

**STORIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN THE CONTEXT
OF SCHOOL CATEGORIZATION.**

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Researcher's Declaration

I, **Praisewell Nonhlanhla Dube** declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated is my original work.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, tables, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

Signed

Supervisor's Declaration

This dissertation is submitted with / without my approval.

.....

DR. DAISY PILLAY

Ethical Clearance



02 April 2015

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Dear Mrs Dube

Protocol reference number: HSS/0198/015M

Project title: Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorisation.

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 24 March 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the aforementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

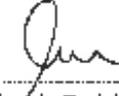
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further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


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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, Mgidi, whose life journey ended while I was on the verge of completing this work. She has always been a pillar of unending enormous support. She will always be adored and remembered for being a source of motivation through all my endeavours, despite being deprived the opportunity of going to school.

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Abstract

This study explores school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization, in the South African context. Through the lives of four principals, this study has enhanced my understanding of the principals' work; the challenges they face; as well as perspectives adopted to negotiate these everyday situations.

This study has employed the qualitative approach within the interpretivist paradigm. Narrative inquiry was chosen for the methodology. To generate data I employed unstructured oral interviews, art-based methods (collage inquiry), artefact retrieval and photo-voice. My data sources were personal stories, collage, artefacts and photos presented by Rojavu, Thabisile, Naledi and Jeff. Poetic inquiry and the 'dilemmatic spaces' conceptual framework were engaged to identify the principals' challenges from the reconstructed stories of the four participants. To analyse how principals negotiate challenges they encounter in their everyday practice, I employed collage portraiture and the transformational leadership theoretical model.

Through the lives of four participants I came to the nuanced understanding of the principals' experiences. I have come to understand that the principals' lives in their everyday practice are complex; that their work is challenging intellectually, psychologically, emotionally and professionally; that they face numerous tensions and anxieties while negotiating everyday situations and the choices they make are informed by particular beliefs and priorities.

I learned that on daily basis principals negotiate dilemmas that are posed by material and structural forces that are always at play. They work with learners that are immensely affected by rife poverty rates. They manage schools that are under-resourced due to insufficient funding. They are subjected to unfavourable conditions of work, such that they experience their jobs as being horrific.

To negotiate challenges of everyday practice, principals draw on innovative and alternate partnerships and alliances to create and support a conducive teaching and learning schooling environment for learners and teachers; and engage in a range of practices to assist them maintain well-functioning schools. Principals leading schools that are adversely affected by inappropriate categorization, enact decisions that are informed by particular

personal attributes (motivation, sacrifice, care), to assist them to go beyond their professional responsibility.

Principals' daily work is value-driven and they negotiate their everyday challenges by embracing personally meaningful – spiritual, social, political, philosophical and professional values. These personal and social dimensions of being a school principal are significant in understanding how principals negotiate the challenges of everyday professional practice.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AET	Adult Education and Training
CBD	Central Business District
CMC	Circuit Management Centre
COLT	Culture of Learning and Teaching
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DoE	Department of Education
DP	Deputy Principal
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
FET	Further Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NRF	National Research Foundation
NP	National Party
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
NTA	National Teacher Awards

PD	Professional Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
OSD	Occupation Specific Dispensation
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SASA	South African Schools' Act
SEM	Superintendent in Education Management
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SGB	School Governing Body
STD	Standard
TD	Teacher Development
TDS	Teacher Development Studies

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‘Fee paying’ versus **‘no-fee schools’**; - the former means schools that charge school fees, while the latter means schools that do not charge school fees (Veriava, 2007).

‘Full service schools’ are schools that are accessible to all learners, including those with physical challenges (Department of Basic Education, 2010). Such schools should ensure accessibility in terms of their infrastructure as well as furniture in order to “allow for easy movement and seating” (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p. 21).

‘Functional’ versus **‘Dysfunctional/Non-functioning’ schools - Dysfunctional/Non-functioning’ schools** are described by Bayat, Louw, and Rena (2014) as those that suffer from among other factors “poor management and leadership with the school systems” (p. 184). Schools are considered **functional** if “learners achieve the desired outcomes” (KZN Department of Education, 2010).

‘Performing’ versus **‘Under-performing’ schools - Under-performing schools** are those that fail “to obtain a pass rate of at least 60% in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations” (Bayat et al., 2014, p. 183), while **performing schools** manage to produce a pass rate of 60% and above.

‘Primary’ versus **‘Secondary’** versus **‘Combined’** schools - **Primary schools** cater for grades 1 to 7; while **Secondary schools** cater for grades 8 to 12 ; and **Combined schools** may accommodate grades at primary and secondary levels (Department of Education, 2009).

‘Public’ versus **‘Independent’ - Public schools** are the ones that are provided by the government out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature (Department of Education, 1996); while **Independent schools** are those schools that are privately owned and can be established by anyone at his own cost (Department of Education, 1996).

Quintile 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 schools – are the five categories of schools that are ranked in terms of poverty levels, or on the basis of the “Socio-Economic Status (SES)” (Bayat et al., 2014, p. 186) of the area where they are located; with Quintile 1 referring to the poorest schools, while Quintile 5 represents the most affluent schools (de Kadt, Norris, Fleisch, Richter, & Alvanides, 2014; Mestry, 2013).

‘Rural’ versus **‘urban’** and **‘peri-urban’**; - depending on where the school is located (Department of Education, 2009). Therefore, the school is labelled rural - if it is in a rural area; urban – if it is in an urban area; and peri-urban - if it is on the outskirts of an urban area.

‘Schools for learners with special education needs (LSEN)’ versus **‘mainstream’**; the former deal with learners who encounter difficulties with learning, while the latter deal with the majority of learner population (KZN Department of Education, 2010). In schools for LSEN the Department of Education (DoE) provides “relevant educational support services for such learners” (Department of Education, 1996, p. 10).

‘Section 20’ versus **‘Section 21’** schools; - the former depend entirely on the State for utilisation of their funds, yet the latter have monies allocated to them which is deposited directly to their accounts and the school governing bodies (SGBs) are allocated functions that allow them to secure and pay for the services and school accounts. This means they are able to spend at the Governing body’s discretion (Department of Education, 1996).

‘Section 21 schools with all functions’ versus **‘Section 21 schools without Function c’**, In the former schools SGBs are delegated by the DoE to perform all functions in respect of securing services and material for the school; while the latter schools are restricted from providing function c which is “to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school” (Department of Education, 1996, p. 16). Therefore the latter are limited to certain functions in terms of controlling their funding such that their learning and teaching support material (LTSM) is procured by the State on their behalf.

S8, S9, S10, S11 and S12 schools – These are categories of schools in terms of the number of educator posts allocated to the school, where S8 – has 2 to 3 educator posts; S9 – has 4 to 12 posts; S10 – has 13 to 24 posts; S11 – has 25 to 45 and S12 has 46 or more posts (Education Labour Relations Council, 2006). “The grading of a school implies the grading and salary level of the principal of the school” (Education Labour Relations Council, 2006, p. 1); hence five principalship levels, P1 to P5 (Education Labour Relations Council, 2008), with P1 serving in an S8 school and P5 serving in an S12 school.

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Chapter One

Mapping out the terrain of my study

Personal interest in the study

My personal interest in principals' experiences in the context of school categorization emanates from my own lived experiences in relation to the South African education system. These experiences date as far back as my childhood when I was subjected to harsh schooling conditions because of financial constraints; such as schooling under a tree because of a shortage of classrooms; being housed in a nearby mud-church on rainy days; walking more than 10km to school and being taught in a multi-grade classroom.

As a poor learner I was able to overcome learning difficulties because of the support I got from my teachers and my principal in particular. There is a day that is not erasable from my memory. It was 1977 and I was doing STD 1 (today's Grade 3). I could not afford a special exam pad that was a requirement for examinations. I was in a deep rural Mtubatuba school and my mother was a domestic worker in Durban, more than 300km from where I was. My principal saw me crying outside while other learners were busy writing. When she found out why I could not write the examination, she gave me her own money to purchase the examination pad that was required. Luckily there was a shop nearby. I was able to sit for that examination like all the other learners.

When I completed Matric (final year of school), I chose to study teaching. From the day I started teaching, I realized that the conditions under which teachers work are challenging. As a teacher I have experienced working with learners from very poor backgrounds. I started teaching in 1992 in an informal settlement of Lindelani, next to KwaMashu, where poverty rates were rife. Despite the poor backgrounds from which my learners came, they demonstrated love and care for their teachers. I am reminded of a critical incident in my teaching life, when my Matric class of 1993 bought me a baby-walker just when I gave birth to my second child. The following picture depicts this special twenty-two year old artefact which has significance for me:



My entire disposition is centred on this artefact which I received as a gift in my second year of teaching. This artefact signifies my learning to walk through the teaching profession and to negotiate the daily challenges that I face as I move through each day; hence I believe it is a fitting description of my lived experiences in the schooling system. To express how I feel about my artefact, I composed the following

Figure 1.1: My artefact – the baby-walker

poem:

My baby-walker

Twenty-two year old artefact

Means the world to me

Came at a crucial time of my professional career

Still a vulnerable novice teacher

Means the world to me

Helping me find my ground

Still a vulnerable novice teacher

Stability and support through a long journey

Helping me find my ground

Came at a crucial time of my professional career

Stability and support through a long journey

Twenty- two year old artefact

The baby-walker is structured in such a way that it provides a lot of support and stability for the toddler wanting to move. The baby-walker provides support for the toddler's arms and it has the bands that connect the seat to the bottom and top. In addition to all the support mechanisms at the toddler's disposal, are wheels that keep the walker moving.

My poem indicates that my walker is '*twenty-two years old*', which coincides with the age of the South African democracy. As a school principal I am faced with new initiatives around transformation and I have to *find my ground* in this changing schooling landscape. This post-1994 era is crucial for South African teachers as democracy emerged with policies that permit the schools to run their financial affairs (Department of Education, 1996). In this dispensation, policies like categorization of schools afford principals greater autonomy to run their schools and take ownership of what prevails therein. At the same time, the context of schools is not the same as they are categorized in a number of ways (Department of Education, 1996). Nevertheless, principals have to see to it that the schools they manage are sustainable.

My question revolves around the daily dilemmas principals face, and what kind of support is at their disposal? The second question is, what enables principals to negotiate the everyday moves they have to take to keep their schools moving? My study explores principals' lived experiences through their daily lived experiences. Thinking back to my principal as a STD 1 child and what I deal with on a daily basis as a principal working in a Quintile 4 school today, makes me wonder what other principals out there are going through in their respective schools. My personal experiences have somehow triggered my curiosity as to how school principals out there walk through their professional journey in diverse contexts. I hope that through this study I will be able to gain insight into the principals' experiences in the context of school categorization.

Contextual Imperatives of the study

The political framework of South Africa as a country dictates that "schools may be classified in a range of ways based on the organisation of curricula, levels of schooling, ownership, sponsorship, size, location..." (Department of Education, 2009, p. 10). It is due to this framework, that the DoE has categorized schools in the following ways:

'Fee paying' versus 'No-fee schools'

‘Functional’ versus ‘Dysfunctional’ schools
‘Performing’ versus ‘Under-performing’ schools’
‘Primary’ versus ‘Secondary’ and ‘Combined’
‘Public’ versus ‘Independent’
‘Quintile 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5’ schools
‘Rural’ versus ‘Urban’ and ‘Peri-urban’
‘Schools for learners with special educational needs (LSEN)’ versus ‘Mainstream’
‘Section 20’ versus ‘Section 21’ schools
‘Section 21 schools with all functions’ versus ‘Section 21 schools without function C’
‘S8, S9, S10, S11 and S12’ schools

Categorization in the education system of this country goes as far as classifying principals in relation to the schools they manage. In terms of the school grading norms there are 5 levels of principals, that is, P1 to P5 (Education Labour Relations Council, 2008) that are determined by categories of schools (**S8, S9, S10, S11 and S12**) in terms of the number of educator posts allocated to the school; where S8 – has 2 to 3 educator posts; S9 – has 4 to 12 posts; S10 – has 13 to 24 posts; S11 – has 25 to 45 and S12 has 46 or more posts (Education Labour Relations Council, 2006). Therefore “the grading of a school implies the grading and salary level of the principal of the school” (Education Labour Relations Council, 2006, p. 1); with P1 serving in an S8 school and P5 serving in an S12 school.

In essence, the ways in which schools are categorized in South Africa seems to be endless since new categories emerge all the time. An in depth description of how all the above school categories differ from one another is furnished in a section dealing with the definition list on pages xiii to xiv. It is critical and significant to consider the everyday realities in schools that are a consequence of the policy on categorization.

