

**A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN AN EDUCATION FOR
LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SCHOOL IN KWAZULU-
NATAL**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Education (MEd) degree in the discipline
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Project title: A case study of a learners with special Educational Needs (LSEN) School in KwaZulu Natal

Dear Mrs Slabbert

Expedited Approval

I wish to inform you that your application has now 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.

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

Yours faithfully

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This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval.

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December 2013

DECLARATION

I, Ria Slabbert, declare that:

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, who passed away at the age of 48, and never saw my dreams come true.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my family for their support and encouragement, and for making sacrifices during my studies. I acknowledge the support of my children, especially my daughter Bernidene's unwavering support. I greatly appreciate the trust that my husband, Ivan, demonstrated; and thank him for his encouragement, and for his belief in me.

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ABSTRACT

Currently, in school leadership a distributed perspective is supported by scholars in this field. Teacher leadership is seen as a means of operationalising distributed leadership. Drawing on this, the aim of this study is to explore the experiences of teacher leadership in a special education needs school. The study seeks to answer the following key questions:

- What does it mean to be a teacher leader in an ELSN (Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs School)?
- How do teachers enact teacher leadership in an ELSN school?
- How does the SMT (School Management Team) promote/not promote teacher leadership in an ELSN school?

Distributed leadership and teacher leadership are used as theories underpinning the study. The study is located within the interpretive paradigm and employs a qualitative case study approach. One of the strategies that qualitative research encompasses is case studies. One of the advantages of case study research is that you can use various kinds of methods to collect data. Case study research is flexible in regard to data selection, methods of data collection and analysis. In this study the context was an ELSN school in KwaZulu-Natal and the informative participants used were five teachers, two heads of departments and the deputy principal. They were purposively selected. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to generate data. The findings revealed that teachers play a meaningful role inside their classrooms, but beyond the classroom, leadership roles are lacking. Teachers do not understand the term teacher leadership and teachers should have a vision for their school.

ACRONYMS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B. Paed	Bachelor of Pedagogies in Home Economics
DIY	Do-It-Yourself
DoE	Department of Education
ELSEN	Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HOD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
M Ed	Masters of Education
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
TD	Technical Drawing

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THIS STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa since 1994, considerable change has taken place. Restructuring of the education system had to happen because of a shift towards democracy, equity and redress in order to overcome the effects of apartheid education. Coupled with these changes, school principals as well as their school management teams (SMT) had to re-evaluate their leadership styles. Before 1994, most SMT's had an autocratic leadership style. Decision-making was in the hands of school principals. Most school principals were autocratic and authoritarian and solely accountable for all school responsibilities (Grant, 2008). According to Calitz and Schube (1992), the leadership style of the principals was rigid and domineering. Decision making was done largely without consulting members of staff.

Given the ideological shift to democracy, the majority of the citizens in South Africa aspire to embrace democratic values. In the democratic era all policies and laws espouse the values of democracy. In education evidence of the values of democracy can be gleaned from legislation such as the *South African Schools Act 84, of 1996* (SASA). The unilateral decision-making powers of school principals ended with the introduction of SASA. This Act outlines shared responsibilities and a participatory approach to school leadership and management (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Special needs education in South Africa has also undergone the changes previously mentioned. Special education was once a neglected sector in education because more attention was given to mainstream education. *White Paper 6 of 2001* foregrounds the importance of special education. The then Minister of Education in his introductory message in the *White Paper 6* states that special schools will be strengthened rather than abolished. (Republic of South Africa, 2001).

1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Being in special education since 1985 and a teacher under the apartheid system I have noticed some schools have embraced the term democracy whereas other schools are taking very long

to change. These changes should include opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making instead of being passive recipients and implementers of policy. Further, there should be opportunities to share expertise and experiences amongst each other. School teachers themselves have also taken on some leadership responsibilities in order to ensure school functionality. I am therefore interested in studying the leadership roles that teachers play in education for learners in special education needs (ELSEN) schools.

Furthermore, I have witnessed changes in school leadership styles over two decades at this school. I have observed how school leaders have tried to make the shift from autocratic styles of leadership to more democratic styles of leadership, such as distributed leadership, where teachers participate meaningfully in decision-making. My personal and professional observation prompted me to delve further into how teachers have embraced the role of leaders in an ELSEN school within a distributed leadership framing.

The Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) requires that teachers serve as leaders, managers and administrators. (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Studies confirm that this role is played out in many mainstream schools (Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley & Somaroo, 2008; Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Spillane 2006). However, there are no studies that have been carried out on how this role is enacted in ELSEN schools. Hence, this gap in the literature prompted me to research this topic.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of teacher leadership in an ELSEN school.

The objectives of this study are:

- To determine the meaning that teachers ascribe to teacher leadership in an ELSEN school.
- To determine how teacher leaders enact teacher leadership in an ELSEN school.
- To ascertain the role that the SMT plays in promoting (not promoting) teacher leadership in an ELSEN school.

1.4 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Collectively, the study seeks to answer the following key research questions:

- What does it mean to be a teacher leader in an ELSÉN school?
- How do teacher leaders enact teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school?
- How does the SMT promote (not promote) teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may alert policy makers and educational managers to the unique contribution that teachers can make as leaders in ELSÉN school communities. This study may also add to the growing body of literature on teacher leadership in general and teacher leadership in ELSÉN schools in particular. This study may also provide new insights about leadership practices in an ELSÉN environment.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

To ensure uniform understanding of the terms in this study, the terms leadership; distributed leadership; teacher leadership; and learners with special educational needs will be defined.

1.6.1 Leadership

According to Yukl (2006) leadership is about a vision and the creation of an environment in which things can be accomplished. Bush (2007) claims that leadership involves influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Cuban (1988) refers to leadership as an influence process. We can thus deduce from this definition that the process of influence has a purpose, in other words it must be purposeful. Fiddler (1997, p. 25) echoed this claim by adding that "followers are influenced towards goal achievement". Furthermore, leadership is perceived to be about the development of people. Bush (2003) links leadership to values. Leadership cannot be mentioned without discussing management. In this study, whenever I use the term leadership the concept of management is subsumed in it. According to Gunter (2001), management is a way of maintaining organisational structure. The overall function is toward

maintenance rather than change. Management is linked to systems. Bush (2003) claims management relates to the implementation of issues. According to Fidler (1997, p. 25) leadership and management have a connection and “a great deal of overlap, particularly in respect of motivating people and giving a purpose to the organization.”

1.6.2 Distributed Leadership

According to Barth (2001, p. 85) “distributed leadership is based on the premise that all teachers can and must lead”. Bennett, Wise and Woods (2003, p. 3) are of a similar view that distributed leadership is a “network of interacting individuals”, and it suggests “openness of the boundaries of leadership”. Therefore not only the teachers’ roles are important, other members of the school community are just as important. Spillane (2006) suggests that distributed leaders focus on the practice of leadership and not just the leader. The assumption therefore is to see leadership as a shared function.

For the purpose of this study, distributed leadership is viewed as a sharing of leadership functions among teachers in an ELSN school, where distributed leaders will focus on the practice of leadership among teachers.

1.6.3 Teacher Leadership

“Teacher leadership refers to teachers who are leaders within and outside the classroom and identify with and within and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, influence others to improve their teaching practice and accept responsibility for realizing the goals of their leadership” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 5). Similarly, Harris and Lambert (2003, p. 16) claim teacher leadership can be described as “a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organization have the opportunity to lead”. Katzenmeyer and Moller add that (2001, p. 53) “within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change”.

York-Barr and Duke (2004, pp. 287 – 288) define teacher leadership as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement”. For the purpose of this study York-Barr and Duke’ (2004) definition of teacher leadership would assist to explore teacher leadership in an ELSN

school.

1.6.4 Learners with Special Educational Needs

Learners with special educational needs are learners with disabilities and impairments (*Republic of South Africa, 2001*). They generally attend special schools. Special schools are schools that cater for learners who have special educational needs owing to severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioural problems. Learners attending special schools do not attend classes in mainstream schools. Special schools provide individualized education so that specific needs can be addressed (Turnbull, 2002).

Special needs education is the education of learners with special needs in a way that addresses the learners' individual differences and needs. 'Special needs' also includes challenges with learning, emotional and behavioural disorders (Sternberg, 1999).

1.7 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

I conducted a literature study to find existing knowledge and information in connection with the research topic. I engaged in a comprehensive search of various databases - National and International. Previous studies on teacher leadership focused mainly on mainstream schools. Much of the literature for this study was accessed directly from the library at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The literature reviewed for this study centred on the themes teacher leadership and leadership in ELSN schools.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study is a qualitative case study research. In the following paragraphs I discuss the nature of the research design and methodology.

1.8.1 Paradigm and Methodology

This study is located within the interpretive paradigm. This paradigm assumes that people's experiences and interpretations are real (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999). Methodologically this is a qualitative case study. Drawing from Cresswell (2002 p. 58), qualitative research is an inquiry in which the inquirer, analyses, interprets and writes the final report. According to

Maykut and Morehouse (1992, p. 43) “qualitative approaches are useful when the researcher intends to have an understanding of a human phenomenon as well as to discover the meaning given to events that subjects experience”. I selected a particular case (teacher leadership) in an ELSÉN school. This study is concerned with the experiences of teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school.

1.8.2 Methods of data collection

Cohen *et al.* (2008) define research methods as research techniques that are used to collect and analyse data in order to get answers for the critical questions. Given that this is a study of limited scope one method was used to generate data, namely semi-structured interviews are used as the way of gathering data. According to Grix (2004), a semi-structured interview is an in-depth interview with a number of pre-planned questions in mind. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and therefore provide opportunities for the participants to discuss what he/she means (Cohen *et al.*, 2008).

1.8.3 Sampling

I make use of purposive sampling. Guided by Cohen *et al.* (2008), purposive sampling is a type of sampling where the researcher chooses a sample that is easy to reach. My sample consist of the following interviewees, five teachers, two heads of departments (HOD) and the deputy principal, from an ELSÉN school in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

1.8.4 Data Analyses

I utilise content analysis to analyse the data collected from the interviews. Content analyses is a “systematic approach to qualitative responses to open-ended questions” (Maree, 2012). Common themes and issues, similarities and differences will be looked at (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is largely delimited to the views of five teachers and three SMT members. The school of interest is an ELSÉN school in KwaZulu-Natal. The research study was conducted between February 2013 and December 2013.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one: Background and Orientation of the study

This chapter provides the introduction to the study. The motivation, as well as the rationale for undertaking this study, are presented. This chapter provides a general background and an overview of teacher leadership in an ELSEN school. The key research questions and objectives of this study as well as the key concepts and terms used in this study are included. A short outline of the methodology used in this study is given.

Chapter two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter covers the literature study that was conducted by the researcher to find existing knowledge and information in connection with the research topic. It presents the theoretical framework, namely distributed and teacher leadership and a review of related literature.

Chapter three: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in: paradigmatic location, methodology, methods of data collection, sampling, the ELSEN school and their participants, piloting, data analysis, trustworthiness, limitations of the study, ethical issues and the chapter summary.

Chapter four: Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings of the study using the critical questions as an organising framework. A discussion of the findings using the theoretical framework and key research questions is also presented.

Chapter five: Summary of the study, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter commences with a brief presentation of a summary of the study. Thereafter, conclusions are drawn around the key research questions. The chapter concludes with some recommendations around the findings.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The background to the problem was described in this chapter. The study explained the purpose and rationale for choosing teacher leadership in an ELSSEN school as a phenomenon to be researched. The research questions were formulated. The aim and objectives of the research were stated. Concepts used in the research were also stated. The research methodology was explained. An outline of the research was given.

