

**SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS:
THE CASE OF FOUR SCHOOLS IN THE UMLAZI
DISTRICT**

by

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master of Education degree in the discipline
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DATE SUBMITTED: December 2014

DECLARATION

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval

Dr Sipiwe Eric Mthiyane (Supervisor)

December 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who played a significant role in the completion of my studies:

To God Almighty for giving me the strength to complete this work.

Mrs Shyma Nunan, who continues to be my sternest critic and for offering me guidance and support.

Mrs Ruby Maharaj, for always encouraging me that the end is in sight.

Mr Imtiaz Saib, my principal, for always offering me a unique perspective in matters of leadership and continues to be an inspiration to my studies.

To my colleagues in my school for always encouraging me in my studies.

The participants in this study, who gave off their valuable time and experiences which proved very insightful.

To all the lecturers in the cohort group who provided invaluable guidance in our sessions.

To my mother, Angie, for always instilling in me the importance of an education.

My wife, Sushi for sacrificing the time in order for me to complete this study.

My supervisor, Dr. S.E Mthiyane, for his patience, guidance, honest critique and encouragement which made this incredible journey an enjoyable one.

DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my late aunt Neela for always being there. I am forever in your debt for the many sacrifices you have made, your love and support throughout my journey in education. Above all, I am truly blessed that you have instilled in me a love of education and hard work. You continue to inspire me from the Great beyond.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore school principals' understandings of their roles as instructional leaders and the challenges that they experienced as they enacted their roles as instructional leaders. The study further aimed to investigate the organisational structures that principals had instituted in their schools to promote effective teaching and learning. The global preoccupation with learner outcomes and how principals influence these outcomes is the cornerstone of the construct that is instructional leadership. Literature is divided on how principals should influence teaching and learning. One school of thought proposes that the principal should be hands-on and knee-deep in pedagogical matters whilst another suggests that effective principals are excellent organisational managers thereby influencing learner outcomes indirectly. Thus this study used Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and Horng and Loeb's (2010) organisational management theory. This study is located in the interpretive paradigm and is a qualitative study within a case study design. Two primary schools and two secondary schools, on the outskirts of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, were purposively sampled because of convenience, with four principals and eight teachers serving as participants. The findings of this research pointed to principals viewing their roles as many and varied. Another finding to emerge from the study was that other principals were shackled by many factors that prevented them from enacting their instructional leadership roles. Further to this the primary schools in this study seemed to evidence more organisational structures than the secondary schools in promoting teaching and learning. Another finding to emerge from this study was that the principals approached instituting organisations structures in their schools differently. Further to this, schools in this study did not have any formal assessment programmes to gauge the effectiveness of their organisational structures. The challenges that these principals faced in their roles as instructional leaders were many and varied. It was also found that the principals dealt with these challenges differently. The final finding to emerge from this study was that the principals thought that in order to improve teaching and learning they should model excellent lessons, create teams, identify areas of weaknesses for teacher development and sustaining and improving the vision of the school. Some of the recommendations proposed in this study were that principals should be teaching in their schools; that principals should co-opt teachers onto the SMT and that PLCs should become the norm rather than the exception.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	- Annual National Assessment
CALDER	- Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research
CAPS	- Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement
DEA	- Data Envelopment Analysis
DoE	- Department of Education
DSGs	- Development Support Groups
HOD	- Head of Department
IQMS	- Integrated Quality Management Systems
KZN-	- KwaZulu-Natal
NAPTOSA	- National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
PLCs	- Professional Learning Communities
RCL	- Representative Council of Learners
SADTU	- South African Democratic Teachers Union
SDT	- Staff Development Team
SGB	- School Governing Body
SMT	- School Management Team
TAs	- Teacher Assistants
TIMSS	- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Contents

DECLARATION	i
SUPERVISOR’S STATEMENT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABBREVIATIONS	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Rationale and motivation for the study	1
1.3 Objectives and key research questions of the study	2
1.4 Definition of concepts	3
1.5 Review of literature	5
1.6 Research design and methodology	5
1.7 Outline of the study	6
1.8 Demarcation of the study	7
1.9 Chapter summary	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Literature review	9
2.2.1 The principal’s role in instructional leadership	9
2.2.2 Managing teaching and learning	11
2.2.3 The role of principals in promoting Professional Learning Communities	15
2.2.4 Values, beliefs and vision	16
2.2.5 Developing teachers	18
2.2.6 Monitoring teaching and learning	20
2.2.7 Organisational culture	21
2.2.8 Shared instructional leadership	23
2.2.9 Challenges to instructional leadership	23
2.3 Theoretical frameworks	25
2.3.1 Weber’s model of instructional leadership	25
2.3.1.1 Defining the school’s mission and vision	26
2.3.1.2 Managing the curriculum and instruction	27
2.3.1.3 Promoting a positive learning climate	27

2.3.1.4 Observing and improving instruction	28
2.3.1.5 Assessing the instructional programme	29
2.3.2 Organisational management theory	29
2.3.2.1 Organisational management.....	30
2.4 Chapter summary	31
CHAPTER THREE	32
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	32
3.1 Introduction.....	32
3.2 Paradigmatic location.....	32
3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm.....	33
3.3 Research design	34
3.4 Research methodology.....	36
3.5 Sampling	37
3.5.1 Description of the case study schools	38
CHAPTER FOUR.....	47
DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION	47
4.1 Introduction.....	47
4.2 Data presentation	47
4.2.1 The principals’ understandings of their role in managing teaching and learning.....	48
4.2.2 Principals’ perceptions of factors that influence how other principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning.	53
4.2.3 Organisational structures or programmes to promote teaching and learning	59
What organisational structures or programmes do you have in place to promote teaching and learning in your school?.....	59
4.2.4 Identifying organisational structures to support teaching and learning	70
4.3 Chapter Summary	77
CHAPTER FIVE	78
5.1 Introduction.....	78
5.2 Data presentation	78
5.2.1 Effectiveness of organisational structures to support teaching and learning.....	78
5.2.2 Challenges to enacting instructional leadership practices	84
5.2.3 Managing the various challenges to teaching and learning	97
5.2.4 Other ways to improve teaching and learning	105
5.3 Chapter Summary	113
CHAPTER SIX.....	114
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	114
6.1 Introduction.....	114
6.2 Summary of the study	114
6.3 Conclusions.....	116

6.3.1 The principals’ understandings of their role in managing teaching and learning.....	116
6.3.2 The principals’ perceptions of factors that influence how other principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning.....	116
6.3.3 Organisational structures and programmes that the principals had instituted in their schools.....	117
6.3.4 How the principals identified the various organisational structures instituted in their schools.....	117
6.3.5 How the principals measured the effectiveness of their organisational structures	118
6.3.6 The challenges faced by the school principals.....	118
6.3.7 How the school principals managed the challenges	119
6.3.8 What school principals thought that they could do to improve teaching and learning	119
6.4 Recommendations.....	120
6.4.1 The principals’ understandings of their roles as instructional leaders.....	120
6.4.2 Organisational structures principals have in place to promote teaching and learning.....	120
6.4.3 Challenges faced by school principals in enacting instructional leadership.....	121
6.5 Implications of the study.....	121
6.6 Chapter summary	122
REFERENCES	123
APPENDIX A.....	128
Ethical Clearance Certificate	128
APPENDIX B.....	129
PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	129
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH	129
APPENDIX C.....	131
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL.....	131
REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL	131
APPENDIX D.....	134
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS	134
APPENDIX E	138
Interview schedule with Principals/Teachers.....	138
APPENDIX F.....	140
Turnitin Certificate.....	140
APPENDIX G.....	141
Language Clearance Certificate	141

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Learner achievement in South Africa is well below international standards as borne out by the recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2003). Dempster and Reddy (2007, p. 907) lend credence to this when they state that “South Africa has consistently been the lowest-performing country in mathematics and science in two successive TIMSS tests.” This is supported by the Department of Education (2009) when it states that South Africa has a poorly performing education system which came with high costs. The previous Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, in commenting on IQMS in a newspaper article (2006) stated “that while children were failing at schools, teachers’ evaluation sheets reflected high performance scores through an unmonitored peer review system” (Monare, 2006, p. 1). In the same article she “admitted no one is checking if teachers are doing their job properly” (Monare, 2006, p. 1). This begs the question of what exactly is the role of the principal, as the instructional leader, in a school. According to Webb (2005, p. 71) principals “are viewed as of central importance in the creation of effective schools in which teachers are motivated to strive for continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.” This dovetails with the instructional leadership model as explained by Hallinger (2003, p. 331) where the role of the principal is viewed as “coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school.”

1.2 Rationale and motivation for the study

My interest in this study emanated from my observation of the Integrated Quality Management System’s (IQMS) implementation in my school. There is a flurry of activity from teachers who go out of their way to present impressive lessons that they would otherwise never engage in. My interest was further piqued when I noticed that the quality of work and results of my learners did not mirror my past learners’ achievements and on a personal level I experienced a turmoil of whether the quality of my learners had declined or the quality of teaching had been diminished through a lack of involvement of the principal in curriculum affairs. Added to this is the rare phenomenon of departmental heads in the classroom observing lessons. Members of the School

Management Team (SMT) including the principal rarely make classroom visits to check on teaching and learning, the core business of an educational institution. I was therefore curious as to whether the principal's absence in the classroom, to observe teaching and learning and the principal as a class room teacher, affected curriculum delivery. I was further intrigued by the phenomenon of leadership and learner performance in reading a newspaper article by Caroline Faulkner (1999) who stated that there was a definite link between student outcomes and school leadership. Ngcobo (2010, p. 21) posits that there was a "need for a better understanding of leadership associated with good academic performance in the majority of schools in the country." Similarly, I was keen to find out if there was indeed a link between instructional leadership and pupil performance in South Africa. Blasé and Blasé (1999, p. 131) further point out that "the relationships among instructional leadership, teaching, and even student achievement have not been adequately studied."

1.3 Objectives and key research questions of the study

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the principals' understandings of their roles as instructional leaders in their schools.
- To investigate what organisational structures principals have in place to promote teaching and learning in their schools.
- To determine how principals manage the challenges they experience as they enact their instructional leadership practices.

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

- What do principals understand to be their roles as instructional leaders in their schools?
- What organisational structures do principals have in place to promote teaching and learning?
- How do principals manage the challenges they experience as they enact their instructional leadership practices?

1.4 Definition of concepts

To avoid any misconception with the terminology employed in this study, the following key concepts will be clarified to ensure that the correct meaning is attached to them:

Instructional leadership

Bush and Glover (2003, p. 12) encapsulates instructional leadership where “leaders’ influence is targeted at student learning via teachers.” Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) strengthen this concept of instructional leadership when they explain that it encompasses engaging with others in the advancement of instruction in the classroom and on improving instruction in the classroom. Leithwood, Jantzi and Stenbach (1999, p. 8) sum up instructional leadership as the leader’s attention being critically focused on “the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of the students.” In this study I will use instructional leadership to mean how principals influence teaching and learning through their interactions with teachers and learners.

Leadership

Sergiovanni (2001, p. 55) explains that leadership is a practical way of selecting ways of achieving aims which factor in the “loosely connected, messy and generally nonlinear characteristics of schools.” Davies, Ellison, Bowing and Carr (2005) extend this achievement of aims of leadership through creating and maintaining a conducive environment where leadership entails working through and with others. Congruent to this idea of leadership is Cuban’s (1988, p. 193) explanation that leadership is “influencing others’ actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others.” In this study leadership will be used to describe someone who influences others to achieve the aims of the organization through the creation of positive conditions.

Transformational leadership

Bennet, Crawford and Cartwright (2003) explain that transformational leadership seeks ways to assist in the motivation of teachers through the satisfaction of needs of a higher order so that teachers are committed to the processes of work. Bush and Glover (2003, p. 32) add that transformational leadership is a “vehicle for promoting and developing leadership capabilities of

classroom teachers and those leaders with direct responsibility for promoting learning.” Hallinger (2003) concurs with this definition when he explains that transformational leadership aims to capacitate organisations to choose its expectations and to back the unfolding changes to the methods of learning and teaching. This study will utilise the concept of transformational leadership to mean transforming the organisation to influence teaching and learning through satisfying the needs of teachers which would impact learners acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Distributed leadership

Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) describe distributed leadership as many people, in this case all stakeholders in a school, pursuing common goals through leadership practices that are shared. This definition finds favour with a definition put forth by Johreh, Mohammadi and Yasini (2012, p. 1) when they state that “the major principle of distributed leadership is the achievement of the school objectives by its leaders, rather than its leader.” This view is strengthened by Timperley (2005) who describes distributed leadership as responsibilities of tasks being spread across organisational roles that were once steeped in traditional practices. This study will use distributed leadership to mean that leadership practices are being spread across the staff complement of a school. Leadership practices in this study will be used to explain how principals use the various leadership styles to deal with everyday issues that arise in schools.

Professional learning communities (PLCs)

Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006, p. 223) quite succinctly capture the meaning of professional learning communities (PLCs) when they suggest that it is “a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way.” Siguroardottir (2010) cements this definition when he states that PLCs are a cluster of professionals who share a common purpose by interacting with each other in order to enhance their practices. Possibly the most appropriate definition comes from Hord (1997, p. 1) when she explains that PLCs “continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students’ benefit.” This study will use the concept of PLCs to mean a group of teachers who engage with each others’ teaching practices to improve student outcomes.

1.5 Review of literature

The purpose of the literature review in my study was to present issues in the literature relating to instructional leadership. I therefore engaged in a comprehensive search of various national and international databases on current and completed research related to instructional leadership. The majority of the books and journal articles that I consulted were obtained from the library at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the internet.

1.6 Research design and methodology

This study is located in the interpretive paradigm which, ontologically, holds the view that there are multiple realities where people attempt to understand the world in which they work and live (Creswell, 2007). This paradigm suits the study as principals set about describing their roles as instructional leaders in their schools. In terms of epistemology, McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 15) explain that “multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perspectives of the same situation.”

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 395), qualitative research “describes and analyses peoples individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions.” I have used a case study approach for this research as it focuses on a particular problem which in this case is instructional leadership and its effect on teaching and learning (Rule & John, 2011). This was a case of four urban primary schools and a case of the principals’ perspectives on their roles as instructional leaders and teachers’ perspectives on their principals’ roles as instructional leaders.

This study was interested in principals’ perspectives on their roles as instructional leaders which made interviewing them on their experiences appropriate. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate data in this study because it “allows for more flexibility during data collection and creates the space for the interviewer to pursue lines of enquiry stimulated by the interview” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 65). In order to triangulate what principals articulate in the interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two level one teachers in each of the selected schools to gain their perspectives on their principals’ roles as instructional leaders.

All semi-structured interviews were digitally voice-recorded which allowed the researcher to focus on the interview process (de Vos, 2005) and also assisted the researcher to transcribe the interview verbatim for analysis. The transcripts were content analysed by generating categories and themes which Maree (2008) describes as examining the data from different perspectives that will assist the interpretation of raw data.

Sampling was done purposively which Rule and John (2011) explain is when the choice of participants is deliberate to enhance the research. Primary school and secondary school principals were chosen because much research conducted on instructional leadership has focused on either secondary schools or primary schools but not on both simultaneously thus there is a gap in research on this phenomenon in both types of schools. The participants were chosen according to gender, race criteria and schools which they run according to the socio-economic background. Although the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), I wanted to collect enough evidence of similarities and differences in the way both primary and secondary school principals conduct their roles as instructional leaders.

1.7 Outline of the study

This research study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One provides a general background and overview of the key aspects of this study. The study is introduced by highlighting the link between the principal's role as an instructional leader and student achievement in South Africa. The motivation and rationale for pursuing this study are presented. The aims and objectives and the key research questions that inform this study are listed, followed by the definition of key terms used in this study. A brief outline of the methodology employed in this study brings this chapter to a conclusion.

Chapter Two focuses on the literature reviewed with regard to the key research questions. The review commences with the elucidation of Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and the conceptual framework on organisational management underpinning this study. In addition to this, national and international literature is reviewed surrounding the role of principals as instructional leaders. Similar studies conducted by various researchers are also discussed.

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology adopted in the study in order to answer each of the research questions listed. The methodology aspects of the study are discussed followed by the methods used to generate data. The sampling process as well as the approach taken to analyse all the data which is generated is further explained. Chapter three also gives a description of the case study schools and the participants who were involved in the study. An account of ethical procedures is provided as well as how trustworthiness was gained and lastly, the limitations of the study are disclosed.

Chapter Four analyses the data and discusses the data in the light of the chosen theoretical frameworks and relevant literature. The chapter is presented under key themes that emerged from the data.

Chapter Five brings the study to a conclusion. It commences by providing a summary of the study as a whole. Thereafter, key conclusions are drawn around the aims and objectives of the study and key research questions. Recommendations based on the findings will also be suggested.

1.8 Demarcation of the study

The study was confined to four schools in the Umlazi district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The participants were four principals and two teachers in each of the selected primary and secondary schools in the greater Durban area. The schools chosen ranged in socio-economic characteristics from low fee paying schools to schools that charge high school fees. The study was located in four schools, two primary and two secondary schools only and therefore made generalisations difficult. A further limitation was time constraints in conducting the study on two levels. One level was the time available for principals to participate in the interviews and on the second level was the restriction of a time frame to complete the interviews and analyse them for assessment purposes.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter provided the background to the study. It highlighted the purpose and rationale for choosing instructional leadership as a phenomenon to be researched. Further to this, justification was provided for placing the focus on principals' roles as instructional leaders within schools. The aims and objectives for this study were also put forward together with the key research questions which this study sought to answer collectively. In addition, Chapter One also provided the definitions of key terms which will recur throughout the study. Furthermore this chapter briefly sketched the outline of the study. In the next Chapter the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study and a review of the related literature are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided a general background and overview of the key aspects of this study. The chapter also highlighted issues around the rationale and motivation for the study, the significance of the study, the key research questions coupled with the aims of the study, the pertinent concepts used in the study and methodological issues to be employed in the study. This chapter's focus is two-pronged: there is a literature review on the phenomenon of instructional leadership, specifically the roles of school principals as instructional leaders and this is followed by a discussion of the theories that underpin the construct that is instructional leadership. This exploration takes place through the reviewing of literature from international, continental and national databases.

2.2 Literature review

Mouton (2012, p. 87) explains that a literature review is carried out for a number of important reasons, one being “to discover what the most recent and authoritative theorising about the subject is.” This study is concerned with school principals' roles as instructional leaders. In presenting my review of related literature, I will present international, continental and national literature that underpins my study. The literature will also be reviewed under the following themes: the principal's role in instructional leadership; values, beliefs and vision; developing teachers; monitoring teaching and learning; organisational capacity; shared instructional leadership; managing teaching and learning; and challenges to instructional leadership.

2.2.1 The principal's role in instructional leadership

Although the concept of instructional leadership has been discussed earlier, it would be prudent to examine the concept comprehensively in the various contexts that it is used in relation to the role of the principal in instructional leadership. Bush (2013) intimates that instructional leadership as a concept is linked to leadership and learning and consequently is also known as curriculum leadership and pedagogic leadership. However, as these concepts seem to place teaching and the principal in the foreground of education, alternative concepts related to

instructional leadership have been conceptualised (Bush, 2013). He explains that some of the related concepts to emerge are shared instructional leadership, leadership for learning and learning-centred leadership (Bush, 2013). Although these concepts are linked to the construct that is instructional leadership I will continue to use the term instructional leadership as it captures the essence of my study which is the instructional leadership practices of school principals. Perhaps du Plessis (2013) captures this preoccupation with instructional leadership in the South African context, when he states that with the emphasis on accountability on the part of schools, especially with the recent Grade 12 results, teacher morale being at an all time low and other related educational problems, impetus has been added to effect improvements in teaching and learning. He therefore surmises that “as an instructional leader, the principal plays a pivotal role in the school by affecting the quality of individual teacher instruction, the height of student achievement and the degree of efficiency in school functioning” (du Plessis, 2013, p. 80).

Consequently du Plessis (2013) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled secondary schools that had produced a hundred percent pass rate in the Grade 12 National Examination. Some of his findings related to the role of the principal setting “goals for teacher involvement in matters of instruction, curriculum and assessment, which signal the importance of activities related to teaching and learning” (du Plessis, 2013, p. 85). He further explains that what the principals expect from their teachers is not ambiguous and that expectations that are set high filter throughout the school to other teachers (du Plessis, 2013). A further finding on the role of instructional leadership in this study found “that instructional settings are not chaotic, but instead have intentional routines and structures that support learner learning” (du Plessis, 2013, p. 86). He explains that these routines and structures serve to protect the environment for learning from external and internal factors that can cause disruptions (du Plessis, 2013).

In another study conducted by Mestry, Koopasamy and Schmidt (2013) with six purposively sampled primary school principals, the researchers balanced gender and achievement issues in choosing the schools. Data was generated using interviews. Some of the findings on the role of instructional leaders point to balancing their instructional roles and administrative duties (Mestry, *et al.*, 2013). While one principal reported that he saw himself as being responsible for

the discipline of learners, school funding issues and administration, another viewed the deputy as being in charge of managing the curriculum while he was there to ensure that his School Management Team (SMT) functioned competently (Mestry, *et al.*, 2013). Further to this another principal maintained that she was there to ensure that all learners were receiving a holistic education while another principal stated that ensuring that her school was functioning optimally with high quality teaching, resources and a safe environment, was her responsibility (Mestry, *et al.*, 2013). The researchers also found that some of the principals found that the paperwork associated with administration was burdensome (Mestry, *et al.*, 2013). Other principals in the study also intimated that constant curriculum changes and training also posed a problem together with managing their time to overcome administrative duties (Mestry, *et al.*, 2013). Added to this, the findings also point to other factors like “attending to difficult parents, district demands, discipline and day-to-day problems of the school interfere with the completion of tasks” (Mestry, *et al.*, 2013, p. 56). Webb (2005, p. 78) in her study of six primary schools adds weight to the role of principals dealing with parents when she states that the principals in her case study “described the increasing diversity of demands made on them by parents.” They explain that this activity consumed a lot of energy and time which could have been better utilised in pedagogic matters to benefit learning and teaching (Webb, 2005). The issue of paperwork consuming too much time was also raised in Webb’s (2005) study when one principal claimed that she kept minimal paperwork because no one was going to check it. Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) summarise the roles of instructional leaders best when they report, on their qualitative study of 200 stratified sampled schools, that the principals claimed that most of their time was spent on administrative tasks and disciplining students. They further claim that “‘instructional leadership’, as read through ‘overseeing teaching and learning’ and ‘supervising teachers’, was not a function that took up the majority of many principals’ time” (Hoadley, *et al.*, 2009, p. 381). This multiplicity of roles of principals is best captured by Hallinger (2003, p. 334) when he states that “principals play managerial, political, instructional, institutional, human resource and symbolic leadership roles in their schools.”

2.2.2 Managing teaching and learning

Managing the instructional programme is inextricably linked to managing teaching and learning which Bush (2013) claims has an advantage over instructional leadership and leadership for

learning in that both teaching and learning is addressed thus giving both aspects prominence. Southworth (2003, p. 9) asserts that although instructional leadership narrowly focuses only on the teaching and learning role of the principal, principals are “are also concerned with developing the quality and power of classroom processes and those of the staffroom, since they wish to enhance the school’s level of performance.” He argues that instructional leadership should thus be called learning centred leadership as the focus is on learning instead of instruction (Southworth, 2003). He also maintains that “learning centred leadership lies at the heart of transforming schools” and that principals bring influence to bear on teaching and learning in classrooms through teaching learners themselves or through other leaders in the school (Southworth, 2003, p. 9). He further adds that a principal manages teaching and learning through three strategies, namely modelling, dialogue and monitoring (Southworth, 2003). He explains modelling as important because teachers are keen observers of what principals say, but more importantly, teachers also observe what principals do (Southworth, 2003). He therefore states that it is for this reason that enlightened principals always model their practice for their teachers (Southworth, 2003). He then explains that dialogue takes place on two levels in schools in the form of formal staff meetings and the influential informal follow-up conversations which benefit teaching and learning immensely by demonstrating to teachers that the principal is genuinely interested in the main purpose of schooling which is teaching and learning (Southworth, 2003). He further explains that monitoring encompasses principals and other leaders and teachers examining each other’s work, perusing the work of students’ work and examining all forms of assessment scores (Southworth, 2003). Bush (2013) also speaks of monitoring, which was discussed earlier, but adds that evaluation involves making an assessment of teaching and learning through an analysis of test and examination scores leading to developing strategies for improvement. He points to a previous study of schools in South Africa where seven out of eight schools did analyse findings of test scores but the follow-up was limited.

Bush (2013) also intimates that observation also plays an important role for teacher assessment either for teacher development or performance management. He succinctly captures the essence of this when he states that “a teacher development focus targets the improvement of teaching and learning while a performance management approach is more instrumental, seeking to ‘weed out’ inadequate teachers” (Bush, 2013, p. 11). He also notes that in order for observation to become

the norm rather than the exception in schools, principals could invite teachers into their classrooms to observe the principal's lesson (Bush, 2013). This is linked to modelling which Bush (2013, p. 11) states that "while workshops may help to improve classroom teaching, modelling of good practice by the principal, the HOD or another educator, is more likely to produce favourable outcomes." He concludes by claiming that there is a paucity of research on modelling in South African schools (Bush, 2013). However, a recent study by Grobler (2013) in South African schools found that there was an indirect effect of modelling on improving learner achievement. He further states that when effective teaching was modelled, there was an indirect effect on the protection of instruction time and "that ensuring coherence between teaching and learning is related to how the instructional leader makes sure that the National Curriculum Statement and its assessment policy is effectively implemented in the classroom" (Grobler, 2013, p. 190). Modelling is further cemented as promoting teaching and learning when Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2013, p. 141) claim that in the schools in their study, "instructional leadership is doing what they would like teachers to do, that is, be exemplary teachers."