Professional/Theoretical context of the study

In this section I will discuss the impact that Departmental policies have on principals as professionals. One of the key policies which focus on school principals is the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD). In terms of this political prescript, the Education Labour Relations Council (2008) aimed at ensuring “a fair, equitable and competitive remuneration structure for identified categories of employees” (p. 3). The question is whether the principals really enjoy the principle of fairness from this policy.

On the issue of employee benefits, such as granting of bursaries, it is stipulated that in terms of the OSD, when providing funding for teachers to improve their qualifications, the State will apply “the principle of preference for [teachers] in poorer schools ...” (Education Labour Relations Council, 2008, p. 15). How does this align with a principal working in an affluent school, now being deprived of an opportunity to uplift himself/herself professionally simply because of the categorization of his/her school? Recently the DoE granted some principals bursaries to enrol for an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) Management. Because of the category of their schools some principals were deprived this Professional Development (PD) opportunity.

My interest in exploring the principals’ stories of their lived experiences is driven by my desire to obtain insight into how their lived experiences will shed light on their knowledge, skills and values that they draw on daily to enable them to run their schools and to make decisions. I want to understand the personal, social and professional dimensions of the principals’ lives.

Scholarly debates on school categorization

There is no dedicated literature review chapter in this dissertation. However, literature is included and woven into the study as a whole. I have engaged selected debates around school categorization that range from issues of schooling realities; inaccuracies and inconsistencies of quintile ranking; school management; and teachers’/principals’ work.

Schooling realities

One debate around categorization pertains to the impact it has on rural students in African States like “Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania” (Mulkeen, 2005, p. 3); and it was reported that students in rural schools are in class for fewer days/hours than students in the same countries’ urban schools since some parents count on their children for labour during busy agricultural seasons; Mulkeen further reported that in rural areas there is lack of support parents can offer their children because they only received minimum schooling and also attach “lower value to schooling” (Mulkeen, 2005, p. 3), and due to the conditions in rural areas, most teachers prefer working in urban environments.

A further debate in relation to schooling realities is concerned with the comparison between learners’ performances in public schools versus learners’ performances in independent

schools as well as of those from schools in low quintiles versus those from Quintile 5 schools (Spaull, 2013), where the argument is that, in terms of numeracy and literacy levels, “students from the upper most quintile ... far outperform students from the lower four quintiles” (Bayat et al., 2014, p. 186).

Inaccuracies and inconsistencies of quintile ranking

Quintile ranking refers to the categorization of schools in terms of poverty levels, or on the basis of the “Socio-Economic Status (SES)” (Bayat et al., 2014, p. 186) of the area where they are located. According to this system, South African schools are ranked “from the poorest to the least poor” (Veriava & Wilson, 2005, p. 10). In this system of categorization, schools are divided into five levels, called ‘quintiles’, with Quintile 1 referring to the poorest schools, while Quintile 5 represents the most affluent schools (de Kadt et al., 2014; Mestry, 2013). In terms of this principle “schools serving poorer communities must receive more funding than schools serving better-off communities” (Mestry, 2013, p. 171). Gustafsson and Patel (2006) maintain that Quintile 5 is “the least favoured quintile” (p. 70) in terms of allocated State resources.

According to Veriava (2007, p. 188) “the inaccurate ranking of schools” results in some schools receiving “low State allocations and because of the absence of sufficient fee revenue with which to maintain these schools, these schools exist in conditions of under-funding and under-resourcing.” Mestry (2013, p. 175) argues that “the criteria used by provincial departments of education to rank schools into quintiles, are not fairly and consistently applied;” such that in certain cases “schools within a kilometre from each other and having similar physical resources are ranked differently.” Mestry (2013) further argues that some learners do not reside in the area where the school is located “but commute daily to school from outside” (p. 169) and therefore raises concern about rating the school as per its location, rather than considering the background of students in the schools in question.

School Management

Some scholarly conversations on school management focus on multi-roles that are expected to be played by principals (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Leithwood, 1994); while others attribute the success of schools to effective managers of such institutions (Bush, 2007; Bush, Kiggundu, & Moorosi, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). There

are also debates that compare the management styles of men and women (Coleman, 2000; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Teachers'/Principals' Work

Debates on teachers' work are mainly centred around the issue of professional identity in relation to curriculum and government policies (Bodman, Taylor, & Morris, 2012; Gur, 2013; Mantei & Kervin, 2011; Tran & Nguyen, 2013; Weinberger & Shefi, 2012); as well as the extra time spent at work in relation to other professionals (Figart & Golden, 2013; Gu & Day, 2007); and how they have to improve instructional leadership (Botha, 2011; Lunenburg & Beverly, 2014; Newton & Wallin, 2013; Starratt & Leeman, 2011).

Morrow (2007) opens up a debate that emphasizes that the teachers' work is impossible. Morrow's discourse has triggered my curiosity to explore the principals' stories of lived experiences in the context of school categorization.

To explore the school principals' stories of work in the context of school categorization, I took the perspective advanced by Morrow (2007). Morrow's discourse stems from the debate posed by Shulman (1983, p. 151) where he asserts that...

Teaching is impossible. If we simply add together all that is expected of a typical teacher and take note of the circumstances in which those activities are to be carried out, the sum makes greater demands than any individual can possibly fulfil.

This statement suggests that the circumstances under which teachers work make it impossible to teach (Morrow, 2007). Considering the harsh realities in which teachers work, Morrow (2007) posits that "we need to think about the conditions in which a high proportion of schoolteachers in South Africa try to teach" (p. 8).

Morrow further suggests that Shulman's argument presupposes conditions in which teaching occurs. He asserts that teaching is "embedded in the accidents and contingencies of expectations and circumstances" (Morrow, 2007, p. 5), making teachers' work a complex task. In addition to the core function of schools, which is teaching, there are numerous additional tasks that are performed by teachers and these include care giving (Morrow, 2007). The question that is posed by Morrow is "whether others should be employed for this work, enabling schoolteachers to focus more sharply on their defining function" (p. 3). Morrow

himself attests that when he started teaching he was so overwhelmed to an extent that he “ceased to have any life outside of teaching” (p. 4). However the stance that Morrow (2007, p. 15) takes is that...

teaching is not impossible, but it needs to be differently pursued in different circumstances. But we make it impossible if we ‘define’ it in terms of its material elements while ignoring the actual conditions in which teaching is expected to take place.

In terms of Morrow’s discourse we tend to overemphasize the material factors at the expense of structural conditions teachers are subjected to. My study intends understanding the individual in relation to both the material and structural dimensions.

The questions that drive my interest are:

1. *What are the school principals’ lived experiences of work in the context of school categorization?*
2. *What are school principals’ challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization?*
3. *How do principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization?*

Methodological choices

To respond to the above research questions, I found qualitative approach appropriate as it is capable of providing “complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue” (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005, p. 1). I also used narrative inquiry since it allows the researcher to explore and seek to understand lived experiences (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013). Caine et al. (2013) also assert that stories “offer us insights into experiences and resonate in ways that help us to learn and form connections with others” (p. 583). It is through my participants’ stories of their lived experiences that I can obtain insight into how they experience school categorization; what challenges they deal with on a daily basis; and how they negotiate challenges of everyday practice.

The four principals that participated in this study work in Ilembe, a district in KwaZulu-Natal, one of nine provinces in South Africa. They were selected across different quintile rankings: one from Quintile 1, one from Quintile 3, one from Quintile 4 and one from Quintile 5. I chose Ilembe district as my school belongs there; otherwise it would have been more challenging to access the participants if I had selected them from districts far from where I am working. Thus I found it advantageous to select participants who are my fellow colleagues within the district. This is in line with the idea advanced by Chang (2008, p. 106) who asserts that “established rapport and the interviewees’ knowledge of you [as researcher] help you get to the core business quickly and more deeply.”

Conclusion and overview of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises six chapters: **Chapter One** maps out the terrain of my study, and also provides an overview of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the methodology that was employed to explore the principals’ lived experiences. A detailed explanation is furnished on why the following were chosen for the study: qualitative research approach, the interpretivist paradigm, narrative inquiry, data generation methods, as well as why particular participants were chosen. Thereafter, I discuss how I analysed data.

Chapter Three presents re-storied narrative accounts of principals of schools where they share their experiences through their personal, social and professional journey; responding to the question: *what are the school principals’ lived experiences in the context of school categorization?* The narratives of four principals that participated in the study are constructed from data that was generated through the following research methods: unstructured oral/conversational interviews, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo-voice.

Chapter Four explores the principals’ challenges of everyday practice. In this chapter, I deliberate on how the ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework and poetic inquiry were employed to understand principals’ challenges of everyday practice. Themes that are developed by poetic inquiry are then deliberated on.

Chapter Five explores the third critical question of this study which seeks to understand how principals negotiate challenges of their everyday practice as school teachers. Here, I use collage portraiture as an analysis tool to identify ways in which each principal responds to

challenges of everyday practice. I then explain what informs each principal's actions from the lens of the transformational leadership model. I conclude this chapter by presenting the study's perspective of the transformational leadership model.

Chapter Six presents my theoretical understanding of principals, as it cites the methodological reflections on the study; the theoretical contributions of the study; personal-professional reflections of the study; implications for policy; implications for principals' practice in schools as well as implications for further educational research.

Chapter Two

Moving into the field of principals' work

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology that was employed to explore school principals' stories of work in the context of school categorization. Murray and Beglar (2009, p. 9) argue that "the findings generated by [the] study are only as valid as its research design is sound." I have divided this chapter into six parts in which I have stated the reasons for selecting the qualitative research approach; the interpretivist paradigm; the narrative enquiry for the methodology and the reasons for choosing my data generation methods; my participants; and my data analysis tools.

Why qualitative approach

Qualitative research is defined as "a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon within a particular context" (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 195). Brantlinger et al. (2005) further argue that "by focusing on participants' personal meanings, qualitative research gives voice to people who have been historically silenced or marginalised" (p. 199). This research approach "treats people as research participants and not as [mere] objects" (Tuli, 2011, p. 101). Mack et al. (2005) maintain that qualitative research is capable of providing "complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue" (p. 1). These researchers further advance that the "findings from qualitative data can ... be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population" (p. 2). Therefore, from the narratives of four principals who were involved in this study, I was able to generalise the way in which they experienced categorization of schools.

The qualitative approach is ideal for my study as it answers questions by collecting evidence to produce "findings that were not determined in advance" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 1). This is exactly what I aim to achieve, by generating data from my participants to answer my research questions. Qualitative research "seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves" (Mack et al., 2005, p. 1). For instance, I will involve four principals (from the local population) working in schools categorized in a

number of ways to gather their perspectives on how they experience categorization of schools in which they operate.

I also feel that qualitative research is appropriate for my study for its open-endedness as it generates data that is “rich and explanatory in nature” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 4). Mack et al. (2005) also advocate the employment of this research approach in that the researcher enjoys “the flexibility to probe initial participant responses – that is, to ask why or how” (p. 4). Hence the researcher is supposed to be a good listener and be able to encourage participants “to elaborate on their answers” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 4). This was achieved through utilisation of unstructured oral interviews as questions and answers always leave a room for elaboration.

Why the interpretivist paradigm

For my research I identified the qualitative study within the interpretivist paradigm as the most appropriate as I engaged in a dialogical discourse with participants. This paradigm promotes dialogue between the researcher and the participants. The interpretivist paradigm “is sometimes referred to as constructivism because it emphasises the ability of the individual to construct meaning” (Mack, 2010, p. 7). I intended getting the principals’ interpretations of working in schools categorized in a number of ways. In terms of this paradigm, “research can never be objectively observed from the outside rather it must be observed from inside through the direct experience of the people” (Mack, 2010, p. 8). Mack further adds that the researcher “seeks to understand than explain” (p. 8).

The interpretivist paradigm is based on idealism, which stems from the idea that the world is interpreted through a person’s mind. Tuli (2011, p. 101) posits that this paradigm “views reality and meaning making as socially constructed and it holds that people make their own sense of social realities.” This actually implies that in terms of the interpretivists, social reality is determined by how one perceives and interprets it; hence I feel this paradigm was appropriate for my study as I intended gathering the principals’ interpretation of their work in diverse schools. In this paradigm, interpretations are subject to negotiation through conversation; hence I employed unstructured-oral interviews for principals to tell their stories; and to express their experiences by going beyond linguistic expressions of their experiences through the employment of collage inquiry, photo-voice and artefact-retrieval methods.

