that was different to my experiences in the past. Having been appointed Superintendent of Education for the last 13 years I have rarely had interactions with individuals as I did through this research. It was indeed a fulfilling and refreshing experience.

Chapter 4 provided a presentation of the data through the various focus groups and an analysis thereof. The data has been carefully structured in terms of the three focus groups. The data was

supported by the various presentations in the literature review. The responses also found favour with the theoretical framework of the two approaches which was the particularist approach and the universalist approach.

5.3 Conclusion

Using my research questions as an organising structure, I present my conclusions of the study from the findings of the study.

5.3.1 The effectiveness of the structure and the format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals as explained by the participants.

Through the focus group interviews it was established that the interview committee of the SGB presides over the recruitment and selection process for the appointment of school principals. Further to that, it was found that these appointments are endorsed by the DOE in almost all cases unless there is a serious transgression in terms of the process. Given that the interview committees are made up of parents, educators, a Department of Education nominee and the union representatives, the research has shown that there is little or no support for any of these relevant stakeholders to continue to participate in this process. It was found that the departmental nominee may have a preconceived idea as to who should be appointed to the position. The parents have been found to lack the competence to undertake the task at hand. The educators were found to be a few levels below the position of a principal and therefore not adequately equipped for the task and the unions were found to have a political bias towards certain applicants for the position. Out of this findings, it can be concluded that the responsibility of the recruitment, selection and appointment of principals of schools be taken away from the SGBs and the interview committees and returned to the Department of Education.

Through the focus group interviews it was found that the format of the selection process was inadequate to fully understand the potential of the candidates. Not enough information can be gleaned from an interview that required 5 questions to be answered within a period of 15 minutes. The questions seem to confine those that are being interviewed to specific responses giving the interview committee very little information to be able to make an informed assessment. It therefore can be concluded that a more rigorous and intensive process of selection be looked into over a protracted period of time which may include psychometric testing, on site

visits and interviews with workplace colleagues to give us a more comprehensive understanding of the candidates being interviewed. Further to this, candidates should be given real life situations to respond to so that the process does not seem cosmetic.

5.3.2 The implications of the format and structure of recruitment, selection and appointment of principals for school leadership and management.

Through the focus group interviews it was found that schools succeed or they fail depending on the leadership and management provided at these schools by principals. This implies that the appointment of good competent principals is paramount to the success of the school. To further deliberate on this aspect, it must be said that improving the quality of education requires the appointment of the correct heads of schools. It therefore can be concluded that the Department of Education must embark on a policy where you recruit hard and manage easy. More examples of best practice need to be replicated in order to improve the standard of education in our schools.

Further to this, a comprehensive understanding of teaching and administration are pre-requisites before principals are appointed. It has been noted that many of the appointments that emerge through the current process do not fully explore the individuals understanding of administration and management. It was forthcoming through the focus group interviews that principals are appointed with a serious lack of understanding of the curriculum of schools and how the curriculum should be managed. This finds its way to other members of management and eventually to the educators of schools. It therefore must be concluded that in selection and recruitment of principals due consideration must be given to effective management skills, a thorough understanding of administrative processes and a good knowledge of the curriculum and how it is managed.

It was also found that parents and educators that preside over the selection and interview process don't fully understand what principals need to know in terms of leadership and management. It becomes extremely challenging when the very people that are expected to adjudicate on a process are challenged themselves in terms of information. In some instances parents have serious difficulty in reading out the interview questions to the candidates. It must therefore be concluded that the selection process under the current format is seriously flawed given the fact

that there seems to be little understanding of the questions asked and the responses forwarded by the candidates.

It was found that leadership and management is sometimes compromised if the principal is selected by favour or subjectively by the parents and educators of the interview committee. The appointed principal is unable to remain autonomous and execute his leadership and management responsibilities because he is always under the control of these parents and educators. This sometimes result in two centres of power which seriously hampers the delivery of quality education. Therefore, it must be concluded that favouritism and subjective biasness be eradicated from the selection process because it has far reaching consequences for the school.

5.3.3 The improvement of the current format of recruiting, selecting and appointment of school principals.

Through the focus group interviews it was found that the current format of recruiting, selecting and appointing of school principals must be improved and that strong changes need to be effected so that the desired outcomes is reached. Serious questions have been asked with regards to the participation of parents and educators in the current process.

It was found that the participation of educators have contributed to serious problems of nepotism. In many instances educators are found to support appointments from within their schools. This is done as a result of not wanting any strong management and leadership from the outside which may result in educators having to work harder or to do more. There are very few instances where there is an open system and educators are looking for the best individual. It therefore can be concluded that the participation of educators for such a critical responsibility must be reviewed and educators must be subjected to improving learner outcomes in the classroom.

Through the focus group interviews it has come across as a serious concern that school governing bodies have been in existence for more than 20 years and there seems to be no improvement in terms of them executing their responsibility in selecting principals for appointment by the Department of Education. If anything, some selection committees have become more competent in how they manipulate processes to arrive at the desired outcome. Having served as a Superintendent of Education for the last 13 years, I must concur with the

above. Individuals are far more brazen and conduct some of the activities with impunity. It therefore can be concluded that the roles and responsibilities of school governing bodies be reviewed and that the Department of Education undertakes its responsibility as the employer in education.