This notion of principals also teaching in their schools is borne out in a study by Wallin and Newton (2013, p. 27) who state that "one principal suggested that his ability to monitor programmes as an instructional leader was facilitated by his role as a teaching principal." Further findings indicate that a teaching principal has the capacity to remain connected to the daily realities faced by the teachers thus enabling them to become better instructional leaders (Wallin & Newton 2013). Further support is provided by Mestry, *et al.*, (2013, p. 561) when they claim that there was general agreement by the principals in their study "that they would be in a better position to support and communicate good teaching practices if they engaged as teaching learners themselves." Webb (2005) lends credence to this line of thought when she claims that where principals sacrificed teaching time to administer the school, they felt that their credibility was undermined as they began to lose touch with the curriculum changes that were being initiated.

In relation to the curriculum and managing the instructional programme, du Plessis (2013, p. 87) maintains that "in the context of curriculum restructuring, the instructional programme consists of a series of integrated and context-bound teaching, learning and assessment activities." He

explains that none of these aspects can occur in isolation and the three aspects together explain “what learners are taught and learn; how they are taught and assessed; the circumstances under which teaching and learning take place (where); and the purpose of teaching and learning (why)” (du Plessis, 2013, p. 87). He further claims that the principals that made classroom visits checked for resource usage, teaching and learning methodologies, the appropriateness of assessment techniques and if standards are achieved and lastly consistency in learner needs being met in striving for standard’s achievement (du Plessis, 2013). Moreover, Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2007, p. 27) state that a principal, in their study, focused on “teacher-directed learning, explicit instruction, moving knowledge from short-term to long-term memory, and acknowledging that none of these will occur without good relationships with students.” This would seem to suggest that in order for the curriculum to be managed and delivered to the very people it is intended for, principals and teachers need to be strong role models that show a level of care to their charges (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007).

This resonates with the study conducted by Reitzug, West and Angel (2008) where one of the theories that emerged from their study was the relational instructional leadership theory that postulates that learner achievement does not take place as a result of the direct instructional programme but it is as a result of the principal attempting to make both learners and teachers work harder and with pride by making them feel better. They claim that the principals in their study “clearly described the connection that they saw between building positive relationships and student success” (Reitzug, *et al.*, 2008, p. 698). On this notion of building relationships with learners and teachers, Pansiri (2008) conducted a quantitative study using questionnaires to collect data from 240 principals and teachers and 575 learners. The purpose of the study was to assess how effective instructional leadership was, after the Primary School Management Project was launched in Botswana (Pansiri, 2008). One of the key findings to emerge from the study was that 86% of learners claimed that principals made classroom visits to check on them and 98% of learners claimed that they enjoyed attending school daily. This would seem to suggest that a warm welcoming atmosphere prevailed in the school which could be ascribed to the principal. Unfortunately this is pure conjecture on my part as this study could have used a qualitative approach by interviewing the learners to ascertain exactly why learners enjoy coming to school daily and what the principal does during class visits when checking on them. In relation to

teachers, Pansiri (2008, p. 483) states that while teachers viewed the relationship with management as cordial, “the teachers did not feel that they received adequate support and attention from the SMTs.” Pansiri (2008) therefore concludes that although principals in these schools evidenced instructional leadership traits in managing the curriculum, instructional leaders could influence teaching methods in classrooms through in-service training to help improve the teaching of English in the classroom. These in-service programmes could come from within or outside of the school where the principal could promote the creation of professional learning communities.

2.2.3 The role of principals in promoting Professional Learning Communities

Hord (2003, p. 42) explains “that instructional leadership is a requirement of developing a community of professionals.” She maintains that the goals of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are to better understand teaching and learning and the skills of teaching which is shared by the traits of an instructional leader. Feger and Aruda (2008) strengthen this claim when they state that one of the conditions for the creation of PLCs is when leadership create a sense of purpose that is shared among teachers and when instructional leadership is the focus of administrators.

A qualitative study by Steyn (2013) where data was collected by reviewing documents and literature on PLCs with the focus on professional development and teacher collaboration, led to a number of findings on the roles of principals in PLCs. One of the findings point to the principal wielding considerable influence on the work of teachers when there is collaboration between teachers and principals (Steyn, 2013). He also points out that “schools that strive to develop and sustain the quality of their teachers need to develop appropriate processes and practices for teacher learning” (Steyn, 2013, p. 286). However, Steyn (2013) admits that not all schools find it that easy to create environments for learning and that some schools ignore the need to do so unless they are forced to do it. Finally, Steyn (2013) found that when networking with other schools, PLCs are widened thus enabling teachers to exchange ideas on practice and increase their knowledge. This would seem to suggest that creating PLCs is advantageous to schools and the role of leadership in developing PLCs cannot be over-emphasised. This is supported by Stoll, Bolam, *et al.*, (2006, p. 235) when they unequivocally state that “it is difficult to see how a PLC

could develop in a school without the active support of leadership at all levels.” They also maintain that if leadership were to further the construct that is PLCs, it would be important that they focus on advocating professional learning as being critical to the process of change (Stoll, *et al.*, 2006). This notion of change and PLCs is further borne out in a study by Harris and Jones (2010) who looked at a group of schools in Wales where PLCs were piloted. One of the findings that came out of this study was that “where the Heads championed and supported the PLC and underlined its centrality to school development, the PLC overcame initial resistance to change” (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 178). They further claim that the converse was true where PLCs laboured to make advancements without the support of the leader (Harris & Jones, 2010). Their final thought on the roles of principals in promoting PLCs is aptly coined when they state that “even though head teachers’ roles may change as they redistribute and share leadership, their support is one of the key resources necessary for schools to become professional learning communities” (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 179).

This finding is contrary to what Nehring and Fitzsimons (2011) found in their qualitative study which utilised semi-structured interviews with teachers to investigate the institution of PLCs in suburban and urban schools. One of their findings to emerge from their study was that leadership failed to communicate the vision and goals of PLCs consistently and clearly leading to confusion among teachers. A further finding found leaders culpable of not maintaining the momentum of collaboration that is the cornerstone of PLCs (Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011). Finally, they appropriately state that “as long as PLC work is perceived by teachers as a professional development option that they may choose to embrace or ignore, then system wide change is unlikely to occur” (Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011, p. 527). It follows therefore that leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting and sustaining PLCs. Another key aspect that a principal influences in instructional leadership is the values, beliefs and vision that the leader instils in the school to effect changes in student achievement (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007).

2.2.4 Values, beliefs and vision

In their case study of three Australian schools, the researchers set about to illustrate the influence of direct and indirect instructional leadership (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007). One of the findings to come out of their study was that the vision of the school needed to be reinforced time and again until they

got it (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007). The researchers also report that the principals “used the language of high expectations with teachers and students (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007, p. 24). Related to this finding was a principal who aligned his vision with his expectations, relationships, pedagogy and the structure of the school (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007). In a qualitative study of 12 rural schools with teaching principals, Wallin and Newton (2013) found that one principal had her vision clearly focused through constant interaction with learners. Some principals also claimed that their vision focused on “citizenship, early years programming and community and global responsibility” (Wallin & Newton, 2013, p. 22). These principals also claim to revisit their vision and that theirs was a supportive and developmental role instead of developing the vision on their own (Wallin & Newton, 2013). The key method of communicating their vision, making their visions clear and setting high expectations was by leading through example (Wallin & Newton, 2013). A further finding in this study was that principals ensured that teaching took precedence over administrative tasks; formal supervision of teachers was viewed as putting strain on staff relations and lastly as a result of a small staff the lines were blurred for disciplining and dismissing staff (Wallin & Newton, 2013). The researchers do however point out that “setting direction is affected strongly by the context of the small school environment, the culture of the local rural community and the teaching role of the administrator” (Wallin & Newton, 2013, p. 24). Reitzug, *et al.*, (2008), in their qualitative study of twenty principals from various schools, used grounded theory and one of the theories to emerge was the prophetic instructional leadership theory. This theory implies that principals who embody a prophetic idea of instructional leadership do not:

Accept the government’s or school district’s vision for schooling. Rather a principal who is a prophetic instructional leader must stimulate staff to examine taken-for-granted (or externally imposed) assumptions about the purposes of education and schooling (Reitzug, *et al.*, 2008, p. 708).

In the age of accountability in South Africa and teach to test for the ANA examinations, it would take a brave and strong principal with vision to follow this prophetic path.

In a South African context, du Plessis (2013, p. 88) maintains that “vision provides teachers with an instructional portrait they can work towards, and it provides a picture against which schools can measure their implementation.” Du Plessis (2013) further explains that the principals in his

study had the expectation that the vision for instruction had to have consistency across all classrooms which created standards of instruction that led to better student outcomes. Du Plessis (2013, p. 89) makes a claim in his findings on the school's vision that "teachers were not given a choice as to their participation, but were expected to strive toward this vision in their daily work." Teachers' views on this aspect of setting the vision could not be articulated as the researcher only focused on interviewing principals.

2.2.5 Developing teachers

A qualitative study conducted by Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) used teachers as a method of triangulation when they investigated five secondary school principals whose schools were purposively sampled in economically trying communities. One of their key findings on professional development of teachers points to principals promoting development of teachers by encouraging them to attend departmental workshops and organising internal workshops for teachers conducted by principals, Heads of Department and expertise garnered from outside of the school. Unfortunately this study does not produce evidence of documents or teachers' voices when a principal claims to have a schedule for staff development. One of the findings in Gurr, *et al.*, (2007) study on professional development points to the principal using staff meetings to discard administrative issues aside in place of readings and discussions on teaching and learning. A further finding was a principal that realised that not all teachers will be exceptional teachers and that if these teachers are committed to the school and to the students, he was willing to back them and support them to improve their practice (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007). The researchers also indicate "that teachers want to see that a principal is passionate, determined and understands the work of classroom teachers" if teachers are to be developed (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007, p. 27). This would serve to inspire teachers to want to develop themselves.

The above sentiment is shared by a qualitative study conducted by Naicker, *et al.*,(2013) where interviews were conducted using snowball sampling which saw five challenging school principals and their circuit managers being interviewed on instructional practices in their schools. One of the findings point to a principal emphasising the development of teachers concentrating on mentoring and inducting staff (Naicker, *et al.*, 2013). These researchers claim that "at these schools staff deployment occurs in innovative ways, which ensure that job embedded learning

takes place among staff” (Naicker, *et al.*, 2013, p. 142). The way this is accomplished is the pairing of novice teachers with experienced teachers thus going against the principals’ claims in Bhengu and Mkhize’s study (2103) where teachers were encouraged to attend departmental workshops. It would seem from the above discussion that while some principals seek to develop their teachers themselves, or seek outside expertise, others encourage their teachers to develop themselves by attending workshops because some “principals felt that they needed to have more content knowledge” (du Plessis, 2013, p. 89). He further adds that some principals acknowledged that while they were not the chief trainers of teachers they were the chief coordinators of developing teachers professionally (du Plessis, 2013). Mestry, *et al.*, (2013) found that the female principals were enthusiastic about developing teachers and aside from encouraging teachers to attend workshops convened by unions, the district and other professional institutions; they also used expertise from within the schools and also funded these professional activities with the stipulation that mentoring take place by the teachers that were developed. Taole (2013) adds another dimension to the professional development of teachers in his qualitative study of three purposively sampled secondary schools using semi-structured interviews with principals. His key finding on developing teachers suggests that “more subject specialists need to be trained because subject advisers are ideally responsible for providing teachers with support in their classrooms and helping them alleviate difficulties they may encounter in specific learning areas” (Taole, 2013, p. 80). This is in stark contrast to the findings by Naicker, *et al.*, (2013, p. 147) when they maintain that the schools they researched receive minimal support by the DoE but do not play the victim and “school principals, together with their teachers have to craft their own ways of addressing matters of teaching and learning.” This resonates with a qualitative study conducted by Reitzug, *et al.*, (2008) with twenty principals from various schools ranging from primary to secondary schools. The study used grounded theory methods and one of the theories linked to instructional leadership that emerged was organic instructional leadership which is concerned with addressing the most urgent issue that affects teaching and learning (Reitzug, *et al.*, 2008). “The assumption that undergirds organic instructional leadership is that instructional improvement occurs as a result of the ongoing learning of teachers and other school personnel about their individual practice and the school’s overall practice” (Reitzug, *et al.*, 2008, p. 703).

2.2.6 Monitoring teaching and learning

Bush (2013, p. 58) states clearly that monitoring “seeks to assess the ways in which teaching plans are put into effect, and the outcomes from these in terms of pupil attainment.” Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) claim that in the schools that they had studied, there was an accountability culture for teaching and learning whereby the principals either indirectly or directly monitor teaching and learning. This view is shared in the findings by Bhengu and Mkhize (2013, p. 40) who state that principals “had a keen interest in what was going on in the classroom. Therefore they played an active role in monitoring instruction.” They further explain that while some principals relied on the HODs’ reports on monitoring teaching and learning, other principals played an active role in observing teaching and learning (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013). The researchers maintain that “through monitoring what happens in the classroom, school leaders may be in a position to understand the level of quality in the teaching and learning process” (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013, p. 41). This finding clearly finds favour with the findings in a quantitative study by Grobler (2013) whose aim was to examine various factors that make up instructional leadership and to identify the links between these factors. One of the key findings of this research was that instructional leadership of principals is strongly linked to teaching and learning coherence which led the researcher to surmise that “the leader thus needs to ensure that monitoring of teaching takes place to ensure that the prescribed curriculum is adequately covered” (Grobler, 2013, p. 190). While the researcher’s use of a positivistic paradigm to quantify leadership factors is to be lauded, it would have been more prudent for the researcher to enrich his findings by using case study research as well, thus employing a mixed methods approach.

Webb’s (2005) study found that although teachers initially resisted the idea of monitoring by subject co-ordinators and SMT, the teachers eventually capitulated and monitoring has become the norm. However, the researcher fails to explain the reason for this change in behaviour. They do however, claim that teachers felt that “while the greater accessibility of classrooms reinforced adherence to government advice, it militated against taking risks” (Webb, 2005, p. 82). In the South African context monitoring of teachers in their classrooms engaged in their craft has been fraught with problems. This is supported by Christie (2010, p. 706) when she categorically states that “monitoring of performance of teachers, principals and schools has been a contentious issue both because of the breakdown of apartheid systems, and because of the continuing inequalities

between schools in the post-apartheid period that impact on teachers' work." This clearly goes against the tenets of instructional leadership either through direct or indirect means.

In a quantitative study by Grissom, Loeb and Master (2013), using full day observations of 100 principals in urban schools, they set out to find the link between instructional leadership actions and student achievement gains. One of the actions that they describe is walkthroughs which is seen as an information gathering exercise on the practice of teaching and ascertaining teacher needs, carried out by principals which they claimed leads to adverse outcomes in secondary schools (Grissom, *et al.*, 2013). They explain that the negative outcomes could be ascribed to the diverse subjects offered in secondary schools which prevent a principal from making any meaningful impact on instructional practices of subjects that they have no expertise in (Grissom, *et al.*, 2013). However, they found that time spent developing and evaluating teachers contributed to student achievement gains (Grissom, *et al.*, 2013).

2.2.7 Organisational culture

Bush (2013, p. 17) appropriately states that "changing school culture has to be a deliberate process, intended to achieve specific results such as enhanced learner outcomes." He further explains that some schools in South Africa have teachers that have been in the same school for many years and that changing the way they work is difficult (Bush, 2013). He does however point out that an external trigger or threat, or a new principal in a school can alter embedded culture in an organisation (Bush, 2013). Evidence of this is found in a study by Gurr, *et al.*, (2007) when they state that when a new principal was appointed at a school in their study, the teachers became uncomfortable when a review of the curriculum and its relevance was initiated by the principal. Needless to say there was resistance from some quarters of the staff but they did not prevail and no longer teach at the school (Gurr, *et al.*, 2007). Hoadley, *et al.*, (2009) surmise in their study that although an indirect link exists between management and a positive school culture, these relations still positively produced results that were better. They further claim that "good social relations amongst staff are unlikely to be established and maintained if they are not supported by the principal and senior management" (Hoadley, *et al.*, 2009, p. 383).

Inextricably linked to organisational culture is measuring the effectiveness of organisational structures to enhance teaching and learning through an appraisal of what works and what does not. Mante and O'Brien (2002) offered a re-examination of evaluating the effectiveness of public organisations through a recently explored method called data envelopment analysis (DEA). They claim that organisations that performed analogous tasks can be compared in order to measure efficiency, which in this case would be schools that focus on education as its core business. In attempting to review this methodology, their study focused on gauging the technical effectiveness of Australian State schools (Mante & O'Brien, 2002). Their reasoning for this review is that an evaluation of organisational structures is problematic both in the public and private sectors (Mante & O'Brien, 2002). They further contend that while the private sector has a market system with measurable profit and loss, "the public sector lack both an analogue for profit seeking behaviour and an adequate feedback system for learning about the quality of decisions" (Mante & O'Brien, 2002, p. 274). They further reason that this has led to a problem of assessing the performance of organisations in the public sector (Mante & O'Brien, 2002). They conclude their study by stating that this new methodology, DEA, has immense potential in measuring the effectiveness of secondary schools in the State of Victoria (Mante & O'Brien, 2002).

Notwithstanding the paucity of literature on evaluating the effectiveness of organisational structures, Thornton, Shepperson and Canavero (2007) claim that at the heart of any evaluation of programmes lie achievement gains which rely on regulated tests to measure its influence and effects. Thornton, *et al.*, (2007) also maintain that schools which use effective feedback have the ability to highlight the variables linked to instruction that was effective, communication and outcomes that were both intentional and unintended. They also maintain that feedback must lead to introspection and a commitment to change how structures operate (Thornton, *et al.*, 2007).

In a research policy brief, Rice (2010) argues that there is a shortage of data on the effectiveness of principals and subsequently their influence on school achievement. She therefore drew on longitudinal data obtained from the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) on school leadership to clarify issues on the effectiveness of school principals (Rice, 2010). An indirect finding was that one indicator for principal effectiveness

and, indirectly organisational structures as overseen by them, was the performance of the school which included achievements by students (Rice, 2010). She further maintains that an analysis of the findings in CALDER point to a principal's experience that positively impacted on pupil's achievement in Mathematics (Rice, 2010).

2.2.8 Shared instructional leadership

Hoadley, *et al.*, (2009, p. 385) claim that “the majority of principals saw curriculum coverage as the responsibility of senior managers rather than themselves.” They then conclude that since the coverage of the curriculum was seen as significant for learner achievement, the suggestion from their findings is that leadership is dispersed (Hoadley, *et al.*, 2009). Sharing leadership was linked to delegating where in a study by Gurr, *et al.*, (2007) principals delegated tasks to teachers to empower them and take responsibility. This is in contrast to a finding by Wallin and Newton's (2013) qualitative study with twelve rural teaching principals. In their study they state that these teaching principals did not display traits of distributed leadership and justified this by claiming that contrary to being seen as controlling, they wanted to protect staff from huge workloads (Wallin & Newton, 2013). This deviated from a finding in a case study conducted amongst four culturally diverse high poverty schools (Ylimaki, 2007). The study found that one principal formed leadership teams to share in decision making where open discussion on student learning prevailed and “the principal also used these shared decision-making structures to build and sustain capacity for instructional leadership and research-based practices” (Ylimaki, 2007, p. 15). Another finding in the same study found that a principal acknowledged that if teachers had to feel any sense of ownership then decision-making had to be shared to provide support for emergent teacher leadership and to encourage teachers (Ylimaki, 2007). A different perspective on shared instructional leadership was offered by Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) when they claim that one finding in their study pointed to a principal who used graduates who were ex-students to tutor learners. They further state that they “discovered that the practice of former students returning to their *alma mater* to offer additional teaching and motivation is in itself a form of strong distributed leadership” (Naicker, *et al.*, p. 143).

2.2.9 Challenges to instructional leadership

Taole (2013) claims that one of the challenges that principals faced was that the DoE did not support them in their attempts to fulfil the new curriculum. The finding further points to the fact

that principals are not considered for training when “innovations are introduced in the curriculum; instead the focus is on teachers. Consequently, principals depend on teachers for feedback regarding curriculum innovations (Taole, 2013, p. 79). The researcher thus points to the fact that, since the DoE does not place a high priority on curriculum training for principals, training is minimal with the limelight placed on training the principal as an administrator and manager (Taole, 2013). On the notion of administrative tasks, Mestry, *et al.*, (2013, p. 60) found that “although most of the participants considered instructional leadership to be their primary responsibility, they were unduly swamped with administrative tasks that made it difficult for them to devote sufficient time on instructional issues.” Webb’s (2005) study reflects the extreme pressure of balancing instructional leadership with administrative and managerial duties when a participant states that he had to give up his position as principal as this balancing act was too much to handle. In the same study one of the findings also point to how social work has become part of a principal’s responsibilities which took up time and energy that might otherwise have been devoted to curriculum and pedagogical issues and improving the quality of teaching and learning” (Webb, 2005).

A further challenge to instructional leadership was the many meetings the DoE called principals to, which had an adverse effect on teaching as the learners are left without a teacher (Taole, 2013). He further claims that the principals are faced with daily crises that need resolving and this coupled with parents that visit the school daily who need their attention, leads to teaching being neglected as the principal must leave the classroom (Taole, 2013). In their study of rural teaching principals, Wallin and Newton (2013, p. 23) claim that principals set “the expectation that their own teaching time with students had to be privileged over administrative responsibilities except in the case of emergencies.” It must be pointed out though that the context of the two studies referred to above must be emphasised with both studies conducted in rural schools in different countries with one in a developed context and the other in a developing context. Bush (2013, p. 59) aptly states that “it may be inappropriate, therefore to make crude comparisons between schools without regard to such contextual variables.” Another challenge faced by instructional leaders is when learners that came from dysfunctional primary schools had to have the gaps in their knowledge bridged with additional programmes in Mathematics (Naicker, *et al.*, 2013). They claim that these principals are proactive but the researchers fail to

acknowledge that the principal who had tried to bridge the gap in his school should have developed a professional community of learners by developing the teachers in the feeder schools to ensure that all learners who leave for grade eight are competent in Mathematics. This would obviate the need for additional programmes to be instituted. Finally to conclude the challenges faced by instructional leaders, it is noteworthy to turn to the findings of Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) on how the principals faced off with powerful teacher unions during protracted labour unrest when participants claimed that they ensured that teaching and learning took place in spite of disruptions caused by these teacher unions. They further claim that “some teacher unions have a corrosive and debilitating impact on schools” (Naicker, *et al.*, 2013, p. 145).

A study by Marks and Nance (2007) examined how certain answerability lexicons like school boards, site councils, teachers and parent associations influence the principals’ ability to effect decisions related to administration and instructional decisions. This was a quantitative study using data from 8524 school from secondary, intermediate and junior phases. One of the findings to come out this study was that “where parent associations were perceived as influential, they tended to affect principals’ perceived influence adversely” (Marks & Nance, 2007, p. 23).

2.3 Theoretical frameworks

According to Vithal and Jansen (2010, p. 19) “a theory is selected for its power and elegance in explaining an educational or social event.” As this study is located in the instructional leadership arena, this study will utilise Weber’s (1996) model of instructional leadership to understand principals’ roles as instructional leaders and determine how they manage the challenges associated with instructional leadership. This is because of its congruence to the roles and responsibilities of school principals. A conceptual framework on organisational management by Horng and Loeb (2010) will be used in order to investigate what structures instructional leaders institute to promote teaching and learning. Vithal and Jansen (1997) explain that a conceptual framework is different to a theoretical framework in that the explanation is not so well developed as a theoretical framework.

2.3.1 Weber’s model of instructional leadership

Weber (1996) explains that instructional leadership is given expression and is effective through schools that utilise teams without leaders, or by using flexibility in existing systems or

maintaining bureaucratic systems. He argues that whatever style of leadership that is being utilised “instructional leadership appears to involve five domains of leadership: defining the schools instructional mission, managing curriculum and instruction, promoting a positive learning climate, observing and improving instruction and assessing the instructional programme” (Weber, 1996, p. 258). Each of these aspects will be discussed in the ensuing discussion.

2.3.1.1 Defining the school’s mission and vision

Weber (1996, p. 58) claims that “a vision and common goals, it is generally held, bind organisations together.” He further explains that obtaining consensus with all stakeholders is of vital importance as this leads to teachers acting as a unitary team which leads to individuals being creative, bringing conflict to the fore, leading to conflict resolution and cross disciplinary objectives being made known (Weber, 1996). He further explains that an instructional leader who builds the vision for the school is both a good observer and a good listener, rationalising how a certain view was created and is open to others testing this view (Weber, 1996). Added to this he points out that “although visions are by definition ideals, leaders may be able to bring them down to earth by listening to their staff; thus general visions can become particular goals relevant to a content area” (Weber, 1996, p. 259). He further indicates that when the vision of a school is shared, teachers articulate what they value the most instead of a mission statement that is an abstraction far removed from the realities of their practice (Weber, 1996). This notion of practice being divorced from the school’s vision is also evidenced when principals do not share their vision and the changes made to an old vision or when teachers do not reflect the vision of the school in their teaching (Weber, 1996). He intimates that the above disjuncture between vision and practice can be corrected by an instructional leader who creates conditions for all for all stakeholders’ defensiveness to be acknowledged and their fears allayed (Weber, 1996). Finally, Weber (1996, p. 260) concludes that “defining the school’s mission is then, a dynamic process, requiring cooperation to construct a workable vision and reflexive thinking to keep the mission clear and honest.” The mission is inextricably linked to the instructional curriculum of a school (Weber, 1996).