Why the choice of narrative enquiry for methodology

Narrative enquiry is defined as the “collection of personal narratives based on recognition that people are storytellers who lead storied lives” (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 197). This methodology is appropriate for my study as, through the experiences of a few participants, the researcher can draw inferences about experiences of a lot more individuals. In this research methodology, “experience is viewed narratively” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 574). Caine et al. (2013) further add that this methodology attends to “the living, telling, retelling and reliving of stories of experience” (p. 574). When employing this methodology, the researcher has to explore and seek to understand lived experiences (Caine et al., 2013). Caine et al. (2013) also assert that stories “offer us insights into experiences and resonate in ways that help us to learn and form connections with others” (p. 583). Although qualitative studies are not about generalisations, narrative enquiry, to a certain extent allows for generalisation as Elbaz-Luwisch (1997) asserts that this methodology “collects and analyzes some form of narratives ... in order to arrive at generalizations about the group being studied” (p. 76).

Data generation methods and data sources

I generated data through utilizing four research methods, that is, unstructured oral interviews, art-based methods (collage inquiry), artefact retrieval and photo-voice. The data sources were the principals’ personal stories, their artefacts of personal value, collages that they put together as well as photos taken by them during the course of the study. I chose the above-mentioned data generation methods and sources as I felt that these methods would be relevant for a qualitative study and give an accurate reflection of the principals’ lived experiences of their direct involvement in the different categorized schools.

Trustworthiness and credibility are very essential aspects of any research study (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Brantlinger et al. (2005) further maintain that these two aspects ensure that the research is valid. Vithal and Jansen (2010) argue that one of the ways of ensuring trustworthiness of a study is to compare “findings of one instrument with findings from other instruments” (p. 33). This employment of “varied data sources and multiple methods” (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201) in a study is termed triangulation. This implies that multiple methods of enquiry ensure dependability of the data generated, hence the reason for using unstructured oral interviews, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo-voice. Utilization of such a wide variety of research methods has ensured rigour and generation of massive data.

For example: the use of the principals' personal artefacts and collages ensured illustrative data and it is said that a picture paints a thousand words (Chang, 2008) and I may have missed such information if I relied solely on interviews and the principals' personal narratives. I was able to ask the principals questions on their artefacts and collages and so I was able to ascertain that whatever was presented through their narratives was validated through meanings attached to their visual research practices (collages and artefacts).

Stories, as narrated in Chapter Three, are not just about sharing the principals' lived experiences third hand, but are reflecting their personal views of how they perceive their everyday working life. Such direct communication further ensured trustworthiness of the study. Their narratives can be trusted because they are directly involved in the management of schools categorized in terms of a variety of ways cited above. All participants had served as principals for not less than three years. This meant it was more likely they each had a story to tell.

The moment I started engaging in the data generation process, the trouble began, as indicated in the following journal entry:



The trouble begins.

The very first day I phone participants to plan the first meeting, I discover that one of them has had an accident. Granted leave till May (a month in which I am supposed to be done with my fieldwork). However she said she does not mind even if I visit her at home for my study. She lives in Durban. I live at Esikhawini (close to 200km away). Have to make a plan.

Damn frustrated.

(My journal entry - 13 April 2015)

During the initial meeting which I organised for all the participants, I advised them of the research title and purpose of the study. I then explained the four research methods that I

wanted to employ and the anticipated time that I would be interviewing each person. The following table portrays the data generation plan as anticipated initially before I engaged in fieldwork:

Table 2.1: Time line indicating the time required for the various interviews

Data Generation Activities	Data sources	Time line
1. Participants will tell stories of their experiences (audio-recording)	Audio-recorded conversations	Two 1-hour individual interviews.
2. Each participant will create a collage illustrating an extra-ordinary event in his/her life as principal, and then explain the meaning attached to it.	Collage	1-hour group session for collage-making (once).
3. Each participant will select three artefacts and explain the significance that they attached to each.	Artefacts	1-hour individual session for ‘unpacking’ the meaning behind each artefact.
4. Each participant will be supplied with a disposable camera to capture important moments during the course of the study. They will then choose the best five pictures and explain the significance thereof.	Photos	1-hour individual session to discuss selected photos.
		1-hour group session for explaining methods (once).

During my initial meeting with the three principals, I advised them about ethical issues as these are viewed as “an important part of conducting research [thus] cannot be ignored” (Murray & Beglar, 2009, p. 32). I apprised my participants about their rights, ranging from

voluntary participation and withdrawal from the study; non-subjection to stress; ways in which I will respect their confidentiality, for example, through the use of pseudonyms instead of their actual names; as well as allowing participants access to the results of the study (Murray & Beglar, 2009). As far as Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011, p. 77) are concerned, the participants have a “right to freedom and self-determination.” I therefore ensured that participants gave consent before conducting my research (Appendix 2).

Having explained ethical issues, I requested for the principals to choose their own pseudonyms to replace their own names as well as for their respective schools. I also requested from the participants to furnish me with tentative dates in which they were available for their respective interviews. By affording participants an opportunity to choose their own dates for our meetings in respect of each research activity, I was guarding against subjecting them to undue stress and pressure as well as giving them autonomy to choose a date that was more suitable to them. According to Munhall (1988, p. 152), such thoughtfulness on my part, is offering “a profound reverence for human beings.” The notion of respecting human beings in research is also emphasised by Fontana and Frey (1994) who state that in employing methods like interviews, a researcher should be mindful of the fact that since the “objects of inquiry ... are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them” (p. 372).

The first meeting with participants had its own challenges as indicated by the following journal entry:

Minor distractions not unexpected. One participant with 3 calls in a row. To pause now and then, yet be calm and continue to wear a happy face, to keep the person in question comfortable.

(My journal entry - 16 April 2015)

Our first meeting was held on 16 April 2015. However, this was only with three of the four principals as the fourth one was on sick-leave. I was only able to meet with this principal on 11 May 2015 as per journal entry below:

At last! A meeting with my fourth participant

Thanks to the SADTU Industrial action in the area.

My fourth participant is on leave due to an injury she sustained. I continue to cross my fingers that she will soon be declared fit for a meeting.

Couldn't believe it when I received her Whatsapp message saying she would be sorting school governance issues and I could meet her.

Luckily there was no teaching and learning in Stanger schools. Got something really constructive to do.

I drove straight to Ballito and had to wait for close to 2 hours while she was changing bank signatories with SGB members.

For her to be on par with other participants, I shared with her what was covered in the initial meeting with the other 3 participants on 16 April 2015.

Luckily I recorded my initial meeting with the other three participants.

I listened to the recording with her, and later took her through the documents I shared with other participants in her absence.

Hard luck. I had to buy another disposable camera as I only learnt about our meeting while already at work. Unanticipated expenditure.



(My journal entry - 11 May 2015)

In the next section, I will briefly describe each of the four mentioned research methods (that is, unstructured oral interviews, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo-voice) that were employed in this study.

Unstructured oral interviews

Unlike structured interview settings where pre-set questions are asked; “unstructured interviews allow flexibility in questioning and responding” (Chang, 2008, p. 105). Blackman (2002, p. 242) highlighted that unstructured interviews ensure “free-flowing exchanges between the interviewer and [the interviewee and this is made possible by] follow-up and probe questions.”

Fontana and Frey (1994) maintain that the generation of rich data is one of the strengths of an unstructured interview since it “provides a greater depth” (p. 365) compared to structured interviews. In line with this argument Blackman (2002) perceives that unstructured interviews are more likely to generate “richer quality of information” (p. 243). He maintains that the unstructured interview has no cut-and-dry questions, but just a main question that is linked to certain themes to guide the researcher in their quest for answers, hence, the interview is open for free communication between the researcher (interviewer) and participant (interviewee). The researcher is the listener, while the participant is the story-teller.

The success of interviews rests on establishing a rapport and gaining trust with participants (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Fontana & Frey, 1994). Fontana and Frey (1994) add that “close rapport with [participants] opens doors to make informed research” (p. 367). I ascertained rapport with principals by creating a relaxed environment each time I had an interview session with any of them. I kept reminding them I was interested in stories of their lived experiences.

Trust, too, is very important and as this emotion is very fragile, it can be lost. Fontana and Frey (1994) caution that a researcher must be careful when employing the unstructured interview method as he/she may lose “his/her distance of objectivity”(p. 367). As the researcher, I attempted to put myself in the participants’ shoes, that is, I tried to see “the situation from their perspective” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 367). To illustrate this point – I found that the principals wanted me to confirm their experiences from the lens of a colleague. For example, during conversations, participants’ statements and gestures suggested ‘as you know as principal’, or through their facial expressions or words, they expected me to validate or comment on what they were saying. This was more so because all my participants happened to know me well as we belonged in the same district as well as same Circuit

Management Centre (CMC), Stanger. However, I would ignore their need, and instead smile in the hopes to further encourage their narratives. The importance of keeping the interviewees comfortable is stressed by Brenner (2006) who considers this to be “the key to a good interview study” (p. 368).

I feel that the use of unstructured interviews for my study is the correct method because its use enables the researcher to gather “ information about topics or phenomena that happen to be of interest to researchers and at the same time are significant events or experiences in persons’ lives” (Corbin & Morse, 2003, p. 339). Fontana and Frey (1994) state that interviews help researchers understand fellow human beings. I feel this is what I achieved through using this research method as I attempted to understand the principals’ stories of their lived experiences.

For each interview there were no pre-set questions, but each participant was requested to share their history from childhood, through to studying towards being a teacher, up to the moment when he or she became the principal of the school. Fontana and Frey (1994) add that oral interviews are a way of reaching individuals who might have been “ignored ... or forgotten” (p. 368). This statement applies to these principals, as this was the first time that anyone had asked them for their narratives.

The time allocated for these unstructured interviews was two 1-hour sessions. The intention of the second hour was to clarify any data that had been generated through the initial interview session. However, the reality is that time-lines do not always work as planned. I recall that first interviews with all participants were way above an hour, the longest being 2 hours 53 minutes. Interviewing was quite a testing exercise for me as a novice researcher as reflected in the journal entry below:

First interview done!!!

What a day!

First interview with Jeff done.

Was quite a long session, 2 hours 30 minutes.

(My journal entry - 20 April 2015)

Observation of precautionary measures worked in my favour during the interviewing processes. According to Brenner (2006, p. 365), it is important to keep a record of the interview since it “allows the interviewer to focus on the conversation with the [interviewee] and carries a more complete record of the ... actual words.” One extra safe guard with audio recording, I decided to use two devices (audio-recorder and a cell phone). As DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) suggest, I practiced using the two recording devices prior to setting up the interview session. I also carried an extra set of batteries. This saved me from a blow as reflected in the journal below:

Third interview done!!!

First interview with Naledi after school. Had the longest interview session this time, 2 hours 53 minutes and 29 seconds!

The worst blunder One of the gadgets switched off after 1 hour 40 minutes 24 seconds, when my participant mistakenly touched it while she was showing me her photos. Only realised when I got home.

Thanks to learning the importance of back up, I did not lose information as the other device continued to record. I would have lost more than an hour worth of data....

What a blow it would have been!

(My journal entry - 30 April 2015)

I found that transcribing the interviews was such a test for me. It took a number of support sessions with my supervisor before I grasped what was expected of me. I had to stop the recorder time and again to ensure that I had captured the interviewee’s words correctly. I also found it difficult to sit for hours to listen to the recordings. When I shared my frustrations during the support sessions, my supervisor advised me to listen to the recordings repeatedly even when travelling. Fortunately, I had ample time for that as the distance I travel between school and home is 100km.

While transcription was a nightmare, the construction of stories was another monster. I found it hard to decide what to leave out, especially in respect of two participants, for whom I had

46 handwritten pages of each interview recording. I remember when I received critique from my supervisor for my first attempt of narrating my participants' stories, I felt like I was crushed to pieces. I felt so hopeless; hence the following journal entry:

When you spend the whole night trying to transcribe hours of interview recordings, until your thumbs ache; how do you deal with a session with a supervisor where you feel like you have been wasting your time?

I was so frustrated when I learned that my first piece of narrative had to be reworked as follows:

Too long (21 pages had to be 6 to 7 pages per narrative); Language used did not sound natural. In the supervisor's terms, it was "sanitised."

Drove home disappointed.

Just decided I am not touching any university work for days. Absolutely not worth the trouble.

(My journal entry - 24 June 2015)

In the next section I discuss collage inquiry as a research method.

Collage

Collage is defined by Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 265) as "the process of cutting and sticking found image fragments from popular print/magazines onto cardstock." This concept comes "from the French word colle – meaning glued" (Gerstenblatt, 2013, p. 295). According to Khanare (2009), collage may also include photographs. Butler-Kisber (2008) maintains that collage making is able to "elicit communication talents that otherwise remain hidden" (p. 266). He further points out that the collage has the capability of providing new ways "of thinking about phenomena and revealing aspects about everyday life and identity that are unconscious or implicit" (p. 272). This is true with participants who may have difficulty expressing themselves and as such can express their emotions through this artistic method.