The next chapter presents the theoretical frameworks and review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the background and introduction to this study. This chapter focuses on the literature reviewed with regard to the key research questions formulated in chapter one, namely:

- What does it mean to be a teacher leader in an ELSÉN school?
- How do teacher leaders enact teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school?
- How does the school management team (SMT) promote (not promote) teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school?

In this chapter, theories of distributed leadership and teacher leadership are presented, and related literature which informed this research is reviewed. A thematic approach is followed in presenting the related literature comprising the following themes: conceptions of teacher leadership; enactment of teacher leadership; ELSÉN schools and leadership; factors that promote teacher leadership and barriers to teacher leadership.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Warmbrod (1986, p. 2) states “a theoretical framework can be defined as a systematic ordering of ideas about the phenomena being investigated”. This study is underpinned by theories of distributed leadership theory and teacher leadership theory. These theories will assist me to make meaning of the data generated.

2.2.1 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

The term “distributed leadership” was first used in 1954, by the Australian social psychologist Gibb for the first time. According to this scholar, people with specialist knowledge would develop their own working patterns by scattering leadership (Gibb, 1954). Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) argue that distributed leadership shifted from a single leader’s behaviour to organisation wide activities. Drawing from Gronn (2008), distributed leadership guides the school principals to explore teachers’ expertise and to think strategically in their daily work. Spillane (2006) shares the same point of view. Distributed leadership theory is based on practising school leadership. Teacher leadership is a perspective of distributed leadership (Harris, 2005).

Gronn (2000, p. 325) describes distributed leadership as being “the new kid on the block”. According to Harris (2010), distributed leadership makes it possible for any person to demonstrate leadership skills. The assumption is that leadership is a shared function. Neuman and Simmons (2000, p. 10) share the same view and state that “distributed leadership calls on everyone associated with schools to take responsibility for student achievement and to assume leadership roles in areas in which they are competent and skilled”. Distributed leadership will ease the pressures on school principals if leadership functions are shared (Copland, 2001).

Barth (2001, p. 85) suggests that distributed leadership is based on the premise that all teachers can and must lead. Distributed leadership could address the leadership crisis in many South African schools. Similarly, Hopkins and Jacksons’ (2003) viewpoint is that all teachers have the potential to contribute meaningfully towards leadership. Harris (2003, p. 7) points out that there is recognition of the positive correlation between school improvement and distributed leadership. Woods (2005) supports that view and adds that distributed leadership is characterized by values, purposes and structures. According to this scholar, this need for structural pathways provides structural support for democratic leadership. Distributed leadership is a notion underpinned by democratic ideals and empowerment. It has been popular in the literature for many years but evidence of successfully implementing it is scarce (Webb & Vulliamy, 1996). According to Harris (2002, p. 15), it is easier to “point the finger of accountability in the direction of one person rather than to acknowledge that leadership is collective, shared and distributed throughout the organization”.

Gronn (2002, p. 423) argues that “leadership is less the property of individuals”. Leadership that is spread throughout the organization is important but not new (Mayrowetz & Weinstein,

1999). Secondly, the aspect of distributed leadership that is new is the interactions among educators (Gronn, 2003).

Drawing from the work of Hoskins (1988), commentators on distributed leadership suggest that leadership comprises a network of people working with boundaries that are open. According to Woods and Harvey (2003), key activities should be performed by people specialising in specific areas and working together in collaboration with others; as opposed to one person being expected to be an expert on everything within the organisation. Wilkinson and Malby (2008) share the same viewpoint.

Distributed leadership is the professional work of everyone in the school (Lambert, 2003). The traditional model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped and promising programmes often lose momentum and fade away when the leader changes or leaves. This distributed expertise leads to distributed leadership (Spillane, *et al.*, 2001). Distributed leadership is characterized as a form of collective leadership, in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively. According to Elmore (2003), powerful leadership is distributed. A distributed view of leadership also recognizes that leading schools require multiple leaders (Spillane, 2006). Leaders not only influence followers but are also influenced by them. Spillane (2006) suggests that leadership is not simply something that is done to followers. Followers in interaction with leaders and the situation contribute to defining leadership practice.

In a large school the need to distribute leadership tasks among others is very important as it is an enormous task. School principals should not do all the work alone. Copland (2003) states that it has been evident in research studies that “leadership should be distributed throughout the teachers”. In some special needs schools, leadership roles are seen as being authoritative or power based. People in those roles, normally the SMT’s, are responsible for the improvement of the school. The use of distributed leadership in schools like the ELSN school according to Harris (2008) is important because distributed leadership has the potential to “free schools from existing leadership structures as well as having the potential to connect the practice of leadership more closely to teaching and learning”. This scholar points out that school improvement through patterns of distributed leadership is evident in several research studies.

Gronn (2003) is of the opinion that distributed leadership consists of the following important dimensions: mission, vision, goals, and shared responsibilities. Any school should aim for success, and the school mission drives the aim. The second dimension that Gronn points out to be important for distributed leadership is shared responsibility. Teachers might feel important and will be motivated if they could be part of decision-making in schools. Teachers might think they played an important part in helping to make a success of the school. School principals' roles in the school could change from authoritative to distributed.

According to Spillane (2004) and Gronn (2002), leadership is a process. The relationships and interactions of multiple actors; characteristics of distributed leadership are based on three main premises, an emergent property of a group openness of boundaries and expertise of the many not the few (Bennett, 2003).

Distributed leadership as practice is based on four main premises, namely:

- Trust
- Acceptance of one another's leadership potential
- Formal leaders 'letting go' of their control
- Consultation and consensus (Mac Beath, 2005).

The key characteristics of distributed leadership, according to leadership literature are task orientation, communication orientation and trust orientation, (Fleishman, 1953; Gronn, 2000; Spillane, 2006; Mac Beath, 2005; Murphy & Louis, 2007).

Distributed leadership unfolds the following characteristics as one of the key concepts to this study, namely, **Interaction:** Instead of leadership coming from individual behaviours, leadership comes from the interactions among the staff members in the school. **Wholeness:** SMT's, teachers, learners and other communities can all be leaders. (Woods & Harvey, 2003). **Institutionalisation:** According to Gronn (2002), distributed leadership includes collaboration and participation within the school. **Fluidity:** According to Spillane (2006), leadership does not reside in formal positions, but emerges from the practice. Therefore boundaries between the leader and followers are blurred. Hopkins and Jackson (2002) characterised distributed leadership as "shared learning through teams of staff working together to augment the range of knowledge and skills available for the organization to change and anticipate future developments".

The attitude of teachers to the development of effective distributed leadership could be a stumbling block. Another stumbling block could be the perception of “separateness” associated with the roles of school principals and SMT’s as well as their responsibilities from teachers.

Teachers do see themselves as leaders in the classrooms where they teach learners, but not as leaders of colleagues. According to Fullan (2001), Creasy and Williams (2002), collaborative models of leadership were being recognized as being underdeveloped for the promotion of distributed leadership. Opportunities to take on leadership roles may not be welcomed by teachers. The separation of management and leadership might help to assist teachers to take on leadership roles (Hopkins & Jackson, 2002).

Another barrier to distributed leadership, according to Harris (2008), is “how leadership distribution is viewed by school principals and teachers. If it is viewed as delegation, then it is likely to be met with resistance by teachers not wanting to undertake more work. If principals and heads equate distributed leadership with an erosion of their power, it will be perceived as threatening and therefore unlikely to happen”.

In this study I am using distributed leadership theory because joint problem-solving in an ELSN school is just as important as in mainstream schools. Opportunities for shared leadership are vital. Contemporary educational reform places a great premium upon the relationship between leadership and school improvement. Effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of schools and of achievement of students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). There is a need in an ELSN school to explore the opportunities for decision-making and shared responsibility. Interventions need to be designed to help the manifestation of these opportunities. However, according to Ensley (2006), the heroic approach to leading is still dominating. The heroic, charismatic leadership is still a problem in some ELSN schools. There is a need in an ELSN school to explore the opportunities to develop distributed leadership.

2.2.2 TEACHER LEADERSHIP

According to Patterson and Patterson (2004, p. 74) a teacher leader is “someone who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or informal capacity”. Similarly Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) echo the same

viewpoint. Teacher leadership is about action that transforms teaching and learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Drawing from Starratt (1995) there is an indication of growing evidence that involvement by teachers in educational reform is critical. Wasley (1991) states that teacher leaders need greater leadership opportunities. According to Barth (2001), the possibilities for school reform is in teachers hands. A lot of literature describes the importance of teacher leadership in mainstream schools.

Teacher leadership is a collective and collaborative endeavour in schools (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007). Du Four (2007) points out that teacher leadership has great importance for school development and therefore teacher leaders have to realise that leadership is a part of their future work for the success of the school. Research studies on what encourages and what discourages teacher leaders has been done (Birky, 2002). These studies provide important and useful data from the perspective of the teachers. Data were compiled from teacher leaders teaching at high schools in Oregon school districts (Binky, 2002). These teacher leaders had no leadership titles, but always volunteered their time. They were interviewed three times and also had to complete a survey. Three assumptions have resulted from these two studies that affirm the current literature base: Teacher leaders do valuable work (Barth, 2001; Birky & Wood, 2003; Fullan, 2001). Teacher leaders are motivated (Birky, 2002; Fullan, 2001). Administrators (SMT's) can either encourage or discourage teacher leadership (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Birky & Wood, 2003; Fullan, 2001). Many believe and have written that "the days of the school principal as the lone instructional leader are over." One administrator can no longer serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without the substantial participation of other teachers (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; Olson, 2000). Studies done in South Africa on the concept of teacher leadership is that many South African schools are still bureaucratically and hierarchically organized with principals who "are autocratic and show negativity to teachers who attempt to take up a leading role outside the classroom" (drawing on the work of Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 13).

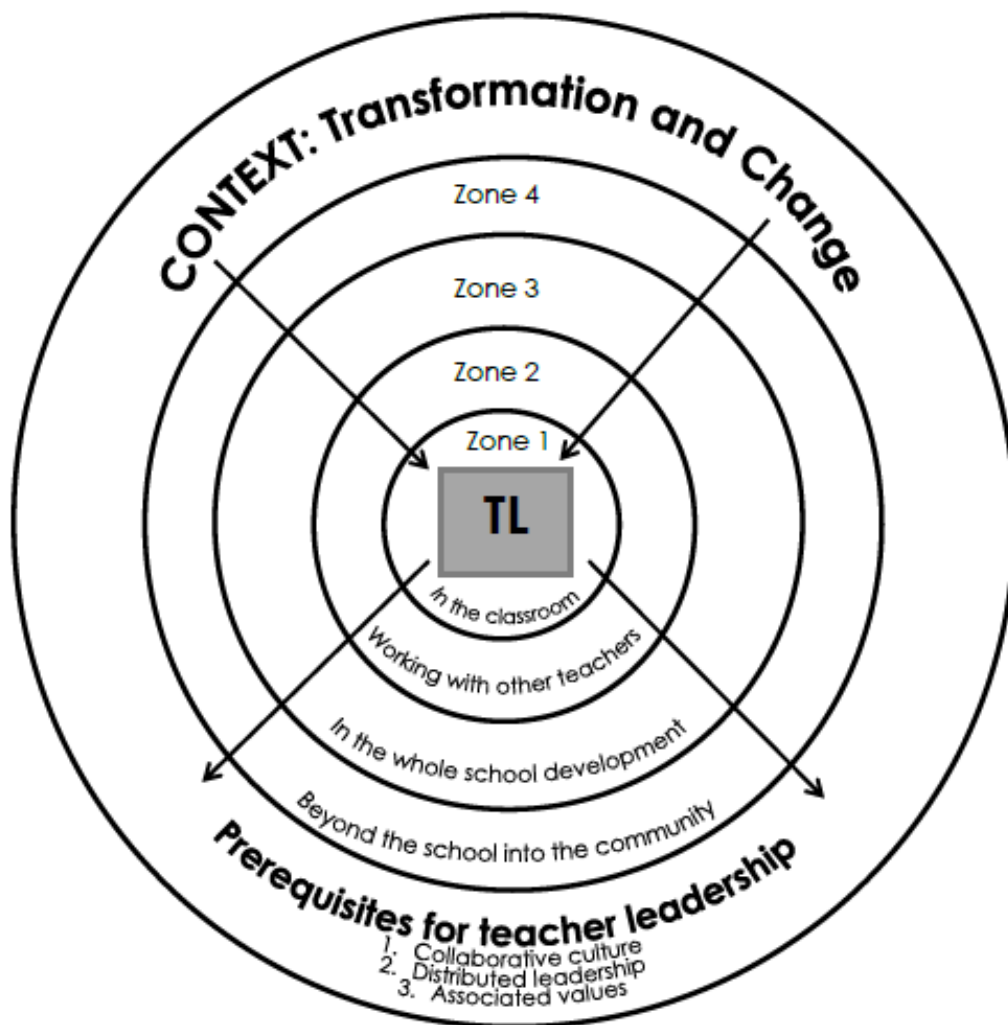
Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) reveal a model named 'Leadership Development for Teacher Model'. This model includes three major components; influencing strategies, personal assessment and changing schools. These scholars demonstrate that influencing others enhances the way of leading others; personal assessment invite teachers to explore their own beliefs; changing the schools, help teachers to understand their positions in leading. Anderson (1992) insists that a positive culture of schools helps to improve teacher leadership. Most schools discourage teacher leadership beyond the classroom (Coyle, 1997). It is important,