2.3.1.2 Managing the curriculum and instruction

Weber (1996) maintains that one of the challenges that face instructional leaders is the ability to identify the available options and then together with teachers choose those that best suit the school environment. He further explains that instructional leaders need to be familiar with instructional techniques and current trends in education (Weber, 1996). He captures the importance of this when he claims that “instructional leaders must share with teachers an understanding of instructional goals and a common language for describing and analysing teaching practices” (Weber, 1996, p. 260). He expands on the above by claiming that some of the skills all instructional leaders should possess include selecting appropriate textbooks, teacher-developed materials and classroom supervision among others (Weber, 1996). Clearly the instructional leader cannot be expected to be a master of these areas, hence (Weber, 1996) suggests that the shared instructional approach ensures success. He explains that teachers should be included in managing the curriculum because they are at the coal-face of curriculum delivery in the classrooms (Weber, 1996). He further claims “that shared power does not dilute the effectiveness of an organisation but concentrates it” and “that decisions should be made as close to the point of implementation as possible” (Weber, 1996, p. 263). He concludes that in involving all stakeholders in leadership, teachers feel powerful in contributing to the improvement of instruction in their organisation (Weber, 1996). The learning climate of a school is not divorced from the management of the curriculum (Weber, 1996).

2.3.1.3 Promoting a positive learning climate

Weber (1996, p. 263) explains that the factor that seems to have the greatest effect on learning by students “is the set of beliefs, values, and attitudes that administrators, teachers, and students hold about learning.” Students’ attitudes about learning are gleaned partially from the adults that occupy positions of influence in the school (Weber, 1996). He further intimates that the most important variable to influence student learning is the judgement and expectations that the organisation holds for its students’ capabilities to learn (Weber, 1996). Instructional leaders should then be mindful of the actions that they take to enable a positive learning climate (Weber, 1996).

One of the first actions in enhancing the climate for learning is communicating instructional goals which Weber (1996) expounds on when he claims that in order for curriculum goals to be

more collegial, teachers should be involved. He further states that “instructional leaders perform like good coaches, setting goals and monitoring expectations with due consideration of their players’ abilities and hopes” (Weber, 1996, p. 264). He further makes the claim that those instructional leaders who act like coaches can help prevent schools from falling into a cycle of low expectations by teachers and students (Weber, 1996). Instructional leaders can also enhance the learning climate by protecting instructional time (Weber, 1996). He explains that time-on-task must increase but he warns that the quality of the time must also show an improvement (Weber, 1996). He suggests that “instructional leaders can enhance useful time-on-task by enforcing tardiness rules, minimising interruption from visitors, and reserving 90 % of classroom time for instruction” (Weber, 1996, p. 266). A well organised school, discussing teachers’ field of interests and assisting them to work as a group and placing an emphasis on the student needs, all contribute to the effective use of instructional time (Weber, 1996).

Weber (1996) further elaborates that in creating a learning climate, instructional leaders need to recognise and reward excellence both in academia and extra-curricular activities. He also explains that student discipline issues should not dominate a learning climate and that instructional leaders in conjunction with all stakeholders in a school should be pro-active and ensures that an orderly learning climate prevails (Weber, 1996). Weber (1996) concludes the factors that promote a positive learning climate with instructional leaders increasing teacher commitment. He alludes to the fact that teacher commitment can be increased when job stress is decreased; when teachers feel fulfilled professionally as they become actively involved in issues that affect instruction and where discipline of learners was expeditiously handled to free teachers to focus on creating a positive learning environment (Weber, 1996).

2.3.1.4 Observing and improving instruction

Weber (1996, p. 271) quite succinctly captures the idea of teachers being observed practising their craft when he claims that “one of the most sensitive issues among teachers may be observation of their teaching.” Weber (1996, p. 271) explains that in order for a teacher to benefit from the observation of lessons, the teacher needs to trust that first “the observer intends no harm; secondly the teacher must be convinced that the criteria and procedures of evaluation are predictable and open; and third, the teacher must have confidence that the observer will

provide information to improve the nuts-and-bolts of his or her teaching.” He warns that when done superficially, observation can harm collegiality and can lead to the erosion of excellence that it was supposed to strengthen (Weber, 1996). He proceeds to point out that observation should become more the norm rather than the exception as continuous improvement is the hallmark of professional development (Weber, 1996). Finally, Weber (1996) points to instructional leaders who use research as a way of ensuring that teachers stay current in their relevant fields and as a way of encouraging discussion among teachers which leads to sound decisions being made.

2.3.1.5 Assessing the instructional programme

Weber (1996) posits that an assessment of the instructional programme in a school is necessary and that it requires internal leadership to carry out the assessment as outside expertise cannot plan, design or execute the assessment. He explains that while informal assessments are continuous in all parts of the school, “what is needed is a formal, objective assessment that can also capture the valid gripes, insights, and trends of those involved in daily instruction” (Weber, 1996, p. 272). Assessment of the instructional programme results in a school identifying its strengths and weaknesses which assists in planning, in the revision of the programme or simply ploughing ahead with those aspects of the programme that works (Weber, 1996). He strengthens the role of leaders in assessing the instructional programme when he maintains that “instructional leaders contribute to this process in a variety of ways, in planning, designing and administering an assessment and in interpreting the outcomes” (Weber, 1996, p. 273). He concludes by claiming that assessment affords instructional leaders the ability to observe the entire system that makes “the school what it is and that could be used in changing it into what it could be” (Weber, 1996, p. 276). The preceding model on instructional leadership has shown six aspects that encompass the roles of instructional leaders in schools. The ensuing discussion will focus on the conceptual framework of organisational managers by Horng and Loeb (2010).

2.3.2 Organisational management theory

Horng and Loeb’s (2010) organisational management theory was borne out of research that they conducted into instructional leadership. They claim that the traditional notion of instructional leadership sees the leader being touted as an exceptional teacher who mentors and observes other

teachers and in providing feedback to teachers, the leader influences student learning (Horng & Loeb, 2010). However, they posit that in large schools it is near impossible for a single individual to know all of the curricula being taught in order to make a marked impact on student learning (Horng & Loeb, 2010). They maintain that “the quality of teaching in a school, in many cases can be affected only marginally by a principal’s involvement in the classroom (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 66). They clarify this point when they argue that leaders can effect changes in student learning “through the teachers they hire, how they assign those teachers to classrooms, how they retain teachers and they create opportunities for teachers to improve” (Horng & Loeb, 2010, pp. 66-67). They conceptualise this process as organisational management which is intended to improve instruction through the school being staffed with quality teachers who are provided with the necessary resources and support to ensure success prevails in their classrooms. A closer examination of this concept will follow.

2.3.2.1 Organisational management

Horng and Loeb (2010) explain that organisational management is when managers create and develop structures for improving instruction rather than being present in the classroom observing teachers practice their craft or being coaches to struggling teachers. They cement this argument when they state that “schools that demonstrate academic improvement are more likely to have effective organisational managers” (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 67). They base this claim on one of their studies where principals reported on 42 tasks related to school leadership and the study demonstrated that a growth in student achievement consistently found favour with skills in organisational management (Horng & Loeb, 2010). They also claim that “when principals spend more time on organisational management activities, school outcomes are better, including test-score gains and positive teacher and parent assessment of the school’s instructional climate (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 67). They contrast this with time used on activities of an instructional nature such as observing teachers teach and claim that this is viewed in a negative light by teachers and parents (Horng & Loeb, 2010). They claim that organisational management occupies only one fifth of a principal’s time whereas administrative duties such as the management of disciplining students and paperwork related to compliance measures take up more time but have no bearing on improving the outcomes of the school (Horng & Loeb, 2010). According to Horng and Loeb (2010) the management of personnel is one of the key

responsibilities of organisational managers. They explain that the hiring, supporting and retention of good teachers while the removal of less effective teachers is a principal's responsibility (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Moreover, drawing from one their studies they claim that "effective schools are able to retain higher-quality teachers and remove lower-quality ones" (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 68). They make a further claim from one of their studies that leaders that are organisational managers use staff professional development as a means to retain and reward highly effective teachers (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Conversely they state that some principals also "use professional development as coaching to help low-performing teachers to transfer elsewhere" (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 68).

Horng and Loeb (2010) finally compared the instructional leadership styles of principals where one group did more classroom observation informally while the other group of principals did less and found that the former group of principals had no marked influence over student achievement. In yet another study of effective organisational managers that enabled collaboration among teachers, novice teachers in particular benefitted from the expertise around them (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Interestingly, Horng and Loeb (2010, p. 69) conclude their theory by stating that "defined narrowly only in terms of curriculum and classroom instruction, instructional leadership is unlikely to result in increased student learning or other desirable outcomes." Instead they propose that leaders become strong organisational managers (Horng & Loeb, 2010). I will utilise these two theories because they speak to the roles of principals as instructional leaders from two different perspectives, namely the principal as an instructional leader, knee-deep in the practice of teaching and observing teaching while the other creates structures to achieve the same objectives of enhancing student achievement.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter engaged in literature encompassing a theoretical and conceptual framework that underpins the construct of instructional leadership. Further to this, literature was reviewed linked to the themes of principals as instructional leaders; their values, beliefs and vision; the development of teachers; monitoring teaching and learning; organisational culture; shared instructional leadership; managing teaching and learning; and the challenges faced by instructional leaders. The following chapter will centre on the research methodology and the design of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter examined the related literature that underpins the topic under examination and the theoretical frameworks of the study. This chapter offers a deep examination of the paradigm under which the study falls, research design and methodology, methods and sampling techniques that will be utilised to generate the data. The issues of trustworthiness and ethics conclude this chapter together with the limitations of the study.

3.2 Paradigmatic location

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107), a paradigm “represents a worldview that defines for its holder, the nature of the ‘world’, the individual’s place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world.” They further claim that paradigms demarcate the boundaries for the research study that is conducted (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Moreover they state that paradigms are defined by certain beliefs that respond to three underlying questions of: ontology, which is the shape and essence of reality; epistemology, that is the association between the researcher and the subject being researched and methodology, that is how can the researcher set about inquiring about what needs to be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Finally, they point out that the four paradigms, positivism, post positivism, critical theory and constructivism, have competed for recognition as the main paradigm that qualitative researchers would choose to inform their research. Emerging paradigms currently in use are Realism which combines both constructivism and positivism (Krauss, 2005). Taylor (2013) claims that a new paradigm called Postmodern Paradigm which suggests that the world cannot access what is in our hearts and minds and that this can be communicated through art, dance, language and gestures. Perhaps de Vos (2005, p. 40) captures the essence of using paradigms best when he states that all research should be “conducted within a specific paradigm” and that “the researcher must therefore decide within what paradigm he is working, know the nature of his selected paradigm very well.” Therefore, I have chosen the interpretive paradigm for my study and below I clearly explain the reasons for my choice of paradigm and its suitability to my study.

3.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

This study was interested in school principals' experiences as instructional leaders. Taking the lead from the definition of a paradigm in the preceding discussion, it would then follow that this study's focus was on how school principals viewed their world, in this case their positions in schools, and their relationship to this world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This would then place this qualitative study in the interpretive paradigm which is described by Cohen, *et al.*, (2011, p. 26) as a "paradigm that strives to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors." They further state that "the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011, p. 21). This paradigm is in stark contrast to the positivist paradigm which relies on the observation of phenomena while in the interpretive paradigm the focus is on attaching meanings and interpreting the data (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). This was appropriate for my study as it sought to interpret the experiences of school principals in relation to their roles as instructional leaders. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 106) capture the reasons for my choice of paradigm which falls into the qualitative or naturalistic research when they claim that "human behaviour, unlike that of physical objects, can be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities." Creswell (2007, p. 27) cements my choice of the interpretive paradigm when he claims that "the researcher's intent, then, is to make sense (interpret) the meanings others have about the world. This is why qualitative research is often called 'interpretive' research."

Finally, to summarise the interpretive paradigm, its ontology refers to reality being socially constructed with multiple constructions of reality being the norm. This study sought to explore the phenomenon of instructional leadership from four principals and eight teachers whose perceptions of instructional leadership could be at odds with one another (Mertens, 1998). In terms of epistemology, the interpretive paradigm "opts for a more personal interactive mode of data collection" with this study employing semi-structured interviews where the inquirer and the participant invariably influence one another in the research process (Mertens, 1998). Linked to this interaction is the methodology employed in the interpretive paradigm which speaks of observations, interviews and review of documents as qualitative methods of data generation, with the latter two being employed in this study (Mertens, 1998). Lastly, Mertens (1998) claims that

the correlative approach in interpretivist research leads to a multiplicity of views that advances a clearer understanding of the perceptions of the participants which are then contrasted and compared and which leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3.3 Research design

Yin (2003, p. 20) states that all empirically conducted research has a research design which he explains as “a logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions.” This study’s focus was on the phenomenon of instructional leadership and the key questions set out in the introductory chapter link the phenomenon under study and the data that is to be generated which eventually will lead to conclusions. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) further indicate that a research design sets out how the research is to be conducted, who the research participants are and the conditions under which the data will be generated. The case in this instance is instructional leadership and a case of principals’ experiences as they enact their roles as instructional leaders.

As this study was concerned with principals’ experiences as instructional leaders, it would therefore follow that a qualitative case study design would be utilised. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 395) qualitative research “describes and analyses people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions.” Qualitative research is characterised by five approaches namely phenomenology, narrative research, grounded theory, case studies and ethnography (Creswell, 2007). As indicated above I utilised a case study design for this research as it focused on a particular problem which in this case was instructional leadership and its effects on teaching and learning (Rule & John, 2011). According to Yin (2003) a case study design consists of four types namely single case (holistic), single case (embedded), multiple case (holistic) and multiple case (embedded). Yin (2003) explains that choosing a single case design is similar to conducting a single experiment either to test a theory; or when a case is unique in nature or when a case represents other cases; or when the case reveals data previously not accessible; or when repeating an investigation but in a different time frame. Yin (2003, p. 42) refers to this type of single case study as holistic which he contrasts with an embedded single case study “when within a single case attention is also given to a subunit or subunits.” Rule and John (2011), however point out that the limitations of a single case study are that the conclusions cannot be applied to other cases; there can be no comparisons drawn and that researcher bias

may be allowed to creep in if the researcher has previous knowledge of the case. It was for the limitations offered above that I had chosen a multiple-case study design which involved four schools. Yin (2003) explains that multiple-case design comes to exist when a particular study contains more than one case. He further explains that “a multiple-case study may consist of multiple holistic cases or of multiple embedded cases” (Yin, 2003, p.52). This study has the principal as a participant together with two teachers and documents review per school and there are four schools thus making it a multiple embedded case study design. Yin (2003) does however caution researchers that multiple-case design must show evidence of replication with the choice of case carefully chosen and that if results are contrary to the researchers study this must be clearly expressed at the beginning of the investigation.

In as much as case study design serves to advance qualitative research, there are a few drawbacks that the researcher should be aware of when utilising a case study design. Yin (2003) contends that the first concern of case study research is that there is an absence of exactness in the findings. The second concern is that case studies cannot be generalised but Yin (2003, p. 10) does argue “that case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.” The third concern over case studies is that it is too time-consuming which results in voluminous paperwork (Yin, 2003). Although this may be the case, Yin (2003) proposes that in order to overcome time issues, the researcher should compose the methodology and bibliography parts of the case study early. As far as the voluminous paperwork is concerned, Yin (2003, p. 148) suggests that in multiple-case studies, which this study is, each “section would be devoted to a separate cross-case issue, and the information from the individual cases would be dispersed throughout” each section. This study addressed the various concerns raised in the preceding discussion by firstly ensuring that there was a semblance of exactness in the findings by utilising the principle of dependability where rigorous methodology to generate the findings will be adhered to (Rule & John, 2011). Secondly, the concern of this study not being generalised to other studies is a non-issue as this study was concerned with the theoretical phenomenon of instructional leadership and can only purport to add to the existing literature on instructional leadership (Yin, 2003). Thirdly, regarding the concern of too much time being spent on voluminous paperwork, this study coded and categorised the raw data to generate themes with appropriately selected quotations to avoid voluminous paperwork (Rule & John, 2011). Yin’s

(2003) final word on case study design suggests that case study designs can be modified when the data speaks of new findings but that this adjustability should not in any way decrease the rigor of the methodology the study follows.

3.4 Research methodology

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) claim that research methods are often also referred to as methodology which encompasses the ways in which data is generated. Data is generated quantitatively using measurement techniques; or through interviews and observations also known as qualitative research or a combination of both approaches which is referred to as a mixed methods research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). They explain that quantitative research is situated in the positivist paradigm which assumes that there is only a singular reality with the results presented as numbers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In stark contrast to quantitative research methodology, qualitative methodology is situated in the interpretive paradigm where multiple realities are mediated through how the same situation is viewed by individuals or groups with data presented in the form of words (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Mixed methods research “divides inquiry into dichotomous categories: exploration versus confirmation. Quantitative work is assigned to the first category, qualitative research to the second” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 9).

As this study was a small case study situated in the interpretive paradigm, my choice of methodology fell in the ambit of qualitative research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 395) qualitative research “describes and analyses people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions.” Using qualitative methodology would suit this study because it is conducted to obtain details through directly interacting with people in their natural settings thus allowing them to relate their stories without inhibition which reduces the relationship of the power struggle that inadvertently exists between research subjects and the researcher (Creswell, 2007). He further points out that qualitative research involves the researcher maintaining the focus on understanding the meaning that the research participants attach to the phenomenon and not what the researchers understand the meaning to be (Creswell, 2007). The appropriateness of qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research is best captured by Creswell (2007, p. 40) when he claims that “to level all individuals to a statistical mean overlooks the uniqueness of individuals.” However, quantitative researchers point out that

one flaw of qualitative research is that there is no method of authenticating the truth in the statements that come out of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Creswell (2007, p. 40) disagrees and claims that “qualitative research keeps good company with the most rigorous quantitative research” and adds that qualitative researchers use various forms of data generation to triangulate what is articulated in interviews. Another flaw of qualitative research is the inability to generalise to the population but Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that a case study in qualitative research is unique and that replicating it is a fruitless exercise. Given the above discussion on the constraints placed on qualitative research, this study insisted on pursuing a qualitative methodology as it was interested in how principals and teachers in the selected schools perceived instructional leadership and only through qualitative methods can the researcher “gain an understanding of the constructions held by people in that context” (Mertens, p. 161).

3.5 Sampling

Cohen, *et al.*, (2011) explain that sampling is as a consequence of the entire population not being able to contribute to data generation in a particular research. They point out that several factors which result in sampling are time constraints, difficulty in accessing all the participants in a study and the expenses related to conducting a mammoth study with an entire population (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). Hence researcher “often need to be able to obtain data from a small group or subset of the total population” and “this smaller group or subset is the sample” (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011, p. 100). They add that there are two types of sampling namely, probability sampling or random sampling and non-probability sampling or purposive sampling (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). Probability sampling seeks to make generalisations because of its large sample size while non-probability sampling does not claim to generalise because of its smaller sample size (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011).

This was a small scale study and therefore employed convenience sampling which “involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents” and “as it does not represent any group apart from itself, it does not seek to generalise about the wider population” (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011, pp. 113-114). Further to this sampling was done purposively which Rule and John (2011) explain is when the choice of participants is deliberate to enhance the research. The unit of analysis in this study was the instructional leadership roles of principals and thus includes four principals

and two most experienced Level one teachers from each school to triangulate what the principals claimed in their interviews. The schools in my sample included two secondary schools and two primary schools. Further to this I balanced the gender issues with two male principals and two female principals. I wanted to collect enough evidence of similarities and differences in the way principals conduct their roles as instructional leaders.

3.5.1 Description of the case study schools

3.5.1.1 Smallville Primary School

Smallville Primary School, a pseudonym given to one of the schools in this study, is located on the outskirts of Durban. It has a quintile ranking of 5 and falls under Section 21 schools according to the *South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1986*. There are 37 teachers at the school, 9 of whom are employed by the School Governing Body (SGB). The SMT comprises 5 members (4 males and 1 female). The learner population of Smallville Primary School is 1 082 of which 589 are males and 493 are females.

Description of the participants

The principal of Smallville Primary School, Mr Kent, is a 55 year old male who has 15 years experience as a principal. He has a Bachelors Degree and a Bachelor of Education Honours degree and has been principal of the school for 15 years.

Master teacher, Mrs Lane is a female teacher who has over 37 years of teaching experience with a wealth of qualifications such as a teaching diploma, a diploma in remedial education, a Bachelor Degree as well as an Honours Degree in learners with special needs in education. Mrs Luthor, aged 65, from the same school is a master teacher with over 40 years of experience with a Bachelors Degree and an Honours Degree in leadership and management.

3.5.1.2 Valhalla Primary School

Valhalla Primary School, a pseudonym given to one of the schools in this study, is located on the outskirts of Durban. It has a quintile ranking of 5 and falls under Section 21 schools according to the *South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1986*. There are 31 teachers at the school, 15 of whom

are employed by the School Governing Body (SGB). The SMT comprises of 4 members, all female. The learner population of Valhalla Primary School is 539 females.

Description of the participants

The principal of Valhalla Primary School, Mrs Thor, is a 63 year old female who has 40 years teaching experience. She has a Higher Diploma in Education and has been principal of the school for 25 years.

Master teacher, Mrs Loki is a 55 year old female teacher who has over 37 years of teaching experience with a Higher Education Diploma in Education. Mrs Odin, 46 years old from the same school is a senior teacher with over 25 years of teaching experience with a Bachelors Degree and a B.ED (Honours).

3.5.1.3 Peter Parker Secondary

Peter Parker Secondary, a pseudonym given to one of the schools in this study, is located on the outskirts of Durban. It has a quintile ranking of 5 and falls under Section 21 schools according to the *South African Schools Act No.84 of 1986*. There are 64 teachers at the school, 30 of whom are employed by the SGB. The SMT comprises 6 members. The learner population of Peter Parker Secondary is 1 014 females. Peter Parker Secondary obtained 97 % pass rate in the National Senior Certificate examinations in 2013.

Description of the participants

The principal of Peter Parker Secondary, Mrs May, is a 57 year old female who has 15 years experience as a principal. She has a Bachelors Degree, Bachelor of Education (Honours), and Master's Degree and has been principal of the school for 15 years.

Master teacher, Mrs Watson, is a female teacher who has over 30 years of teaching experience with a Higher Education Diploma and a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Mr Ben, 30 years old from the same school is a senior teacher with over 10 years of teaching experience with a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education), a Bachelor's Degree and a B.ED Honours degree in English.

3.5.1.4 Gotham Secondary

Gotham Secondary, a pseudonym given to one of the schools in this study, is located on the outskirts of Durban. It has a quintile ranking of 5 and falls under Section 21 schools according to the *South African Schools Act No.84 of 1986*. There are 38 teachers at the school, 3 of whom are employed by the SGB. The SMT is comprised of 8 members (7 males and 1 female). The learner population of Gotham Secondary is 1 119. Gotham Secondary obtained a 93 % average in the NSC examinations.

Description of the participants

The principal of Gotham Secondary, Mr Wayne, is a 40 year old male who has been acting as a principal in this school for a year. He has a Secondary Teaching Diploma and a Further Diploma in Education.

Senior teacher, Mrs Alfred is a female teacher who has over 21 years of teaching experience has a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, (PGCE), and Bachelor of Science Degree. Mrs Robin, a 44 year old female, from the same school is a master teacher with 23 years of experience with a Bachelors Degree and a B.ED Honours degree, Masters of Education Degree and a Doctorate of Education.

3.6 Data generation methods

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

This study was interested in principals' and teachers' perspectives on the roles of principals as instructional leaders which made interviewing them on their experiences appropriate. Questionnaires could have been used in place of interviews but they do not give the researcher the opportunity to probe participants' responses further (Rule & John, 2011). Yin (2003, p. 89) claims that "one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview." De Vos (2005) concurs with this statement when he states that qualitative research has been dominated by interviews as a means of data generation. He further explains that there are two types of interviews in qualitative research namely unstructured and semi-structured interviews (de Vos, 2005). He elaborates that "unstructured interviews are conducted without utilising any of the researcher's prior information, experience or opinions in a particular area" (de Vos, 2005, p. 292). He contrasts this with semi-structured or guided interviews which he claims is

appropriate for gathering in-depth data that can be examined for similarities and differences (de Vos, 2005). He proceeds to state that “because all respondents have been asked the same questions, responses can be coded and tabulated, and descriptive statistics used to examine the data for relationships” (de Vos, 2005, p. 292). As this study was interested in one particular area of interest, instructional leadership and how it was perceived by the various participants in differing contexts, it was deemed prudent that semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate instrument in generating data. De Vos (2005) explains that the researcher conducting semi-structured interviews needs to be armed with an interview schedule with questions that guide the interview process and ensures that the focus of the interview is not lost. Furthermore he states clearly that “questions should be neutral rather than value laden or leading. Jargon and ambiguous questions should be avoided in order to eliminate confusion and prejudice (de Vos, 2005, p. 297). He further explains that during the interview process itself, the researcher should ensure that the participant is comfortable and suggests that the researcher share the interview schedule with the participant who can then choose in which order he/she wishes to answer the question (de Vos, 2005). “The participant is thus allowed a strong role in determining how the interview proceeds” which helps to make the participant feel more comfortable and forthcoming in sharing intimate details of his/her experiences (de Vos, 2005, p. 297). However, Cohen, *et al.*, (2011) “questions whether, if carefully controlled interviews such as those used in social surveys are inaccurate, then the less controlled interviews carry even greater risks of inaccuracy.