Burns (as cited in Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 269) maintains that in collage "images enable meaning to travel in ways that words cannot." Similarly, Gerstenblatt (2013, p. 294) declares that collage provides "the opportunity to ... articulate lived experiences." I, therefore, feel

that this method is appropriate for my topic as I hoped that through my participants' act of putting together images to reflect their lived experiences, it may unblock unconscious thoughts to enable them to talk about life that they may previously have blocked. Sometimes methods like interviews may not elicit all the information from the participant; yet if requested to express their experiences in an artistic form like collage, more information may be extrapolated by the researcher. Therefore, collage making would enable me to obtain rich data that would not have been possible with structured questions.

I organised a group session with all participants and explained how collage is used as a research method. Before the session, I collected all the material that is required for the exercise which ranged from newspapers and magazines (which I collected from December 2014 to March 2015), to charts, pairs of scissors, glue and marking pens. Each participant was requested to single out one extra-ordinary moment/event/occasion in his/her life as a principal of the school. They were then asked to express that extra-ordinary moment through a collage by cutting (words or pictures) from newspapers or magazines that I had provided. Participants were also allowed to choose their own pictures / photos / cut-outs from their own copies / home photographs if they so wish. I worked on my own collage in the presence of my participants. This was in line with a suggestion advanced by Gerstenblatt (2013) that to put participants at ease with collage making, the researcher has to model this either by making the collage him/herself or by providing samples of collage work completed previously. The following is a picture I took during the group session for collage making:



During the session all the participants requested to take their work home for refining. Additional individual sessions were then arranged during which each participant briefly unpacked what was signified by their collage. This is in line with the idea advanced by

Figure 2.1: Collage making

Badley (2015) who asserts that through collage, “collagists and researchers analyse and construct the very thing they are trying to understand” (p. 5). It must be noted that two of the four participants, Rojavu and Jeff had prior experience in collage making as they had

participated in other studies, hence the refined nature of Jeff's collage; and Rojavu's collage that differs from the others as he put together his collage from photographs from his own archives. In contrast, Naledi just limited her collage to words, while Thabisile used words and pictures from the newspapers and magazines.

In the next section I deliberate on how I used artefact retrieval for my study.

Artefact retrieval

Artefacts are objects that have a meaning to individuals associated with them and these may be pieces of objects of any kind such as old pictures, old documents or newspapers (Chang, 2008). To cite diversity of artefacts, Chang (2008, p. 107) maintains that these "may be text-based or non-textual [or a combination thereof] officially produced documents and personal, whether formal or informal texts written by you or about you or your cultural contexts." Official documents range from diplomas, official letters, certificates and employment contracts (Chang, 2008). Other textual artefacts may be letters or programmes previously used in certain occasions of significance to an individual associated with the artefact in question.

Cole (2011) maintains that artefacts have the capacity to trigger memories; and highlights that "object memory involves the use of a physical prompt within a qualitative interview setting as a means of digging more deeply into the subject." (p. 227). In respect of this research, it was hoped that the participants' chosen objects would trigger their memories of something significant that happened during their lived experiences as principals. Chang (2008) also argued that artefact inquiry allows access to one's "past experiences and personal interpretations of these experiences" (p. 71). Chang further adds that "the past gives a context to the present, self and memory opens a door to the richness of the past" (p. 71) and in my study artefacts assisted participants to elicit memories that relate to their lived experiences in the context of school categorization. This is in line with Chang's view that "personal memory taps into the wealth of information on self" (Chang, 2008, p. 72).

To alleviate participants' fears of bringing in objects and discussing them, I shared numerous artefacts of my own. I brought in photos and explained their significance to me. One of the photos I shared with the group, was the baby-walker that I explained in great length in Chapter One of this research. After sharing my personal artefacts with the participants, they

got excited and realized that they had numerous old objects that were either lying in their homes or schools, that were significant to them. The exercise of sharing my own artefacts with the participants is in line with the concept of reciprocity. I was certain to get a positive response as Dufwenberg and Kirchsteiger (2004, p. 268) argue that “people are motivated by reciprocity.”

After the group session of discussing the artefacts, I then requested each of them to select any three artefacts that are of personal significance. For each artefact, they were then further requested to briefly explain what it symbolised. This task is in line with the viewpoint held by Chang (2008, p. 80), that artefacts “have utility or ceremonial value, incorporated into the life of people.” This exercise excited the participants, as reflected in the journal below.

Just a day following our initial meeting, I met Naledi, one of my participants in a principal’s workshop. She was still thrilled and shared that...

Naledi: Hey Nonhlanhla, after our meeting yesterday, I was so thrilled to see a trunk I used to carry my luggage to a teacher’s college more than 30 years ago. When my daughter saw me laughing she wondered what the story was and I had to share my excitement with her. Your study is indeed triggering memories.

(My journal entry - 17 April 2015)

In the next section I will discuss the use of photo-voice in research.

Photo-voice

Photo-voice is defined as the use “of photography as a means of accessing other people’s world and making those worlds accessible to others” (Booth & Booth, 2003, p. 431). Therefore, this method involves “giving people cameras and using pictures they take to amplify their place in and experience of the world” (Booth & Booth, 2003, p. 432). Booth and Booth (2003, p. 432) further add that photo-voice “sets out to capture and convey the point of view of the person holding the camera, [thereby inviting us] to look at the world through the same lens as the photographer and to share the story the picture evokes for the person who clicked the shutter.” Booth and Booth (2003) further point out that this method “helps to include people who lack verbal fluency [as well as] allows people the opportunity to

exercise choice as competent participants in the research process” (p. 432). I can attest to this on the basis of my observations as my participants were engaged in capturing pictures.

After describing the use of photo-voice, I issued a 27-exposure colour film disposable camera to each participant. This description was in line with the view advocated by Wang (1999) who stated that a researcher should not just hand cameras to participants without explaining the method in detail as this helps familiarise the participants “with underlying issues about the use of cameras ... and ethics” (p. 186). I then advised participants that over the following four weeks, to please use the disposable camera to take pictures that captured important moments/spaces/events in their daily routine at school. This activity was in line with the view held by Wang (1999) that photo-voice enables participants “to express, reflect and communicate their everyday lives” (p. 186). Participants were further informed that in the following session, they would each be requested to select the best five pictures and to discuss their significance and / or meaning.

The participants were given clear guidelines with regard to ethical considerations that were to be observed when taking photos. These included cautioning them that photos taken should be staged, such that no faces of individuals are to be portrayed. They were advised to take pictures at a distance, of people’s back or without people. They were also requested to return the cameras for developing, once they were done with the exercise. Jeff, who is one of the participants, could not wait for the following session to hand the camera in for processing, so he had the photos developed himself. A point of interest, none of the participants had ever used a disposable camera before. The other three participants relied on their cell phones to capture the moments of interest during the course of the study. They then sent me the photos and during individual sessions, they explained why they took these particular photos and why was it significant to them. Although I accepted the use of cell phones for taking photos, I was quite disturbed and felt annoyed that I spent money on disposable cameras that were never used.

This process of discussing their photos played an important role in enriching the participants’ narratives. The photos served as an effective tool for this study as Wang and Burriss (1997) declare that they have the power to tell a story. In support of this view, Chang (2008, p. 81) asserts that “one picture is worth a thousand words [implying that] a visual image can convey a message more efficiently and powerfully than a series of words.”

In the next section I deliberate on the selection of participants for this study.

Selection of participants

When selecting participants for my study, I took note of the ideas advanced by Brantlinger et al. (2005), who asserted that one of the quality indicators that ensures that the study meets high scholarly standards, is the selection of appropriate participants. This choice is in terms of effective recruitment, adequate number and correct representation of a population of interest. I started planning participant selection in 2014. My first step was gathering data of quintiles to which the schools belonged. I requested from the officials in Ilembe district to furnish me with this data (Appendix 8). The following table is part of the data I was offered by a district official:

Table 2.2: List of quintile categorization of Ilembe district schools

CIRCUIT	WARD	EMIS	NAME OF SCHOOLS	S20/21	No Fees School	Quintile 2009/2010 Indicative Budget
NDWEDWE	UMDLOTI	101195	A M MOOLA SECONDARY	S20	No Fee	1
NDWEDWE	UMHLALI	100677	ALDINVILLE PRIMARY	S20	Fee	4
NDWEDWE	INSUZE	101269	AMABUTHO PRIMARY	S21	No Fee	1
MAPHUMULO	BALCOMBS HILL	102416	AMAPHUPHESIZWE SECONDARY	S20	No Fee	1
LOWER TUGELA	GINGINDLOVU	102675	AMATIGULU SECONDARY	S20	Fee	3
LOWER TUGELA	KWADUKUZA	277241	ASHRAM PRIMARY	S20	Fee	4

I utilised the above furnished data to identify schools in my district that would cater for a range of the quintile ranking categories. When I received the ethical clearance letter from the university in April 2015, I then phoned individual colleague principals to verify the data on hand and told them about my study and asked if I could set up appointment to discuss the study further. I utilised the individual meetings to explain my study and my intentions and to enlist their participation. During this meeting, to confirm that the principals met my inclusion criteria I confirmed they had been school principals for a minimum of three years and I also verified the details of their school categories, such as quintile ranking; whether they were fee-paying or no-fee schools; whether they were primary, secondary or combined schools as well as whether they were Section 20/21 (as per table 2.2 above).

I based my study in Ilembe District (a district in KwaZulu-Natal Province). I chose Ilembe District for my study as I work in a school located within the same district, otherwise it would have been more challenging to access the participants if I had selected them from districts far from where I am working. These principals came from the three circuits of the Ilembe District and they are Kwa-Dukuza, Umhlali and Phambela. I selected principals from across different quintile rankings: one principal from Quintile 1, one principal from Quintile 3, two principals from Quintile 4 (one of which being myself) and one from Quintile 5.

To achieve a cross-section of views, I chose two principals from Quintile 1 and 3 and three from Quintile 4 and 5 because the former (Quintiles categorized below 3) represent the poorest categories of schools and the latter (Quintiles categorized above 4) represent the more affluent schools. A choice of more than one participant in the two categories (1-3; and 4-5) was meant for ensuring representation of both major categories in the eventuality of any participant withdrawing from the study. To my surprise the participant that withdrew from the study happened to be myself. Luckily I still had a participant that was in the Quintile 4 category. This happened at the concluding stages when I was working on data analysis. I found it very difficult to analyse my own data as a researcher as well as participant. Besides, the data that had been generated from the other four participants was massive. It was a matter of choosing who to leave out. I could not afford to leave out data I had generated through so much effort as well as at the sacrifice of participants. So I ended up working with field texts for four participants.

The section below deals with data analysis.

Data analysis

In narrative inquiry “narratives or stories are the object of analysis” (Caine et al., 2013, p. 583); hence, I analysed data through reconstructing stories in Chapter Three of this work. Narrative analysis includes storylines, characters and settings that both influence and are influenced by the principals’ lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Analysis of narratives was done by the inductive process, moving from the specific data from each participant to general data. Inductive analysis is defined by Brantlinger et al. (2005, p. 196) as a “process of reasoning from specific to general.” This approach was also advanced by Elbaz-Luwisch (1997, p. 76) who argued that “in analysis of narratives, the desired outcome

is generalizations about a particular phenomenon based on narratives generated by or about that phenomenon”.

Basit (2003) declares that data analysis can be the most difficult aspect of the research process and initially I thought so too as my journal entries below highlight:

How on earth does one put all the data together?



I simply do not know where to start.

The more data I generate, the more overwhelmed I become!

(My journal entry - 16 June 2015)

I am certainly not in a good space for writing.

Massive pieces of data are lying in my room, but I have no idea where to get the energy to write.

You know, when you are invited by a supervisor to a group support session, and you wish you could disappear to the world of no man and I had this feeling because there was virtually nothing to deliver to the supervisor.

(My journal entry - 19 August 2015)

The difficulty with data analysis is that in qualitative research “throughout analysis, researchers attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what they have studied and to

continually refine their interpretations” (Basit, 2003, p. 143). Hence, for quite a while, my difficulty was that I did not know where to start. However, as I interacted with my supervisor and co-supervisor I discovered that it was actually an exciting stage of my work. It took time for me to realise that “the analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research and is not a separate self-contained phase” (Basit, 2003, p. 144). Actually Basit (2003, p. 152) asserts that “several analyses may be undertaken during the course of the fieldwork.” Before assimilating the above ideas, my supervisor’s remark made absolutely no sense to me when she told me to work on my analysis chapter while I was busy reconstructing stories. I told her I was still completing the latter and she insisted these are simultaneous processes.