though, that schools encourage a culture of sharing their knowledge and skills amongst them – thereby creating a collaborative culture in schools which in turn will add to the improving of teaching and learning.

The old model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped. Improvements achieved under this model are not easily sustainable, when the school principal leaves, promoting programmes often lose momentum and fade away (Fullan, 2003). This model suffers from what Fullan (2003) calls the individualistic fallacy.

Teacher leadership is increasingly viewed as a key factor determining the quality and effectiveness of modern schools. Teacher leadership can be defined as “the capacity for teachers to exercise leadership for teaching and learning within and beyond the classroom, to identify with and contribute to a community of teacher leaders to influence others towards improved educational practice” (Harris & Muijs, 2005, p. 437).

Grant (2008) presents a model of teacher leadership where teacher leadership is categorised into four zones and six roles of teacher leadership. This model is a description of teacher leadership in the South African context. This model could assist the South African school teacher in taking up formal and informal leadership roles inside and beyond the classrooms.



TEACHER LEADERSHIP

First Level of Analysis FOUR ZONES	Second Level of Analysis SIX ROLES
One – In the classroom	One – Continuing to teach and improve one’s own teaching
Two – Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities	Two – Providing curriculum development knowledge Three – Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers Four – Participating in performance evaluation of teachers
Three – Outside the classroom in the whole school development	Five – Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice Six – Participating in school level decision-making
Four – Between neighbouring schools in the community	Two – Providing curriculum development knowledge Three – Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers

Model of Teacher Leadership (Grant, 2008, p. 93)

2.3 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The aim of a literature review according to Reardon (2006, p. 151) is to, “help to find what already has been done, so as to gain a good understanding of the subject of interest and recognize the key features and communications in the subject”. Similarly Bell (1999) claims that the purpose of the literature review is to provide the reader with a picture of the state of knowledge. With that in mind, I shall attempt to review the latest studies done on teacher leadership in general and leadership in an ELSEN school in particular.

2.3.1 CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Barth (2001), states that there are at least ten areas, where teacher involvement is essential to the health of the school. They are:

- Choosing textbooks and instructional materials.
- Shaping the curriculum.
- Setting standards for student behaviour.
- Deciding whether students are tracked into special classes.
- Setting promotion and retention policies.
- Deciding school budgets.
- Evaluating teacher performance.
- Selecting new teachers and
- Selecting new administrators.

Similarly, Wheling (2007) argues that leadership should be embedded in the school community as a whole, where everyone’s expertise, experience and talents are tapped. According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001, p. 53) teacher leadership should be ‘centre stage in the leadership play’.

2.3.1.1 VIEWS OF SCHOLARS

Senge (1990) suggests that teacher leadership is seen as the “collective capacity to do useful things and where leadership responsibility is widely shared beyond the principal”. According to this scholar, it involves school leaders and teachers in closer co-operation and collaboration with one another. Crowther, Ferguson and Hann (2009) share the same view and add that through collaboration new forms of understanding and practice are developed and this will

contribute to the success of schools. Similarly, Du Four (2004) states that in order for learning communities to be successful, a culture of collaboration must be created. This scholar's view is that teachers and administrators must work together to make it possible for all learners to learn. Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2001, p. 6) definition of teacher leadership is "teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice". These scholars argue that teacher leadership is required to transform schools into professional learning communities. York-Barr and Duke (2004, p. 287) view teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement".

2.3.1.2 SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY PERSPECTIVES

According to the *Personnel Administrative Measures* (PAM) document, all South Africans must receive flexible lifelong learning. The roles and responsibilities of teachers according to the PAM document is: Teachers should take on leadership roles in respect of subject, or learning areas. The teacher should teach, be involved in extra- and co-curricular activities, as well as interaction with stakeholders (Republic of South Africa, 1999).

The policy on *Norms and Standards for Educators* describes the roles, their associated set of applied competences (norms) and qualifications (standards) for the development of educators. This policy describes seven roles that serve as a description of what it means to be a competent teacher leader. They are:

- Learning mediator. The teacher will mediate learning in a manner which is sensitive to the needs of the learners.
- Interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials.
- Leader, administrator and managers. The teacher will make decisions and manage learning in the classroom.
- Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner.
- Community, citizenship and pastoral role. The teacher will uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices.
- Assessor. Assessment is essential feature of the teaching and learning process.

- The teacher will know about different approaches of teaching and learning. (Republic of South Africa, 2000)

These policies are very clear as to what is expected from teachers in terms of teacher leadership.

2.3.2 ENACTMENT OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Empirical studies have been done both nationally and internationally. The bulk of the studies have been done on how school principals lead, and not enough on how teachers lead internationally. Further, for over a decade, the literature has documented leadership in mainstream schools but very little has been researched on ELSEN schools in South Africa. The passing of the *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* was to democratise the education system. These policies that were created in South Africa to assist teacher leadership to emerge in schools, did not clarify what teacher leadership entails (Singh, 2007). They also do not provide guidelines on how teacher leadership should be introduced in schools.

2.3.3 ELSEN SCHOOLS AND LEADERSHIP

Studies in both the United States and Canada have shown that the increasing diversity of the school-aged population coupled with demands for educational reform has posed challenges for school leaders in special education (Zaretsky, Moreau & Faircloth, 2008). Even though there are challenges, ensuring accountability and success for all students with special educational needs is very important (Vincent, 2000). In the US and Canada leaders must be adequately trained to undertake leadership for special education programmes (Jordan, 2001). In South Africa it is not necessary to have a qualification in remedial or special education to teach in a special school.

Special education like mainstream schools is also moving away from an atmosphere of compliance toward accountability and results (Hehir, 2005, p. 35). However, school leaders continue to face issues and challenges in their efforts to guide teachers in striving for educational equity for all children (Zoretsky, 2004).

Studies with principals in Ontario examined their perceptions of their leadership roles and responsibilities in special education. The participants in that study identified the following

roles: support of special educational teachers in their effort to teach learners with learning disabilities; coordination of services and development of effective communication strategies and protocols among teachers and other stakeholders; establishment of procedures to ensure compliance with provincial legislation in special education and lastly identification and arrangement of effective in-service training opportunities in the area of special education.

Participants identified key issues, including strengthening parent/community ties to schools, developing teachers' knowledge and skills and promoting a school-based professional community. "Effective principals encourage teacher leadership, team learning, flexibility and self-governance" (Begley, 2001, p. 353). Principals must emphasize innovation, collaboration and professional growth (Plance, 2004).

The White Paper 6 of 2001 (Special Needs Education) proposed a cost-effective use of specialist educators which is currently the practice in South Africa. Internationally studies have shown that the greatest challenges in schools are the lack of qualified special education teachers. Many teachers are poorly prepared to provide effective academic support for those with disabilities. Many become quickly overwhelmed by their job responsibilities and quit (Embich, 2001). Balt (2000) indicated that school principals do not understand special education and feel unprepared. Several other studies (Davidson & Gooden, 2001) point to gaps in special education training. Teacher leaders need particular training in skills to provide adequate education for learners with special education needs. Children's basic needs must be met (Wood, 2008).

Further studies in the United States point out that principals were unaware of procedures to be followed when disciplining students with disabilities. According to Goor, Schwenn and Boyer (1997), principal preparation for special education is poor and is challenging their ability to serve all students. Lack of awareness of the various types of disabilities and successful intervention strategies will limit the principal's effectiveness. Bateman and Bateman (2001) claim that although the responsibility of the principal has increased in the United States, almost no state requires any training in special education to become a principal.

The position of teacher leaders in special education has become more demanding in the United States. Long hours, low pay and increased accountability discourage many potential leaders. Retirements are also thinning the ranks of present teacher leaders with few to take their place (Bowser, 2001).

Di Poala and Walter-Thomas (2003) claim that to be an effective leader in special education, teacher leaders must understand how to get communities to tackle challenging issues and deal with problems. These scholars argue that school principals need to recognize their responsibility for the education of all learners. Teacher leaders in special education need to maintain a clear focus on high achievement for all the learners in special education. Evidence from this study stressed the importance of learning in a context where knowledge could become specific, usable and distributed. The participants in this study seem to also stress the importance of teacher leaders to be identified with exemplary knowledge and skills. They need to develop ways to share their skills and knowledge.

In these studies the school principals provided opportunities for shared leadership, the recognition of talent and effort and structures for collaborative and professional growth. These school principals understood that there were teachers on their staff that often had a higher degree of expertise in some areas than they did. These school principals realised that there is a need to distribute leadership with regard to specific knowledge in special education. Dyson and Millward (2000) and Ryan (2006) shared the same findings on distributed leadership and joint problem solving in teacher leadership in special education. These scholars point out the importance of collaborative processes that focus on distributed leadership and participative decision-making. Each school principal in these studies distributed day-to-day responsibilities in special education to a variety of staff. However in this study the school principals saw the need for them to learn more about special education. Evidence in this study suggests that even though special education remains complex, distributed leadership practice is necessary. In this study teacher leaders practice is necessary and teacher leaders remained dedicated to shared leadership practices.

Most of the school principals that were interviewed saw the need for ongoing professional development that targeted their roles as teacher leaders in special education (Balt, 2000). They seem to feel that learning needed to be gained in ongoing professional development to equip them with knowledge and the necessary skills to be able to lead with confidence. At the moment their knowledge was acquired through learning on the job (Goor *et al.*, 1997).

Data from this study in the United States suggests that preparation programs should emphasise the development of instructional, distributed and authentic leadership skills. School principals that understand the instructional demands that classroom teachers face can provide

appropriate support. Torgerson (2003) claims that to date, preparation programmes neglect leadership as it relates to special education. According to Balt 2000; Smith and Colon (1998) recent studies of school principals found that “special education was the factor reported as having the most consistent effort on principals’ time, enthusiasm, ability to lead schools and frustration level”. The findings in all these studies were very similar.