In order to triangulate what principals articulated in the interviews the voices of Level one educators were used to corroborate the principals’ claims on their roles as instructional leaders. Rule and John (2011, p. 109) assert that “triangulation refers to the process of using multiple sources and methods to support propositions or findings in a case study.” In addition they claim that the thinking behind triangulation is to reduce inaccuracies through the use of one source for data generation (Rule & John, 2011). They also claim that this would lead to the strengthening of the truthfulness of the findings but they juxtapose this with the claim that “including additional actors or seeking data from them via different methods, simply provides a greater breadth of perspectives but not a truer (more valid) perspective” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 109). Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 5) add to our understanding of triangulation when they state that the use of “triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in

question. Objective reality can never be captured.” It would be apt therefore, to conclude by adding that the teachers’ voices used in this study will add depth as well as richness to the study on the roles of principals as instructional leaders.

3.6.2 Documents review

In order to further triangulate what the principals and teachers articulated in the semi-structured interviews, official documents, dating back five years, such as staff memos, minutes of meetings and circulars to parents were utilised which McMillan and Schumacher (2001) contend shows leadership style and values of principals. Cohen, *et al.*, (2011) argue that the use of documents as a data collection technique is useful because it is cheap, readily available and contains facts. However, they also claim that documents “may be unrepresentative, they may be selective, lack objectivity, be of unknown validity, and may possibly be deliberately deceptive” (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011, p. 182). This argument to use caution when using documents as a data collection tool is further elucidated by de Vos (2005) who states that documents contain bias by virtue of the fact that when information is recorded, omissions and deletions can occur by whatever prevailing political, social or economic climate that exists. However, Mertens (1998) claims that despite all of these drawbacks, the researcher must perform member checks to clarify any inconsistencies found in between the articulated word and the written document. Documents for this study were provided by the institution themselves, dating back five years and were they were verified against the data from interviews.

3.7 Data analysis

All semi-structured interviews were digitally voice-recorded which allowed the researcher to focus on the interview process (de Vos, 2005) and also assisted the researcher to transcribe the interview verbatim. This then allowed the researcher to analyse the data which Rule and John (2011, p. 75) describe as “a highly creative and intellectual process where you work the data to find patterns of meaning.” Transcripts can be analysed in three ways namely thematic analysis, discourse and content analysis. Thematic analysis refers to the researcher being so immersed in the data that it enables him/her to identify themes and categories which “should be internally consistent but distinct from one another” (de Vos, 2005, p. 338). He further explains that identifying a set number of themes can be problematic when the data is voluminous but advises

that the data should be sorted out into small, workable themes (de Vos, 2005). Discourse analysis refers to the researcher making deductions not only from what is articulated by participants but also by how it is articulated (Rule & John, 2011). They explain that before content or thematic analysis can occur, coding of interview transcripts need to take place (Rule & John, 2011). This is strengthened by Cohen, *et al.*, (2011, p. 476) when they state that “content analysis involves coding, categorising, comparing and concluding – drawing theoretical conclusions from the text.” Rule and John (2011) confirm that vacillating from codes to themes is frequently used in case studies and is referred to as content analysis. Maree (2008) describes content analysis as examining data from different perspectives that will assist the interpretation of raw data. Content analysis was chosen as a method of analysing and interpreting data in this study because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the different perspectives school principals experience as instructional leaders.

Cohen, *et al.*, (2011) pointedly state that there is no singular way or proper way for data to be analysed but add that qualitative data should be guided by fitness of purpose. This involves the researcher making clear what he/she requires the data analysis to do (Cohen, *et al.*, 2001). They explain that in analysing qualitative data the researcher makes “sense of data in terms of participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011, p. 411). As this study is interested in the school principals’ perspectives and experiences on their roles as instructional leaders, the analysis serves to define how they view their positions as instructional leaders. One of the hallmarks of case study research is “a rich and detailed description which focuses on specifics” which Rule and John (2011, p. 87) refer to as ‘thick description’. Cohen, *et al.*, (2011) claim that not all events can be reduced to a simple interpretation thus ‘thick descriptions’ are preferred to representing complex conditions as simple situations. Rule and John (2011, p. 87) add that ‘thick description’ “tries to capture a sense of actions and events as they occur in context, as well as participants’ understandings of these actions, using categories and concepts of the participants themselves.” These categories will emerge once the researcher codes and labels the data which consumes a lot of time and multiple readings (Rule & John, 2011). They also suggest that coding choices impact on the generation of findings, emergent conclusions, detailed explanations and theories and recommendations (Rule & John, 2011). They also add that “researchers prefer to do their own

coding despite the labour intensive nature of the process. Coding also provides a good opportunity for getting close to the data” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 77). They further offer advice on the practicality of coding by suggesting that wide margins, and spaces between lines be utilised for the researcher to make notes and apply codes to the various parts of the text using highlighters of different colours to make the coding process that much more useful.

3.8 Ethical issues

Creswell (2007, p. 44) claims that “throughout all phases of the research process we are sensitive to ethical considerations” because as researchers we are asking participants to expose intimate, personal thoughts about their life experiences and to give off a lot of their personal time to our projects. Stake (2003) takes ethical considerations in case studies a step further when he states that as researchers we are morally obligated not to place participants in harm’s way. It is for this reason that Rule and John (2011, p. 112) therefore claim that “research ethics, which are developed and embraced by a community of scholars, govern and guide the practices of researchers.” Hence it is now normal practice for institutions of higher learning that engage in research to fulfil ethical considerations (Rule & John, 2011). As a result I sought permission to conduct this research from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix A, p. 128) and the KZN Department of Education (Appendix B, p. 129). Further to this, letters of permission to conduct research at the various schools were given to the school principals who act as gate-keepers of the research sites (Appendix C, p. 131). Added to this, letters of permission were given to the research participants outlining the purpose of my study (Appendix D, p. 133). This is linked to one of the first requirements of ethics which is autonomy and informed consent that Kvale and Brinkman (2009) claim involves briefing the participants about the reason for the study and its main characteristics, as well as any risk and remuneration from participants. Creswell (2007) adds to the principle of autonomy by stating that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Rule and John (2011, p. 112) further add that the second principle of ethics is non-maleficence with the researcher “ensuring that at every stage in the research process, the research participants, their organisations and communities are not maligned or harmed in anyway.” This study used pseudonyms for both the participants and schools. The third principle of beneficence as described by Rule and John (2011) involves supplying feedback to research participants in follow-up meetings that should have been agreed upon by both the researcher and participants earlier in the research process.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Yin (2003) claims that the quality of a research design can be measured using tests that involve concepts such as trustworthiness, confirmability, dependability and credibility. Rule and John (2011, p. 107) offer a succinct explanation of trustworthiness when they state that “the concept promotes values such as scholarly rigour, transparency and professional ethics in the interest of qualitative research gaining levels of trust and fidelity in the research community.” de Vos (2005) explains transferability as the application of conclusions from one study to another. He goes on to explain that the use of triangulation where data can be generated from other sources can enhance transferability (de Vos, 2005). In my study I ensured that there was a paper trail in terms of the interview transcripts which other researchers who want to replicate this study in similar contexts can use.

The second principle of credibility refers to member checks where the researcher gets participants to check the accuracy of the written transcripts of the recorded interviews (Rule & John, 2011). The importance of member checks is best captured by Mertens (1998, p. 182) when she claims that member checks “is the most important criteria in establishing credibility.” Rule and John (2011) further state that credibility is enhanced through ‘thick description’ which clearly depicts the richness and real meaning of the case study. According to Rule and John (2011, p. 107) the third principle of dependability refers to an attempt by the researcher to “focus on methodological rigour and coherence towards generating findings and case accounts which the research community can accept with confidence.” Mertens (1998) elucidates the principle of dependability when she claims that the inquiry process be audited to check for levels of quality and how appropriate the inquiry process was. The last principle refers to confirmability which de Vos (2005) explains as when the findings of the research are confirmed by the data. I relied on my critical reader to ensure confirmability. Mertens (1998, p. 184) further points out that confirmability is when “qualitative data can be tracked to its source and the logic that is used to interpret the data should be made explicit.”

3.10 Limitations of the study

Mertens (1998) declares that it is impossible to “design and conduct the ‘perfect’ research study in education ...” and that it is for this reason that researchers identify and discuss the limits in

their field of study. This is supported by de Vos (2005) when he states that however carefully planned the study is, there is always potential for limitations in regards to data instruments, issues of generalisability and ethical issues. The study was located in four schools, two primary and two secondary schools only and therefore made generalisations difficult. A further limitation was time constraints in conducting the study on two levels. One level would be the time available for principals to participate in the interviews and on the second level was the restriction of a time frame to complete the interviews and analyse them for assessment purposes. A further limitation was the restrictions placed on the research because of convenience hence a comparative study of rural versus urban school principals and their experiences on instructional leadership could not be conducted. Given that the resources available to both types of schools would indeed offer up interesting comparisons.

3.11 Chapter summary

The preceding chapter firmly placed the research study in the interpretative paradigm and sought to explain the methodology employed to generate the data for the study. Added to this, the data generation instruments were clearly spelt out together with sampling issues. Further to this the method of data analysis was explained. The issue of ethics and trustworthiness, which is integral to research retaining its integrity, concluded this chapter. The following chapter will focus on data generation, findings and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter outlined the research design and methodology of this study. Due to the voluminous nature of the data generated, the data presentation section was subdivided into two chapters (Chapter Four and Chapter Five). The focus of this chapter is on the presentation of data and the discussion of findings in terms of the first four themes that emerged from my research. Chapter Five will focus on the four remaining themes. The data was generated from the field through the interviews and documents reviews with the research participants. A critique of the findings is also facilitated through interrogating the literature review and theoretical frameworks which were explored at great length in Chapter Two.

To remind the reader, the key research questions are set below:

- What do principals understand to be their roles as instructional leaders in their schools?
- What organisational structures do principals have in place to promote teaching and learning in their schools?
- How do principals manage the challenges they experience as they enact instructional leadership in their schools?

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the data with four school principals and eight teachers (from all the researched schools) as well as a documents review of official school documents on teaching and learning. Presentation of data takes the form of themes that emerged through the content analysis (as discussed in the previous chapter) of the interviews and documents. Further, in presenting the data, I wanted to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost. To this end, *verbatim* quotations are used throughout in the data presentation and discussion. Pertinent findings are then analysed and discussed as indicated in the previous chapter on the research design and methodology.

4.2 Data presentation

The following data is presented under themes that emerged from my analysis of the interview transcripts as well as documents that were reviewed.

4.2.1 The principals' understandings of their role in managing teaching and learning

What do you understand to be your role in managing teaching and learning at school?

The majority of the principals in this study perceived their roles in managing teaching and learning as those of mentoring, creating a positive learning environment to develop teachers, supervising teachers, and providing support to teachers. The principals were emphatic about providing support to both teachers and learners. Mr Wayne from Gotham Secondary pointedly stated that support encompassed:

Both physical as well as human resources as far as possible so that there will be learning and teaching in the school. There must be no single moment wherein there is no teacher or a single moment when the teacher is there but the resources are not.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

Mr Kent from Smallville Primary described his role as being one of monitoring teaching and learning and supporting teachers and learners. His role also mirrored those of Mr Wayne when he claimed that human resource management was also seen as part of his instructional leadership role when he stated that:

There isn't a class in this school that's unmanned for as long as I know myself. If a teacher wanted leave or he was sick we made sure that there was a teacher. Now the TA (teacher assistant) concept is helping us.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Another role to emerge from the findings was from Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary when she explained that besides guiding, supervising, and ensuring that there was an equitable distribution of work among teachers, she also felt that her:

Role is to create an enhanced learning environment so that the educators can improve their ability to teach and facilitate learning.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

The principal of Peter Parker Secondary, Mrs May saw her instructional leadership role as supervising teaching and learning when she stated that supervision is done to:

Ensure that there's quality teaching and learning in the classroom by doing classroom visits.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

The teachers at these schools confirmed and contradicted what the principals articulated in the interviews on their roles as instructional leaders. Mrs Alfred, a level one teacher at Gotham Secondary, contradicts what Mr Wayne articulated about learners not being without a teacher when she states that the Afrikaans teacher suddenly fell ill and:

So she's left so our grade 12 at the moment...I think our grade 10 and 11 as well are sitting without an Afrikaans teacher, and it's been quite some time and there are people available to teach...but were not allowed to resume the post because of some issues.

(Mrs Alfred, Post level 1 teacher at Gotham Secondary)

This disjuncture between what the principal and the teacher articulated seems to contradict each other but could not be confirmed as the school only supplied minutes of one staff meeting and one learning area minutes not related to the Afrikaans learning area.

Mrs Lane, a level one teacher from Smallville Primary confirmed Mr Kent's assertion about no learner being left without a teacher when she maintained that:

Even when we are absent, at least we don't have to serve relief...we have teachers and it's not so stressful.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

In perusing the staff minutes of Smallville Primary school there is evidence of the teacher assistant concept with the TAs having their own timetables, which serves to indicate that they were an integral part of the school system.

Mrs Loki, a level one teacher from Valhalla confirmed what the principal articulated about creating an enhanced learning environment to develop teachers when she stated that Mrs Thor provides, “*Opportunities for management and teachers to...to continue professional growth.*”

This role of the principal in helping teachers develop is confirmed in a newsletter to parents where it was reported that eight teachers would attend an ‘out of the box’ Mathematics problem solving workshop elsewhere. Further confirmation is found in management meeting minutes where teachers had to attend a lesson planning and assessment workshop in Physical Education on a Friday after school hours and on a Saturday. Further evidence of using readings to develop teachers was in staff minutes which were related to nurturing bright learners.

While the principal of Peter Parker Secondary stated that the supervision of teachers was done to ensure that quality teaching and learning occurred through classroom visits, a teacher from the same school, Mrs Watson claimed that the principal:

Doesn't walk beyond the foyer. To me that's a problem when I know that principals are walking around and coming into classrooms...I have a friend who is a deputy principal who walks into any one of his classes.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Another teacher, Mr Ben, from the same school spoke of dealing with his HOD when it came to matters pertaining to teaching and learning:

Just because he's making sure you are CAPS compliant, and also if you are a coordinator you're ensuring that in terms of moderation everything is in order and ensuring that every teacher is on task.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

The divergent responses to the roles that these principals saw themselves as instructional leaders finds favour with much of the literature reviewed. In developing their teachers, the principals echo the sentiment of the participants in a study by Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) where the

principals encouraged teachers to attend departmental workshops. Further to this, a study by Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2013) witnessed principals placing emphasis on the development of teachers concentrating on mentoring and support. In a study by Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2007), one of the findings on developing teachers was the clever use of staff meetings to lead discussions on readings, which in this study saw the principal using a newspaper article on nurturing bright learners to initiate a discussion amongst staff members.

As regards the role of providing resources in an educational setting, Mestry, Koopasamy and Schmidt (2013) reported that one principal in their study maintained that she saw her role as ensuring that her school functioned optimally by providing resources. This would seem to suggest that resources pointed to both human and material resources. In relation to the principals that saw their instructional roles as human resource managers, du Plessis (2013, p. 86), found that “instructional settings were not chaotic, but instead have intentional routines and structures that support learner learning.” This is apt for both the schools in my study where one school has no Afrikaans teacher for the senior learners, which is chaotic, while the other school ensures that no class is left without a teacher through the ingenious use of teacher assistants. The findings on some of the principals playing a supervisory role in teaching and learning resonates with a study conducted by Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) where one of their findings indicate that while some principals relied on the HODs reports on monitoring teaching and learning, other principals played an active role in observing teaching and learning. Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) strengthen this argument when they claim that in the schools that they had studied, there was an accountability culture for teaching and learning whereby principals either indirectly or directly monitor teaching and learning. Grobler (2013, p. 190) summarises the monitoring of teaching and learning best when he found that “the leader thus needs to ensure that monitoring of teaching takes place to ensure that the prescribed curriculum is adequately covered.”

While the reviewed literature evidenced principals in all the studies taking on a teaching role, none of the principals who participated in this study indicated that they actually taught in the classroom. This would then seem to suggest that if observation of teaching and learning is to become the norm rather than the exception in most of South African schools, if principals cannot model lessons for teachers to observe, then teachers would be very reluctant to allow principals

to observe the teachers teach (Bush, 2013). Grobler (2013), takes this notion of modelling further when he claims that the curriculum and assessment policy implementation is more effective when principals model teaching. Naicker, *et al.*, (2013, p. 141) also claim that the schools in their study “instructional leadership is doing what they would like teachers to do, that is, be exemplary teachers.” Finally, Webb (2005) claims that where principals sacrificed teaching time to administer the school, they felt that their credibility was undermined as they began to lose touch with the curriculum changes that were being initiated. In a South African context this should raise alarm bells as Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is a relatively new curriculum initiative and principals cannot be seen to be ensuring its correct implementation if they themselves are not practitioners of the new curriculum.

Monitoring teaching and learning falls within the ambit of Weber’s (1996) model of instructional leadership where he speaks of managing the curriculum and instruction through classroom supervision as being a skill an instructional leader should possess. The findings in this study do point to the principals supervising the curriculum and instruction albeit through the members of the SMT. The notion of using the structure of the SMT to supervise teaching and learning is linked to Horng and Loeb’s (2010) organisational management theory where they explain that managers create and develop structures for improving instruction rather than being present in the classroom observing teachers teach. The organisational management theory of Horng and Loeb (2010) also maintains that the management of personnel is one of the key responsibilities of organisational managers. The findings from this study point to principals defining one of their roles as being one of resource managers where the principals maintain that they ensure that no class is left without a teacher. A further finding in this study points to principals taking on the role of developing their teachers to enhance teaching and learning. Weber (1996), in his instructional leadership model, alludes to principals promoting a positive learning environment whereby teachers’ commitment is increased when teachers feel fulfilled professionally as they become actively involved in issues that affect instruction. This study’s findings demonstrate that the principals felt strongly about developing their teachers professionally to influence instruction.

The principals gave varying responses as to how they perceive their roles as instructional leaders. These ranged from mentoring, creating a positive learning environment, monitoring teaching and

learning, developing their teachers professionally and human resource management. The multiplicity of roles that these principals saw themselves is congruent with Hallinger's (2003) view that principals play an instructional, managerial and human resource role as instructional leaders. I will now turn to the next theme of principals' perception of how their colleagues view themselves as instructional leaders.

4.2.2 Principals' perceptions of factors that influence how other principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning.

What do you think are the factors that influence how different principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning?

The responses to the factors that influenced how other principals understood their roles as instructional leaders varied from the principal's capacity, the principal's experience, personality, the principal's ability to network and the contextual factors that different principals find themselves in. The majority of the principals however viewed a principal's experience as being the most crucial factor that influences how other principals understood their roles as instructional leaders. Each of the participants viewed this experience differently as the comments below indicate. Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary stated that:

If I'm a novice I'm going to be grappling in terms of managing teaching and learning and managing the curriculum. If I'm a practitioner I might just do the day-to-day things but if I'm a specialist I know exactly what I need to look for in learners.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

While Mr Kent described a principal's experience as being embedded in the position of authority, Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary interpreted experience as being one of the paradigms that a principal holds of the world of education.

She remarked that principals:

Bring their own experience to the school they lead...the experience as a pupil in a school when they were young, then as an educator, then as a member of probably a school management team and finally as a principal.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

She further explained that she was of the opinion that principals needed to go through these stages before being appointed as principal as there were experiences that an HOD and deputy principal takes with them to being a principal that proved advantageous in effectively leading a school. Mrs Thor was also of the opinion that besides networking with other schools which she felt was vitally important:

Other factors that influence how principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning could be through their own personal reading and research.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, also viewed research on the part of the principal as being important but was also of the view that the personality of the principal and his/her flair for particular issues to focus on in a school affected how they understood their roles as instructional leaders. She stated that some principals:

...would focus more on management issues. Some would focus on leadership issues. Some would be introverted, some would be extroverted and some would be visionary whereas some would focus on day to day issues as well. So, depending on what's their flair, on their types, and on what their priorities would be, they would function accordingly.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Wayne, the principal of Gotham Secondary observed that apart from experience and expertise, one has to:

Look at both his and her leadership style as well as his management style you know those also have a great impact in terms of how the manager ensures that there's good learning and teaching in a school.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

When the principals were questioned further if they thought that contextual factors like poverty influence how they enacted their instructional roles, the responses were evenly split between agreement and disagreement. Mrs Thor and Mr Kent disagreed that contextual factors such as poverty affect an instructional leader whereas Mr Kent was adamant that:

Sometimes it would be a challenge but I think in any context there are challenges. So contextual factors, yes there would be a challenge but with the kind of financial infrastructure set by the state, there ought not to be any teaching and learning barriers except for say, human resources. Even that, you know if you take the initiative you might be able to do something.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs Thor claimed that principals need to:

Go out there and this is what principals have to do, and you have to tap into people's spirit of generosity...so if you want to do lots of things in your school and there's no money, you have to find other means.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs May meanwhile was of the opinion that contextual factors such as poverty was an issue and stated that a principal's focus would be different, "If the children are coming in you know the school has a poverty issue...the children have a poverty issue." She explained that if the principal's focus was on issues of paying for water and electricity, his area of priority would not be on teaching and learning but rather on financial issues. The same question was put to the teachers who participated in the study and their responses both mirrored and differed from the responses of the principals. Most of the teachers felt that the personality of the principal was the most influential factor that affected instructional leaders when enacting their roles. Mrs Lane, a teacher from Smallville Primary described her principal as:

More like an introvert. He didn't have, you know, a feel of what's happening in the classroom and to the learners. He didn't have a relationship with the learners. Learners didn't talk to him and neither did the teachers too....like he was in his office. More doing office work than you know trying to help teachers.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Watson, a teacher from Peter Parker Secondary also insisted that the personality of a principal, who is hands-on in his /her school, was a mitigating factor over poverty. She stated that one should:

Have a look at some of those poor black schools in rural areas and look at the difference why some are performing and why some are not and they are all poverty-stricken. It's the principal's dedication, determination and ability to inspire and lead.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Mrs Robin, a teacher from Gotham Secondary however, was of a different opinion on the issue of poverty when she claimed that besides teacher apathy, teacher absenteeism and discipline issues in secondary schools, poverty was a strong factor that affected how principals managed teaching and learning because:

In public schools it is a daily battle to ensure that you have the resources to produce worksheets and that the learners have resources with them. Very often our children can't afford their books....their files...they don't have it.

(Mrs Robin, Post level 1 teacher at Gotham Secondary)

Mrs Alfred from the same school agreed with her colleague Mrs Robin about poor learners' access to resources but she was adamant that if discipline was straightened out at her school then teaching and learning would not be a battle. She claimed that:

We have got five people in discipline...strong people in the disciplinary committee you know and still our school is a mess.

(Mrs Alfred, Post level 1 teacher at Gotham Secondary)

It would then seem that the principals' and teachers' perceptions of the factors that influence instructional leadership point to personality and experience coupled with contextual factors such as poverty and discipline. The notion of experience being a factor that influences instructional leadership is to be found in the findings by Ruff and Soho (2005) who claim that a novice principal in their study displayed similar traits to the ones articulated in this study where the

novice principal was seen to be working in his office to run programmes for teaching and learning and then separating this work to interact with his staff. This was in opposition to the experienced principal who used a unitary approach in dealing with the staff, learners and the parents ensuring that there was collaboration between all the stakeholders as opposed to the superior-subordinate relationship that existed between the novice principal and his staff (Ruff & Soho, 2005). There seems to be a paucity of literature on the effects of the personality of the principal on instructional leadership. In support of this, a recent study by Drysdale and Gurr (2011) point to successful schools that relied on the style of leadership, personal characteristics and qualities and the building of relationships. This dovetails quite well with the findings in this study that speak of the personality of the principal who sits behind his desk and did not have good relationships with either teachers or the learners.

The findings in Drysdale and Gurr (2011) study also point to how successful principals network professionally. One principal from this study was very strong on networking locally and abroad. This idea of networking is linked to the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which Steyn (2013) found led to the principal wielding considerable influence of the work of teachers when there was collaboration between principals and teachers. Steyn (2013) also found that when networking with other schools, PLCs were widened thus enabling teachers to exchange ideas on practice and increase their knowledge.

While the participants were in agreement about the factors of experience and personality influencing the instructional leadership role of principals, they were of differing opinions on the contextual factors like poverty. In a study by Kamper (2008) one of the key findings was that the challenges facing poverty-stricken schools in South Africa point to a lack of textbooks, facilities and support from the local education offices. This study evidenced a secondary school teacher bemoaning the lack of resources for her students who come from poverty stricken homes. However, a teacher from a different secondary school in this study disagreed that poverty was an issue and insisted that the leadership of the school influenced teaching and learning more than poverty. This finding finds favour with Kamper's (2008, p. 13) findings that "notwithstanding their severity, poverty-related challenges can be overcome to a significant extent, in South African high-poverty schools through energetic, compassionate, innovative and empowering leadership." This finding seems to find congruence with what the majority of the participants

claimed when they stated that poverty is not a contextual factor that influences how an instructional leader enacts his/her role. However, in a study by Fancera and Bliss (2011) in a New Jersey secondary school they concluded that Student Economic Status (SES) could not be overcome either through instructional leadership or Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE).