It has come across through the focus group interviews that parents have indicated that they lack the knowledge to participate in these processes. They have further declared that they are forced to sit in these processes and sometimes for reasons that may be surreptitious. It has come out clearly that as a result of this they feel vulnerable. Some of them have not completed formal schooling themselves and are found sitting on selection committees to decide who the next principal of the school should be. It therefore can be concluded that parents have an important role to play in the education of their children. However, being part of a process that requires expert knowledge in education must be handed back to those that are qualified and have the relevant experience in education.

5.4 Recommendations

The following are suggested recommendations for this study:

5.4.1 Recommendation One – Process be returned to the Department of Education.

In terms of the findings by principals, educators and parents that were directly involved in the selection process, I recommend that the responsibility for recruiting and selecting principals be withdrawn from the school governing bodies and be given back to the Department of Education. Special teams can be set up at a district level that focus solely on the appointment of principals at public school. This will reduce implications of preferential treatment, nepotism, political biasness and incapacity.

5.4.2 Recommendation Two – Training and empowerment of School Governing Bodies

One of the areas that require serious attention is the building of capacity in school governing body structures. It is an area that has been neglected over the years and many of the challenges that currently face our schools is as a result of school governing bodies not correctly executing their responsibilities. A once off training programme when school governing bodies are elected once every three years have proved ineffective in schools. Parents have confused their

responsibility with that of leadership and management of schools. Governance and professional management must be clearly defined so that individuals don't work at cross purposes with each other. A well trained school governing body will reduce conflict and malpractices and assist the school to advance itself and improve academically.

5.4.3 Recommendation Three – Developing specific standards for principals

One of the critical areas with challenges facing the recruitment selection and appointment of school principals is the minimum requirements for applications. Serving for just 7 years as an educator qualifies you to apply for the position. This further compounds the selection process because interview committees are inundated with applications. Every educator in a school believes he is a prospective principal having served 7 years. All the other findings in the study are directly linked to these applications. The Department of Education needs to set more stringent criteria in terms of who is eligible to apply for these positions.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter comprised of a summary of the study. Each chapter was unfolded together with what the key learning areas were. This was followed by my drawing conclusions from my research questions. Finally, this chapter was brought to its conclusion by recommendations that emerged from the study.

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Appendix 1.1 Questions to be asked to stimulate discussions using focus groups - Educators

[NB : These questions will guide and stimulate discussions in the focus group after the group has been presented with 4 grievance cases.]

1. Selection Committees at schools now include educators being part of the selection process. Do you think educators should be included in a process that entails the appointment of school principals?

[Probes: If yes why do you believe so. If no, why do you believe they should not?]

2. Being currently supervised by principals that have directly emerged from the current process, how would you describe the current leadership provided by principals?

[Probes: You may comment on your experience in your school or schools in your district.]

3. Having understood and being a member of the selection process do you continue to advocate that this process continues in its current format?

[Probes: If yes provide support for your response. If no, what are the possible alternatives]

4. What in your view seems to be the reason for stakeholders having an interest in the appointment of principals at schools?

[Probe: Highlight what you think may be some of the reasons]

5. Do you think parents are well placed to undertake a process of this magnitude?

[Probe: If yes provide support for your answer. If no, what would be your recommendation]

Appendix 1.2 Questions to be asked to stimulate discussions using focus groups - Principals

[NB : These questions will guide and stimulate discussions in the focus group after the group has been presented with 4 grievance cases .]

1. Having been appointed to the position of principal through the current structure and format, do you think that the structure and format enables schools to appoint competent principals?

[Probes: You may extend your response to experiences outside of your school]

2. Do you believe schools are adversely affected if school principals are appointed without having the necessary pre-requisites to be an effective principal?

[Probes: If yes say how. If no, provide reasons to support your answer]

3. What is your view with regards to the participation of educators in the process that requires the appointment of the principal?

[Probe: Should they be part of the process, explain. If not why would you say so]

4. The department of education may be contemplating reviewing the current process. What are your views in this regard?

[Probe: Should the status quo remain. If not why do you believe change is necessary]

5. Are the parents in your community adequately equipped to undertake a task of this magnitude?

[Probe: You may also make reference to parents in surrounding schools]

6. Do parents and other stakeholders have a preferred candidate prior to the process taking place?

[Probe: What influences this]

Appendix 1.3 Questions to be asked to stimulate discussions using focus groups – Parent members of the school governing body.

[NB : These questions will guide and stimulate discussions in the focus group after the group has been presented with 4 grievance cases.]

1. Having participated in this process do you believe the current process being used is assisting schools in the appointment of principals?