I must admit though that after generating field texts from a variety of methods, I found it very hard to put the stories together. Another frustrating part of data analysis was selection of field texts to use in stories. I had massive pieces of these at my disposal. I had to be very selective when deciding on what to use and what to leave out. For instance, each participant was requested to furnish one collage, three artefacts and five photographs, but the participants got carried away with the excitement of sharing their stories such that; in as much as I did all I could do to maintain consistency in respect of the data generation instruments with each participant, some furnished additional data beyond what had been requested. That is why Naledi for example, is the only one with a story presenting her school motto; and Jeff presenting a Hiawatha song he sang as a boy.

It was also a nightmare to identify the conceptual and theoretical frames for analysing my data. But, the moment I understood these, I began to enjoy data analysis like never before. However, the feelings of uncertainty never left me. I recall a session when I presented the analysis of my first narrative using my conceptual frame in the presence of my peers; each time the supervisor asked me to clarify myself, I got more and more frustrated, such that I could not even hear her commending me for the good work I had done. If it were not for a colleague who shared the supervisor’s comments with me when I vented my frustration with her after the session, I would have stayed in the dark. I certainly appreciate the research support sessions that were offered throughout the course of this study.

The breakthrough with the choice of the frame for analysing my data, as well as the methods to be employed, was a writing retreat that instilled love for use of poetic inquiry and collage portraiture for data analysis. It was after that special writing retreat organised by our supervisor, that I wrote a letter of appreciation below:

28 November 2015

Dear Dr Pillay

Gratitude for a writing retreat

I hereby would like to register my warm appreciation for the writing retreat you organised for our Masters group at Asseggay Hotel on 25 November 2015.

Attending the session cited above was such a blessing for me. Of all the things I learnt to apply in my research study, I appreciate that I am now confident to use poetry as a method. We had intensive sessions on this method in the Researching Teacher Development module last year. However, I must be honest that I never loved this method such that even for an assignment on research practices, I consciously left it out and instead insisted on using interviewing in its place.

I am very grateful that after the morning session at Asseggay, I realised that I could actually use poetry to synthesise my study. This will certainly enrich my dissertation. Thank you once more for the patience you show whenever you interact with us.

Yours sincerely

Nonhlanhla Dube

(A letter of appreciation I wrote to my supervisor)

To analyse the data, I employed two analytical frames which are discussed below.

Conceptual and theoretical frames for data analysis

To analyse data in Chapter Four and Five, I employed the ‘Dilemmatic Spaces’ conceptual framework and ‘Transformational Leadership’ theoretical frame.

‘Dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework

I found the ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework appropriate for my study as it has the “potential to elucidate and deepen the understanding of the complexity of teachers’ everyday work practices” (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013, p. 4). Fransson and Grannäs (2013) assert that dilemmas are “ever-present in people’s living space” (p. 4). Therefore, this framework worked well for discovering my participants’ ‘everyday work practices’ because principals are also, or were teachers before their promotion and have many stories of their lived-experiences as knowledge-providers.

Honig (1994, p. 568) defines dilemmas as “situations in which two values, obligations, or commitments conflict and there is no right thing to do.” In the same vein, Lyons (1990) viewed dilemmas as “practical conflicts” (p. 169) without a right answer. Similarly, Groundwater-Smith, Le Cornu, and Ewing (2011) liken dilemmas to being “trapped between a rock and a hard place” (p. 12), such that whatever decision is taken, is accompanied by difficulties. This scenario is experienced by principals on daily basis, where they face situations where they have to decide on what is best to do. Fransson and Grannäs (2013) further state that a challenge posed by a dilemma is that while one intends solving one problem, it “simply [may] result in other dilemmas” (p. 7). This is true in the everyday situation in schools, where the principal tries to address a challenge, but it leads to another dilemma.

Fransson and Grannäs (2013) also allude to the fact that a particular situation is usually viewed differently by different individuals, for example, the lens from which a principal views a scenario might not be necessarily the same as the lens through which a teacher, learner, parent or Department official views the problem. Therefore, whether the decision is right or wrong, is determined by “the perspective or position from which something is examined” (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013, p. 7). On this basis, these researchers conclude that “although one teacher might experience something as a dilemma it does not mean that other teachers in the same situation will experience it as a dilemma. In other words, it depends on people’s different values, priorities or knowledge” (p. 8).

Space, in respect of this framework, is “a relational category wherein one object is related to another or others” (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013, p. 4). This relational aspect of a dilemma also “applies to subjects’ (people’s) relationships with one another through positioning” (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013, p. 8). Fransson and Grannäs (2013) further point out that “dilemmas are not out there per se, [but] dilemmatic spaces are social constructions resulting from structural conditions and relational aspects in everyday practices” (p. 7). These researchers further assert that dilemmas are determined by the context in which the individual in question finds him/herself. As principals work in a diversity of contexts, they are bound to face dilemmas in their everyday practice.

I find the ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual frame appropriate in relation to teachers’ work. Since teachers deal with challenging issues on a daily basis, Lampert (1985, p. 178) regards them as “dilemma managers.” Lampert further maintains that “even though the teacher may

be influenced by many powerful sources outside herself, the responsibility to act lies within” (p. 180). In other terms, Lampert (1985) views the scenario as “having an argument with oneself” (p. 183). This is true for principals as they have to view a number of options before they take decisions in their place of work.

In terms of the ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework, in their everyday lives, principals are placed in different situations within their work ‘space’. They are subjected to dynamic structural and material forces that are at play (Morrow, 2007). These forces may relate to contrasting views of learners, teachers, parents, officials or even school scenarios against government policies. These forces in turn result in complexities in the principals’ work; yet, not all principals respond in the same way to these diverse forces. Instead, they have to negotiate how they react.

Transformational Leadership’ Theory

Transformational leadership is defined by Burns (1978) as a “process by which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (p. 20). Therefore, this approach leads to change in individuals and organisations where it is implemented. Individuals are determined to do their best. Burns also argues that transformational leadership advocates social as well as spiritual values to motivate followers. Values become partly internalised in followers who are led in this kind of leadership. This in turn uplifts a sense of connection to a higher purpose. Burns (1978) ethical dimension to his transformational leadership theory places ethics and people first.

Burns (1978) believes that a transformational leader inspires his followers by being a role model. Therefore, a leader advocating this style leads by example. According to Bass (1985), this means the leader is walking the talk. Such a leader shares his/her vision with the employees and is therefore collaborative in nature. This ensures that employees work as a team, rather than operating individually. A transformational leader has influence on employees under his/her supervision such that they develop trust, loyalty and respect for him/her (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) further adds that under such leadership, followers get motivated, their morale and performance are enhanced and they also develop a sense of ownership for their jobs. Employees are prepared to go an extra mile, beyond the expectations.

Bass (1985) points out that transformational leaders encourage employees to work for the benefit of the organisation or community rather than focusing on self-interests. In this way employees are more concerned about how they can improve the lives of others instead of theirs as individuals. This is to the extent that a transformational leader can make a sacrifice in the interest of the organization or community. This model therefore promotes persuasive appeals by the leader.

The ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual frame and the ‘transformational leadership model’ are well paired for this study as the conceptual frame explains the principals’ lives in dilemmatic situations, and the transformational leadership theoretical frame illuminates what knowledge, values and skills inform their choices.

Below, I explain how I used poetic inquiry to analyse data.

Use of poetic inquiry as a data analysis method

In this section, I describe my process of using poetic enquiry as a research method to better understand my learning from the reconstructed stories represented in this study. I started by re-reading the re-constructed narratives of all the four principals that participated in this study (See Chapter Three). From each narrative account, I then composed a poem expressing each principal’s challenges of everyday practice. For evenness and dependability of form across the poems, I decided to use the format of a ‘pantoum’ poem as an organisational device for each poem. This French poem that is “characterised by repeating lines that echo throughout the poem, is a valuable tool of emphasising strong emotional responses” (Furman, Langer, & Taylor, 2010, p. 63). I created pantoums using the following three - stanza format:

Stanza 1:

Line 1
Line 2
Line 3
Line 4

Stanza 2:

Line 5 (repeat of line 2)
Line 6
Line 7 (repeat of line 4)
Line 8

Stanza 3:

Line 9 (repeat of line 6)

Line 10 (repeat of line 3)

Line 11 (repeat of line 8)

Line 12 (repeat of line 1)

By employing this three - stanza format, I was limited to six lines for each poem. I was therefore very discriminating with the choice of lines from each storied narrative (Chapter Three). This process of deciding on words and phrases that would be most informative and illuminate my thoughts and feelings compelled me to think deeply about what I was learning from each narrative in relation to my particular research interest (Furman & Dill, 2015). The poems are presented in Section A of Chapter Four. From the poems, I was able to draw themes that identified challenges, thereby addressing the question, *“What are school principals’ challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization?”*

In the section below, I describe how collage portraiture is employed in data analysis.

Use of collage portraiture as a data analysis method

Using data generated from the poems I employed collage portraiture (in Chapter Five) to analyse the ways in which principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice. Gerstenblatt (2013) promotes the use of collage portraiture as a method of analysis since it “has the potential to support and enliven the analysis of otherwise dry and detached interview data, thus producing new knowledge and interpretation” (p. 296). Gerstenblatt (2013) further adds that “creating a collage portrait ... allows for a multisensory interaction with the data, with the researcher literally touching the words and images of the narrative” (p. 296). I experienced this as I was cutting the excerpts and images from the participants’ stories to create the collage portraits. Gerstenblatt (2013, p. 305) also argues that “collage portraits offer scholars a venue for producing research that is adaptable to diverse populations and conveys meaning beyond the constraints of language.”

Just when I thought I had mastered data analysis, I realised that I was struggling with taking on the role of researcher as well as undertaking my usual role as principal as the following journal entry shows:

Supervisor (Dr Daisy Pillay) : “Nonhlanhla, take out the principal’s cap and write as a researcher!”

Co-supervisor (Maud Donda) : “Jump and say I am now a researcher; I am now a researcher!”

(My journal entry - 24 February 2016)

My supervisor and co-supervisor regularly reminded me of the words, in the above journal.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed and explained the methodology that was employed in this study. Thereafter, the data generation methods and sources were discussed. A clear description of how participants were selected was also furnished. The analysis of the data was also highlighted. The next chapter presents re-storied narrative accounts from the four principals of the different categorized schools; thereby answering the critical question of: *“What are the school principals’ lived experiences in the context of school categorization?”*

Chapter Three

Exploring new spaces through principals' stories of their work

Introduction

In this chapter, I present narratives of the four principals of schools where they share stories of how they walk effectively through their professional journey. The purpose of sharing these narratives is to explore the experiences of school principals in the context of school categorization in the South African context, as schools in this country are classified in various ways. Therefore, this chapter answers the research question: *“What are the school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization?”*

The following four narratives are a product of field texts that I generated by employing a variety of methods, ranging from unstructured oral interviews, to collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo-voice. Hence, each story will reflect a variety of data sources ranging from collage, to artefacts and photos in respect of each participant. Each narrative is a re-storied account of each participant's story. In all stories pseudonyms have been used. Two female participants are Naledi and Thabisile, and the two male participants are Jeff and Rojavu.

ROJAVU'S STORY

The trendsetter

***Rojavu:** When my colleague suggested I participate in her study; I was initially reluctant to share my story. I am not the kind of person that likes blowing a trumpet about his own successes. But when she insisted, I then decided to come on board. I thank my colleague for giving me this opportunity. I am naturally very reserved. Normally I do not talk about my achievements. Nevertheless, I've got nothing to hide. As an employee of the Department the type of work I'm doing, calls for me to be transparent. My name is Rojavu and here is my story.*

A ‘travelling’ son of a pastor

I was born in 1969, the first child to Reverend Petros Nhlumayo and Sylvia. I have three siblings and I am the only boy. Being the son of a ‘man of clothe’ exposed me to being a traveller, as I had to move with my parents from place to place. As a result of travelling, I never stayed in any school for long. At times, my parents were forced to leave me behind to complete certain grades, such as the years I spent with my grandparents.

Becoming a teacher

When I completed Matric in 1987, my parents wanted me to go straight to a university or college. I felt that I had to work for at least three years in order to cover my tuition fees so that my father could focus on my siblings. Therefore, I started teaching without a ‘teaching licence.’ In those three years I was able to accumulate a sizeable amount of money to carry on with my studies.

Initially I intended studying journalism. However, it was associated with politics, so I decided to pursue a teaching qualification. In 1991, I enrolled in KwaGqikazi Teachers’ College.

A ‘farm-school’ teacher

The first two schools in which I served after qualifying as a teacher were located in farms. It was like I was meant to serve in farm schools. Life has never been easy in this category of schools. In my first school, Bongimfundo Primary, which was located on J. Smith’s farm, learner enrolment was too small. Therefore, we used a multi-grade class system. It was not easy to teach two different grades with different syllabi in one room. I taught for five years in that school.