Discipline was another finding in this study that militated against instructional leaders enacting their roles. This finding is supported by a finding by Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) who state that the principals in their study claimed that most of their time was spent on administrative tasks and disciplining students. They further claim that instructional leadership which included supervision of teachers and the teaching and learning process, did not consume a large amount of the principals' time. Mestry, *et al.*, (2013) concur with this finding in their study which saw principals bemoaning the fact that discipline prevented them from completing their tasks.

The final factor that affects instructional leadership as explained by one principal, was a leader's propensity for reading and research. The literature reviewed seemed silent on this aspect of instructional leadership. However, Weber's (1996) instructional leadership model points to instructional leaders who use research as a way of ensuring that teachers stay current in their relevant fields as a way of encouraging discussion among teachers which leads to sound decisions being made. Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership also explains that student discipline issues should not dominate a learning climate and that instructional leaders in conjunction with all stakeholders in a school should be proactive and ensure that an orderly learning climate prevails. Horng and Loeb (2010) in their organisational management theory weigh in on discipline issues then they state that the management of disciplining students takes up more time of the principal but have no bearing on improving the outcomes of the school. As far as the other factors of experience, personality and poverty, Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and Horng and Loeb's (2010) organisational management theory are silent on these issues.

The factors that the participants felt militated against principals enacting their instructional leadership roles ranged from experience, personality characteristics, research and reading and contextual factors such as poverty and discipline issues. While all these factors were supported by reviewed literature, there was scant evidence of most of these factors in the theoretical

frameworks chosen for this study. The following analysis focuses on the third aspect of the study which is the organisational structures instituted by the principals to enhance managing teaching and learning.

4.2.3 Organisational structures or programmes to promote teaching and learning

What organisational structures or programmes do you have in place to promote teaching and learning in your school?

In terms of organisational structures or programmes that the principals in this study claimed to have instituted in their schools, their responses were very similar with the one exception being the course selection committee found in the secondary schools. All the principals in this study cited the School Management Team (SMT) as their first organisational structure. Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary stated that his school's SMT consisted of the principal, deputy principal and three HODs. He elaborated further that:

Under them we have a list of educators that they are specifically responsible for. We also have a list of learners that they are responsible for in terms of their grade....and linked to that are certain projects assigned to these HODs.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary pointed to a similar organisational structure in her school with the principal, two deputy principals, HODs and subject heads. She claimed that the HODs:

Will monitor the quality of teaching and learning in terms of what the educators are doing, making sure that all curriculum issues are being met.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

While all the schools shared a similar organisational structure for their SMT, as mandated by the Department of Education (DoE), one school proved to be the exception to the rule. Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary school remarkably stated that:

I know that the management structure in my school is different. So we have organised our SMT so that it actually consists of three post level one educators

and then we have our HODs, deputy principal and principal....everything is shared here...I don't believe in an autocratic approach at all.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Following on the SMT as an organisational structure to promote teaching and learning, three of the four principals in this study also shared a similar view regarding the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) as an organisational structure in their schools. Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary spoke of parent consultation as a structure for assisting students that were struggling academically and he further stated that:

In terms of teachers and the monitoring of teachers, we have IQMS in place. We have our teachers with their own Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) that link to the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, further claimed that IQMS:

Was tied in with staff development, as well as professional growth, professional development and long term planning, the school improvement plan, and also academics form a major part of that.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Linked to IQMS, most of the principals in this study also viewed the Staff Development Team (SDT) as a structure to promote professional growth for their teachers. Mrs May summed up the views of the principals when she claimed that:

In terms of the management structures you've also got the Staff Development Team (SDT), the DSGs (Development Support Groups and we look strongly at what our growth areas need to be in terms of academics and how we're going to achieve that and what should be our staff development programmes.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, saw the staff development structure as a personal responsibility and she quite succinctly explained that:

We need to bring in this knowledge, training, wisdom and experience to ensure that projects are successful. I feel responsible for staff training programmes for new and experienced teachers.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Similarly, the principal of Smallville Primary, Mr Kent meanwhile saw the structure of subject committee meetings as a springboard for HODs to identify areas of development for the teachers that they supervised. He explained that:

We have got subject committee meetings and the advice I give to my HODs is to start addressing authentic needs...where for example non-routine problems in Mathematics is the issue.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mr Kent further alluded to the fact that this would lead to the HODs organising and conducting workshops for that particular area of concern where teachers leave the workshop having been empowered. The use of meetings as an organisational structure to promote teaching and learning was also alluded to by Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, when she noted that:

We have an SMT meeting, a staff meeting and phase meetings every week in school. Maybe people will think that's a lot of meetings but that's the way our organisation runs and our organisational structures exist at all levels.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor explained the existence of organisational structures at all levels in her school when she claimed that even children at her school participate in organisational structures like the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). She proudly proclaimed that:

We are a primary school but we have an RCL because you see I like to see the children's voices brought into the conversation and on a Monday the deputy and I meet them in person...not a teacher.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor's comments on the structure of the RCL is also reflected in comments made by Mr Wayne, the principal of Gotham Secondary who viewed this structure as being important in creating a healthy environment to enhance teaching and learning. He stated that:

The council of learners, RCLs, also play a pivotal in ensuring that in class there is order and discipline through the reports that they submit.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

On the issue of discipline, Mr Wayne spoke of another structure at his school, that of the Disciplinary Committee. He claimed that:

In terms of discipline there is a structure that is made up of different people from different sectors. Ideally we would have wanted the representation of all stakeholders across the board but of course we do have challenges in terms of others not availing themselves particularly on the parents' side.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, did not seem to have the same problem as Mr Wayne and stated that the Disciplinary Committee at her school was very structured and followed all the necessary processes. She remarked that:

We have a disciplinary committee and they set up a hearing and we go through the motion and processes. We've got a very strong code of conduct and we follow it through.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

The use of the code of conduct as a disciplinary tool in enhancing teaching and learning was also seen as such by Mrs Thor who claimed that:

Obviously an important part of one's organisation is in a school is tied up with the code of conduct because a lot of your discipline affects the success of the learning environment.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

She interestingly elaborated that:

We don't do any form of punishment in this school....we use biblio-therapy and counselling...these are girls we are dealing with and they are going to deal with their own children one day and perhaps we want them to know that negotiation is better.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor explained biblio-therapy as a form of intervention for learners with discipline problems where fiction books are used to sensitise errant learners to empathise with the fictional characters in a particular story that is chosen by an experienced librarian. Mrs Thor admitted that although time-consuming, this form of discipline led to fewer disciplinary problems at her school. A teacher at Valhalla Primary, Mrs Odin, confirmed the use of biblio-therapy as a form of discipline when she contended that she thought that:

Biblio-therapy is a novel yet effective manner in which discipline is maintained through the reading and enactment for the stories. Learners get to role-play, do role reversal and just simple discussions on various aspects of problem area which they enjoy as well. They also learn values and virtues on a weekly basis.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

An examination of the documents especially the school's code of conduct for learners confirms what the teacher and principal articulated about discipline which involves counselling rather than punishment. The document clearly states, *"The school is committed to a system of corrective discipline and will use punitive discipline only as a last resort."*

Mrs Robin, a teacher at Gotham Secondary concurred with her principal about the existence of a disciplinary committee as an organisational structure at her school. She maintained that:

There is a disciplinary committee and we do have processes in place to discipline the kids...this committee deals with serious misdemeanours like fighting, stabbing, stealing, attacking a teacher, that sort of thing...serious issues.

(Mrs Robin, Post level 1 teacher at Gotham Secondary)

In perusing the documents provided by the school, the school's code of conduct for learners sets out details of misdemeanours by learners and their consequences. Mr Ben, a teacher at Peter Parker Secondary intimated that at his school, *"If a child is giving you discipline problems; the child goes to the discipline head."* This confirms what was claimed by the principal, Mrs May from the same school when she stated that the school's code of conduct ensured that processes were followed. In examining the copy of the documents provided by the school, the school's code of conduct proved to follow the various processes implicit in a document of this nature. The document covered transgressions and disciplinary procedures to be followed. In terms of IQMS as an organisational structure in the schools in this study, one teacher from Smallville Primary, Mrs Luthor, confirmed the existence and practice of the IQMS tool in her school when she stated that HODs, *"Come to classrooms and they check our books...they do our IQMS."*

An inspection of the staff minutes of this school, evidence was found of the IQMS procedure being set in motion where the first round meetings with the HODs and the Development Support Groups (DSGs) were to begin. Mrs Watson, a teacher from Peter Parker Secondary on the other hand sarcastically observed that the:

One thing we do is the bureaucratic side to the letter. We were inspected two weeks ago and we got ticked flying colours because we are doing everything bureaucratically correct.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Although the IQMS structure could not be verified through document analysis, Mr Ben another teacher in this school spoke of the Staff Development Team (SDT) and how the school improvement plan is completed through this team which is inadvertently linked to the structure of IQMS. In relation to the SDT most principals did indicate that this structure was used as a springboard for staff development. Mr Ben, a teacher at Peter Parker Secondary, confirmed his principal's assertion that staff development programmes were an off-shoot of the SDT. He claimed that, *"The SDT meet on occasion and suggestions for improving teaching and learning are drawn up – an action plan."* Mrs Watson from the same school was in agreement with her colleague on the SDT when she stated that, *"Our school does everything by the book. We have an SDT – and they meet regularly."*

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary saw staff development as a personal responsibility that led to enhancing the teaching and learning process at her school. Mrs Odin, a teacher from Valhalla Primary confirmed what was articulated by her principal when she stated that:

My principal is huge on staff development...we have a professional development once a term starting off at the beginning of the year with team building and thereafter with the specific needs of teachers or just educational issues.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki from the same school validated the development of teachers when she stated that:

We have visiting speakers like psychologists, doctors, lawyers and educationists like Rod Smith that address us, including other teachers from other schools.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Another structure pointed out by the principals was the various subject committees in place in their school to enhance teaching and learning. Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary confirmed what Mr Kent articulated about there being subject committee meetings. She stated that, *“Well we have regular learning area meetings.”* An examination of the staff minutes confirms that subject committee meetings are a priority in this school. The staff minutes indicate that *“Subject meetings will take place once allocations are done for 2013.”*

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary also intimated that regular meetings were held in her school to enhance teaching and learning. Mrs Loki, a teacher at this school verified this claim of regular meeting when she stated that, *“We have weekly senior primary and junior primary meetings and weekly staff meetings.”* Confirmation was also provided by another teacher Mrs Odin who stated that:

We have our staff meetings or our phase meetings where a list of children with particular issues would be taken on individually and be supervised...and it's ongoing, it's not just done at the beginning for the year.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

This seems to suggest that regular meetings were held to enhance the teaching and learning process at this school. Another organisational structure pointed out by two of the four principals

was the RCL to enhance teaching and learning. Mrs Odin from Valhalla Primary validated what was articulated by Mrs Thor, the principal. She stated that:

With regards to the RCL, it plays a huge role in our school. The girls report on issues from the learners to the principal and vice-versa and these are school related issues. These RCL learners are made to feel special by being invited to discuss and share the girls' concerns with the principal over a cup of tea.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

The existence of the RCL as an organisational structure at Gotham Secondary was confirmed by Mrs Alfred, a teacher at the school. However, she stated that instead of the RCL being used to help with discipline in the classroom as the principal had articulated, the RCL at her school was used as, *"A channel for learner rights but they hardly use it nor is it used to convey news to their form classes."*

This disjuncture in what the principal had claimed and what one level one educator disputed could not be confirmed through the interview with the second teacher because she did not respond to queries during the member check process. Triangulation through documents reviews could also not be carried out because the school was reluctant to share documents it deemed to be of a sensitive nature to the researcher.

One of the most important structures which enhance teaching and learning that all principals pointed to was that of the SMT. Mr Kent, the principal explained that his SMT was responsible for specific teachers, learners and project at his school. Mrs Lane from his school confirmed this when she remarked that the principal:

Has regular meetings with the HODs and he has rules...he tells them what he requires from them and they in turn expect that from us and they check.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

In perusing the management meeting minutes evidence was found of the principal's interaction with members of his SMT where it was noted that HODs should remind teachers about, *"Effective time management of lesson so that there's no encroachment into other subject periods."*

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, had indicated that her SMT was responsible for the completion of the syllabus through the monitoring of teachers. This was verified by Mr Ben, a teacher at the school who stated that:

We have a strong management in terms of academic and discipline and we have our HODs per subject so some people may say too much because we have an HOD per subject in other words a subject head and also HODs per grade.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

These sentiments were echoed by Mrs Watson, a teacher from the same school who stated that they have, “*The principal, deputies and HODs in charge.*” While this was the norm in all the schools in this study, one school, Valhalla Primary, proved to be innovative in the composition of its SMT by including three level one teachers in its school management team. This seems to suggest that the principal was not afraid of sharing power of the SMT with teachers as she realised that sharing power does not mean power is lost but rather it is concentrated in the organisation (Weber, 1996). Further to this the teachers in the school must realise that they have a say in the decisions that the SMT makes and thus feel a sense of pride in any decisions that are made at management level and implementing any policy requirements should be done without any friction of most top-down decisions that are the hallmark of most bureaucratic organisations. This was verified by Mrs Loki, a teacher from this school who pointed out that:

We were co-opted onto the management team shall we say just to have an extra ear...and we keep everyone updated with what's going on. We all get together and it's pretty much an open discussion where if somebody comes up with an idea we talk about it openly and the principal is always willing to listen which I think is fantastic.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

An examination of the management meeting minutes found four level one teachers appending their signatures to the document proving that they were present at the meeting. This innovative idea of sharing instructional leadership resonates with a study by Ylimaki (2007) who found that one principal formed leadership teams to share in decision making where an open discussion on student learning prevailed. Contrary to this finding was a study conducted by Wallin and Newton

(2013) who found that the rural principals in their study justified excluding teachers from leadership structures because they wanted to protect them from huge workloads. The other principals in this study did not indicate that any teacher served on any management structure in their schools although these were all urban schools.

The various principals in this study viewed their SMTs as being responsible for the syllabus and they in turn overseeing the functions of the SMT. This idea was evident in a study by Hoadley, *et al.*, (2009) who claim that most of the principals in their study saw the completion of the curriculum as falling within the ambit of the members of the SMT. Resonating with this was a study by Mestry, *et al.*, (2013) where a principal viewed the deputy as being in charge of managing the curriculum while he was there to ensure that his SMT functioned competently. The managing of the curriculum through monitoring was one of the key findings by Grobler (2013). In terms of monitoring, all the principals indicated that they had the IQMS structure that monitored teaching and learning. Southworth (2003) explains that monitoring encompasses principals and other leaders examining teachers' work, perusing the work of learners and all other forms of assessment. This study evidenced HODs carrying out the function of monitoring. The principals in this study further alluded to the SDT, which is a component of IQMS, as being a springboard for the development of their teachers. In a study by Bhengu and Mkhize (2013) one of the key findings on professional development of teachers points to principals promoting the development of teachers by encouraging them to attend workshops. A principal in this study claimed that staff development was aimed at both experienced and novice teachers. Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) echo the same sentiments in their findings where a principal emphasised the development of teachers concentrating on mentoring and inducting staff. The same principal in this study also pointed out that she sought the expertise for staff development from outside of the school. This mirrors a finding by du Plessis (2013) where he found that some principals acknowledged that while they were not the chief trainers of teachers they were the chief coordinators of developing teachers professionally. The importance of staff development that the principals in this study propagated finds resonance with the organic instructional leadership theory that came off a study by Reitzug, *et al.*, (2008). The organic theory of leadership refers to improvement in instruction is a consequence of continuous development of teachers. Further to this a finding by Grissom, Loeb and Master (2013) found that the time spent by principals on developing and evaluating teachers contribute to student achievement gains.

Another finding to emerge from the same study was the relational instructional leadership theory which postulates that learner achievement does not take place as a result of the direct instructional programme but is as a result of the principal attempting to make both learners and teachers feel better. This finds congruence with the finding in this study where a primary school principal has instituted an RCL, the preserve of secondary schools, in her school because she wants to give the children a voice in school matters and she even discusses these issues with them over a cup of tea. This unusual step surely instils in these girls a sense of pride that other girls in this school would aspire to. Another study by Gurr, *et al.*, (2007) also claim that when the principal had positive relationships with students, then instruction improved. A finding by Wallin and Newton (2013) had a similar insight when they found that one principal had her vision clearly focused through constant interaction with learners.

In terms of subject committees as a structure to enhance teaching and learning, the principals in this study pointed out those regular staff, subject and phase meetings were the norm. In a study by Steyn (2013) one of the findings point to the principal wielding considerable influence on the work of teachers when there is collaboration between teachers and principals. Although the schools in this study had the HODs and deputy principals heading the various subject committees, the principals did indicate that they relied on their HODs' reports from these meetings.

In relation to the Disciplinary Committee as a structure to enhance teaching and learning, the schools in this study evidenced strong codes of conduct that addressed issues of discipline. The principals spoke of procedures and processes that were in place to quell any disciplinary issues that may hamper teaching and learning. In a study by du Plessis (2013) one of the findings mirror the findings in this study where an environment in most schools is not chaotic but rather it has structures and routines that serve to assist learning by learners. He explains that these routines and structures serve to protect the environment for learning from external and internal factors that can cause disruptions (du Plessis, 2013). These disruptions that are chaotic and can lead to an unhealthy learning environment is explained by Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership. He explains that instructional leaders can support students' time spent on academic tasks by enforcing rules that prevent tardiness (Weber, 1996). He also explains that student discipline issues should not dominate a learning climate and that instructional leaders in

conjunction with all stakeholders in a school should be pro-active and ensure that an orderly learning climate prevails. He further explains that a well organised school, assisting teachers to work in a group and placing an emphasis on student needs, all contribute to the effective use of instructional time. This study's findings point to the principals having subject committee meetings as organisational structures where teachers participate in the development of their specific subjects and students serving on the RCL to give voice to their needs.

In terms of a positive learning climate, Weber (1996) also states that in order for curriculum goals to be more collegial, teachers should be involved. This study witnessed one principal co-opting teachers onto the SMT which went a long way in ensuring collegiality between level one teachers and management which makes the achievement of curriculum goals easier. Weber (1996) also explains that teachers should be included in managing the curriculum because they are at coal-face of curriculum delivery. In relation to the SDT as an organisational structure which develops teachers, Horng and Loeb (2010) state that principals effect changes on student learning by creating opportunities for the improvement of teachers. The findings in this study point to the principals using the SDT to develop their teachers by enlisting the help of outside expertise to enhance the teaching and learning process. Horng and Loeb (2010) further state that leaders that are organisational managers use staff development as a means to retain effective teachers. Unfortunately no principal in this study alluded to retaining effective teachers through the use of staff development.

The findings on organisational structures that principals had instituted in their schools were varied. They ranged from the SMT, RCL, Disciplinary Committee, IQMS with its SDT and the subject committees. While all the principals pointed to these organisational structures as enhancing teaching and learning, the primary schools evidenced more organised structures than the secondary schools. I will now turn to the processes that the principals in this study used to identify the various organisational structures.

4.2.4 Identifying organisational structures to support teaching and learning

How did you identify the need for organisational structures to support teaching and learning?

The principals in this study indicated that they had identified the need for the organisational structures in their schools to support teaching and learning through various methods. The

methods that these principals spoke of were mainly the mandated structures of the Department of Education (DoE), the feedback from staff in meetings, through networking, research and reading. Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary, referred to his experience as well as the DoE as a means of identifying the organisational structures in his school. He claimed that legislation dictated the types of organisational structures at his school. He explained that legislation was in the form of departmental circulars stating that:

You know each circular is eventually a piece of legislation down the line. So things like that would give you an idea of exactly what kind of systems or committees of organisational structures you should have.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

The principal of Gotham Secondary also shared this view that organisational structures were mandated by DoE regulations. He pointed out that:

The DoE has called for the formation of Quality Learning and Teaching Committees at each school as a means of dealing with issues relating to safety in school and teaching and learning.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

The principals also identified and improved organisational structures in their school through feedback from staff during staff meetings. Two of the four principals intimated that a needs analysis allowed them to rectify any shortcomings in the way organisational structures functioned in their schools. Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary stated that she carried a needs analysis separately with the governing body, the trustees of the school, the SMT, the teachers and the learners that exited the school in Grade Seven. She claimed that:

We took all the information and we still do this from the things we got and so the information gained from these documents was analysed and action was implemented where necessary.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor further claimed that she used her SMT meetings, which was established earlier to consist of teachers as well, to critique all the recent activities in her school. She boldly stated that:

Every week when we have our SMT meetings we have, if I can use the term post-mortem, to study recent events that have taken place in school in the last week. This might cover academic matters like ANA (Annual National Assessment) or a school musical and every suggestion is always followed up and investigated. I would say that every single term we probably tweak some organisational structure in this school.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, also claimed that she used her meetings with teachers to obtain feedback and input on the organisational structures in her school. She pointed out that her staff contributed to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organisational structures at her school and that the teachers had wonderful ideas on organisational structures. She claimed that:

We get input from staff...feedback on what's working and what's not working. Very often staff comes up with innovative ideas that they themselves would like to see through and we encourage that kind of thing.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mrs May also claimed that networking with other schools and borrowing ideas from other schools helped her in identifying the organisational structures that were instituted in her school. She stated that while the organisational structures in her school was mandated by the DoE she felt that, “*Networking with other schools and observing what was working elsewhere,*” assisted her in identifying organisational structures in her school.

Mrs Thor was also of the view that networking and comparing what was done organisationally at her school to other schools both locally and internationally, was a huge contributing factor in identifying the organisational structures at her school.

She pointedly stated that:

Every year that I have been here I have compared our organisational structures with those that exist in other schools. I ask my colleagues in my neighbourhood and I network with schools abroad and I say we are doing this, how do you do it in Australia, in New Zealand or in England.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor also attributed reading and research in assisting her in identifying organisational structures in other settings including private schools which enable her to use local and international standards as a test of the appropriateness of the organisational structures in her school. She remarked that:

We need to use other world standards out there to benchmark what we do, and I think I have to go back to my own research and reading which has led me to identify organisational structures.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs May also made reference to reading and research as a means of identifying organisational structures that she had instituted in her school. She stated that she thought, “*My reading and research,*” had led her to identifying organisational structures in other contexts which led her to instituting these structures in her school. Unfortunately, Mrs Watson, a teacher from Peter Parker Secondary school seemed to suggest that instead of reading and research as a means of identifying organisational structures, the DoE dictated what structures the school instituted with no deviation or creativity. She claimed that:

The department (DoE) tells our principal this is what you need and we need that...I mean we have a rigid management structure but there are no other committees.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Ben, another teacher from the same school seemed to concur with his colleague that the DoE was largely influential in identifying the organisational structures in the school.

He stated that:

The Staff Development Team...every government school has to have one and comprises of members of management and two teacher representatives and that is prescribed by the government.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

The responses from these teachers is in stark contrast to those of the teachers from Valhalla Primary whose principal claimed to use reading and research as a means of identifying organisational structures at her school. Mrs Odin, the teacher at Valhalla Primary eloquently stated that her principal:

Was really updated...and she has solutions in terms of books that she has read or interviews or meetings and I think she gathers information on all little issues.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, the other teacher at the same school, confirmed that the principal was a well read individual who networked with other schools when she stated that:

Mrs Thor reads widely about educational matters. She even tries to meet the authors like Edward de Bono....she attends so many workshops and networks overseas as well so she's able to see what other schools do and then try and implement things here.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

This would seem to suggest that the principal is highly passionate about her position as principal of her school that she even takes the time to meet with esteemed authors and attends workshops to learn more on how to make her school an effective learning organisation. Needless to say, her networking with schools and universities that are found outside of our country speaks volumes about how she wants her school to grow and be compared to schools found in other parts of the world. I think this principal would be held in very high esteem by both her colleagues and more importantly her teachers. This of course would have a morale boosting role in terms of the

teachers in her school who would strive to be like their principal and this would enhance teaching and learning in the school.

Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary meanwhile confirmed what Mr Kent claimed when he stated that legislation through the DoE circulars dictated the organisational structures at his school. She observed that her school operated normally because the principal followed what the DoE expected of a school in terms of organisational structures. She stated that:

The principal follows what the department asks for and because of that everything is in order. I would say that we are a functional school.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

This was confirmed by Mrs Luthor, another teacher in the same school who concurred that the principal followed the mandate of the DoE when identifying organisational structures in the school. She maintained that the principal, *“Sticks strictly to the department regulations and thus our structures are mostly as a result of the department’s mandate.”*

Another form of identifying organisational structures as articulated by some of the principals was a needs analysis and feedback from teachers during staff meetings. Mrs Odin, a teacher from Valhalla Primary confirmed what her principal articulated about using staff meetings to obtain feedback from teachers on the organisational structures of the school. Mrs Odin claimed that:

I know that every teacher is given the opportunity to offer feedback every week once the agenda is done. The principal personally asks each teacher for his or her feedback....thus allowing every teacher to speak.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki confirmed Mrs Odin’s utterances when she stated that, *“We have a post-mortem of any function. We discuss what worked, what can be improved and what can be discarded.”* Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, also intimated that she used feedback from staff to identify the organisational structures at her school. Mrs Watson, a teacher at this school offered a different perspective to the principal’s claim when she observed that once feedback was obtained from teachers, nothing changed for the rest of the year. She claimed that the exercise was merely

a bureaucratic one, designed to fulfil the need for paperwork to be completed for record purposes.