2.3.4 FACTORS THAT PROMOTE TEACHER LEADERSHIP

According to Mitchell and Sackney (2001) “unless a top-down approach facilitates the creation of a community of leaders, it is not likely to stand the test of time”. Schools can promote teacher leadership by:

- Cultural factors. Risk taking. Democratic norms. Teachers as professionals.
- Structural factors. Mechanisms for involvement in school governance. Mechanisms for proposing ideas. Time for collaboration. Opportunities for skills acquisition.
- Opportunities to take initiative. Teachers are actively encouraged to propose new ideas. Sometimes there is even funding available to support their implementation.

Research evidence points to the importance of shared norms and values and of collaborative practice between teachers. The evidence suggests that teacher leadership flourishes most in collaborative settings, and that therefore creating a culture of trust that allows collaboration to grow is crucial to the development of teacher leadership (Lonquist & King, 1993; Caine & Caine, 1999). According to Friend and Cook (1990, p. 72), “collaboration is a style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal”. Skills, according to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) such as leading groups and workshops, collaborative work, mentoring, teaching adults, action research, collaborating with others and writing bids, could promote teacher leadership.

Grant (2006, p. 523) identifies three factors likely to promote teacher leadership:

- A collaborative culture with participatory decision-making and vision sharing.
- A set of values, which assist in developing this collaborative culture.
- Distributed leadership on the part of the principal and management teams.

The need for principals to empower their teachers to lead and manage teaching and learning effectively is very important. According to Harris and Muijs (2003) there is a need for mediation between colleagues and for senior leaders to surrender power. These scholars argue that schools should transform into professional learning communities. According to Bush and Glover (2008) for many South African principals, this will mean a total change of focus.

Teacher leadership is increasingly viewed as a key factor determining the quality and effectiveness of modern schools. Teacher leadership can be defined as “the capacity for teachers to exercise leadership for teaching and learning within and beyond the classroom, to identify with and contribute to a community of teacher leaders and to influence others towards improved educational practice” (Harris & Muijs, 2005).

Factors such as building participative structures, the support of the principal, open communication, an understanding of organizational culture and redistribution of power and authority, are supporting teacher leadership (Barth, 1999).

2.3.5 BARRIERS TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

According to Grant (2008, p. 525), the most powerful barrier to teacher leadership, is that many South African schools are still bureaucratically and hierarchically organised with principals who ‘are autocratic and show negativity to teachers who attempt to take up a leading role outside the classroom’. Yukl (1998, p. 139) states “failure to delegate may be the result of a strong need for power by a manager, sometimes combined with insecurity”.

Contextual factors also play a role in the resistance to teacher leadership (Senge, 2000). In KwaZulu-Natal Xhosa and Zulu cultures are very traditional and power is in position of the males. A female head of department might find leading her department to be problematic.

Lack of support from peers and SMT’s in the educational context is a barrier to teacher leadership. Family and other commitments is also a barrier to teacher leadership. Another barrier to teacher leadership is a leadership that fosters secrecy and suspicion. According to Walker (1994, p. 40) “for teamwork to be successful the culture of the school must be based on the fundamental values of openness, trust and participation. It would be a futile exercise to implement a team structure in a school that fosters secrecy and suspicion”.

For authoritarian principals and SMT members, barriers to teacher leadership would be the lack to share power and decision-making. According to Bush (1995, p. 52) “... power and decision-making should be shared amongst some or all members or the organisation”. Yukl (1998, p.139) argues that “failure to delegate may be the result of a strong need for power by a manager, sometimes combined with insecurity”. According to policy the principal is

ultimately accountable for anything that goes wrong. This could be a reason why principals are afraid to delegate and distribute authority. In South Africa teachers resist leadership roles because they see it as another burden to add to their workload (Steyn & Squelch, 1997). Teachers link leadership to a formal position because of their lack of understanding of teacher leadership.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical frameworks and literature review. It commenced by presenting the theories of distributed leadership and teacher leadership. Thereafter it highled conceptions of teacher leadership, enactment of teacher leadership, ELSN schools and leadership, factors that promote teacher leadership and barriers to teacher leadership.

The next chapter looks at the research design and methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two focused on the theoretical framework of the study as well as the literature reviewed around the critical questions as discussed in chapter 1:

- What does it mean to be a teacher leader in an ELSÉN school?
- How do teacher leaders enact teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school?
- How does the SMT promote (not promote) teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school?

In this chapter an account on the research paradigm used will be presented. The methodological approach of this study will follow. The methods of data collection, sampling, ELSÉN school participants, piloting, limitations and ethical issues will then be presented.

3.2 PARADIGMATIC LOCATION

This study is located within the interpretive paradigm – the aim being to explore teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school. Interpretive paradigm emphasizes the interpretations and experiences of people. This paradigm treats people as though they are the origin of their thoughts and feelings. Borrowing from Lincoln and Guba (1985), this perspective acknowledges multiple truths and multiple realities. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2008), interpretive research is basically concerned with meaning and seeks to understand people's definitions and understanding of situations. The assumption of this paradigm is that people's subjective experiences are real (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Scott and Morrison (2006) share the same view. Using the interpretive paradigm enabled me to investigate the experiences of the participants and to understand those experiences by interacting with the participants during the interviews. Therefore, my role as a researcher in this study was to explore the experiences of teachers, of teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school in KwaZulu-Natal, and to seek understanding of their experiences of leadership.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

Polit and Hungler (2004) describe methodology as ways of obtaining, organising and analysing data. Similarly, Grix (2004) describes methodology as the theory to gain knowledge

through methods and procedures. Holloway (2005) shares the same view that methodology is a framework of theories on which methods and procedures are based. Scott and Morrison (2005) add the 'why' question, which is critical to explain reasons for using certain methods.

I made use of a qualitative case study approach. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), there are multiple realities in qualitative research, which can be interpreted by individuals' interactions within their context, "...recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect" (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 461). The original context of the experience is unique and rich knowledge can be generated which in turn presents a picture of the participants' reality and social context (Holloway, 2005 p. 4). Hittleman (1997) supports this view and states that the issue of context is at the core of qualitative research. The researcher collected the data within the natural settings of the participants in order to understand people's experiences in context. In this study the context was an ELSEN school and the informative participants used were five teachers, two heads of departments and the deputy school principal employed at this school.

One of the strategies that qualitative research encompasses is case studies. According to Robson (1993, p. 146) a case study is "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence". Similarly Yin (1994, p. 13) describes a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". The disadvantage of a case study research is the issue of bias in sampling. One of the advantages of case study research is that you can use various kinds of methods to collect data. Yin (1994) claims that this is the strength of case study research. Case study research is flexible in regard to data selection, methods of data collection and analysis. According to Yin (1994) frequent complaints about case study research is the amount of data. Too little data may not have enough information and too much data might take a long time to complete the study.

3.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

A research method is a strategy of inquiry which moves from assumptions to research design and data collection (Myers, 2009). Cohen *et al.* (2007) supports this view and defines research methods as research techniques, used to collect and analyse data.

3.4.1 INTERVIEWS

In this study interviews were used as a primary data collection strategy. Interviews are person to person interactions with a specific purpose in mind (Kumar, 2005). Cohen *et al.* (2008) supports this view and claims that an interview is an “interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest”. They argue that interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. They further state further that an interview is a flexible tool for data collection and is a powerful tool for the researcher. However, the researcher using interviews has to be aware that they are open to interviewer bias, and may be inconvenient for the participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2008). The researcher needs to remember that an interview is not an everyday conversation, but that it has a specific purpose. It is a constructed situation and not a naturally occurring situation (Cohen *et al.*, 2008). Qualitative researchers use interviews to collect data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). According to Maree (2012), qualitative research is carried out in real-life situations. Qualitative research interviews focus on specific ideas and is a positive and enriching experience for all participants (Cohen, *et al.*, 2008). Therefore this method of data collection was deemed an appropriate method of data collection as the aim of this study is to explore the teacher leadership roles in an ELSN school.

There are different types of interviews. In order to get answers for my critical questions I used of semi-structured interviews as the data collecting strategy. (See Appendix A, B and C; pages 71 – 75). Semi-structured interviews provided more opportunity for the participant to explain and discuss what he/she meant. According to Maree (2012), it allows for the probing and clarification of answers. I found this most helpful to identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are related to teacher leadership. According to Grix (2004) a semi-structured interview is an in-depth interview with a number of pre-planned questions in mind. This type of interview “allows a certain degree of flexibility” (Grix, 2004). Semi-structured interviews are flexible and therefore will provide more opportunities for the participant to discuss what he/she means. Open-ended questions will be preferable, as they allow the participant to answer in his/her own words (Maree, 2012).

3.4.2 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Before I conducted the interviews, I gave research cover letters (Appendix D and E; pages 77 – 79), to the participants, requesting their participation in the research. The participants accepted my research requests after I told them that my research instrument would be individual interviews. The interview questions focused on my critical questions about teacher leadership in an ELSN school from the distributive leadership prospective. I pre-designed the interview questions. (See Appendix A, B and C; pages 71 -75). I added follow-up questions based on the participants answers. I conducted these interviews during the participants' lunch breaks. The interviews took place in a venue of the participants own choice. The participants remained anonymous, therefore pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. I made use of a voice recorder during the interview sessions. Individual interviews were conducted to gather-in-depth data. Later the interviews were transcribed to change audio information into textual data. According to Durrheim (2002), recording has the advantage of capturing trustworthy data rather than written notes. First I had to obtain permission from the participants to record the interviews. In order to confirm that the transcribed interviews was what the participants said during the interviews, I read the transcribed interviews to the participants.

3.5 SAMPLING

Maree (2012) states that sampling is a process that is used to select a portion of the population for the study. “Qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling” (Maree, 2012, p. 79). This scholar states that purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of characteristics that make them holders of data that is needed for the study. Kumar (2005) shares the same view and states that a relatively small number of participants selected can provide the researcher with a true reflection of the sampling population. A purposive sampling method was used in this research. Guided by Cohen *et al.* (2008) purposive sampling is a type of sampling where the researcher chooses a sample that is easy to reach. In a case study research the sample can be small. Therefore I chose five teachers, two HOD's as well as the deputy principal of the school. The principal was not one of the participants as he is new on the staff and has limited experienced in an ELSN school. The post level one teachers are all senior teachers. The selected participants are connected to each department of the school. I chose the most senior teachers and SMT

members as they have the most experience and they had rich information to share in terms of teacher leadership in an ELSEN school.

3.6 PILOTING

According to Strydom (1998, p. 179), a pilot study can be seen as a “dress rehearsal”. “The researcher is able to identify confusing and ambiguous language and obtain information about possible results” (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 64).

The main purpose of a pilot study is to sharpen the research instrument (Bell, 1989). To determine the effectiveness of my research instrument, a pilot study was conducted. According to Slavin (1984), pilot testing is a good thing because weakness can be detected and the appropriate changes can be made.

The research instrument was piloted at an ELSEN school and because of the feedback I received I made the necessary changes. I interviewed one HOD and one level 1 teacher for the pilot interview. The interview duration was thirty minutes for the one with the HOD and thirty five minutes for the one with the teacher. The pilot study assisted me to correct questions in the interview schedules which was difficult to answer.