Due to the political changes in the country, some farm workers moved their families back to their own original villages. This resulted in a significant drop in learner enrolment at the school. As a result, three educators had to leave the school. I volunteered to leave. This is how I came to work at Transformation Primary (pseudonym), which also happened to be a farm school.

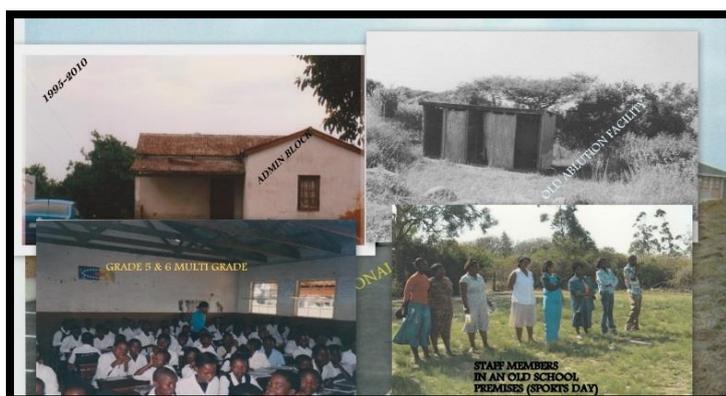
My management journey and its challenges

Mrs Mbokazi, the principal retired at the end of 1999, and I was appointed. My promotion as principal in 2000 was quite a milestone since I had never been a Head of Department, nor a Deputy Principal (DP).

My school used to be a farm institution that catered for farm workers' children before 1994. The history of the school can be traced way back to 1910 when it was started as a missionary school to this far during times of a new democratic South Africa. It has a rich history of producing excellent primary school learners. However, the challenges I had to put up with there were unimaginable.

The very first challenge I had to face was the learner enrolment that was mounting since the community, about 18km away, was reclaiming their land. They were beginning to enrol their children in this school. I felt I had to come up with mechanisms that would see the school going forward. Because I was still young and had a lot of energy, I decided to involve myself too much in teaching. I had a lot of teaching load just to set the example. I was seeing to it that I come early to school, as well as teach during the weekends.

Infrastructure has always been a serious challenge for our school. The following collage shows the buildings we were operating in when I came to this school:



This collage illustrates the mission house that was used as the administration block, the multi-grade classroom, part of the school yard where we held our assembly, and the ablution facility that was used by learners and

Figure 3.1: Rojavu's collage – farm school

teachers. This was such a dangerous site because it was surrounded by a natural forest with snakes, monkeys and other forest animals.

The double-decker

When I assumed my position as principal I tried to improve the school's culture of learning and teaching (COLT). This situation resulted in an increase in learner enrolment in my school. In 2000 when I became principal, the school only had 250 learners and 6 educators. In 2001, there was an increase in the enrolment to 640 learners and during this time there was a shortage of classrooms.

I was caught in the middle. I tried to think out of the box. There is an English expression that says 'desperate times call for desperate measures.' After knocking on several organisations' doors and departments looking for help I decided to approach a local scrap metal company that was buying scrap vehicles, stripping them and selling parts. I said: "Guys, I can see in your premises you've got a double-decker bus. Can you take this bus and place it in my school, remove all the seats and convert it into a make-shift classroom?" The guys who were running the scrap yard used their own resources to tow the bus to my school. They removed the wheels and put it on the ground. They improved the floor by donating carpets and it then looked nice inside. The picture portrayed below is my bus classroom/staffroom:



This bus was used by the Grade 1's between the years 2001 to 2005. Part of this bus was also used as a staffroom because we did not have one. This type of classroom had its own disadvantages and challenges. In summer it was very hot, in winter

Figure 3.2: Rojavu's artefact – bus classroom

it was very cold. Over time it developed holes underneath that allowed reptiles to enter into this makeshift classroom. This was just a hazard for teachers and learners. It called for perseverance. I had to persuade the educators to think first about the community before thinking about themselves.

One of the challenging experiences I had was when I had to make a decision against building 14 classrooms that were going to be donated by the local municipality. Since a nearby community was reclaiming their land 18km away, I was approached by the School Governing Body (SGB) and members of the community who then introduced the idea of relocating the school to the new site. They said: “Now that we are reclaiming our land, we feel that we need to have a school of our own.” So I thought it was proper to make a request to the DoE to relocate the school with its own history to the new development.

While I was pushing for the application for the new school, the municipalities were assisting with the building of new classrooms with Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) funds. In 2002, the municipality 2002 offered: “Look here we’ve got R750 000 with which we can build you plus minus 14 classrooms and a small admin building where you are.”

I was caught in the middle. Since the nearby community members were reclaiming their land 18km away, I asked myself: “Is it worth it to build a structure worth R750 000 here while I am speaking about a relocation plan?” Developing a school where it was, was going to be a wasteful expenditure. That sponsorship was given to another school. That decision made me to be very unpopular even within my staff because they said: “What kind of a leader is refusing help?” I said to them: “Well, I think I am a leader because I also think about how the money is spent. ‘Best value for money’ matters in terms of Batho Pele.” I was just viewed as a crazy principal.

The other challenge I faced was running two schools while the relocation plan was in place. When the DoE offered us mobile classrooms, I took those to the new site so that the community could get used to the new school. I moved Grades R to 3 to the new site and remained with my Grades 4 to 7 because they were bigger and could manage the distance. The idea of managing two schools came with baggage. This was the most challenging administrative period which lasted for six years from 2005 to 2010. It was a hectic six-year period. I had to run two schools at my own cost in the meantime. I had to drive between two sites without claiming anywhere for my additional transport costs. I had to manage staff in both sites. The mobile classrooms themselves are not the best type of classrooms one can think of. They are very hot in summer and very cold in winter because their making is not a permanent structure.

Keeping the ball rolling

Even with all the challenges I still had to keep the ball rolling. One of the strategies I used to survive was fostering partnerships with a number of stakeholders. For example, to fast-track the school relocation plan, I decided that ‘now I must be smart with my moves’. That’s when I decided to form a relationship with Mr. S.V. Naicker, one of the politicians in the area and said: “Can you adopt our school so that when you go to parliament you represent our request.” This indeed fast tracked our application.

Ultimately our school project was approved. This was a breakthrough because after that the DoE was able to issue five mobile classrooms to us. At that time the learner enrolment had increased to 680. We had 6 classrooms, the bus being the seventh. We had packed classes with an average of 100 per room. I was motivating my educators to persevere with such large numbers in their class.

I also counted on fostering a partnership within the community to address safety and security issues. I ensured that the community members developed a sense of ownership for the school. For example, whenever a community member sees a desk in the school yard after school hours, he/she calls me and complains that we are attracting criminals to the school. There is an occasion when I received a call late at night from a community member reporting there was a suspicion that there was a break-in, in the school. I drove to the school to find that there were already about twenty-five community members around the premises.

I strongly maintain that good financial management is a must. As principals we wait until May or June each year before the DoE deposits funds into school accounts. Good financial management is required for the school to survive from January to this time. I have got to a point where I have learnt to buy in bulk when funds are available. In some year I bought enough duplicating paper to carry us through three years. I am being very strict with the way the monies are spent in the school. As a result, sometimes I face angry teachers who accuse me of being stingy as if the school monies are mine; yet I have to ensure the continuous smooth-running of the school. Another financial survival strategy is to engage in ‘gentlemen’s agreements’ with business people. When the going gets tough and there are absolutely no funds in the school account, I plead with service providers to supply services and pay in the following financial year.

Four-in-one employee

Due to financial challenges in the school, I have learnt to survive by employing a ‘four-in one’ employee for school maintenance. I have a security guard that is multi-skilled. In one man I have a guard, carpenter, plumber, electrician, basically every maintenance expertise. I make it a point that when professional expertise is enlisted, I instruct my guard to observe everything that is done by those people, so that in future he can attempt those tasks on his own. To boost the finances at school we engage in a number of fundraising events. The following picture was taken when the school conducted a fundraising event:



Figure 3.3: Rojavu’s school fundraising event

Seeking sponsorships is one of survival mechanisms. The poverty levels in the community I am serving are very rife. Therefore, parents cannot afford to buy the school uniform. One of the local non-profit organisations volunteered to purchase school uniforms for the needy learners. Below are pictures that were taken on the day those uniforms were handed to those learners:



Figure 3.4: Rojavu’s school uniform donation

I also count on persuading my colleagues to persevere under the difficult circumstances in which they are working. Teachers on a daily basis are facing the challenges of observing

learners from poor backgrounds. Our learners fall sick during the school day. When we phone parents, they have no means to come and pick them up. Many a times teachers end up taking these kids to the clinic using their own cars at their own cost. I keep reminding my colleagues that what they are doing is for God, not just for those kids or their parents. We have to await blessings in the future.

I believe in leading from the front. It is important to lead from the front and show learners how things are done. There is an English expression that says “learners are good imitators not good listeners”, which means that when learners observe their educators/parents doing things; they will always imitate them in return. I prefer to lead by example. This works equally for teachers.

A dream comes true

At the end, my sacrifice of running two schools paid off when the mobile classes were replaced by the ‘state of the art’ school that was built between 2008 and 2010. The new school buildings were handed over to us on 10 August 2010. It is still incredible to think how far I have come when I look at my school buildings today. The following picture is my school in its current form:



The new structure consists of 26 classrooms, an administration block, a computer room, school library, 3 multipurpose classrooms, decent ablution blocks for boys and girls, as well as for the staff and a

Figure 3.5: Rojavu’s new school

beautiful Grade R facility.

The achievement of the new school was a ‘dream coming true’ for me and the community. It is now history that this school once operated within a dilapidated structure. This is a good story to tell in this community because finally learners were able to access education close by and the community had a school of their own for the first time in the history of the village.

However ‘all that glitters is not gold.’ I now have a good new school but still have some challenges. One of the challenges is safety and security as the school is within a community with a high unemployment rate. Since all the learners are from disadvantaged families and occupying the RDP housing, the school was ranked Quintile 1. It was declared a ‘no-fee’ school. However, the challenge is that the school has a Section 21 status without function (c). This, therefore, means that the school does not have a full financial management as some financial aspects are controlled by the State. If you are limited in finances it doesn’t give you a scope to come up with new things.

I was initially appointed to run a small rural school with poor facilities. Suddenly, I was made to run an infrastructure that is ‘state of the art.’ To begin with, the learners were not used to the modern toilet facilities. In our first few months, most of our ablution facilities were broken. That was when I started feeling that maybe I’m not needed in this facility anymore. I had to sit down with the learners and teach them how to use the new toilet facilities. We do not have cleaners, and therefore learners themselves have to keep their school premises clean. I remember that at some stage I had to clean the walls and toilets with them. They then realized that ‘this man means business.’

An agent of transformation

I am glad that I have played a significant role in transforming my ‘farm school’ to the ‘state of the art’ institution it is today. The type of experience that I acquired during the school transformation taught me a number of lessons: to work with people collectively, to believe in myself and to have a vision. There is an expression that says “if everyone can clean his premises the entire world will be clean.” In South Africa, there is a need to start a Leadership School where we can learn the art of winning, developing government institutions, mentor others and instil in our learners good working habits.

THABISILE'S STORY

The handy woman

Thabisile: It was a Monday afternoon when I received a call from Nonhlanhla who is my colleague principal; I wondered what it was about. She then asked if she could pay me a short visit for a chat. I agreed. When she broke the news that she was pursuing her Masters' and would like me to be part of her dissertation, I was excited. My name is Thabisile and this is my story.

My humble beginnings

My origin is where everybody around is poor. I grew up in a deep rural area in Bergville, where poverty was just a norm, such that I was not the only child without school shoes. Nevertheless, I did not feel that I was struggling because almost everybody in the area was the same. Besides, I had never experienced a better life than this one, so I thought, this is the life. It was only when I grew older and got exposed to other lives, that I realised that “ha! I am coming from such a poor background!”

I come from a family of six. Both my parents were not privileged in terms of accessing education. My father never went to school. My mother was schooled to Grade Two. I, therefore, come from a very humble home. Neither of my parents ever had a decent job. But my mother, my source of motivation, despite the odds would do everything to ensure I received education. As a family, we had one goat. We were looking after this goat. I still recall the pain I felt one day when mummy told us: “This goat does not belong to us anymore.” I asked (in tears): “Hawu ma! Why didn't you tell us all this time?” Her reply was: “Where do you think I found the money to pay your secondary school fees? I sold this goat!”

My hectic school days

My school days were not fascinating. I had to walk 20km to school because my mother could not afford the ten cents bus fare. When I was doing STD 8, I was supposed to attend morning classes (which commenced at 7h00); as well as afternoon classes. I could not make it for

morning classes because there was no watch to tell me what time it was. I could not afford to attend afternoon classes as well. It was not safe to stay till late in the afternoon because I would have to walk alone when other students would be using a bus.