She remarked that a needs analysis was done on:

*Day one and then it's forgotten. It's completely ignored for the rest of the year.
First day of school and then it's ignored.....it's all just part of the
paperwork...part of the bureaucracy and nothing changes for the rest of the year.*

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Ben further added that teachers had no input in the identification of organisational structures at his school. He claimed that the SMT determined the various organisational structures thus disputing what the principal had articulated when she claimed that teachers' feedback was used to identify and improve organisational structures at her school. Mr Ben stated that:

*Organisational structures are already in place – determined by management.
Teachers have little or no say in the way the structures function.*

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

This lack of input by the teachers in Peter Parker Secondary on how organisational structures are identified does not synchronise with the finding of du Plessis (2013) where he found that the principal sets goals to involve teachers in curriculum, assessment and instructional matters. I think this does not augur well for teacher commitment in an institution that does not involve the very people that are at the coal face of curriculum delivery. The principal of Valhalla Primary did involve her teachers in identifying and improving the organisational structures at her school through regular feedback in meetings. This finds favour with a study by Ylimaki (2007) who found that one principal formed leadership teams to share in decision-making where an open discussion on student learning prevailed which the principal used to capacitate teachers for instructional leadership. Another finding in the same study found that a principal acknowledged that if teachers had to feel any sense of ownership then decision-making had to be shared to provide support for emergent teacher leadership and to encourage teachers (Ylimaki, 2007). While the teachers from Valhalla Primary extolled the distributed leadership qualities of their principal, the teachers from Peter Parker Secondary were quick to point to the bureaucratic style of management displayed by the principal and her SMT.

In terms of networking and borrowing organisational ideas and benchmarking them against local and international standards, the principals in this study displayed Professional Communities (PLCs) tendencies. Steyn (2013) found that when networking with other schools, PLCs are widened thus enabling teachers to exchange ideas on practice and increase their knowledge. The one principal in particular was able to draw on models from international countries and use it in her school to identify and create structures that were not found in other schools in this study. Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership points to principals promoting a positive learning climate where a well organised school, which enabled teachers to work as a group, in this case PLCs, contribute to the effective use of instructional time. He further states that when teachers feel fulfilled professionally they become directly involved in issues that affect instruction. The principals in this study both excluded and included teachers in their schools for the explicit purpose of identifying organisational structures. The advantages of principals including teachers in this process augur well for the quality of instruction in the school and the converse would be true where the quality of instruction would either stagnate or decline. Weber (1996) supports this statement when he concludes that involving all stakeholders in leadership, teachers feel powerful in contributing to the improvement of instruction in their organisation.

The principals in this study had employed various methods in identifying the organisational structures that were instituted in their schools. All the principals indicated that they had first and foremost instituted organisational structures as mandated by the DoE. Two of the principals in this study also stated they had used networking, and research and reading to identify the organisational structures in their school to enhance teaching and learning. The focus of the next analysis will shift to how principals gauged the effectiveness of the organisational structures in their schools.

4.3 Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter focused on the presentation of the data and a discussion of the findings in terms of my research questions. Presentation of the data took the form of themes that emerged through content analysis of the semi-structured interviews and documents. Pertinent findings were then analysed and discussed through the lens of the literature reviewed and theoretical frameworks chosen specifically for this study. The following chapter focuses on the remaining four themes that emerged from the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter was devoted to the first four themes to emerge from the data. As indicated in the preceding chapter, due to the voluminous nature of the data generated, this data presentation section was subdivided into two chapters as explained in chapter four. This chapter specifically deals with the remaining four themes that emerged from the data. A critique of the findings is also facilitated through interrogating the literature review and theoretical frameworks which were explored at great length in Chapter Two.

5.2 Data presentation

The following data is presented under themes that emerged from my analysis of the interview transcripts as well as documents that were reviewed.

5.2.1 Effectiveness of organisational structures to support teaching and learning

How effective are the organisational structures to support teaching and learning in your school?

Three of the four principals that were interviewed put forth a number ways in which they measured the effectiveness of the organisational structures to support teaching and learning in their schools. Their reasons included results in external examinations and feedback from the high schools that primary school learners attended. Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary alluded to his school's achievement in external examinations for Mathematics and Science including the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results. He claimed that effectiveness of the organisational structures in his school was measured in their participation:

In all external examinations which ranks us as one of the top primary schools because of the kind of awards that we get. Also the ANA results compared to the rest of the country is way above the national average.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs Thor on the other hand intimated that while her learners performed well in all external examinations including the government's ANA examinations, she wants an improvement in the scores but that her teachers were instructed not to teach to test. She remarked that:

I can't remember what the scores were but I want them to be better. But we don't just teach to test for ANA. I have to keep remembering that. I've told our teachers that they are definitely not allowed to do that.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor also pointed to the achievements of ex-learners from her school as a measure of the effectiveness of the organisational structures in her school. She proudly claimed that:

I think our structures are pretty good....our girls achieve academically and I mean that not long ago one of our girls was the Dux of Durban Girls College last year and another girl was the Dux of Danville Secondary. Another girl at Northlands is a contender for the Dux. So our girls go on and they do well.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, meanwhile measured the effectiveness of her organisational structures in lieu of the competition for spaces by learners who want to attend her school. She also added that the universities in South Africa aggressively recruited the Grade 12 learners at her school. She claimed that:

We are in demand from tertiary institutions. You find institutions throughout the country from UCT (University of Cape Town) to Stellenbosch to Pretoria offering our learners scholarships and coming to visit the school to market their institutions. So I don't think it would happen if they were not happy with the quality of learners that we offer.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

The principal of Smallville Primary, Mr Kent, echoed a similar sentiment when he described how his Grade 7s were also aggressively recruited by the local secondary school because of the quality of learners that exit the school for a secondary education.

He claimed that the secondary schools:

Come here vigorously marketing their schools. Star College is prepared to give all our top learners bursaries from Grade 8 to 12.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mr Kent also remarked that the reports that he received from the high schools, about the progress of ex-learners in the secondary schools, was very positive suggesting that this pointed to the effectiveness of the organisational structures at the school. He pointed out that:

We get feedback from many of the secondary schools and all those schools specifically stated that they were very pleased with the quality of our learners.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, was also of the opinion that positive feedback from the secondary schools was a good indicator of the effectiveness of the organisational structures at her school. She also stated that the ex-learners from her school attended many different secondary schools and that:

I've had good feedback from the people that lead those schools and also from educators who come into contact with our girls who enter Grade 8, like their Grade 8 heads and because they know me they don't mind what they tell me and so I listen carefully.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, a teacher at Valhalla Primary confirmed what her principal claimed about the positive feedback from the feeder high schools when she remarked that:

The Grade 7 teachers have meetings at least twice a year with our main feeder high schools regarding Mathematics, English and Afrikaans – bridging the gap. Here we get to know how our girls are doing.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Odin, another teacher at the same school also confirmed the use of feedback to gauge the effectiveness of the organisational structures at her school.

She claimed that:

There is constant feedback from high schools. There are meetings and workshops that the Grade 7 teachers go to with regard to making sure they are keeping with the demands of high schools.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary was also at pains to point out that verbal feedback instead of written feedback from the teachers from the feeder secondary schools were always positive in relation to the ex-learners from her school, thus concurring with her principal, Mr Kent. She remarked that:

Verbal statements don't carry weight. These high schools must send us letters. Yes, high flyers from our school do perform at high school.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

A reading of the staff minutes (dated 25 January 2013) points to a vast majority of ex-learners from this primary school achieving distinctions in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination. The minutes read that, *"It shows that our foundation is strong and that our learners reap what was sowed at the primary level."* While Mrs Luthor did not confirm what her colleague articulated about feeder schools giving positive feedback, she however confirmed that the results produced by learners in her school were very impressive especially the ANA results in English. This served to validate what the principal, Mr Kent, had claimed earlier when he stated that the ANA results at his school were above the national average. Mrs Luthor stated that, *"We do produce excellent results. Last year the Grade 6 English ANA results were eighty percent."* Mrs Lane further indicated that the ANA results and external examination results in the foundation phase were excellent thus further cementing what the principal and her colleague had articulated. She stated that, *"These results are authentic as certificates and medals have been given by these examining bodies and our ANA results are always excellent."*

In terms of tertiary institutions aggressively recruiting learners from Peter Parker Secondary, Mr Ben, a Post level 1 educator, validated this claim by his principal, Mrs May when he stated that:

We have had a number of learners who receive bursaries to study at different universities. I can't remember the specifics but we have had a few learners who got full bursaries. A learner also acquired an international bursary.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

These bursaries seem to suggest that the principal was correct in her assertion that universities aggressively recruit the learners at her school thus seeming to suggest that the organisational structures that were in her school were indeed effective. Further confirmation was provided by Mrs Watson, a teacher at the school, who stated that, “*Our top girls receive financial aid from universities to further their studies.*”

In relation to using feeder institutions as a gauge for organisational effectiveness, Mrs Loki, a teacher at Valhalla Primary confirmed what her principal had claimed that learners from her school went on to achieve honours in the secondary schools that they attended. She remarked that:

Most of the girls cope well when at high school. The girl that achieves the Dux in primary school maintains great grades and some even achieve the Dux at the high school.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Odin, a teacher at the same school, meanwhile claimed that the learners performed well academically in external programmes which validated her principal's claims. She stated that:

Our Grades 4 to 7 are involved in the AMESA (Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa) Mathematics and Einstein programmes which are based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and we prepare our kids for these university based programmes in which our learners perform quite well.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

The findings to this question attempted to elicit the effectiveness of the organisational structures from the principals in their respective schools. Inherent in this question was an evaluation of

their organisational structures which is problematic both in the public and private sectors (Mante & O'Brien, 2002). These researchers further contend that while the private sector has a market system with measurable profit and loss, "the public sector lacks both an analogue for profit seeking behaviour and an adequate feedback system for learning about quality of decisions" (Mante & O'Brien, 2002, p. 274). They further reason that this has led to a problem of assessing the performance of organisations in the public sector which would include schools (Mante & O'Brien, 2002, p. 274). Hence the dilemma for the researcher was in trying to find literature that spoke to the various methods identified by the school principals to gauge the effectiveness of the organisational structures in their schools.

Notwithstanding the paucity of literature on evaluating the effectiveness of organisational structures, Thornton, Shepperson and Canavero (2007) support the principals' use of the ANA results to point to the success of their organisational structures. They claim that at the heart of any evaluation of programmes lie achievement gains which rely on regulated tests to measure its influence and effects (Thornton, *et al.*, 2007). The regulated tests are in reference to the ANA results that the primary school principals used as an indicator of effective organisational structures. The literature reviewed does not specifically point to the principals using academic achievement as a marker for effective organisations. However, in a study by Rice (2010) an indirect finding was that one indicator for principal effectiveness and indirectly the organisational structures overseen by them, was the performance of the school which included achievements by students. She further maintains that an analysis of the findings of the Centre for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research- CALDER- which point to a principal's experience that positively impacted on learners' achievement in Mathematics (Rice, 2010).

The principals in this study further claimed that they used feedback from higher institutions to gauge the effectiveness of their organisations. Thornton, *et al.*, (2007) maintain that schools which use effective feedback have the ability to highlight the variables linked to instruction that was effective, communication and outcomes that were both intentional and unintended. They also maintain that feedback must lead to introspection and a commitment to change how structures operate (Thornton, *et al.*, 2007). This finds favour with Mrs Thor's assertions that she listens to the feedback from the secondary school to make changes to the organisational structures in her school, if necessary.

This notion of feedback can be linked to Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership where he posits that an assessment of the instructional programme in a school is necessary and that it requires internal leadership to carry out the assessment as outside expertise cannot plan, design and execute the assessment. Unfortunately on the evidence of the principals' articulation about feedback and academic achievement, there is a lack of any formal system in place to evaluate the organisational structures in their schools. Weber (1996) clearly states that this will result in identifying its strengths and weaknesses which assists in planning, revising or ploughing ahead with what works.

While the primary schools depended on the secondary schools and ex-learners' National Senior Certificate results as an indication of the effectiveness of their organisational structures, the one secondary school depended on the recruitment drive of tertiary institutions. Admittedly these schools had effective organisational structures but they lacked any formal assessment programme to ascertain the effectiveness of these structures. The focus of the next question deals with the challenges those principals face as they enact their instructional leadership roles.

5.2.2 Challenges to enacting instructional leadership practices

The next question that was asked to all the research participants was:

What are some of the challenges that you face as you enact your role in managing teaching and learning?

The findings to this question encompassed challenges ranging from the Department of Education (DoE), the teachers, the learners, the School Governing Body (SGB) and teacher unions. In relation to the DoE, the principals gave varying responses to the challenges that they faced. These responses ranged from inefficiency, capacity and a lack of support. Mr Kent, the principal bemoaned the lack of timeous communication of the DoE with regards to important circulars and the inefficiency of departmental officials who facilitate departmental workshops. He stated that, *"It is frightening that in the technologically advanced world of ours where we don't get a circular on time."* He then explained that while the DoE wanted to cascade the new curriculum to teachers, the facilitators were not capacitated. He stated that:

The cascading model is not good because the people who present at a district or circuit level are not prepared to entertain questions that teachers have- which is

not good. You want the messenger to be capacitated. Teachers must go from there very clear what they need to go back to school and execute.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, echoed a similar sentiment about the lack of capacity of the DoE facilitators and their support in relation to curriculum development of teachers. She claimed that:

In terms of the Department of Education, I think at times the support is not there because sometimes in terms of curricular matters and training very often the officials are not knowledgeable enough with what the processes or what the content should be, so it's like a guessing game and very often you get ideas coming forth that's very far....in any case these people don't have an understanding of what's happening on the ground.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mrs Thor meanwhile reiterated what Mr Kent stated about circulars being sent late to schools by the Department of Education. She remarked that, *“There's a lot of inefficiency where you get notices to attend meetings that are sent late even after the due dates.”* However, she also pointed out that her ward-manager *“Has been extremely helpful and supportive in our school.”* This support though was not forthcoming in Mr Wayne's school, Gotham Secondary. He explained that due to a lack of support from the Department of Education and its bureaucratic processes, learners who were also a disruptive influence at the school continue with this type of behaviour to the detriment of the other learners. He stated that:

The lack of support from the Department where we seek the approval in terms of carrying out the disciplinary process or to undertake to take the matter forward like if the misconduct warrants suspension or expulsion where because of red tape, before we know it the learner is back in school committing more serious offences.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

Notwithstanding these challenges from the Department of Education, the principals also voiced challenges in relation to teachers. Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary lamented the

lack of subject specialisation of new graduates claiming that while the new curriculum begged for specialist teachers, graduates were not trained for this. She stated that:

The new teachers coming in are not as specialised as you used to have before and yet the curriculum is calling for specialist knowledge, so that's one area I find is a challenge.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary, voiced a similar thought on teachers adding that teacher commitment was also a challenge. He stated that:

The first challenge with teachers is how do you get commitment back into the teacher and the second thing is qualification where you are a non-Maths qualified person teaching Mathematics for example. So the issue of the challenges bears heavily on schools because teachers are incorrectly qualified to be teaching subjects that learners are performing badly in.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, meanwhile viewed the challenges posed by teachers differently to the preceding principals. She spoke of teachers that were coping well in the subjects that they were teaching, but that there were teachers that experienced emotional and physical stress that needed support. She was also sympathetic to teachers in the current educational climate in South Africa who had to acclimatise themselves through a number of curriculum changes. She quite clearly stated that:

Like all schools we have teachers who need a lot of support emotionally or because they are unwell and others who don't need as much support and our IQMS documents reveal that some of our teachers are on top of their field. You know I feel that teachers had to deal with four curriculums over a short space short of time and that's a huge challenge for them.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

In relation to the challenges posed by learners the responses once again varied from school to school with differing contexts. Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary painted a picture of

the girls who came to her school as coming from challenging backgrounds and who spent a lot of time travelling to and from school. She also observed that learners with learning barriers were not adequately supported by the DoE. She claimed that:

Our girls come from vastly different socio-economic backgrounds...such a wide range and we've got some girls who travel 2 hours to come to school every morning and some (of them) arrive at school looking tired by eleven and they only reach home very much later in the day. So those are challenges that impact on teaching and learning. Also some learners have barriers to learning and there is limited support from the DoE...so it's a huge challenge for us to try and make them achieve optimally.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary viewed the challenges posed by learners in a similar vein to Mrs Thor when he explained that the economic crisis facing the country inadvertently affected homes and families and this coupled with social problems affected the learners' concentration in the classroom. He claimed that:

The social environment is problematic now. You have got unstable homes, single parents, financial issues, you have the economic crisis, unemployment is very high and as a result learners come to school with those kinds of issues. Learners switch off and move from grade to grade with gaps in their knowledge.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, on the other hand viewed learners as a challenge because they arrived from the primary schools with gaps in their knowledge. She claimed that:

We find major gaps especially in Mathematics because we do an assessment on our new intakes in Grade 8 and what percentage you see in the report and what we get in the assessment tests that we give them upfront....there's a grave discrepancy. So that is what worries us and when the teacher starts teaching, they can identify clearly the gaps in certain areas.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

All of the participants were of the opinion that the SGB did not pose any challenges to teaching and learning and that the SGB understood that their role was one of governance and not professional issues. Mr Wayne, the principal of Gotham Secondary, explained that the SGB understood that:

In terms of their governance as their main responsibility they do....it's not like they meddle in teaching because they know it's the responsibility of people who are professional and the only professional is the staff.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

However, Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary, while agreeing with Mr Wayne about the SGB understanding their roles and interfering with teaching and learning, he stated he was of the opinion that if he was not capacitated as a principal, the SGB would have the means to interfere in professional matters. He claimed that:

They don't pose a challenge and maybe if I didn't have the capacity then maybe they would have posed a challenge where they would have interfered in professional matters and not governance issues. I think it exists only where the principal's capacity is weak. If you are weak they ride rough-shod over you.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

In relation to the two dominant teacher unions at school, SADTU and NAPTOSA, the principals were of the opinion that these teacher unions posed no challenge to teaching and learning for reasons that differed from context to context. While some principals felt that teacher unions posed no threat because of their small numbers in the school, others felt that they were capacitated enough to handle teacher union issues while another felt that teacher unions were not a challenge but rather that they enhanced teaching and learning. Mr Wayne, the principal of Gotham Secondary, explained that contrary to being a challenge:

Both teacher unions are very supportive...I know they have programmes and strategies to capacitate their own members. They have not given us any challenges as the institution or as management.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, on the other hand claimed that teacher unions at her school did not pose a challenge to teaching and learning except when strike action was initiated by them. She was very adamant that the teachers at her school did not go on strike as teaching and learning took precedence over the salaries of teachers. She stated that:

The teacher unions haven't been a challenge at this school. It was only when there were strikes and teachers were expected to go on strike....we are dead against any stay-away and strikes because it interferes with the learning and teaching which at our school has to come first...before teachers' salaries.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary meanwhile spoke of the teacher unions as not posing a challenge in his school as he is capacitated to deal with any teacher union issues that may arise. He stated that:

To be honest, in our school scenario they don't pose any challenge. I think the challenge is again the capacity of principals who need to know where to draw the line and how to call teachers to order whether its teacher attendance or other union matters.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, claimed that the composition of her teaching staff, most of whom were employed by the governing body, and the state-paid teachers were split between the two major teacher unions. This led to a scenario wherein when the teacher unions went on strike, the number of teachers that went on strike was negligible. She remarked that:

Naptosa members don't normally strike. Sadtu is the minority. We have 64 teaching staff and Sadtu members may be about 10 and very few of them go on strike. The maximum you would get is one or two, that's it.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Ben, a teacher at Peter Parker Secondary, confirmed what his principal, Mrs May claimed about teacher unions not posing a challenge to teaching and learning at the school.

He stated that:

We've got teacher unions....there's Sadtu and Naptosa and we haven't had big issue. We haven't had much union activity in terms of them coming here; usually our teachers go out to the meetings. I haven't experienced any disruption to teaching and learning.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Mrs Watson meanwhile cemented what her colleague had stated about there being no disruption to teaching and learning from teacher unions when she remarked that, *"Absolutely no disruption at all. Union activity is very low key, hardly causes a ripple."* Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary, concurred with her principal Mr Kent that teacher unions did not pose a challenge to teaching and learning. She stated that, *"Teacher unions do not really pose a challenge at this school."* Mrs Luthor another teacher at this school stated that, *"Teacher unions hardly ever pose a challenge to teaching and learning because the principal handles the situations quite well."* Mrs Odin, a teacher at Valhalla Primary, was quite adamant that teaching and learning at her school was not sacrificed on the altar of teacher union strikes. She confirmed what the principal articulated when she stated that:

In terms of teacher unions with all their strikes which interferes with teaching and learning but in terms of the teachers and the work ethics and in terms of their dedication of the teachers we haven't gone on strike.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, another teacher at the school concurred with her colleague when she claimed that:

We didn't actually go on strike...we signed the register and at one stage when it was dangerous because of people toyi-toying outside the school. But we haven't actually joined in an actual march.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

In terms of the SGB posing a challenge to teaching and learning, the teachers confirmed what the principals claimed that the SGB posed no challenge to teaching and learning at their schools. Mrs Alfred a teacher at Gotham Secondary stated that, *"The SGB does not interfere in teaching and learning. Their role is one of governance."* Mrs Robin, a teacher at the same school, however

maintained that while the SGB did not interfere with teaching and learning, *“They are not helpful with fundraising or purchasing the necessities we request....it’s upsetting.”* Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary also did not view the SGB as a challenge to teaching and learning thus confirming what her principal, Mr Kent had stated earlier. She claimed that, *“The SGB are not a hindrance...I would say at the moment they are really doing their job which is to get money.”* Mrs Luthor agreed with her colleague when she claimed that, *“The SGB doesn’t trouble us. I think their role mostly is to ensure the upkeep of the school.”*

In relation to the learners posing a challenge to teaching and learning, the teachers seemed once again to agree with their principals’ views of socio-economic problems as preventing learners from optimally benefitting from teaching in the classroom. Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary concurred with her principal by stating that:

Learners that come from broken homes and where abuse is rife display signs of poor performance. Also where a mother is forced to work because of divorce, the child is neglected at home and this is evidenced in homework being incomplete and the child’s inability to keep up with his peers.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Luthor another teacher at the same school was also of the opinion that learners who came from single-parent homes and backgrounds and were plagued with socio-economic issues, posed a challenge to teaching and learning. She remarked that:

Boys tend to react more to the socio-economic issues like single parent homes and families that are broken up. The behaviour of these boys tends to be quite disruptive in the classroom.

(Mrs Luthor, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Odin, a teacher at Valhalla Primary, viewed the challenges posed by learners as those that experienced emotional problems and barriers to learning. Her views coincide with those of her principal, Mrs Thor. She claimed that:

All the behavioural problems with these learners are due to emotional reasons like divorced parents or one of the parents going away overseas and for that child

in particular, no History, Mathematics or English is important. Also there's a lack of interest by children with barriers to learning.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, another teacher at the same school, saw the challenges posed by learners differently to her colleague and principal. She yearned for the days when learners worked independently and discipline was not as bad as it is today. She stated that:

... discipline is a problem. I think learners not being able to work independently, I have found over the years that, that has become more and more of a problem. They're like little birds with their mouths open and just want to be spoon-fed.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

In terms of teachers posing a challenge to the principals in this study, the responses were varied but with a common thread of support and development coming to the fore. Mrs Luthor, a teacher agreed with her principal, Mr Kent, that the qualifications of teachers teaching a particular subject were a challenge to teaching and learning. She remarked that:

As a teacher of English, I cannot teach Mathematics and so the results will suffer. It is important that you are au fait with the content of the subject that you teach. In any case if you are a committed teacher you will become well read in the particular subject that you teach.

(Mrs Luthor, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Likewise, Mrs Lane, another teacher at the same school, was also of the opinion that not being qualified to teach a certain subject posed a challenge to teaching and learning. She stated that:

Qualifications are an issue because you cannot take a senior primary teacher and expect them to teach the foundation phase or vice-versa. It will impact on teaching and learning.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Similarly, Mrs Odin, a teacher at Valhalla Primary, concurred with her principal, Mrs Thor, that curriculum changes were a challenge to teaching and learning especially the prescriptive nature of the new curriculum, CAPS. She stated that:

The department doesn't allow time...especially with CAPS, it's so tightly prescriptive...how do you actually teach this child that's been absent...test the child and catch up with the rest of the work that is not actually taught.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, another teacher at the same school, echoed a similar sentiment about the curriculum changes when she stated that:

I think the greatest challenge this year has been the change to CAPS. These changes in the curriculum after 30 years of teaching and having had quite a lot of freedom, now suddenly to be reined in like this and being told what to teach, I find it quite restricting.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

While the principal of Peter Parker Secondary saw subject specialisation as a challenge in her school, the teachers however stated that the personal management of time, syllabus coverage and management itself posed a challenge to teaching and learning. Mr Ben, a teacher at this school remarked that, *"The biggest challenge is time management and syllabus coverage."* Mrs Watson, another teacher in the same school remarked that, *"The biggest challenge is management upwards. I would like to see them more supportive."*

In terms of the Department of Education and the challenges it posed to teaching and learning, the teachers both echoed and differed from the respective principals' views expressed earlier. Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary agreed with her principal's assertion about the facilitators' abilities to conduct workshops was below a competent level. She claimed that:

The department of education is not really up to date because they convey the message at these workshops and when you ask questions they just say that they are just the messengers and can't answer questions.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Luthor, another teacher at the same school agreed with her colleague about the facilitators' ability to conduct workshops. However she also added that:

There is too much of paperwork, especially now. Also there are too many learning areas, too many learners in my classroom and a heavy workload. The workshops are not fruitful and we had to assist them in conducting the workshops.