3.7 THE ELSEN SCHOOL AND THEIR PARTICIPANTS

A brief biography of the selected school and the participants in this study is furnished. This school is situated in an urban area in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. It is a school for learners with special educational needs and offers education to learners from level 1 to level 4, ages 14 to 20 years. There are 730 learners in this school. There are 58 staff members: 50 teachers, 2 deputy principals, a principal and 5 HOD's. The school has an academic department where academic subjects are being taught. There is a boys' practical department with workshops. In this department the boys get trained in various skills, like motor mechanics, panel beating, woodwork, metalwork and do-it-yourself (DIY). There is a girls' practical department, where the girls get taught the following subjects: hairdressing, hospitality, needlework, computing and technical drawing (TD). It is a big school with not enough classrooms as the school was built for 350 learners. Most of the learners who attend this school live far from the school and are dependent on public transport to get to school. This school was purposively sampled, based on convenience.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

NAME	SEX	AGE	HIGHEST QUALIFICATION	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	YEARS OF SERVICE
SMT A Mrs Henning	Female	54	BA HDE	26	23
SMT B Mrs Fourie	Female	59	ACE	26	26
SMT C Mrs Elijah	Female	50	BA HDE	28	24
Teacher D Miss Babolal	Female	59	M Ed	36	6
Teacher E Mrs Pillay	Female	48	ACE	24	23
Teacher F Mrs Ramsay	Female	48	B. Paed	25	13
Teacher G Mrs Ludick	Female	50	HDE	24	4
Teacher H Mrs David	Female	64	HDE	36	33

3.7.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The deputy principal of the school, Mrs Henning is a fifty six year old female who has twenty three years' experience in special education. She has a BA; HDE and FDE qualification. She has been the deputy principal for the past nine years.

Head of Department (HOD) (practical), Mrs Fourie. She has an ACE: Technology qualification and has been HOD for the past eleven years. She is fifty nine years of age.

Mrs Elijah is HOD (academic). She is fifty years old and has been HOD for the past nine years. She has a BA, HDE qualification.

Miss Babolal is a female master teacher with an M Ed degree in Psychology and thirty six years teaching experience. She is very involved in the community and holds a position on the

SGB. She also holds a position on a teacher union. Miss Babolal is the subject head for English main language.

Mrs Ramsay is a master teacher and has a B. Paed degree as well as a Home Economics post graduate diploma. She has twenty five years teaching experience in special education. She teaches Needlework to the girls.

Mrs Ludick is a senior teacher and a subject head for Natural Science. She has twenty years teaching experience. Five years in special education. She is fifty years old and has a HDE qualification.

Mrs Pillay is a master teacher with twenty five years teaching experience in special education. Mrs Pillay assists the learner managers with their daily duties. She is also on the IQMS committee. She is forty eight years old and has an ACE Technology diploma.

Mrs David is a sixty four year old master teacher with thirty six years' experience. Thirty three years in special education. Mrs David is subject head for Life Orientation. Mrs David is actively involved in various committees.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

I made use of content analysis to analyse the raw data collected from the interviews. Maree (2012), indicates that content analysis is a systematic approach to analyse qualitative responses to open-ended questions on, for example interviews. This process assisted me to identify keys in the text that helped me to understand the data (Maree, 2012). Cohen (2007) suggests that content analysis wants to know who is saying what, to whom and how, as well as the reasons for and the purposes behind the communication. Common themes and issues, similarities and differences were looked at (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness of the research means that the readers of the research believe what the researcher has reported and that they consider the results reliable. Verification of the results of data analysis is a key issue in ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Poggenpoel, 1980). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in a qualitative research project,

four issues of trustworthiness are important and demand attention: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These four issues will now be discussed.

Credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), refers to the ability of the researcher to produce findings that are convincing. Poggenpoel (1998), states that transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be transferred to other similar settings. Bloomberg & Volpe (2008), share the same view but add that transferability refers to the match between the research context and similar contexts. An interview schedule has been provided by me to address issues of transferability. Guba (1985) maintains that the responsibility for applicability lies with the person who wants to transfer the results. I relied on the available data from this study so as to ensure transferability. I also provided interview schedules for other researchers to use. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) state that qualitative researchers make their data available for review by other researchers. The original data was kept safely in case of an audit trail. The audit trail was compiled by giving a detailed description of the way data was collected and how it was analysed. In addition written permission was obtained from the school principal where the research was conducted (See Appendix D; page 77). Written permission was also obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I explained to each participant what was expected of them. Therefore, I subjected my research to a competent peer to address issues of dependability and confirmability.

3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), limitations of the study refer to an exposure to the conditions that may weaken the study. I focused only on one ELSN school in KwaZulu-Natal therefore this study was subjected to some constraints. As I used only one method of data collection, namely interviews it could have weakened the study. I am a member of the staff and had to guard against being biased. Cohen *et al.* (2008, p. 350) state “during the interview the biases and values of the interviewer should not be revealed and the interviewer should avoid being judgemental”.

3.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

According to Churchill (1995), ethics is the study of moral principles in the way a group or individual conducts its activities. Reardon (2006) claims that ethical standards must be maintained by researchers. Cohen *et al.* (2008) talk about beneficence and non-maleficence.

Beneficence is the extent to which the participants are going to benefit by participating in the study. Non-maleficence principles states that no harm should happen to the participants (Cohen *et al.* 2008). In this study ethical measures are taken into account. The research data are kept confidential and not used for any other purpose. The anonymity of participants are protected. Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity.

I employed a code of good practice as outlined by Churchill (1995) when carrying out this study. I applied for ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Ethical clearance was granted. Permission to conduct research at the ELSÉN school was sought from the KZN Department of Education. However despite numerous communications to the DoE my efforts were unsuccessful. Therefore I decided to seek permission directly from the school principal. A letter was sent to the principal of the ELSÉN school, asking for permission to conduct the study at his school (See Appendix D; page 77). Permission was granted. Letters were sent to the SMT and the four teachers asking for their participation in the study. (See Appendix E; page 79). Each participant signed a consent form as evidence of agreement and to ensure acceptance of their participation in the study. These processes had to be completed a few days prior to the research. During the research participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Information about the nature of the research was fully explained to them. The participants' right to privacy was respected. All participants were treated with consideration and respect.

3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research design, method of data collection and procedures for data analysis have been described. The measures implemented in ensuring the trustworthiness of the research were discussed. Ethical considerations were explained. The next chapter will present and interpret the qualitative data collected. Findings and discussion of data is presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three, the research design and methodology employed in this study was discussed. This chapter focuses on the analysis, findings and discussion of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. The data is presented under themes and categories generated from the interviews. Further, in presenting the data, I wanted to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost. Therefore, *verbatim* quotations also used in the data are infused into the presentation.

4.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

In this chapter I present the findings and discussion of the data according to the three critical questions identified in the study:

- What does it mean to be a teacher leader in an ELSEN school?
- How do teachers enact teacher leadership in an ELSEN school?
- How does the School Management Team (SMT) promote, (not promote) teacher leadership in an ELSEN school?

The data from the semi-structured interviews was grouped into themes namely: Meaning of teacher leadership in an ELSEN school; Enactment of teacher leadership in an ELSEN school and the role of the School Management Team in promoting teacher leadership in an ELSEN school.

4.2.1 MEANING OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN AN ELSEN SCHOOL

The sub-themes that emerged during the interviews were: Meaning of teacher leadership as from leading from within the classroom and meaning of teacher leadership as leading beyond the classroom.

4.2.1.1 MEANING OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP AS LEADING FROM WITHIN THE CLASSROOM

The participants were asked to explain their understanding of teacher leadership. All eight participants were unanimous in stating that they supported the notion of teacher leadership and believed that all teachers are leaders. Mrs Pillay said her understanding of teacher leadership is that teachers should take up leadership roles and added that everybody should have a vision for their school. All the staff members should share in this vision. According to her, all the teachers should lead in the classroom. Broadfoot (1988) echoes the same view. He argues that teacher leadership calls for teachers to have a vision for the future and to shoulder more responsibilities.

Mrs Pillay emphasised that teachers as leaders respect other teachers.

She commented:

There should be mutual respect.

According to Walker (1994) there should be transparency, trust and respect. Another participant's, Mrs Ludick's, understanding of teacher leadership is to take charge of a certain subject or grade and then to behave as a leader in the field that you are a leader of. Her understanding of teacher leadership coincides with the second zone of Grant (2008) model, where the teacher develops working relationships with other teachers in his/her subject. Similarly, Day and Harris's (2002), fourth dimension of teacher leadership explains scenario's where teachers form close relationships with each other such as within subject or grade teams in order for mutual learning to take place. It was evident that some teachers' activities in their classrooms prompted teaching.

Mrs Ludick commented:

My duties included liaising with the teachers in the grade ensuring that they were at the same place [in the curriculum] at the end of each week.

One participant, Mrs Ramsay, said her understanding of teacher leadership was to have authority in the classroom. She also seemed to understand that leading outside the classroom is also very important.

Mrs Ramsay commented:

... the ability to lead in your classroom as well as in the school community and surrounding areas.

This comment of Mrs Ramsay is in line with Harris and Lambert' (2003) point of view. They claim that teachers can lead at various levels within the organisation. Having authority in the classroom emphasizes that teacher leaders are, in the first place expert teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Most teachers understood that teachers are regarded as leaders in the classroom.

Hoyle (1980) argues that this type of view is seen as "restricted professionalism". In other words teachers only lead in the classrooms. One participant said in this ELSEN school the majority of the teachers only lead from inside their classrooms. She said the teachers are not interested in extra responsibilities.

4.2.1.2 MEANING OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP AS LEADING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

From the data findings, one participant, Mrs Ludick said that she considered teacher leaders, those who took on positions where they lead groups of children in the school.

Mrs Pillay commented:

...preparing learners for activities, like concerts, valentine's day, and so on. In other words they are involved in extra-mural activities. There are some teachers on our staff who in this aspect show great leadership skills. Extra-curricular activities, like participating in the performance evaluation of other teachers. Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) need leadership skills.

Some teachers were involved in the planning of extra-mural activities in this school. An opportunity for leadership through teamwork was the exception. It seems like an isolated activity. Harris and Muijs (2005), refer to this form of teacher leadership as being restricted. A participant, Mrs Fourie on the SMT indicated that she considered all the teachers in her department as leaders, because the teachers are very mature with many years of experience. They are mostly master and senior teachers.

They spend a lot of time going on courses and some are improving their qualifications. All those things count towards being a very good teacher leadership in my opinion and will benefit the whole school community. (Mrs Fourie)

Teacher leaders can be agents of change if they get the support of the SMT to be excellent in teaching and learning through continual professional development, inside and outside the school (Grant, 2006).

Participants indicated that their understanding of teacher leadership is that it has to do with being a role model for the people that you deal with.

Mrs Henning's comment:

Teachers have to be a role model to the learners. They have to see you as a leader. They must be able to see you are making the right choices. Then when you make it into a management position you must be a leader amongst your colleagues.

According to Mrs Henning the young teachers that are coming through the ranks have a lack of leadership qualities, generally speaking.

According to Mrs Henning:

There is a lot of looking at what their rights are and what they should be getting and what they should be receiving, but there is very little dedication to the profession. Generally some teachers today do not want to do anything extra.

Miss Babolal commented:

In some communities teachers are regarded as being leaders because we are the ones who are role models to their children. So that put us in a leadership role. When you are on the playground and you do extra-mural activities you automatically assume a leadership role.

This participant seemed to understand her work more broadly. Hoyle (1980) refers to this viewpoint as 'extended professionalism'. In other words, teachers that want to extend their work beyond the confines of the classroom. A member of the SMT, Mrs Fourie's understanding of teacher leadership was twofold: teachers are there to empower learners and to empower other teachers around them.

Mrs Fourie commented:

My understanding of teacher leadership is to lead by example for and to be mentors for other teachers. Being in an ELSEN school, the learners need good role models because our learners have a very low self-esteem in general. Teachers need to lead.

According to Gehrke (1988) the role of a mentor is a very important function of a teacher leader. Being a mentor to other teachers is important but more importantly being a mentor and role model to learners is extremely important.