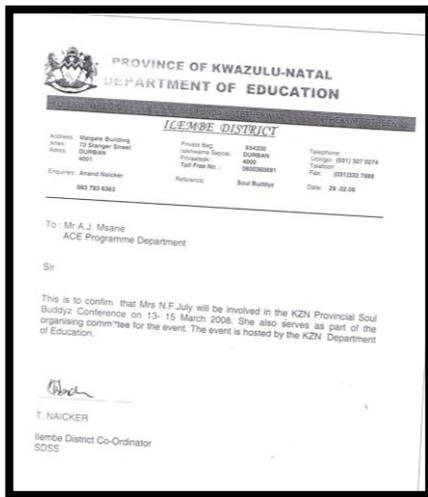
I received very bad treatment from unsympathetic teachers who would not bother to ask why I was always late for school. In winter, I would arrive to class freezing. The teacher would punish me. My hands were so hard because of the frost, such that when the teacher hit me the stick would sound 'qhu, not phaca'. I also was punished for failing to attend in the afternoons as well.

Becoming a teacher

Teaching was not my first choice. My first choice was Nursing, not because I liked it, but because while training, I would be getting paid. Then I would be able to help my mom. Unfortunately, I was not accepted at a Nursing college. Later, however, I was offered a bursary by the Roman Catholic Church which enabled me to enter a teachers' training college to become a qualified teacher.

It is incredible to think that I have been at the same school for twenty seven years. I have been here since my first day of teaching, 23 May 1989. The name of my school is Nkanyezi Primary School (pseudonym). This was a very small school. It had just one block of classrooms and very few teachers.

I was the youngest teacher, very active and involved in a number of activities like coaching the netball team. I was also responsible for the Soul Buddyz programme in my school. I enjoyed a memorable experience of serving in the committee that was organising a provincial Soul Buddyz event in 2008. The following is a letter that was written to my circuit manager to that effect:



What impressed me the most was reading the part that said I was serving in a Provincial committee. I said: “Wa! This is me! It means I am doing great. I am making a difference in people’s lives, to be selected from so many schools in the province.”

Figure 3.6: Thabisile’s artefact – a letter to the circuit manager

I also took an initiative to introduce the library service to our learners in school. There was no functional library in my school at this time and I began to attend workshops on how to incorporate a library in my school. I wanted to make a difference. My involvement in school librarianship turned out to be the milestone of my career. It opened doors for me, for example, it enabled me to enter a competition for the National Teacher Awards (NTA). Looking back, 2008 stands out as the year that I will remember with pride, because I came first in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province for the category of school librarianship, the award of which is illustrated in the photograph shown below:



Whenever I look at this award, it makes me feel proud. My name is inscribed on it, and when I retire, I will take it home. It is mine. It remains the most exciting award that I have ever received from the DoE.

Figure 3.7: Thabisile’ NTA award

My management journey

The school grew and got to a point where there were vacant posts for acting Heads of Departments (HODs). Two of us were voted into office by our own colleagues. Some years later, I was promoted to Deputy Principal (DP) and subsequently to the principal's position in January 2012.

School management challenges

Principalship came with its own challenges. I remember my first day as principal. I was very scared. I recall very well that before I stepped out from the car, I prayed: "Now God, You've given me this; please give me the strength to face whatever challenge that comes my way." There is so much that one has to do such that I miss the good old days. I certainly miss my days as post level one. I am no longer hands on with things I was able to do before, for example, being a school librarian. I also cannot participate in the Soul Buddyz programme as I did before. I am happy as a principal, but I am sad that there are things I am no longer able to do because of the administrative and management responsibilities attached to my position. Not a single teacher was prepared to take over my extra-curricular tasks such as taking care of the library and the Soul Buddyz programme when I got promoted. I pleaded without success, even when I promised them I would give them all the support they required. They just told me to my face that: "your boots are too big for anybody's feet to fit in." Therefore, the general lack of support from members of staff became the very first thorn in my new position as head of the school.

Finances are a huge matter of concern in my school. It is located in an affluent area, just behind a middle class suburb at Umhlali (only separated by the fence from the suburb). As such it poses a challenge to our school as it is ranked as Quintile 4; yet is serving communities that are housed in RDP housing. Some community members live in shacks. The unemployment and poverty rates in the area from where my students come are rife. Since none of my students come from the rich area where the school is located, they either come by 'omalume' (uncles driving learner vans) or by train. Even those that come by train walk quite a distance from the station. A few of them walk to and from school.

Due to a Quintile ranking of 4, the school receives minimal subsidy from the State. This affects our National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). Since my school learner

enrolment is above 800, yet it is a Quintile 4, the school then qualifies for only one cook that is paid by the State. You then ask yourself: “Is it possible for one cook to cook for 800 learners?”

Running a school that has been given a wrong quintile ranking is so frustrating. The school fees are very low; yet more than fifty percent of parents do not pay. Grades R to 6 learners are supposed to pay one hundred and fifty Rand (R150.00) per year, while Grades 7 to 9 pay two hundred and fifty Rand (R250.00). However, some parents cannot afford to pay as a substantial number of these families live on social grants and are therefore entitled not to pay school fees. When I did my research in 2014, I discovered that of my 800 learners, 523 were from families who received a social grant. This means that only 277 parents or 35% pay towards the upkeep of the school. Besides that these parents rely on social grant for survival, they actually cannot afford to pay school fees because they have to pay train fare or omalume every month. Sometimes I am tempted to tell the parents who are receiving a social grant and therefore not paying for their child’s/children’s education “the Department has made different schools for different people. If you cannot afford the school fees, then take your child to a no-fee school, because if you do not pay school fees, you are causing trouble for me.” However, due to policies, I cannot do that.

Non-payment of school fees by most parents does not make life any easier at all. We still have to pay for services like telephone, water and electricity. The municipality charges us the same fees as other people in the neighbourhood. You know, sometimes I feel like I am trapped in the middle.

Keeping the wheels turning

Despite the challenges I encounter on a daily basis, I always ensure that I keep the school going. To see to it that the school runs smoothly, I have learnt to devise a variety of survival tactics. I cannot sit down and relax. I have made friends with the community for the school to survive. As a principal I approach various people and organisations for help. For instance with regard to the issue of one cook for the whole learner population, I pleaded with the NSNP supplier to hire and pay the cook for us. I have in a way become a beggar

When I assumed duties as principal someone had to take care of the library. I approached an ex-learner from the school to volunteer her services to keep the library going. I then went out

and looked for sponsorships. Fortunately, I managed to get two sponsors, each giving us five hundred Rand (R500.00) towards this, so we were able to pay this ex-learner a small stipend of one thousand Rand (R1 000.00) a month from 2013.

Recently, we were ‘rescued’ by a company called Umhlali Quarry Heights when it donated chairs to our school. Adrian and his wife, a local couple added more chairs for us. I am grateful to have people who are so generous. Even teachers in the school have learnt to ask for sponsorships. Through the efforts of Miss Khuzwayo and Mr Dlamini (who is late), we were able to get the state of the art Grade R class and that was worth five hundred and forty thousand Rand (R540 000.00). These colleagues got this sponsorship from Isibaya Casino. The following pictures show the state of the art Grade R class and the donated chairs:



Figure 3.8: Thabisile’s Grade R class



Figure 3.9: Thabisile’s donated chairs

I have also fostered community partnership for my school to survive, such that it has become every ‘neighbour’s baby’. My school is struggling in such a way that most community members in the neighbourhood are aware of the condition of the school. So, wherever they go, if they see something that can be of use to the school, they do not hesitate to push it in our direction. Mrs Pamela Jacob recently approached people who were removing the old paving and asked them to give it to the school; hence the following picture shows a paved section of our school yard:



Figure 3.10: Thabisile’s school yard

A White family in the neighbourhood donated the following jungle gym to the school, when their child had outgrown its use:



Figure 3.11: Thabisile’s school’s jungle gym

An Indian lady by the name of Daisy recently opened a face book page called Ballito Helping Hands. Daisy’s intention was to invite people to help my neglected school. Through Daisy’s face book page, we recently got a sponsorship for renovation of our multi-purpose room. Numerous ladies in the neighbourhood who have accounts with Woolworths selected us for ‘My School’ program. Through this the school raises three hundred or four hundred Rand from Woolworths per month.

Leading by example

I also believe in leading by example. On yearly basis, the Link Church (a church close by the school) members choose a day to come and help in various ways, such as painting, planting flowers and general cleaning of the school. On this day about one hundred people participate in the cleaning project. I always make it a point that I lead by example, by ascertaining that I am always part of the team. I can’t be an on-looker while everybody is working.

One of the ways that keep me going is by embracing diversity. My school embraces diversity and this is well represented by the learners and teachers. We have teachers who are Zulus, Xhosas, Indians, and Whites and recently we have been joined by a Ghanaian teacher. Learners represent this diversity as well. Although there is a majority of Zulus, some are Xhosa and some learners are from Venda. The collage below depicts this diversity:



To embrace this diversity, I ensure that whenever we celebrate the Heritage Day, all groups dress in their traditional attire and also bring traditional food to be shared. During our celebrations, every group presents any activity that has some cultural significance to them. These include activities like Indian dance, Zulu dance, Xhosa dance and Venda dance. This makes everyone feel welcome, being part of the family, being recognized and accepted. This helps people to learn to tolerate one another, love one another and also to work with one another harmoniously. I hope that this yearly event in my school will help reduce xenophobic

Figure 3.12: Thabisile’s collage – embracing diversity

attacks that seem to ruin the relationships in our country at present. It is unfortunate that while I was making this collage, I could not find any picture of relevance to the White people’s culture.

I am content with service to humankind

Despite the challenges I face on a day-to-day basis, the service to humankind has made me develop a passion for my job. I have absolutely no regrets that I chose teaching, and accepted a post to be the principal.

NALEDI'S STORY

The miracle worker

Naledi: In my entire teaching career I have never been awarded a chance to share my experiences. So, when my colleague invited me to participate in her study, I grabbed the opportunity. I am the kind of a person that likes to jump into things and gain experience. So I just said 'although I'm busy, with my very, very tight schedule, let me jump in. I want to see what this lady is doing.' This is my story of a miraculous journey from childhood to principalship. I am Naledi (pseudonym).

My aunt - my mother

I did not have a pleasant childhood. I wasn't brought up by my parents. I only got to know my mother when I saw her for the first time at the age of ten, when I was in STD 3. She was staying in Maphumulo. All along I knew my aunt, to be my mother. My aunt worked in a Scandinavian Christian Mission in a farm next to Stanger. I grew up very lonely, because I was the only child staying in the mission. We were struggling financially as my aunt was earning only eight Rand a month. To supplement her pay, aunty sold all sorts of vegetables, like madumbes, sweet potatoes, spinach, tomatoes and even mealies at times.

A miraculous fowl

My aunt is a Christian and used to pray a lot. There was this banana field by the house where she would always go and pray. One day her prayer was answered through a fowl appearing from nowhere. It was a Thursday afternoon when I saw this big chicken around the yard. We were living in a place that was surrounded by sugar cane fields. Aunty asked me to take that chicken and ask the neighbouring compounds if it belonged to anyone but people just shook their heads. Aunty then told me to put that fowl in an old hut where we used to keep our firewood. After two weeks the fowl laid about twenty eggs of which eighteen chicks survived. Aunty fed those chicks. Miraculously, all those chicks grew up; none of them died or was eaten by cats or by other predators. They started to breed themselves. We then started selling chickens. Aunty saved that money and decided to start a chicken business. That is how she raised money to send me to a secondary school.

My school days

I started school at a Mission where I stayed with aunt. The secondary school was very far from the Mission. My aunt had to raise bus fare. I only had my first pair of school shoes when I went to the secondary school in Form 1 (today's Grade 8). I still remember that my first pair was the well-known 'hush puppies' brand. I adored my shoes so much that on rainy days I would not wear them until I got to the bus. They were the only shoes I had.

Aunty's prayers

If it were not for my aunty's prayers, I would have not got money to go beyond Form 3 (today's Grade 10) with my studies. She used to say: "The birds are not worried about tomorrow. You must live like a bird that does not worry about what it is going to eat. You must trust God for everything for tomorrow." The missionaries miraculously offered me a loan after one of my aunt's prayers. I am ever so grateful to those missionaries for giving me the opportunity to go to Appelsbosch Teachers' College.

The money I got was only enough to cover college fees. I clearly remember that my biological mother coincidentally visited aunty's place on the day I was offered that loan. She signed the agreement that I was going to repay the loan after completing my studies. I recall that even the trunk that I used to pack my belongings as I was going to stay at the college came from her. The following is a picture thereof:



This trunk means the world to me. If it were not for my mother's visit on that day, I do not know where I would have packed my clothes.