(Mrs Luthor, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Odin, a teacher at Valhalla Primary, strengthened her principal's claim that the DoE was inefficient in communicating with schools via circulars. She stated that:

I find that the DoE is disorganised because I cannot function if a notice for a meeting is given to me today when I haven't organised other things where you have late notices or if something comes from the department saying you have to be in a meeting tomorrow and it has come today.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, another teacher at the same school echoed a similar sentiment about the Department of Education when she stated that:

Meetings seem to be sprung on you and you are expected to drop everything and go. Mostly they read through documents which are a waste of time. Facilitators are not always clear on what is required.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Watson, a teacher at Peter Parker Secondary, meanwhile felt that the Department of Education was preventing her principal from taking the school forward with all their requirements. She claimed that her principal, Mrs May:

Would be more effective if the department wasn't breathing down her neck. The principal knows what is right and what is wrong ...she knows what is best for her school but the department is not interested. They're only interested in fulfilling these criteria that they have laid down. So they are our biggest challenge.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Ben, a teacher from the same school, concurred with his principal when he claimed that:

The DoE workshops are often a waste of time. They state something at the workshop that is suggested but never explicitly stated in CAPS. Nonetheless, sometimes it is essential to go because they clarify certain changes and procedures for the continuous assessment programmes.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

While the principal of Gotham Secondary found that the Department of Education posed a challenge in not supporting his school as far as disciplining learners at his school who warranted suspension or expulsion, the teachers' challenges with the Department of Education was different. Mrs Alfred claimed that her school was beset with leadership issues and that the department was of no assistance despite their imploring them to do so. She stated that, *"We tried going to the department but the challenge is who do we get there that will look after our rights?"* Mrs Robin meanwhile echoed her colleague's sentiments when she stated that, *"The DoE do not support this school with anything...period."* When probed to explain herself she stated quite emotionally that, that was everything she had to say about the Department of Education.

The challenges faced by these principals with the Department of Education and its inefficient handling of workshops to cascade the new curriculum finds favour with the findings of Taole (2013). He claimed that one of the challenges that principals faced was that the Department of Education did not support them. However, the researcher could not find other studies that spoke to the Department of Education not addressing the disciplinary issues that plagued one secondary school in this study. In terms of the challenges posed by the SGB all the principals did not see them as challenges because the SGB understood their roles as one of governance and not professional matters. This finding is contrary to a finding by Marks and Nance (2007, p. 23) where they found that "where parent associations were perceived as influential, they tended to affect principals' perceived influence adversely."

In relation to the teacher unions not posing a challenge to the principals in this study, the principals stated that they were both capacitated and placed teaching and learning above the fight for teacher salaries. This resonates with a finding by Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) where principals claimed that they faced off with powerful teacher unions during protracted labour unrest when

they ensured that teaching and learning took place in spite of disruptions caused by these teacher unions. In terms of teachers and their qualifications in a specialist subject like Mathematics, the principals in this study viewed it as a challenge. In a study by du Plessis (2013) the principals in his study felt that teachers needed developing because they lacked knowledge in the content of the subjects that they were teaching. Taole (2013) on the other hand found that the number of subject specialists needed to increase because teachers needed support to help them overcome the challenges that they faced in particular subjects. One principal, Mrs Thor, in this study explained how teachers faced numerous challenges because of constant curriculum changes. This mirrors a finding by Mestry, *et al.*, (2013) where principals intimated that constant curriculum changes and training posed a problem to them.

In terms of learners posing a challenge to teaching and learning, one principal in this study pointed to learners that arrived in her school with gaps in their knowledge, especially in Mathematics. This resonates with a finding in Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) who claim that a challenge posed to instructional leaders was when learners that came from dysfunctional primary schools had to have gaps in their knowledge bridged with additional programmes. Challenging learners that came from impoverished backgrounds and saddled with social issues of broken homes and single-parent households was viewed as a challenge by two principals in this study. However, a study conducted by Naicker, *et al.*, (2013), the researchers describes the contextual realities of their research into instructional leadership in challenging contexts. They describe the schools in their study as being located in extremely impoverished communities with joblessness and families of single parents and even child-headed households. They then claim that “despite these challenging contextual realities, these schools performed extremely well academically” (Naicker, *et al.*, 2013, p. 138). This would seem to debunk the myth that exists in the South African contexts that poverty plays a role in student outcomes.

In terms of the Department of Education not carrying out its mandate in cascading the intricacies of the new curriculum to teachers, Weber’s (1996) model of instructional leadership, where one of his domains on promoting a positive learning climate states that in order for curriculum goals to be more collegial, teachers should be involved. Clearly the teachers and principals in this study want to be involved in curriculum delivery but are left short-changed at workshops where not enough information is clarified for curriculum delivery. In relation to the challenges of

teachers not being subject specialists, Weber (1996) offers valuable insight to the principals in this study. He claimed that instructional leaders should set goals and oversee expectations, all the while taking cognisance of their teachers' competence (Weber, 1996).

In relation to challenging students who enter the secondary school with gaps in their knowledge and learners from challenging backgrounds, perhaps the principals should take heed of Weber's (1996) claim in his instructional model. He states that students' attitudes about learning are gleaned partially from the adults that occupy positions of influence in the school. This would seem to suggest that notwithstanding the gaps in their knowledge and impoverished backgrounds, these learners could draw inspiration from the adults in the school that however insurmountable a problem may appear, hard work and dedication can overcome these problems. Further to this, Weber (1996) strengthens the above argument that the most important variable to influence student learning is the judgement and expectations that the organisation holds for its students' capabilities to learn. The principals in this study who bemoaned the gaps in learners' knowledge should take heed of the above statement.

This question dealt with the various challenges faced by the principals which ranged from the inefficiency of the DoE, teachers lack of subject specialisation, learners' socio-economic status and the gaps in their knowledge from primary school to secondary school. The following question's focus deals with how the principals managed these challenges.

5.2.3 Managing the various challenges to teaching and learning

Another question asked to all the study participants was:

How do you manage the challenges elucidated above?

While the principals described the various challenges that they faced in the previous questions, this question dealt with the strategies that they employed in addressing some of these challenges. Their strategies differed from context to context as each one strove to enhance teaching and learning in their respective schools. These strategies ranged from keeping the lines of communication open to all stakeholders, networking, professional development and affirmation of both teachers and learners.

Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary stated that he copes with the challenges of enhancing teaching and learning by keeping the lines of communication open to all stakeholders in his school. He stated that:

I talk a lot to my stakeholders. I communicate with the staff representative on a daily basis on staff issues. I speak to the SGB chair on a daily basis. To my management I will speak to them about 100 times a day. To my learners, I'm out at all times and odd times, checking on what's happening...getting a sense of what's going on. Our school's code of conduct helps a great deal in terms of learner discipline.

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, meanwhile mentioned a number of strategies that she employed to cope with the challenges that she faced as she enacted her instructional leadership role. She had earlier indicated that one of her challenges was the inefficiency of the DoE in not ensuring the timeous delivery of circulars to her school. She claimed that she solved this problem by networking with her colleagues in neighbouring schools. She stated that:

I have a few principals on a network and if they receive a circular they let me know and I do the same and often one of us hasn't received something so we share and it is important to network with your colleagues.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

She went on to explain that networking played a huge role in overcoming the challenges that she faced as an instructional leader. She explained that in engaging with her circle of colleagues, no challenge seemed insurmountable because:

You can't just pretend that everything is perfect because it isn't....but if you open yourself up to their input you will find that those outsiders bring in a different perspective and so often you can see the wood from the trees.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, echoed a similar sentiment of networking when she claimed that the school counsellor was dependent on the help of social workers and

psychologists in dealing with learners that posed a challenge with disciplinary issues. She stated that:

We have a counsellor who has got strong networks with social workers and psychologists from the private sector and individuals who come in and have a support system for those learners if there are problems with abuse of learners or problems at home.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

Mrs May also added that in order to overcome challenges with disciplining learners, they have a reward system in place in order to positively affirm good behaviour. She stated that, “*We also have a debit and credit merit system and in fact the other day we gave quite a few awards for merits to learners who had exemplary behaviour.*” Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, mirrored Mrs May’s strategy of affirmation to reward good behaviour and thus encourage other learners to aspire to receive such rewards. She claimed that:

We have a wonderful reward system here so we are very big when it comes to affirmation. Certificates of praiseworthy behaviour are presented to the girls every week at assembly and merit badges are also presented to certain girls for meritorious work or effort, honourable behaviour or honesty and these rewards greatly enhance the learning process because the girls feel affirmed and acknowledged.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor was also of the opinion that teachers who posed a challenge needed to be motivated and affirmed in order to endure the ordeals of teaching. She claimed that:

First of all teachers need to be re-energised all the time and motivated so I just know that they are really feeling good about themselves and then perform much better in the classroom. Twice a year the teachers get a detailed report from us and a lot of it is appreciation.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

She was also of the opinion that monitoring her teachers regularly helped her to overcome the challenges that under-performing teachers posed. She remarked that the IQMS scoring system did not cater for the average teachers and thus monitoring was essential to provide support. She claimed that:

The IQMS document jumps from good to outstanding....there's no in between and so you have to give people support and when we first introduced book monitoring it wasn't hugely popular but they got used to it now and because I do it regularly, no one feels threatened.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Odin, a teacher at Valhalla Primary, confirmed what her principal stated about monitoring the books for teacher improvement. She claimed that:

In terms of improvement there's regular book checks. It's done every Monday so we are given a week to mark all our books and it's by the SMT. There's classroom visits not for IQMS and in fact I invite members of the SMT to my classroom.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, another teacher at the same school, confirmed her colleague's assertion about monitoring when she claimed that, *"The SMT monitor our books and classroom practice in a way that is beneficial to us and we don't mind because it is now routine."*

In relation to overcoming the challenges of late circulars through networking the teachers at Valhalla primary could not confirm what the principal had articulated earlier but they did provide how the problem was solved when notice of meetings were very late. Mrs Odin, a teacher at this school, stated that, *"If an invite has come in today and there are teachers that cannot attend, so other teachers would offer to go to the meeting and cascade that information to us."* Mrs Loki another teacher concurred with her colleague when she stated that late notices to meetings were, *"A disruption to our routine but somebody's always willing to go."* However, Mrs Loki did validate what her principal, Mrs Thor, had articulated earlier that networking helped her to overcome the challenges she faced by bringing in outside help.

She claimed that:

Through Mrs Thor's networking, she's managed to find so many wonderful people that can help us and I think the girls are so lucky to be able to get that assistance as well because if we wait for the DoE to do something I think maybe we will never get anywhere.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Odin confirmed her colleague's assertion about the effective use of networking by her principal to solve problems when she stated that, *"My principal networks with so many people and organisations that sometimes we feel that there is no problem too big for her."*

In terms of networking, Mrs Watson from Peter Parker Secondary did not feel that the schools counsellors networking skill helped with discipline in her school, as was claimed by her principal, Mrs May. She was adamant that the disciplinary committee consisted of one person and that:

It's completely and utterly ineffective because the concentration is window dressing. The discipline in this school is concentrated on hair, nails, uniform, earrings, etcetera....the outward appearance of the girls and there's no discipline in terms of behaviour because to me we are rearranging the chairs on the Titanic. Yes we have discipline problems but nobody is looking at it.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

Mr Ben, another teacher at the same school echoed a similar sentiment when he stated that, *"Too much focus on appearance rather than tacking serious disciplinary issues."* Mr Ben also stated that the system of affirming learners was, *"An excellent idea that reinforces good behaviour."* Mrs Watson meanwhile felt that, *"While the merit system affirmed good behaviour, I just wish it rubbed off on the badly behaved ones."*

Both these teachers corroborated what their principal, Mrs May had earlier articulated about her method of solving the challenge of disciplining learners. On the issue of affirming good discipline Mrs Odin, a teacher at Valhalla Primary validated her principal's claim that affirming learners in the assembly enhanced the learning process.

She claimed that:

We've got the merit system at assembly and that happens once a week and the learners are rewarded for anything positive they may have done. I'm quite happy that this policy is actually being fostered from the principal in the assembly to the classroom.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, a teacher at the same school, voiced a similar sentiment when she stated that:

Positive motivation and encouragement is the best sort of tool one can use in the classroom to help these kids that have behavioural problems – and it all starts with our principal.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Both these teachers also corroborated what their principal had stated about overcoming challenges with teachers by energising them and motivating them. Mrs Loki stated that, “*Mrs Thor offers so much support and extra assistance that eventually she does motivate us.*” Mrs Odin meanwhile proudly claimed that her principal “*Is this most amazing person who motivates and inspires us all to be the best we can be. She just knows how to lift a person.*”

In terms of communicating with all the stakeholders in his school, the teachers at Smallville Primary, confirmed what their principal, Mr Kent had articulated earlier. Mrs Lane, a teacher at this school, claimed that her principal coped with the various challenges at her school by having an open door policy, taking the wise counsel of all stakeholders and having an effective code of conduct for learners. She stated that:

Our school's code of conduct ensures that badly behaved learners are disciplined timeously. Also the principal is always talking to the SGB, the staff representative, the learners and also his teachers and the parents.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Luthor agreed with her colleague that her principal overcame the various challenges he faced by:

Talking to us....to his HODs and deputy principal all the time. In fact he relies heavily on his SMT for feedback to overcome the various day-to-day challenges he faces. We have very effective code of conduct for learners coupled with a character award programme that has aided in curbing unruly behaviour of learners.

(Mrs Luthor, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

In terms of using communication to overcome the challenges he faced, one principal, Mr Kent, in this study claimed that he spoke to all the stakeholders in his school especially the learners to ascertain what was happening in his school. This finding resonates with a finding in Wallin and Newton's (2013) study where they found that one principal had her vision clearly focused through constant interaction with learners. In relation to overcoming the challenges of behavioural problems of learners the principals in this study intimated that learners were affirmed and acknowledged for their scholastic and good behaviour which enhanced teaching and learning. Further to this, detailed reports of teachers' work to show appreciation to the teachers was another tool used by a principal to motivate and re-energise her teachers. This finding resonates with a study by Reitzug, *et al.*, (2008) where one of the theories that emerged from their study was the relational instructional leadership theory. This theory postulates that learner achievement does not take place as a result of the direct instructional programme but it is as a result of the principal attempting to make both learners and teachers work harder and with pride by making them feel better (Reitzug, *et al.*, 2008). They also claim that in their study the principals acknowledged the link between positively building relationships and success attained by learners (Reitzug, *et al.*, 2008).

Mrs Thor's use of monitoring to overcome the challenge of teachers who needed support was initially unpopular but she claimed that her teachers have become so accustomed to it that they do not feel threatened. This resonates with a finding by Webb (2005) whose study found that although teachers initially resisted the idea of monitoring by the SMT, the teachers eventually capitulated and monitoring has become the norm. In terms of networking, the principals in this

study used it in a few creative ways. Firstly, one principal claimed that an important circular from the DoE that never materialised or arrived late was creatively overcome through networking with surrounding schools. Secondly the same principal welcomed her colleagues and outside professionals in education to give their input on the structures at her school. She maintained that this networking aided in overcoming challenges that seemed daunting at first. Another principal claimed that the in-house counsellor at her school used her network of related professionals to help with learners with disciplinary issues. The use of networking finds similarities in a study by Steyn (2013) who found that when networking with other schools, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are widened, leading to an exchange of ideas on practice and an increase in knowledge.

Viewed from Weber's (1996) theoretical model in assessing the instructional programme, this results in a school identifying its strengths and weaknesses which assists in planning, and the revision of the programme or simply ploughing ahead with those aspects of the programme that work. A principal in this study, Mrs Thor, claimed that pretending that all programmes were perfect was incorrect and that obtaining a different perspective even from outsiders assisted in recognising the school's strengths and weaknesses which leads to an assessment of the programmes.

Another finding in this study, where principals were seen to be building positive relationships with all stakeholders in their school especially the learners, resonates with Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership. In one of his domains, Weber explains that in promoting a positive learning climate, the most important variable to influence learner learning is the judgement and expectations that the organisation holds for its students' capabilities to learn. The principals in this study are quick to affirm excellent work and good behaviour thus impressing upon the learners that they value excellent work and behaviour and reward these traits positively. Weber (1996) also elaborates that in creating a positive learning climate, instructional leaders need to recognise and reward excellence both in academic and extra-curricular activities. One principal evidenced this characteristic in the assembly by affirming learners for academia and other activities that learners engage in.

In terms of keeping the lines of communication clear, Weber (1996), in his instructional leadership model, explains that as an instructional leader who builds the vision for the school is both a good observer and a good listener, rationalising how a certain view was created. In this study a principal claimed that he spoke to all his stakeholders on a daily basis thereby gaining a sense of what goes on his school. In terms of what goes on in the classroom, one principal in this study claimed that learners' books were monitored on a weekly basis and that the teachers, who initially resisted the idea, are now accustomed to it. This speaks to Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership model of observing and improving instruction. He points out that observation, in this case the monitoring of learners' books should become more the norm rather than the exception as continuous improvement is the hallmark of professional development (Weber, 1996).

From the above discussion it can be gleaned that the principals approached their challenges differently. They used innovative ways to overcome the challenges that they faced. These ranged from constantly communicating with stakeholders, affirming learners and teachers and using the input of others to assess the learning programmes at schools. The final question dealt with any aspects that the participants felt that they had not mentioned previously in order to improve teaching and learning.

5.2.4 Other ways to improve teaching and learning

Another question asked to all the participants was:

What else have you not mentioned which I may not have asked you, which you think should be done to improve teaching and learning?

The principals' responses were once again varied across the contexts within which they found themselves. The responses ranged from eliciting honest responses from teachers to facilitating development after the IQMS process; identifying new methodologies for teaching; focusing on a relevant curriculum; modelling excellent lessons for novice teachers and improving teamwork amongst teachers. Mr Kent, the principal of Smallville Primary, felt that in order to improve teaching and learning at his school, teachers need to be honest about their weaknesses so as to facilitate their development.

He stated that:

This could fall under challenges....looking at authentic needs. What are the real needs of teachers? Not for IQMS....not for ANA. Do teachers honestly state their weaknesses. How are you going to reach that level of maturity that you are going to say I definitely need help in this area?

(Mr Kent, Principal of Smallville Primary)

Mrs Thor, the principal of Valhalla Primary, meanwhile intimated that a school can never bask in its former glory and must strive to find new ways and better ways of doing things. She claimed that:

You know that in other parts of the world they are constantly identifying different methodologies. They keep finding better ways of doing what they are already doing and that is what I would like to think that we are going to continue to do. It never stops...you can't rest on your laurels...you have to keep trying to improve.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Thor's final comments on what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning had echoes of an idealistic education system where the curriculum was not so heavily prescribed and that relevant skills and principles were imparted to learners. She remarked that:

We need to eliminate the non-essential material and we need to provide teachers with the time to teach the significant curriculum because there are quite a few things in there that are not relevant. We also need to place a greater emphasis on teaching timeless principles and skill that are relevant to today's global reality.

(Mrs Thor, Principal of Valhalla Primary)

Mr Wayne, the principal of Gotham Secondary meanwhile saw teachers helping one another through teams as a means of improving teaching and learning at his school. He stated that:

I would think in this institution probably it would be denouncing the mentality which says 'I want this or nothing' or 'I can't work with that person'. People not

wanting to be led but always wanting to lead and people not wanting to be advised but they only want to advise.

(Mr Wayne, Principal of Gotham Secondary School)

In addition, Mrs May, the principal of Peter Parker Secondary, saw the improvement of teaching and learning in her school through competent teachers modelling excellent lessons to novice teachers. She claimed that:

Different educators have different strengths in different areas....so if they could do model lessons for other teachers, especially the new teachers coming into the profession to learn from that.

(Mrs May, Principal of Peter Parker Secondary)

The teachers were asked what their respective principals could do to improve teaching and learning at their schools. Their responses, like the principals, showed variation across the different contexts. The responses ranged from wanting a smaller number of learners in their classes, having a teaching principal, a principal who was more hands-on and a principal that motivates and inspires his staff.

Mrs Lane, a teacher at Smallville Primary, spoke of the need for smaller class sizes to enhance teaching and learning more especially in the junior classes. She stated that:

I think we need to have smaller classes especially in the foundation level even if it is in grade one only. The numbers are very large for us to do justice. Every year the principal says he's going to bring the numbers down but we still end up with those big numbers. I suppose because of the demands of the DoE...or so he says.

(Mrs Lane, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

Mrs Luthor, a teacher from the same school but from the senior phase, took a different view of what the principal could do to enhance teaching and learning. She remarked that:

No, I don't think there's much else they can do because they are a very effective institution and the fact that the ANA results and the ex-learners' matric results

proves that the school is well run and teaching and learning is effective in our school.

(Mrs Luthor, Post level 1 teacher at Smallville Primary)

The teachers from Valhalla Primary echoed a similar sentiment to Mrs Luthor, that their principal should continue what she was doing as it seemed to be very effective. They also praised her organisational skills, vision and achievements at the school. Mrs Odin, a teacher at the school, claimed that:

In terms of her being organised it is now cascaded down to us and we as well are able to look at what she's done in terms of her experiences and learn from it as well. I honestly believe that she has a vision that is the best for the school. The school's vision which is 'learn, achieve and excel' will inform you that her vision is constantly striving towards excellence.

(Mrs Odin, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Loki, another teacher at the school started that:

I don't know if there's anything else she could do....she's like superwoman. I think she should carry on with what she's been doing. She's just such a wonderful person and she's achieved so much not only for us but for the community.

(Mrs Loki, Post level 1 teacher at Valhalla Primary)

Mrs Robin, a teacher at Gotham Secondary, went to the heart of problems plaguing her school when she intimated that because her school had an acting principal, they were beset with problems of a motivated staff and a lack of vision at the school. She claimed that:

For me there were quite a few things that are problematic but I suppose when you have an acting principal, that leaves people in limbo. Maybe he should motivate teachers to do things the right way. If we have a principal who has a vision....who is motivated an inspired and wants to do something grand....not somebody who is there worrying about the salary he is going to retire with.

(Mrs Robin, Post level 1 teacher at Gotham Secondary)

Mrs Alfred, another teacher at the same school, meanwhile maintained that she wanted, “*The principal has to look at our allocation and try to make it equitable and fair for everybody.*” In terms of what the principal should do to improve teaching and learning at his school, Mr Ben, a teacher at Peter Parker Secondary was of the opinion that his principal Mrs, may should also teach in the school. He claimed that:

Some of the teachers do debate whether or not the principal should teach a class and as far as I know our principal does not teach. If you teach a class you know what’s going on in the classroom before you say ‘oh why can’t you handle the classes’. Also maybe the principal needs to little bit more walking around.

(Mr Ben, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

His colleague, Mrs Watson on the other hand felt that her principal should:

Start listening to the needs more and then become more hands on. Two people in management that are exactly what I’m trying to say. There’s nothing they would ask us to do that they don’t do themselves. The entire staff respects those two and will follow them and take inspiration from them because they’re always there coming into the classroom to support us.

(Mrs Watson, Post level 1 teacher at Peter Parker Secondary)

This mirrors the ideas of Horng and Loeb (2010) who claim that most of the literature on instructional leadership speaks of leaders that are hands-on who work with teachers directly and make their presence felt in teacher’s classrooms. They do however caution that in the reality of today’s education systems in secondary schools where the subjects that are offered are varied and demand specialist knowledge, principals would find it daunting and time consuming to work with teachers individually (Horng & Loeb, 2010). The assertion by another teacher in the same secondary school suggested that the principal should do more walkthroughs in the school. However, this goes against the findings by Grissom, Loeb and Master (2013) who claim that walkthroughs in secondary schools led to adverse outcomes. They explain that the negative outcomes could be ascribed to the diverse subjects offered in secondary school which prevents a principal from making any meaningful impact on instructional practises of subjects that they have no expertise in.

The teacher, Mr Ben, also pointed out that the principal in his school did not teach claiming that if the principal did teach she would be more empathetic to the situations that teachers face in their classrooms. This notion of principals also teaching in their schools is borne out in a study by Wallin and Newton (2013) who state that a principal in their study claimed that teaching in a classroom enhanced his ability to monitor the programmes at his school. Further findings indicate that a teaching principal has the capacity to remain connected to the daily realities faced by the teachers thus enabling them to become better instructional leaders (Wallin & Newton, 2013). Further to this Mestry, *et al.*, (2013) found that teaching principals would be able to support and relay appropriate practices linked to teaching. Webb (2005) strengthens this idea further when she claims that where principals sacrificed teaching time to administer the school, they felt that their credibility was undermined as they began to lose touch with the curriculum changes that were being initiated.

Another teacher spoke of how the absence of a permanent principal led to the lack of vision at the school. Perhaps the challenges that beset this school stem from a lack of vision which was crucial in the findings by Wallin and Newton (2013). They state that the principals in their study revisited their vision and theirs was a supportive and developmental role. While the one secondary school in this study seemed beset with leadership issues and a lack of vision, the primary school teachers extolled the vision of their school principal who was always striving for excellence. This mirrors a finding by Gurr, *et al.*, (2007) who report that the principals in their study conveyed lofty expectations for both students and learners. They further claim that they also found a principal who aligned his vision with his expectations, relationships and pedagogy and the structure of the school. However, another teacher from a different primary school claimed that although the principal promised to reduce the large numbers in the junior classes, the situation continues unchanged. This goes against a finding by Wallin and Newton (2013) who found that some principals claimed that their vision focused on early childhood development.