The participants on the SMT indicated that the teachers could volunteer their services in the various committees that are available for teachers to participate in. These committees are put up at the end of each year when the SMT does the planning for the next year to ensure the smooth running of the school.

Obviously there are committees that are not viable because there are no volunteers but if the SMT feel that it is an important committee then the SMT will take over the running of those committees. It is very disappointing if a committee does not work well or has not achieved much. Committees are put in place to develop the learners and the school generally. The teachers could play a vital role as teacher leaders in these committees outside their classrooms. (Mrs Henning)

Another member of the SMT, Mrs Elijah indicated that to her very few teachers show any leadership qualities outside the classroom. According to her many teachers on her staff are unfortunately influenced by union members which results in teachers not wanting to expose themselves to any leadership role at all.

Really bad comments and criticisms and things like that prevent the teachers from taking on any leadership roles. (Mrs Elijah)

The participants indicated that the influence of a union is preventing teachers to take on leadership roles. According to Johnson (1984) unionism was linked to conflicted relationships among teachers and the SMT members.

4.2.2 ENACTMENT OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN AN ELSEN SCHOOL

The research question guiding this section is: How do teachers enact teacher leadership in an ELSEN school? The themes that emerged from the data are: leaders in the classroom, leaders in their subject, leading beyond the classroom, participating in decision-making and leading in the community.

4.2.2.1 LEADERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Participants were asked to comment on the role they play in their classroom. Most participants indicated that they are leaders by virtue of imparting knowledge, make decisions about lesson plans and the curriculum content as well as projects to be done. The participants explained that in an ELSEN school the teachers have to lead the ELSEN learners because they are unable to make their own decisions.

Mrs Ramsay commented:

I plan my lessons according to the learners' abilities. Our special needs child is very weak; therefore I plan my lessons according to their level of ability. Some children in the same class are weaker than others. So I have to explain a couple of times before they understand. The brighter child can do more advanced work. Being able to concentrate for a length of a time is also a challenge for them. To keep them focused on the task at hand is a constant battle. I have to be able to lead the learners constantly.

Mrs Pillay commented:

... because our learners have a learning disability and lose concentration easily we need to keep them busy with interesting things. Your lessons must be very interesting.

A further two participants had the following to say:

Working with ELSEN learners you need to make sure you are reaching all the learners. You need to have lots of patience and repeat yourself many times when necessary. A person cannot teach at an ELSEN school if they cannot be tolerant towards the learners and their needs. Lead by example. Good preparation for each lesson is vitally important. (Mrs David)

I work on learning programmes that are inclusive for my learners' abilities so that teaching and learning can take place effectively. Our learners cannot concentrate for long period of time so your lessons must be very interesting. (Mrs Ludick)

All the participants found that working with ELSEN learners is a challenge in the classroom. To be a leader in the classroom you must be well prepared and must be able to keep the learners attention during a lesson. Most participants indicated that they are going on courses to improve their own teaching. They all seem to understand that teachers are leaders in the classroom leading the teaching and learning process.

One participant explained it like this:

I lead in the classroom because I set the ground rules. I plan the lessons. I plan the timetable then I instruct the learners what we are going to do and how the day is going to progress. I teach and lead in my classroom. (Mrs Babolal)

Another participant Mrs Ramsay seemed to think that to be able to lead in the classroom a teacher needed to take charge of the disciplining of the learners as to enable the learners to work better together. Squelch (1993) claim that on important task for a teacher is to maintain discipline.

Mrs Pillay shared the same point of view. She explained it like this:

In my classroom I take leadership by ensuring discipline of the learners, guiding the learners, reprimanding them when necessary, counselling them. I also motivate the learners to work. I am also the mediator when they argue in the class. It is important to keep order in the classroom. In our department, which is girl practical department, most of us go on courses to enrich ourselves to be better teachers.

Most participants indicated that they take charge of the learners and of discipline mainly in their classrooms. They also indicated that they take charge of the learner material, learning programmes and get ongoing empowerment and training in leadership in these learning programmes which is in line with Grant' (2008) zone one. According to Grant (2008) teachers need to improve their own teaching. According to this zone teachers are leaders in their classrooms. It was evident from the data presented that teachers are promoting teaching and learning in their classrooms.

4.2.2.2 LEADERS IN THEIR SUBJECT

When the participants were asked how they serve as a leader in the subject that they teach, most participants mentioned that they saw themselves as leaders in the subject in various ways.

Mrs Babolal commented:

In my subject that I teach I serve as a leader because whatever courses I attend and I attend many professional development courses I meet with the teachers and share what I have learnt and make a presentation about it. So for me it is about getting information and sharing it with others to assist in developing the school.

The above participant's comment is in line with Katzenmeyer and Moller' (2007 p. 17) definition, where teachers "identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and influence others towards improved educational practice." Some teachers in this school indicated that they took the initiative in improving their classroom practice by going on professional courses and sharing what they have learnt with others on the staff.

Mrs Ramsay commented:

I serve as a leader in my subject when working with an educator that teaches the same subject, sharing information about subject matter, compiling books, compiling the timetable, working together on examination papers as well as test papers and decide on class projects.

Mrs David commented:

I am the subject head of the subject that I am teaching. Therefore I am the mentor to the teachers teaching this subject in our school. We have meetings and discuss the work. All the teachers can give their input. When problems arise the head of department will be invited to join the meeting to assist in problem areas. We always have to remind ourselves that we are working with learners who cannot read.

One of the other participants, Miss Babolal who shared the same point of view is also a subject head. She makes sure that they all work together on the curriculum and she mentor new teachers in this subject. These comments are in line with Grant' (2008) model. Zone two describes teachers beyond the classroom, where they are involved in developing and mentoring other teachers. Teachers can also act in an advisory capacity in this zone. According to Harris (2002) teacher leadership is seen as focusing on participative leadership, where teachers assist other teachers to work together to achieve the same goals. Another participant saw herself as a co-leader with her colleague that is teaching the same subject.

She explained it like this:

We are not one above the other. We have both many years of experience and lots of expertise. We work with each other in curricular things. We discuss all issues relating to our subject with one another. There are only two teachers teaching Needlework and we both take up a leadership role in this subject. (Mrs Pillay)

A participant on the SMT indicated that teachers that have been trained in the last ten years do not have knowledge of their subject areas that they are teaching.

Mrs Henning commented:

Generally speaking I think that teachers have come through their studies and they did not develop themselves. They have not read enough about their learning areas. So to lead in their subjects is a problem. There are lots of courses available to assist teachers to better themselves. We, the SMT, are continually telling teachers about the development courses that are available. Not only provided by the different unions, but also by the Department of Education - the colleges and the universities. Somehow the motivation is not there.

Mrs Pillay commented:

In our department, which is the girls' practical department of the school, most teachers go on courses to enrich ourselves to be better teachers.

According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) teachers must be provided with “meaningful professional development experiences”.

Mrs Henning commented:

We also have found that teachers generally are not willing to take an extra workloads and do not want to develop themselves. So it is an ongoing battle to encourage educators to do the extra, to develop themselves, to take on extra tasks to develop their leadership skills, and to work together in curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Mrs Henning seems to think that teachers in this school are reluctant to develop themselves to take on leadership roles and to collaborate with each other. According to Harris and Lambert (2003, p. 44) “collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership, as it is premised on change that is undertaken collectively”.

4.2.2.3 PARTICIPATING IN DECISION-MAKING

In response to the question whether teachers are allowed to participate in decision-making, two of the three members of the SMT asserted that the leaders were allowed to be part of decision-making.

A very candid comment from Mrs Elijah sums it up:

At the moment, “yes”.

With a

Absolutely, yes. From Mrs Henning.

In addition, one participant of the SMT had the following to say:

With a new principal now – he is trying to encourage different committees and things but there is a terrible apathy with teachers reluctant to participate in committee. They feel that their workload is too heavy and there are too much that go with every committee. (Mrs Fourie)

Another participant of the SMT, Mrs Henning indicated that the teachers are encouraged to participate in decision-making.

Mrs Henning commented:

They can participate in decision-making in different forums like departmental meetings, subject meetings and staff meetings.

While there is evidence that teachers do participate in decision-making, there is also evidence of reluctance by some teachers to participate in committees activities owing to the additional work being too burdensome. It seems that some teachers are just there to collect a salary and to do the bare necessities. They are not really interested in the learner’s needs and the school’s needs. Muijs and Harris (2003) argue that involvement in decision-making is a key indicator of the strength of teacher leadership. A school that wants to make teacher leadership work needs to develop a culture that supports team teaching and collective decision-making. Bush (1995) emphasise that power and decision-making should be shared amongst all members. However, the above findings reveal that some teachers do not make an effort to participate in decision-making. Only a select few do.

4.2.2.4 LEADERS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

To the question how do you ensure that whole school development takes place there was reference to teacher leadership in relation to the development of the school as an organisation

by the participants. Some participants seem to think that teachers have lost their focus. The focus is not on the learner and learner improvement anymore but about what the teacher can get out of the profession. One SMT participant, Mrs Henning said, to her, leadership is about sacrifices and giving rather than receiving.

Mrs Pillay commented:

There should be a vision for our school. All staff members should share in this vision. There is no vision.

This comment linked teacher leadership to vision building. This participant said that teachers should be allowed to say what they think the school need to move forward. To move forward, she explained that the school needs a discipline structure to be put in place.

Mrs Elijah commented:

So much damage has been done to our discipline structure through negativity amongst our staff members. If teachers become consistent when dealing with discipline problems it would be a start in assisting in whole school development, in my opinion. Being an ELSEN school, consistency is vitally important. Putting a discipline policy in place might help.

It seems as if some of the participants regarded staff members to contribute to a lack of learner discipline. The comment of Mrs Elijah makes reference to the development of a discipline policy, which is in line with zone three of Grant' (2008), model. She said that teachers have been given the opportunity to get involve in whole school development, but the teachers seem not to be interested. There seem to be an overall lack of confidence to participate in whole school development of some participants.

Mrs Fourie commented:

I think because of years and years of putting down, the teachers do not have the courage to voice their opinions. They just do not have the courage to voice their opinions. They just do not have enough confidence so they just back off. Therefore they battle to play their part in whole school development.

One participant said that she goes on professional development courses, but is not so much involve in whole school development as she would like to as the context of the school does not give her much opportunities to do that.

A SMT participant compared the leadership style of top management as autocratic. This leadership style causes a lot negativity and unhappiness in the school. There seems to be a lack of enthusiasm for shared leadership and it could interfere with the teacher's responsibilities. Some teachers seem to feel restricted and do not have the freedom to express opinions. There is an overall lack of confidence to participate in decision-making.

Mrs Fourie commented:

The term teacher leadership is something that comes automatically, in my opinion, because you are leading within your class.

Another member of the SMT, Mrs Elijah indicated that to her very few teachers show any leadership qualities outside the classroom. According to her many teachers on her staff are unfortunately influenced by union members which results in teachers not wanting to expose themselves to any leadership role at all.

Really bad comments and criticisms and things like that prevent the teachers from taking on leadership roles. (Mrs Elijah)

The participants indicated that the influence of a union is preventing teachers to take on leadership roles. According to Johnson (1984), unionism was linked to conflicted relationships among teachers and the SMT members.

Mrs Fourie commented:

There is a tendency in our school that top management want to dominate and to have everything done their way. That caused a lot of problems in our school in the past and is still causing a lot of problems today. I think because of years and years of being put down the teachers do not have the courage to voice their opinions. Therefore they battle to play their part in whole school development. The leadership style was very autocratic and sometimes it still is.