[Probe: You may provide a response relating to your participation in this process]

2. What are your views on educators being part of a process to recommend the appointment of principals at schools.

[Probe: If supported give reasons. If not why would you say so]

3. What are the reasons for parents and communities wanting to be part of this process?

[Probe: Is this related to building good schools or are there other factors]

4. Are unions providing the necessary support to ensure that there is fairness and transparency in the process?

[Probe: Provide your own experiences in this regard]

5. Do you fully understand the core responsibilities of a principal and what is role as a leader and manager entails.

[Probe: If yes provide some information to support your claim. If no, does this disadvantage you in undertaking this responsibility]

Appendix 2.1 : Consent form

.....DETACH AND RETURN.....

Declaration by Principal

I.....(Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study. **Research Title: Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals: A case study of stakeholders views.** I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I further understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I so desire.

I agree/do not agree to the use of audio recording device.

.....

.....

Signature of Principal

Date

Thanking you in advance

Researcher : Mr S.A.Chetty

Appendix 2.2 : Consent form

.....DETACH AND RETURN.....

Declaration by Educator

I.....(Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study. **Research Title: Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals: A case study of stakeholders views.** I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I further understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I so desire.

I agree/do not agree to the use of audio recording device.

.....

.....

Signature of Educator

Date

Thanking you in advance

Researcher : Mr S.A.Chetty

Appendix 2.3 : Consent form

.....DETACH AND RETURN.....

Declaration by parent member of the school governing body

I.....(Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study. **Research Title: Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals: A case study of stakeholders views.** I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I further understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should I so desire.

I agree/do not agree to the use of audio recording device.

.....

.....

Signature of Parent member of SGB

Date

Thanking you in advance

Researcher : Mr S.A.Chetty

Appendix 3.1: Letter to the Department of Education requesting permission to conduct research in KZN schools.

P.O.Box 60712

Phoenix

4080

15 January 2018

Attention : The Head of Department (Dr E.V.Nzama)

Department of Education

Province of KwaZulu Natal

Private Bag X9137

Pietermaritzburg

3201

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Selvan Angamuthu Chetty, a Masters student in the School of Education at the University of Kwazulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my Masters study I am expected to conduct research in four schools under your jurisdiction in the Pinetown District. The title of

my study is **Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. A case study of stakeholders views.**

My study aims to explore the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals in both secondary and primary schools. Data will be generated by using focus groups, a form of group interview. Participants will be engaged in focus groups at a time that does not interfere with teaching and learning at schools and the participants will include principals, educators and members of the school governing body.

All responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. The participants will be given timeous notice and all participants will be purposively selected to participate in the study. As the participation is on a voluntary basis, participants are at liberty to withdraw at any time if they so desire.

The following are the details of my supervisor and myself if you so wish to contact us in the event of questions and queries you may have.

Supervisor:

Dr BNCK Mkhize

Cell no: 0836530077

Office no: 0312601398

Email: mkhizeb3@ukzn.ac.za

Mr S.A.Chetty

Cell no: 0837891649

Office no: 0315024307

Email: chettysa@ymail.com

UKZN Research Office

Mariette Snayman

HSSREC-Ethics

Tel: 0312608350

Email: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Looking forward to a positive response

Thanks and appreciation in advance

Yours Sincerely

Mr S.A.Chetty

Appendix 3.2: Letter requesting permission from the principals to conduct research in schools.

P.O.Box 60712

Phoenix

4080

15 January 2018

The Principal

.....

Pinetown District

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Mr Selvan Angamuthu Chetty currently a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in the School of Education. As part of my degree I am expected to conduct research. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct this research at your school. The title of my study is **Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. A case study of stakeholders views.**

My study aims to explore the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals in both secondary and primary schools. Data will be generated by using focus groups, a form of group interview. Participants will be engaged in focus groups at a time that does not interfere with teaching and learning at schools and the participants will include principals, educators and members of the school governing body.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances during and after the reporting process.
- All the responses, observations and reviewed documents will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school and the names of participants.
- Participants will always remain voluntary which means they may withdraw if they so desire.
- The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interviews.

You may contact my supervisor, the Research Office or me should you have any queries or questions:

Supervisor:

Dr BNCK Mkhize

Cell no: 0836530077

Mr S.A.Chetty

Cell no: 0837891649

Office no: 0312601398

Email: mkhizeb3@ukzn.ac.za

Office no: 0315024307

Email: chettysa@ymail.com

UKZN Research Office

Mariette Snayman

HSSREC-Ethics

Tel: 0312608350

Email: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Looking forward to a positive response to my request.

Thank you kindly in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr S.A.Chetty

Appendix 3.3 Declaration by Principals

I(Full names of the principal) of(school name) confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **Re-imagining the structure and format of the recruitment, selection and appointment of school principals. A case study of stakeholders views.** I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understood everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily for the school to be part of the study. I understand that the school is at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time should the school so desire.

.....
Signature of Principal

.....
Date

School Stamp

Thanking you kindly in advance

.....
Mr Selvan Angamuthu Chetty

RE-IMAGINING THE STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: A CASE STUDY OF STAKEHOLDERS VIEWS

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24 JANUARY 2019

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This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

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To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully

S. Govender (duly signed)

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