Having dealt with the teachers' views on how their principals could improve teaching and learning in their schools, the focus will now shift to the how principals felt that they could improve teaching and learning in their schools. One principal bemoaned the fact that the teachers in his school did not want to work as a team. This was the school beset with leadership issues

with an acting principal. One possible explanation for teachers not working in teams could be found in the findings by Nehring and Fitzsimons (2011) who claim that when leadership failed to communicate the vision and goals of PLCs consistently and clearly, confusion was rife among teachers. A further finding witnessed leaders culpable of not maintaining the momentum of collaboration which is the cornerstone of PLCs (Nehring & Fitzsimons, 2011).

Another principal, Mr Kent, maintained that if teachers identified their weaknesses then teaching and learning would improve because the teachers could then develop. This finding favours with a finding by Reitzug, *et al.*, (2008) who coined the term organic instructional leadership model. This model postulates that improvement in an institution is as a result of teachers continuously learning about their teaching. This would seem to suggest that teachers need to continuously appraise their practice and remedy any shortfall therein. Linked to this idea of continuously improving teachers, another principal maintained that basking in past glories was not what they did. Rather, she continuously strove to develop and find better ways of teaching. This finding echoes a similar sentiment shared by Steyn (2013) who states that schools that sought to develop and maintain the quality of its teaching staff need to establish means for teachers to learn. Steyn (2013) also found that when networking with other schools, PLCs are widened thus enabling teachers to exchange ideas on practice and increase knowledge.

Another finding to emerge from the same principal was where she claimed that the current curriculum needed to be culled of irrelevant material so that a relevant curriculum can be taught with an emphasis on principles and skills. This finding is congruent with the prophetic instructional leadership theory by Reitzug, *et al.*, (2008). This theory surmises that principals who embody a prophetic idea of instructional leadership do not welcome the vision of a government or district for education, but rather arouse in their teachers to question the intention of schooling and education.

Another finding to this question pointed to a principal stating that in order for teaching to improve in her school, modelling should become the norm where teachers should model excellent lessons to assist other teachers especially novice teachers. A recent study by Grobler (2013) finds favour with this finding where it was established that there was an indirect effect of modelling on improving learner achievement in South African schools. He further states when

effective teaching was modelled, there is an indirect effect on the protection of instruction time and that when there was consistency between teaching and learning the curriculum's implementation was successful (Grobler, 2013). Modelling is further cemented as promoting teaching and learning when Naicker, *et al.*, (2013) claim that in the schools in their study, principals did what they expected their teachers to be, which was being excellent teachers themselves.

In relation to the lack of vision in a school which was the finding in this study, Weber (1996) claims that when the vision of a school is shared, teachers articulate what they value the most instead of a mission statement that is an abstraction far removed from the realities of their practice. The secondary school in this study saw teachers and leadership pulling in two different directions with no vision articulated by the leadership which was in a state of uncertainty. Weber (1996) also points out that principals who have a vision but do not share their vision, create problems as this study found a principal promising to reduce class sizes but did not do so as his vision for the school was not shared. This has led to dissatisfaction in the classroom where large numbers in the junior phase is frustrating the teachers.

In terms of developing teachers and always striving to improve, Weber (1996) states that those instructional leaders who act like coaches can help prevent schools from falling into a cycle of low expectations by teachers and students. The findings in this study correlate with Weber's (1996) model in that the principal wanted teachers to identify their shortcomings in practice to enable development and also of finding new ways of improving teaching and learning. Weber (1996) explains that a well organised school, discussing teachers' field of interests and assisting them to work as a group, all contribute to the effective use of instructional time. A finding in this study evidenced a principal bemoaning the fact that his teachers could not work as a team as everyone wanted to lead and not be led. This school shows signs of being dysfunctional with the leadership in the school in a state of continuous flux and teachers uncertain of the principal who had no vision for the school.

Finally, Horng and Loeb (2010) explain that organisational management is when managers create and develop structures for improving instruction rather than being present in the classroom observing teachers practice their craft or being coaches to struggling teachers. A principal in this

study intimated that she would create the opportunities for teachers to model excellent lessons to novice teachers. Although not being a teaching principal, as one teacher observed, and thereby not modelling lessons to her teachers, the principal is endeavouring to ensure that novice teachers are coached by experienced teachers and are thus coached and modelled in an indirect manner.

This question dealt with what principals thought that they could do to improve teaching and learning at their schools. Their responses ranged from modelling excellent lessons, sustaining and improving the vision of the school, identifying areas for improvement to develop teachers and creating teams to make teaching and learning effective. The teachers also weighed in with a diverse range of views on what their principals could do to improve teaching and learning. Some teachers wanted their principals to teach and be more hands on while others felt that a principal's vision and actions should be in sync so as not to create conditions for teachers that become frustrated.

5.3 Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter focused on the presentation of the data and a discussion of the findings in terms of my research questions. Presentation of the data took the form of themes that emerged through content analysis of the semi-structured interviews and documents. Pertinent findings were then analysed and discussed through the lens of the literature reviewed and theoretical frameworks chosen specifically for this study. The following chapter concludes with a summary of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings linked to the key research questions.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter focused on the presentation of the data and a thorough critique of these findings through the literature review and the lens of two theoretical frameworks. This chapter deals with three issues. Firstly, a synopsis of the study is offered. Secondly conclusions are drawn stemming from the findings linked to the key research questions. Thirdly, the implications of the study for additional research are put forward.

6.2 Summary of the study

Chapter One provided the background and rationale for my study. I set out justifiable reason as to why I was interested in this particular area of research on instructional leadership. Professionally I have observed that there was a flurry of activity on the part of teachers during the IQMS process who engage in impressive lessons that they would otherwise never engage in. Added to this is the rare phenomenon of the SMT in classrooms, observing lessons except for the IQMS process. Furthermore I was curious as to whether the principal's absence in the classroom, to observe teaching and learning, and the principal as a classroom practitioner, affected curriculum delivery. Further to this I rationalised that there was a definite link between school leadership and learner outcomes (Faulkener, 1999). Adding impetus to this rationale was Ngcobo (2010) who claimed that there was a desire in South Africa to gain a better perspective of the performance of learners' academic achievements and leadership in our schools. To this end I listed the objectives and key questions of the study which is set out in chapter four as well. Finally, I provided a definition of the concepts used throughout the study so as to avoid any misconceptions on the part of the reader.

Chapter Two reviewed the latest literature on instructional leadership both from the continent of Africa as well as internationally. The literature reviewed, explored the various facets of instructional leadership namely: the role of the principal in instructional leadership; managing teaching and learning; promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); the principal's values, beliefs and vision; developing teachers; monitoring teaching and learning; the

organisational culture of the school; shared instructional leadership and the challenges to instructional leadership. Further to this Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership and the conceptual framework on organisational management by Horng and Loeb (2010) was explained. These two frameworks were chosen because while Weber (1996) extols the five domains of instructional leadership which casts the principal as being actively involved in the craft of teaching, Horng and Loeb (2010) juxtapose this by claiming that a principal does not necessarily have to teach or monitor teaching in order to effect changes in learner achievement.

Chapter Three set out to examine the research design and methodology of the study. Issues of trustworthiness and ethics were also discussed at length. This study was interested in school principals' experiences as instructional leaders and was thus located in the interpretive paradigm which serves to understand the principals' experiences as they enacted their roles as instructional leaders (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As this study was interested in the principals' experiences as instructional leaders, a qualitative case study design was utilised (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). A case study design was chosen as this study focused on a particular issue, in this case the principal as an instructional leader (Rule & John, 2011). Data was generated using interviews with principals that were purposively sampled through convenience sampling as these principals were located closest to me (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). In order to triangulate the data generated from the interviews and documents reviews were also employed (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). This chapter also provided the method I employed in analysing the data which was content analysis (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). Chapter Three was concluded with ethical and trustworthiness issues.

Chapter Four and Five dealt with the presentation of the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the principals and teachers. To facilitate a systematic presentation of the findings, the data was analysed and broken up into themes.

Chapter Six summarised the study giving a brief overview of each of the preceding chapters. Further to this conclusions were drawn from the findings and recommendations were made. Finally implications were presented for further research to be conducted.

6.3 Conclusions

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), conclusions serve to summarise and bring together the main areas covered in the writing. Conclusions also serve to give a final comment or judgment about a particular study. As its key research aim, this study sought to explore the role of school principals in leading, managing and supporting instructional leadership practices in their schools. It also sought to elicit the school principals' views on the challenges they experienced as well as to investigate how they navigated those challenges as they support instructional leadership practices in schools. The conclusions which follow sought to encapsulate the three research questions through the themes that emerged from the interview process.

6.3.1 The principals' understandings of their role in managing teaching and learning

The first theme to emerge from the data was the principals' understandings of their role in managing teaching and learning. The principals saw their roles as mentoring, creating a positive learning environment to develop their teachers professionally and human resource management. This would seem to suggest that these principals, as instructional leaders, have to take on a multiplicity of roles to ensure learning and teaching took place. Above all else, all these principals saw the development of their teachers as being crucial to enhancing teaching and learning. It can thus be concluded that principals recognised that in developing their teachers, teachers become more knowledgeable and are thus able to add value to the learning process for the learners.

6.3.2 The principals' perceptions of factors that influence how other principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning

The second theme to emanate from the data was the principals' perceptions of factors that influence how other principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning. The factors that the participants felt that influenced how other principals enacted their instructional leadership roles ranged from experience, personality characteristics, research and reading, and contextual factors such as poverty and discipline issues. Some of the principals and teachers in this study were critical of principals that used poverty as an excuse for not enacting their instructional leadership roles. They cited very poor schools that still function optimally despite their dire economic conditions. It can thus be concluded that where principals were innovative,

barriers such as poverty to teaching and learning could be overcome. Another finding to emerge was the principal's propensity for reading and research or rather the lack of it which would allow the principal to realise that that networking with colleagues of other schools was beneficial to teaching and learning.

6.3.3 Organisational structures and programmes that the principals had instituted in their schools

The third theme to come out of the data was the organisational structures and programmes that the principals had instituted in their schools. The findings point to the principals instituting organisational structures such as the SMT, RCL, Disciplinary Committee and SDT as a component of the IQMS process. It can be concluded from these findings that the principals placed a premium on instituting these organisational structures to ensure functionality of the institutions to enhance teaching and learning. While all the schools in this study demonstrated an orderly environment through the presence of these organisational structures, one secondary school showed signs of being dysfunctional because of a lack of some of these key organisational structures. Notwithstanding the Department of Education mandating some of these organisational structures for schools, one principal showed innovation by co-opting level one teachers onto the SMT.

6.3.4 How the principals identified the various organisational structures instituted in their schools

The fourth theme to emerge from the data was how the principals identified the various organisational structures instituted in their schools. The methods identified by the principals in this study included networking and research together with the management plan mandated by the Department of Education. It can therefore be concluded that the schools in this study that only instituted structures as prescribed by the Department of Education, were not extending themselves and by association their learners. One school was the exception in this study whereby the principal networked with local and international institutions and thus had organisational structures over and above those prescribed by the Department of Education.

6.3.5 How the principals measured the effectiveness of their organisational structures

The fifth theme to emanate from the data was how the principals in this study measured the effectiveness of their organisational structures. The findings point to the use of feedback from the secondary schools by the primary schools, the National Senior Certificate results and the recruitment drive by the tertiary institutions. While all of these indicators do point to the effectiveness of their organisational structures, none of the school had any formal assessment programmes to ascertain the effectiveness of these structures. It can therefore be concluded that if schools institute formal assessment programmes to measure the effectiveness of their organisational structures, ineffective schools can devise methods to overhaul their systems to effect changes to enhance teaching and learning. Further to this effective schools can set their current benchmark even higher to benefit the teaching and learning process.

6.3.6 The challenges faced by the school principals

The sixth theme to emerge from the data was the challenges faced by the school principals in supporting appropriate instructional leadership practices in their schools. These included the Department of Education, the teachers, School Governing Body, learners and teacher unions. While all the schools in the study did not find the teacher unions to be a disruptive influence, the school principals cited the inefficiency of the Department of Education, teachers lack of subject specialisation, learners' socio-economic status and the gaps in their knowledge the gaps in their knowledge from primary school to secondary schools as challenges to their instructional leadership roles. This would seem to suggest that we still have a fair way to go in creating an efficient Department of Education that appoints competent facilitators to cascade vital curriculum information to teachers. Added to this, is the inefficiency of the Department of Education in handling ill-disciplined learners who pose a disruption to teaching and learning. To compound matters, at one particular school was the post of the principal not being filled timeously but rather leaving SMT members acting in the position leading to frustration among teachers who yearned for strong leadership. As regards the subject specialisation of teachers, it can be concluded that higher education institutions need to revisit their training programmes. In relation to the learners' gaps in knowledge it can only be concluded the primary schools lack the capacity to teach learners in the key subject of Mathematics. In relation to learners from socio-economically challenged backgrounds it can be concluded that principals in this study used this

as an excuse for their shortcomings in providing for such learners because a leader can inspire such learners to overcome the challenges they faced and could also go as far as assisting such learners financially as these schools are located in predominately affluent suburbs.

6.3.7 How the school principals managed the challenges

The pen-ultimate theme to emerge from this study was linked to how the school principals managed the challenges that they encountered as they enacted their roles as instructional leaders. The findings in this study point to the school principals using innovative ways such as communication, affirmation of both learners and teachers and assessing the learning programmes in the school. These findings seem to suggest that school principals need to constantly interact with all stakeholders in education so as not to lose sight of their core business of teaching and learning. Further to this, both teachers and learners need to be affirmed in order to be motivated to realise their true potential. Finally in assessing the learning programmes at their schools, principals ensured that their schools do not bask in past glories but continue to raise the bar and challenge their institutions to be in a continuous state of development and growth. It can therefore be concluded that if principals interacted with all the relevant stakeholders in education, instead of remaining aloof from the daily realities of the dynamic nature of the learning process, then challenges that seem insurmountable at first become less daunting in the face of shared ideas and shared views. It can also be concluded that both adult and child actors in the drama of education need affirmation and an ego boost to maximise their true potential.

6.3.8 What school principals thought that they could do to improve teaching and learning

The final theme to emanate from the data was what else these school principals thought that they could do to improve teaching and learning. The findings point to modelling excellent lessons, sustaining and improving the vision of the school, identifying areas for improvement to develop teachers and creating teams to make teaching and learning effective. These findings seem to suggest that the principals, in their own contexts, were at least giving thought to sound educational methods of improving teaching and learning. Whether this is actioned in the foreseeable future remains to be seen. Following on the conclusions and findings of this study, the recommendations are set out below.

6.4 Recommendations

The preceding discussion centred on the findings and conclusions that emerged from the data generated through semi-structured interviews. Although the school principals in this study displayed traits of instructional leadership, there exists the need for improvement in the various schools including the main role players in education. The recommendations set out below are grounded in the aims of the research.

6.4.1 The principals' understandings of their roles as instructional leaders

While all of the school principals understood their roles as instructional leaders as one where teaching and learning was of the utmost importance, none of the principals in this study were teaching principals. It is the recommendation of the researcher that the principals in these schools teach a subject. The advantage of teaching a subject in the classroom allows the principal to understand the demands of the new curriculum on teachers and by association renders the principal empathetic to the daily realities in the classroom of both teachers and learners. Added to this, a teaching principal is able to model lessons to novice and struggling teachers and thus not appear to be seen to be preaching and not practising the demands of the new curriculum.

6.4.2 Organisational structures principals have in place to promote teaching and learning

The findings in this study point to school principals instituting organisational structures as mandated by the Department of Education. Schools should first do a needs analysis from all the stakeholders and collate that information to form new structures that will enhance teaching and learning. The benefit of including all stakeholders, points to them having a sense of ownership of these structures leading to a shared responsibility in ensuring that these structures not only exist on paper but are a well-oiled part of an organisation that adds value to the education process. The added benefit of a needs analysis allows a school to formally assess its programmes and thereby tweak what is working and shed what is inefficient.

Bureaucratic principals should follow the example of the primary school principal in this study by co-opting level one teachers onto the SMT. In this way teachers' concerns are addressed at the very top decision-making structures in the school leading to issues of trust being enhanced and not a war of attrition between 'us versus them'.

6.4.3 Challenges faced by school principals in enacting instructional leadership

While the Department of education has encouraged schools to form clusters, not all schools attend these cluster meetings and as a result networking fails. Networking and forming Professional Learning Committees (PLCs) should become the norm rather than the exception. Principals should create the space and time to allow PLCs to flourish in their immediate wards. This would obviate the need for secondary schools continuously bemoaning the gaps in primary school learners' knowledge, especially in the key subject of Mathematics. The confluence of teacher collaboration, which is the hallmark of PLCs, also leads to teachers that are not subject specialists, to be mentored by those that are specialists, whether it is from the secondary schools or primary schools.

Further to this, the Department of Education needs to take a firm stance on learner ill-discipline especially in schools that display signs of being dysfunctional. Added to this the Department of Education must not bow to pressure from the teacher unions in not placing a permanent principal in schools where the promotion post is disputed. This fuels the dissatisfaction of teachers which leads to teaching and learning taking a back seat to management issues.

6.5 Implications of the study

This was a small scale study of two primary schools and two secondary school principals. Therefore the findings of this study do not in any way reflect the broader community of instructional leaders in the circuit. However, the findings in this study do point to the differences in approach to instructional leadership by the various principals. One of the implications for principals would be that working in isolation and plodding along, not knowing what is going on in other schools would ultimately be disastrous for teaching and learning in these schools. Principals need to read and conduct research which would sensitise them to the latest trends in education management thus allowing them to be innovative in their schools to benefit the teaching and learning process.

Another implication for further tertiary institutions that train teachers, is that they should ensure that all teachers, especially in the primary schools, are trained in core subjects such as Mathematics because while the curriculum is becoming more specialised, teacher training is becoming more generalised.

The implication for further research would be to compare and contrast principals that teach as opposed to principals that do not teach in South African schools to ascertain whether it makes a substantive difference to learner achievement. Another possible large scale study on instructional leadership in South Africa would be to research schools that are dysfunctional as opposed to those that are functional to determine whether contextual factors do indeed play a role in learner achievement or a strong instructional leader makes a difference.

6.6 Chapter summary

The concluding chapter set out to provide a synopsis of the study. Thereafter conclusions were drawn from the findings linked to the key research questions and recommendations were made. Lastly the implications of the study for further research were presented.

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APPENDIX A

Ethical Clearance Certificate



13 May 2014

Mr Devendran Naidoo (210556918)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0113/014M
Project title: School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district

Dear Mr Naidoo,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 12 December 2013, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

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

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

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

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shenika Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Mr SE Mthiyane
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

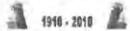
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APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

2 Modelclay Place
Clayfield
Phoenix
4068

08 November 2013

Attention: The Head of Department (Dr N.S.P. Sishi)
Department of Basic Education
Province of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Devendran Naidoo, an M.Ed student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my work, I am conducting research on school principals as instructional leaders of primary schools. In this regard, I request permission to conduct research in schools in the Umlazi district.

The title of the research project is: **School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district.**

This study aims to explore the principals' understandings of their roles as instructional leaders in selected primary schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal and will focus on School principals, to solicit their views and experiences on the challenges they face as instructional leaders. The study will use semi-structured interviews with School principals and level one teachers to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 20-35 minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.

All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
Fictitious names will be used to represent participants' names.
Participation is voluntary which means participants are free to withdraw at any time they so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on their part.
The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.
Participants will be contacted on time about the interviews dates and times.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the ff. contact details: Mr D Naidoo; Tel: 031 5391293; E-mail: sushdav@yahoo.com; Cell: 0846076482.

OR

Dr Siphwe E .Mthiyane; Tel: 031 2601870; E-mail: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 3774672.

OR

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 2609587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.
Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely
Mr D. Naidoo.

APPENDIX C

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

2 Modelclay Place
Clayfield
Phoenix
4068

08 November 2013

Attention: The Principal
Smallville Primary School
Smallville
4000

Dear Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am Devendran Naidoo, a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my M. Ed degree requirements, I am conducting research on school principals as instructional leaders of primary and secondary schools. In this regard, I request permission to conduct research in your school. Further, I request you to be one of the participants. Please be informed that I have already sought and are awaiting the necessary permission from the Research Office of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct this research (See copy of letter attached).

The title of the research project is: **School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district.**

This study aims to explore the principals' understandings of their roles as instructional leaders in selected primary schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal and will focus on school principals, to solicit their views and experiences on the challenges they face as instructional leaders. The study will use semi-structured interviews with school principals and level one teachers to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 20-35 minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.

All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent participants' names.

Participation is voluntary which means participants are free to withdraw at any time they so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on their part.

The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

Participants will be contacted on time about the interviews dates and times.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the ff. contact details: Mr D Naidoo; Tel: 031 5391293; E-mail: sushdav@yahoo.com; Cell: 0846076482.

OR

Dr Sipiwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; E-mail: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672.

OR

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 2609587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.

Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr D. Naidoo.

Declaration/Consent Form

I (Full name & surname of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district.**

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 voluntarily to take part in the study. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research any time, should I so desire. Finally, I consent/ do not consent to this interview being voice-recorded.

Signature of Participant:Date.....

Signature of Witness:Date.....

Thanking you in advance.
Yours faithfully
Mr D. Naidoo

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

2 Modelclay Place
Clayfield
Phoenix
4068

08 November 2013

Attention:
The Educator

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I, Devendran Naidoo, am a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my studies I am conducting research on the experiences of school principals as instructional leaders. I request your permission to be part of this research project. The title of my research project is: **School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district.**

This study aims to explore the principals' understandings of their roles as instructional leaders in selected primary and secondary schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal and will focus on school principals and level one teachers, to solicit their views on the challenges school principals face as instructional leaders. You will be interviewed for approximately 30 minutes at the time and place convenient to you.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.

All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Fictitious names will be used to represent participants' names.

Participation is voluntary which means participants are free to withdraw at any time they so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/penalty on their part.

The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

Participants will be contacted on time about the interviews dates and times.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the ff. contact details: Mr D Naidoo; Tel: 031 5391293; E-mail: sushdav@yahoo.com; Cell: 0846076482.

OR

Dr Siphwe E. Mthiyane; Tel: 031 260 1870; E-mail: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 073 377 4672.

OR

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 2609587, E-mail: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.
Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely
Mr D. Naidoo.

Declaration/Consent Form

I (Full name & surname of participant)
hereby confirm that I have been fully informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district.**

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 voluntarily to take part in the study. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research any time, should I so desire. Finally, I consent/ do not consent to this interview being voice-recorded.

Signature of Participant:Date.....

Signature of Witness:Date.....

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully

Mr D. Naidoo

You will be contacted in time about the interviews. For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: E-mail: sushdav@yahoo.com; Cell: 0846076482 or e-mail Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za ; Cell: 0312601870

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.
Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Devendran Naidoo

Declaration

I (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **School principals as instructional leaders: The case of four schools in the Umlazi district.** 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 voluntarily to take part in the study.

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

.....
Full name of Participant

.....
Signature of Participant

.....
Date

.....
Full name of Witness

.....
Signature of Witness

.....
Date

1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Age:

21 – 45 yrs

46 – 65 yrs

Gender.....

Years of experience in teaching.....

Position held.....

Qualifications.....

APPENDIX E

Interview schedule with Principals/Teachers

Interview questions: Principals

1. What do you understand to be your role in managing teaching and learning at school?
2. What do you think are the factors that influence how different principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning?
3. What organisational structures or programmes do you have in place to promote teaching and learning in your school?
4. How did you identify the need for these organisational structures that you have in place to promote teaching and learning?
5. How effective are these organisational structures in promoting effective teaching and learning?
6. What challenges do you experience as you enact your role in managing teaching and learning at your school? (DoE; teachers; learners; parents; SGB and teacher unions).
7. How do you manage these challenges that you experience as an instructional leader in your school?
8. What else, which you have not mentioned, which you think you should do to improve teaching and learning in your school?

Interview questions: Teachers

1. What do you understand to be the principal's role in managing teaching and learning at school?
2. What do you think are the factors that influence how different principals understand their roles in managing teaching and learning?
3. What organisational structures or programmes does your principal have in place to promote teaching and learning in your school?
4. How did your principal identify the need for these organisational structures that are in place to promote teaching and learning?
5. How effective are these organisational structures in promoting effective teaching and learning?
6. What challenges does your principal experience as he enacts his role as an instructional leader in your school? (DoE; teachers; learners; parents; SGB and teacher unions).
7. How does your principal manage these challenges that he experiences as an instructional leader in your school?
8. What else, which you have not mentioned, which you think the principal should do to improve teaching and learning in your school?

APPENDIX F

Turnitin Certificate

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BY DEVENDRAN NAIDOO

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Learner achievement in South Africa is well below international standards as borne out by the recent Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2003). Dempster and Reddy (2007, p. 907) lend credence to this when they state that "South Africa has consistently been the lowest-performing country in mathematics and science in two successive TIMSS tests." This is supported by the Department of Education (2009) when it states that South Africa has a

PAGE: 1 OF 122

14:34
10/11/2014

APPENDIX G

Language Clearance Certificate

25 Maple Crescent
Circle Park
KLOOF
3610
Phone 031 – 7075912
0823757722
Fax 031 - 7110458
E-mail:
wvbanksec@telkomsa.net
sathsgovender4@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

14 NOVEMBER 2014

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

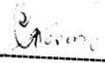
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS
THE CASE OF FOUR SCHOOLS IN THE UMLAZI DISTRICT, by D. Naidoo.

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

Yours faithfully


DR S. GOVENDER
B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers
MPA, D Admin.