The above comment reveals that top management is sometimes autocratic in their approach and shows negativity towards teachers which in turn causes problems outside the classroom. Some teachers feel restricted. Some members of the SMT are stuck in an authoritarian leadership style. One participant indicated that she would love to see the SMT make the important decisions. There seems to be a lack of confidence of some of the SMT in the ability of the teachers to lead. Gunter (2005) argues that it is a form of authorised distributed leadership. Mrs David indicated that she would love to be able to assist in establishing new policies and reviewing old policies but added that it is not possible in this school as teachers with very strong personalities take over. According to Hayes (1997, p. 23) “if people are given responsibility and autonomy, they will rise to it, if they are trusted, they will be trustworthy”. According to the model of Grant (2008) in zone three teachers should get more involved in policy development as well as vision building. Some members of the SMT will distribute work only at their discretion. Yukl (1998, p. 139) argue “failure to delegate may be the result of a strong need for power by a manager, sometimes combined with insecurity”.

Miss Babolal commented:

This is an ELSÉN school and the fact that we do not have workshops like other schools, where those of us who had exposure by training would share with each other. Not only matters of the curriculum but also factors like discipline, high school activities and so on. It lacks in an ELSÉN school. We do not have the platform for that.

There was reference made to whole school development being a holistic approach. Where the teachers get involved with the training of extra-curricular activities. This to them was including fundraising to take the sport teams on tour.

Mrs Ramsay commented:

At this school you have no option but to get involved in annual sport meetings and concerts. Every teacher is put on a roster to assist. We are also given a list of different committees to choose from. You get the opportunity to use your skills.

Most participants indicated that the SMT set the school year plan for the following year as to assist in the smooth running of the school. They also indicated that they are involved in the setting of timetables and duty rosters for the staff.

The participants indicated that all the staff members are involved in the IQMS process where the teachers evaluate each other and then assist and mentor the new teachers to become better leaders. Mrs Pillay said that she is on the IQMS committee and one of her duties as a member is to encourage teachers to develop themselves and to attend courses and enrichment meetings. Day and Harris' (2002) work focuses on staff that work together in an effort to improve whole school development. Patterson and Patterson (2004) echoed the same point of view where teacher leaders work with fellow staff members to improve teaching and learning. Gehrke (1988) claims that the role of mentor is an important function of teacher leader.

4.2.2.5 LEADING IN THE COMMUNITY

In the response to the question that was asked to the participants about playing a role in the community as a teacher leader, most participants indicated that this ELSN school is not a community school. The learners that attend this school do not come from the immediate community. The bulk of the learners are bussed in from areas outside the community.

Mrs David commented:

The problem is our school is not part of the learners' community. The learners come from all over and the only time we have contact with the parents is during meetings. We do not really network with other schools either as we are an ELSN school or it is totally different from mainstream schools.

Similarly Miss Babolal said they could not work with other schools in the area as what they do at their schools, being an ELSN school is very different from other schools. Mrs Ludick indicated that she is involved with a communications course and that she goes to schools and does public speaking courses with learners. This participant extends herself beyond this school. Mrs Ramsay indicated that she taught learners outside the school, skills in needlework and embroidery.

Mrs Babolal commented:

My involvement as far as our school community is concerned is in holding an executive role in a teacher union body and because of my

position in a union, hold a position in the School Governing Body (SGB).

Although these examples correlate with Grant (2008) models' zone four of teacher leadership it is not common practice amongst all the participants. This zone is about teacher leaders extending themselves beyond the school and leading in the community. According to Wasley (1994) teacher leaders extending themselves beyond the school is a critical dimension of teacher leadership.

4.3 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM IN PROMOTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

The research question guiding this question is: How does the SMT promote (not promote) teacher leadership in an ELSN school. The sub-themes that emerged from the data are: SMT's promotion of teachers taking on leadership roles; obstacles posed by the SMT to teachers taking on leadership roles.

4.3.1. SMT'S PROMOTION OF TEACHERS TAKING ON LEADERSHIP ROLES

In response to the question that was asked to the participants on whether the SMT gets them to take on leadership roles all the participants asserted that certain responsibilities, for example the checking of examination question papers for mistakes, joining certain committees, co-ordinating fundraising and so on.

Mrs Ludick commented:

Tasks are resigned to various committees which then facilitate the completion of tasks. The SMT involve e leaders from various subjects and appointed subject heads.

Some of the participants commented that these responsibilities were voluntary and that everybody on the staff had the freedom to use their skills that they are good at. One participant went on to explain that the school is a diverse school and because it is an ELSN school there are different departments. The workload for one particular head of department will be impossible to achieve. Mrs Ludick said that the SMT would identify people who they

know had the expertise to take up leadership of certain tasks or they would ask for volunteers to take up leadership committees.

Mrs David commented:

The SMT give you certain responsibilities, for example, meetings with subject heads. To lead meetings and allow you to give your input concerning the daily running of the school and how to address sensitive issues.

4.3.2 OBSTACLES TO SMT PROMOTION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

From the perspective of the SMT ensuring that the leaders play a role in (a) their classrooms and in (b) their subjects.

Mrs Henning had the following to say:

We have been battling with a very difficult situation at school where we have had a depleted team and double roles had to be taken as well as our teaching loads have been increased. These last couple of years we really had our hands full just trying to cope with a bad situation, where teachers are really taking up their union courses and focusing on political issues more than school issues and the needs of the learners. As a result very little development of leadership amongst the teachers has taken place.

A participant on the SMT commented that she encouraged the teachers in her department to take up different leadership roles. She said she tries to empower the teachers. Letting them take on different roles in our department.

Mrs Fourie commented:

When a teacher is very good in doing for example the timetable I let her do the timetable. Someone else might be good in working out the relief timetable so I let her do that. So on. There are things that you can allow in your department to allow leadership to flourish outside the classroom.

Mrs Elijah from the SMT from a different department from within the school has different problems. She explained that in her department there are a lot of strong-minded individuals and make it impossible for her to lead as their leader. Teachers in her department ignored the structures of discipline that were put in place to assist them and do not deal with discipline issues in their classrooms. They want the SMT to deal with all their discipline problems in their classrooms. To her teachers that cannot control learners in their classrooms fail to be a teacher leader. According to Harris and Lambert (2003) teacher leadership is a leadership in which all staff members of an organisation has an opportunity to lead. From the perspective of teacher leadership, one department in the school, teachers have the opportunity to lead and develop and grow. On the other hand it seems as if strong minded individuals prevent these opportunities to take place and to develop in a different department in the same ELSEN school.

Mrs Elijah commented:

It is very difficult to work with the teachers. They are very strong minded. When it comes to leadership in the classroom they are inclined to back off from discipline issues.

Some of participants indicated that everybody has the freedom to get involved but because of unionisation of the school it became very difficult. Teachers are normally asked to volunteer their services and it is up to the teachers to participate.

Mrs Ludick commented:

The SMT allow the teachers to use their skills to lead in the school. For example they can train a group of learners for a concert or organise Valentine's Day or price giving day and so on.

Barth (2001) argues that distributive leadership is based on the idea that all teachers in an organisation can and must lead. Similarly Hopkins and Jackson (2003) explains that teachers have the potential to lead and can contribute meaningfully towards leadership. In this school most teachers seem to think that all teachers have the potential to lead but there seem to be obstacles like unionisation that is preventing it from happening in this school.

A participant, Mrs Pillay was divided when asked if the SMT and the principal take on leadership roles. She said there are certain members of the SMT who are particularly helpful

and that will open doors to them at any time. Then there are certain members of management (senior management) that do not avail themselves when necessary.

Mrs Ludick pointed out:

With ELSEN learners – if we have a problem we need to deal with it immediately, but unfortunately they keep on postponing and postponing. A lack of discipline in this school is not benefitting the learners. Consistent discipline is very important in this school and would really help. Our principal has adopted a management style which does not include much interaction in policymaking with the various stakeholders concerned.

The comment of Mrs Ludick sums the role of the SMT up like this:

I have to say, management discusses matters or issues with the staff, listen to different opinions, listen to points mentioned and then they make a decision based on this.

Mrs Babolal went on to explain that the principal and members of the SMT take on leadership roles when they meet with the staff during formal and informal meetings to inform as well as to delegate duties, but the principal according to this participant does not encourage the teachers to go on courses to try and improve their general knowledge for the subject that they are teaching.

Mrs Ludick commented:

He seems to be fearful of the teachers and of standing on toes.

The participants were asked if the principal helps teachers to be effective leaders and to which they responded:

All the SMT members teach besides the principal. The principal does not do any class visits, so he does not interfere much in the classrooms. He does try and encourage the teachers to take on leadership roles in their classrooms.

One participant Mrs Ludick went on to explain that the principal is a new member of the staff and therefore lacks experience in an ELSEN school and does not really know what is going

on in the classroom of a special needs learner. For this reason it is going to be a while before he might be able to capacitate teachers to take on leadership roles. According to Harris and Lambert (2003), principals should become the leader of leaders. It is a principal's responsibility to build trust (Grant, 2006).

It seems that the principal does not have enough confidence to distribute leadership because of his lack of experience in an ELSSEN school.

When the participants were asked if they have any other comments to make regarding teacher leadership one said it is the first time that she heard about teacher leadership, but hoped this study would assist the teachers and management to become better leaders in and outside the classroom.

Mrs Fourie commented:

Some staff members are very negative and as far as I know the new principal has never worked in an ELSSEN school before. ELSSEN schools are very different from mainstream schools. So it is a learning curve for him as well. But on a whole the teachers in my department show their leadership capabilities in so many different areas. They are all prepared to do anything for the benefit of the development of the whole school. I do believe they are true leaders in their field.

Mrs David referred to the lack of discipline in the classrooms of some teachers and said it added to the problems of the school. Unionisation was blamed for the unruly behaviour of the learners. Most participants seemed to agree that the learners need boundaries.

Mrs Ludick commented:

With staff members on go-slow or chalk down and so on and learners not being taught made the school unruly and the discipline problems escalated.

This participant is of the opinion that teachers should lead by example. Another participant hoped that leadership should come naturally for her after so many years in teaching. This

participant added that some teachers on the staff thought they take a leading role, but all they do is bully other teachers to see their viewpoint and to accept their demands.

Miss Babolal argued that in her personal opinion the teachers are not given enough space to be more involved in leadership because the SMT is in place and that the teachers' input is limited. She added that more people could be empowered to broaden the leadership so that they could have a more inclusive team to be working together.

Miss Babolal explained:

We are mostly classroom based leaders, whereas we could be used outside the classroom as well as in the context of the SMT.

The data gathered seems to indicate that leadership of teachers was restricted to the classroom. A few other teachers lead outside the classroom. The distribution of leadership was done by the discretion of the SMT, where the teachers mainly followed directives from the SMT. The teachers had a lack of confidence to lead outside the classrooms. It was blamed on the unionisation as well as lack of interest. Although teachers seemed to indicate that they could participate in decision-making, the SMT made the important decisions. The teachers input was limited and controlled.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were presented under the relevant research questions. For each of the research questions themes from the data were generated after subjecting the data to content analysis. Under each theme, using relevant literature, a discussion of the data was presented. In the next chapter, a summary of the study the main conclusions of this study and certain recommendations are made.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the presentation of the data and the findings and discussions of the data. This chapter focuses on three issues namely: a summary of the study is presented; conclusions and suggested recommendations are made from the findings related to my research questions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

As indicated in chapter one, the purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of teacher leadership in an ELSÉN school. The chapter provided the background and orientation to the study. The motivation for the study emanates from the literature, where I discovered that research has been conducted internationally on how teachers have embraced the role of teacher leaders. Further, this role is played out in many mainstreams schools in South Africa. However, there are no studies that have been carried out locally on how this role is enacted in ELSÉN schools. I therefore found it desirable to focus on teacher leadership in ELSÉN schools.

Chapter two provided a review of the literature. The literature review commences with the theoretical frameworks employed in this study, namely teacher leadership and distributed leadership. In the chapter a thematic approach was followed in respect of the review with the following themes: the meaning of teacher leadership; the enactment of teacher leadership; factors that promote teacher leadership and barriers to teacher leadership.

The description of the methodology in chapter three addressed how the research was designed. The study was located within the interpretive paradigm using case study methodology. I used semi-structured interview to generate data. The interview method helped me to understand teacher leaders in an ELSÉN school better. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to delve more deeply into the issues that were being investigated. The chapter also dealt with issues of sampling, data analysis and the ethical protocols observed.

Chapter four presented and discussed the findings and discussions from the data analyses in terms of the themes. Related data were grouped into themes. The first theme covered the meaning of teacher leadership. The second theme covered the enactment of teacher leadership and the third theme the role of the SMT in promoting (not promoting) teacher leadership. The different factors prevailing at the case study school, which enhance or hinder enactment of teacher leadership, were also presented.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the three key research questions and the aims and objectives of this study, some clear conclusions emerged.

5.3.1 MEANING OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN AN ELSEN SCHOOL

Generally, teachers understood the notion of teacher leadership and believed that all teachers are leaders. The teachers expressed that they should have a vision for their school and that all teachers should contribute to the attainment of the vision. Most teachers' understanding of teacher leadership was to have authority in the classroom. Some teachers saw teacher leadership as serving as an example and to be mentors to other teachers and to empower teachers and learners. Some teachers perceived their roles as being a teacher leader to the learners.

5.3.2 ENACTMENT OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Teachers involved in this study indicated that the learners of this ELSEN School experience learning disabilities. Because of their learning disabilities teachers need to plan their lessons according to the learners' abilities. Further, the learners cannot concentrate for lengthy periods of time. Therefore they needed to be kept busy with interesting activities and interesting lessons. It seems that the teachers need to be well-prepared for their subjects in order to be effective classroom leaders. As far as teacher leadership beyond the classrooms is concerned, some teachers are generally not prepared to put in the extra effort that is necessary in this school. Some teachers seem to think that teachers in general at this school have lost their focus. The focus that should mainly be on the learners. The SMT members are of the view that it is generally only about what the teachers can get out of the profession. Thus for

some teachers, teacher leadership does not extend beyond the classroom because they fail to enact leadership roles beyond the classroom.

5.3.3 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM IN PROMOTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

A SMT participant described the leadership style of top management as autocratic. This leadership style causes a lot of negativity and unhappiness in the school. There seems to be a lack of enthusiasm for shared leadership and it could interfere with the teachers' responsibilities. Some teachers seem to feel restricted and do not have the freedom to express opinions. There is an overall lack of confidence to participate in decision-making.

Many teachers do not take up any leadership positions outside the classroom; because of the influence unionisation has on them. Some SMT members encourages the staff to join any committee to develop and use their skills, but some teachers seem reluctant to do so. The influence of a particular union are preventing teachers from taking on leadership roles. They are discouraged because of this influence from engaging in any extra activities. The teachers involved in this study seemed to feel that the issue of unionisation needed to be dealt with as it became evident in this study that it is a huge problem. Unionisation appears to be the root causes of most of the problems in this school and hampers the SMT's ability to manage and lead this school. A particular union encouraged distrustful relations between the teachers and the SMT.

The departments in this school are very different from each other. With one department everything seems to be running smoothly and the teachers assisted each other and attend courses to empower themselves. The same cannot be said about other departments in the school because of strong-minded individuals in that department. The teachers in that department seem to exercise authority instead of working together. The structures that have been put in place to assist with discipline in the classrooms have been ignored in this department. This makes teacher leadership a difficult task.

Many SMT members seem to be extremely helpful and will assist teachers at all times, but it seems that some members do not avail themselves when necessary. The principal is a new member of staff and therefore lacks experience in an ELSSEN school. It seems as if he has not

enough confidence to distribute leadership. Instead of distributing leadership, the leadership process is at times autocratically controlled.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers need to understand the term teacher leadership before they can enact it. According to Patterson and Patterson (2004, p. 74), a teacher leader is “someone who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning”. I recommend that the Department of Education (DoE) workshop teachers so that teachers have a uniform understanding of what teacher leadership is about.

The second recommendation on the understanding of teacher leadership will be that teachers should contribute to the attainment of a vision for the school. According to Barth (2001), a vision is an essential building block for teacher leadership. The vision will assist teachers to focus on the important things in the school. The teachers who lack confidence should be encouraged and developed so that they can lead. Autocratic leadership style needs to be replaced with democratic principles. Woods (2005) echoes the same point of view. The SMT needs to organise a workshop on how to deal with unionisation in this school. It would also be useful for the DoE to set clear guidelines for union participation. Unionisation is an obstacle in this school for teachers to become successful teacher leaders.

Teachers need to play a more meaningful leadership role outside the classroom. Leadership development programmes need to be conducted by the SMT and District officials to capacitate teachers on how they can serve as leaders beyond the classroom.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

TOPIC

Teacher leadership in an education for learners with special educational needs school. (ELSEN).

A case study.

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Deputy School Principal

1. Biographical Information of deputy school principal
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Qualifications
 - 1.4 Work Experience
 - 1.5 How long have you been the Deputy School Principal?

2. Understanding of teacher leadership
 - 2.1 How do you get teachers in your school to take on leadership roles? Explain.
 - 2.2 Tell me – do teachers spontaneously take on teacher leadership roles? Tell me how?
 - 2.3 Are teachers allowed to participate in decision-making?
 - 2.4 Were you ever exposed to this term teacher leadership? If “yes” please comment on how you became aware of it?
 - 2.5 How do you personally understand teacher leadership? Why do you think these people are leaders?

3. Enactment of teacher leadership

3.1 Do teachers play an active role in whole school development? Tell me how?

3.2 Do teachers play a role as leaders in their subjects inside and outside the school?

Please elaborate.

3.3 Do teachers play a role in the community as teacher leaders? Explain.

4. Deputy school principal promotion of teacher leadership

4.1 What do you do to ensure that your teachers play a role in

(a) Leadership in the classroom?

(b) Leaders in their subject?

(c) Leaders in their school development?

(d) Leaders in the school community?

5. General Questions

5.1 Is there any other comment that you would like to make regarding teacher leadership?

APPENDIX B

TOPIC

Teacher leadership in an Education for learners with special educational needs school. (ELSEN) A case study.

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

School Management Team (SMT)

1. Bibliographical Information of SMT
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Qualifications
 - 1.4 Work Experience
 - 1.5 How long have you been a Head of Department? (HOD)

2. Understanding of teacher leadership
 - 2.1 What do you understand by the term teacher leadership? Please explain.
 - 2.2 Were you ever exposed to the term teacher leadership? If “yes” please comment on how you became aware of it?
 - 2.3 Who at school do you consider teacher leaders? Why do you think these people are leaders?

3. Enactment of teacher leadership
 - 3.1 How do you take on leadership roles? Explain.
 - 3.2 Do teachers play an active role in whole school development? If “yes” describe the role that they play in it?
 - 3.3 Are the teachers allowed to participate in decision-making? Tell me how?
 - 3.4 How does the school principal capacitate teachers to take on leadership roles? Explain.
 - 3.5 How does the school principal help teachers to be effective leaders in the classroom? Elaborate.
 - 3.6 What role do the teachers play in the community as teacher leaders? Explain.

4. SMT' promotion of teacher leadership

4.1 What do you do to ensure that your teachers play a role in

- (a) Leadership in the classroom
- (b) Leaders in their subject
- (c) Leaders in school development
- (d) Leaders in school community

5. General Questions

5.1 Is there any other comment that you would like to make regarding teacher leadership?

APPENDIX C

TOPIC

Teacher leadership in an Education for learners with special educational needs school. (ELSEN). A Case Study

Semi-structured interview

Teachers

1. Biographical Information of teachers
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Qualifications
 - 1.4 Work experience
 - 1.5 How long have you been in special education?

2. Understanding of teacher leadership
 - 2.1 Were you ever exposed to the term teacher leadership? If “yes” please comment on how you became aware of it.
 - 2.2 What do you understand by the term teacher leadership? Explain.

3. Enactment of teacher leadership
 - 3.1 Explain how you play out the role as a leader in your classroom? How do you lead in the classroom?
 - 3.2 Tell me how do you serve as a leader in your subject that you teach?
 - 3.3 How do you ensure that whole school development takes place as a teacher leader? Tell me how?
 - 3.4 What role do you play in the community as a teacher leader? Please elaborate.
 - 3.5 Tell me teachers, how does the school management team (SMT) get you to take on leadership roles? Explain.
 - 3.6 How does the principal and other members of the SMT take on leadership roles? Elaborate.

4. General Questions

4.1 Is there any other comment that you would like to make regarding teacher leadership?

APPENDIX D

University of KwaZulu-Natal
(Edgewood Campus)
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605

Attention: _____

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

I am Ria Slabbert, a Masters student specialising in Education Management, Law and Policy. I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct this study and permission has been granted. I therefore seek your permission to conduct research interviews at your school. The title of my study is:

TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN AN ELSÉN SCHOOL. A CASE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the role played by leadership practice communities in developing the leadership capacity of teachers in an ELSÉN school. Through my survey on literature on leadership development, there is evidence that much has been written on leadership development. However, not much has been researched or written on how leadership development can occur in schools catering for learners with special educational needs. This study aims to fill the gap that exists in literature.

I have through a purposive sampling process chosen to conduct this study at your school. The study will use semi-structured interviews. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes and each inter will be voice-recorded. Responses will be treated with the strictest degree of confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names in the reporting data. All participants will have access to this information, should they wish.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my Supervisor, Dr Inba Naicker at 031-260 3491 or email at naickeri1@ukzn.ac.za. My contact details are as follows: Mrs R Slabbert at 0833013588 or email at riaslabbert@hotmail.com.

Thank you in anticipation.

R Slabbert Mrs (Student)

Declaration

I, _____ (full name of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of research project for the study.

Teacher leadership in an ELSEN school. A Case Study.

I understand that educators will have the freedom of withdrawal from the study at any time. I also understand that anonymity and confidentiality will be assured. I therefore give you permission to conduct research at my school.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E

University of KwaZulu-Natal
(Edgewood Campus)
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605

Attention: _____

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

I am Ria Slabbert, a Masters student specialising in Education Management, Law and Policy. I am studying through the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). Please be informed that I have sought the necessary permission from the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct this study and permission has been granted. I therefore seek your permission to conduct an interview with you. The title of my study is:

TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN AN ELSEN SCHOOL. A CASE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the role played by leadership practice communities in developing the leadership capacity of teachers in an ELSEN school. Through my survey of literature on leadership development, there is evidence that much has been written on leadership development. However, not much has been researched or written on how leadership development can occur in schools catering for learners with special educational needs. This study aims to fill the gap that exists in literature.

The study will use semi-structured interviews. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes and each interview will be voice-recorded. Responses will be treated with the strictest degree of confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names in the reporting data. You will be contacted well in advance for interviews.

Your participation will always remain voluntary which means that you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time if you so wish.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact my Supervisor. Dr Inba Naicker at 031-2603461 or email at naickeri1@ukzn.ac.za

Yours sincerely
Mrs R Slabbert
(Student)

DECLARATION

I, _____(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study.

Teacher Leadership in an ELSEN school. A case study.

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent to voluntarily take part in the study. I also grant permission for the interview to be audio recorded.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Participant _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of witness: _____ **Date:** _____

Thanking you in advance.

R Slabbert



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