Figure 3.13: Naledi's artefact – a trunk

In those days, our uniform consisted in part, of a pair of black panty-hose. I could not afford these. I always wore a pair of torn panty-hose, which I collected from rich girls. I also could not afford soap, so I would wait until all the girls finished bathing, but I would linger and pretend to clean the bathrooms. That gave me a chance to collect all the pieces of bath soap girls left behind which I would combine and use to soap myself. Otherwise, I would wash with pure water.

My bumpy ride as a teacher

I started teaching at Maphumulo in 1982 where I did not have good experiences as I was accused of being a serial killer after some of my colleagues died. After a thorough investigation, I was acquitted. I was promoted as HOD in 1997 and in June 2001 I got promoted to DP. But, again my life turned upside down when I was accused by the School Governing Body (SGB) of killing my principal who got shot in 2004. After being labelled ‘serial killer’, I started moving from one school to another, until I was ordered by Mr J.G. Govender, the Superintendent in Education Management (SEM) to act as principal at Lobi Primary School (pseudonym) in Lindelani, an informal settlement that is 5km from Stanger in September 2009. This is the school where I have been permanently placed as principal.

I only discovered when I got to this school that I had actually been recommended by the community to be the school’s principal. I had been a manager for an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Centre for quite some time in the area. The parents of most of the learners in Lobi Primary School were enrolled in my adult centre. They appreciated that they had learnt to read and write. They asked: “How come is it that we are in school for only two hours, and we are able to read and write; yet our own kids are there for the whole day, and are unable to read and write? We want the centre manager to come and assist our kids.” That is how I was appointed as principal.

Being in Lobi Primary – Quintile ranking, a thorn in the flesh

Being a principal came with its own challenges. When I initially reported at Lobi Primary School, I was told that I was going to serve there for three months because the school was going to close down and be converted to a Further Education and Training (FET) college. The school enrolment was too low, (88 learners) and the conditions were not favourable for teaching and learning. Due to the low numbers, the school had only three teachers; yet it

catered for eight grades (R to 7). The community believed there was no teaching and learning taking place in the school, and they were taking their children to other schools in the area. The school was chaotic and was such a mess. The grass was tall. The toilets were not functioning. There was no furniture. There were just scraps of desk frames lying in classrooms.

Classrooms falling apart

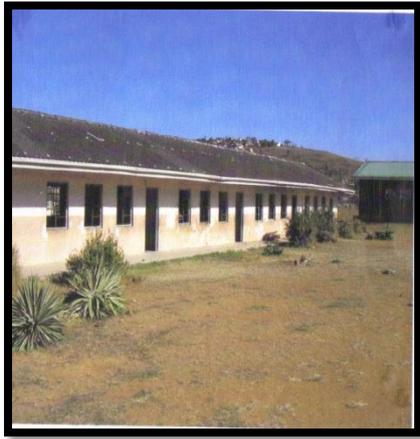
The lack of infrastructure is a serious challenge in my school. At the time of my arrival, the condition of the school was so pathetic such that I did not know where to start. I had a block of five classrooms that was falling apart. Even the window frames were falling. To this day, I am running the school from a store room because it has no administration block. This is the worst nightmare. Even my clerk has no space to do his work. My school has no library. It has no Science or Computer laboratory. So our learners are struggling.

Poverty levels are rife

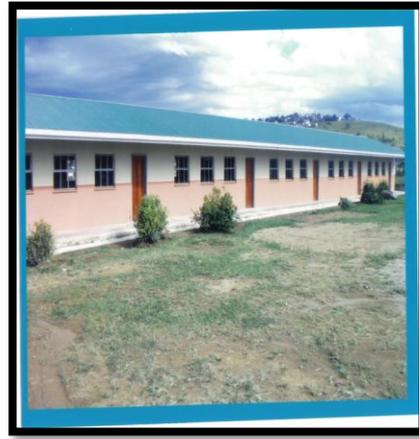
The poverty levels in the area where the school is located are rife. Most parents work in sugar cane farms and are therefore not earning much. That is why I consider quintile ranking a thorn in the flesh. When I came in 2009, the school was ranked as Quintile 5. Just imagine a school right in the informal settlement. The SGB accompanied me to Pietermaritzburg, the KZN head office to contest that. Although it was revised, our school quintile ranking of 3 is still a matter of concern. The wrong quintile ranking affects our school very badly because the funding that we are given by the DoE is very little. Last year for instance, I had to run the school with only one hundred and forty-five thousand Rand (R145 000.00) allocation from January to December.

Turning things around

I rely on knocking from door to door in order to survive, hence I had to stand up, and go knocking on doors to ask for donations. A company by the name of Unitrade came to my rescue by renovating classrooms. The following pictures show the state of the classrooms before and after Unitrade's assistance:



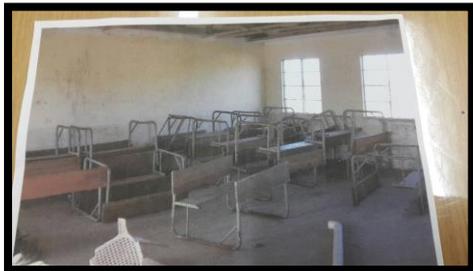
Before



Now

Figure 3.14: Naledi's school block

In addition to renovating classrooms, Unitrade also repaired our old desks. The pictures below show desks before and after repairs:



Before



Now

Figure 3.15: Naledi's school desks

Unitrade also donated school library books to the school. In 2013, they sponsored a jungle gym for our pre-school. In simple terms, Unitrade just adopted the school. Other companies also supported us. For example, African Bank donated five computers to the school. The local Taxi association, the Sathya Sai Organisation Group and Nedbank always donate school uniform to our needy learners. I have managed to achieve all of this, by going an extra mile, begging for assistance.

I devised means to turn things around by drawing on the support of volunteers. I said to myself, "I cannot do a thing (in a school with 8 grades) with three teachers because I was the fourth one." I sat down with my ABET teachers and said: "Guys, I have a problem in my

day school. Can we make two shifts? We will work with kids during the day, and come back late as I am doing, and teach the ABET students. I need you to volunteer. You are not going to be paid because the school has no money. Please guys, help me out.” Those ABET teachers helped me out.

When parents realised that there was improvement in the school, they brought their kids back in numbers. The school enrolment went up by more than hundred percent in 2010, rising to two hundred and seventy five learners. Today, I have five hundred and thirty five learners. Eventually, the DoE allocated me five extra teaching posts in 2011, thereby increasing the teaching staff from four to nine. Later, I was allocated a Grade R post and a tenth staff member. So my volunteers who served in 2010 helped turn things around.

One class, one garden

I introduced the idea of one class, one garden. To alleviate poverty, I sold the idea of vegetable gardens to teachers. In front of classrooms there were flower gardens. The following pictures display our flower gardens that were later replaced by vegetable gardens:



Before



After

Figure 3.16: Naledi’s one class, one garden project

Needy learners benefit from this project as teachers are able to pick vegetables and give them to these poor children in the afternoons. Therefore, no child will sleep on an empty stomach.

Community partnerships

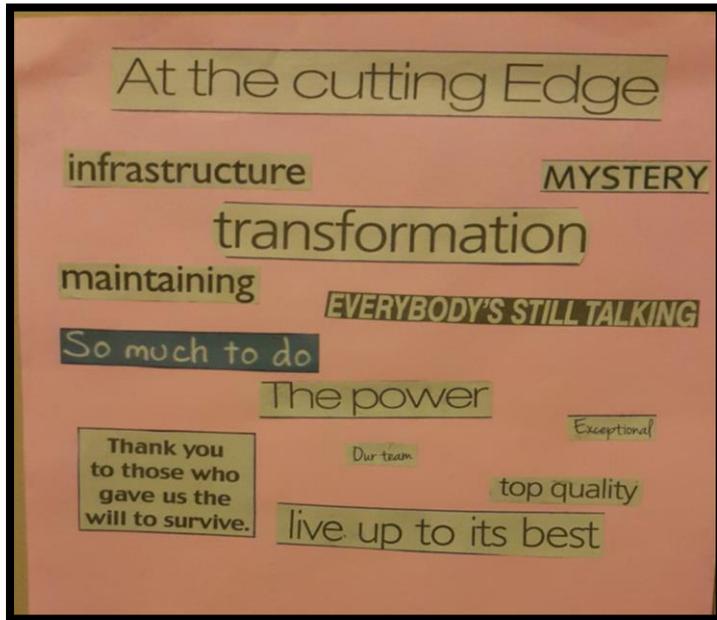
I also improved conditions by making the school a community centre. The DoE officials did not approve of the KwaDukuza Municipality's decision to build the toilets right in front of the school gate. So, instead of demolishing these, I decided to convert them into a school kitchen and a 'Phila mntwana' centre which is used by community members as a clinic that renders service for zero to five-year old children. This facility is meant to assist malnourished children. This assists community members that are not able to use community halls for health services because of complications posed by political affiliation in the Lindelani area. With this centre being in the school, every community member is free to bring their children. Even community members without children in the school also utilize this centre.

Fostering good relationships with the community leaders has also helped the school a lot. When I arrived at the school, I requested the SGB to introduce me to the ward councillor, who then said to me: "You do not have a problem in the school. You don't need to worry. If you need any help, just shout." I then told him: "Baba there is no water at the school." The following day he brought four Jojo tanks to the school with the stands and fitted them. I told him the grass is more than 2 metres tall. He also took it upon himself to see to it that grass was cut at no cost such which still continues today.

Community members have also developed a sense of ownership for the school such that even when there is a leaking pipe after school hours, they call me to report it. This happens even if learners erroneously leave taps open (as they don't realise it is open because the water has been switched off at the mains) and the service gets restored after school; they continue to call me if they see water running. The community has actually adopted me because I give so much of myself to building a school to improve the lives of their children.

I also engaged in changing the mind-set of the community. When I came here, the school uniform was black and white in colour. I sat down with the SGB and said: "My mother was wearing a black gym dress and a white shirt. I was wearing the same black and white; even our kids are wearing this. I think we must effect a change." The SGB agreed. Consequently, the school uniform was changed from black and white, to orange.

Whenever I look at my school today and reflect on how far I have come, the state in which it is, remains a *mystery* to me; hence the collage below:



I will never forget that when I came here towards the end of 2009, the DoE told me that I was going to run this school for three months; because it was on the verge of closing. *Everybody's still talking* in amazement about the existence of this school to this day. With all the transformation that has happened in the school, I *still have so much to do*. I don't have a

Figure 3.17: Naledi's collage – at the cutting edge

library, Science laboratory, administration block, to mention just a few. *By the power* of God I believe miracles could still happen again, because I have seen and I believe in these miracles. And I know that if anything happens by the power of God, it will be *exceptional*. My God does not just give me ordinary things, He gives me great things. I thank my *team* which is doing a great job. Today's enrolment of five hundred and thirty-five against eighty-eight in 2009, proves that my team is *top quality* and we *live up to the best* that we can do. We therefore *thank those who gave us the will to survive*.

My school motto keeps me going

We must dare to succeed

Dare to succeed

Dare to spread your wings and fly

Dare to love with all your might

Dare to stand out amongst the crowd

Dare to live the life you truly want

Dare to make a stand for what you believe

Dare to face the challenge

Dare to dream and make it real

In a nutshell, dare to succeed

JEFF'S STORY

The activist principal

Jeff: It was a bit strange for me to receive a call from my colleague who is a principal in one of the high schools in the area. She requested me to fit her in for a short visit at school. I agreed though I was wondering what it was all about. I was so thrilled when she told me she had identified me for her Masters study. What fascinated me the most was being offered an opportunity to share my experiences as principal of a school in this era. I am Jeff (pseudonym) and here is my story.

Who am I?

I am Jeff. I am currently serving as principal at Cubs Primary School (pseudonym) which is located in KwaDukuza. I was born in the barracks in central Durban. The term 'barracks' was used to refer to residential areas for people that worked for Railways and the Municipality. Families were allocated a place to stay according to the jobs the parents performed. I lived in the Railway barracks because my father worked at the harbour. Life there was pathetic because we did not even have a decent toilet system. The bucket system was in operation.

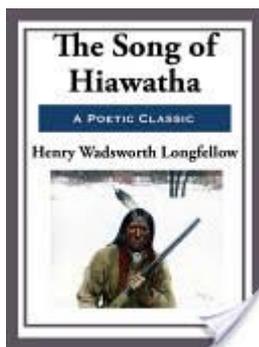
My school days

When I was young, schools were then categorized gender wise. My first school was all boys' school in Durban. This school was founded in 1895 and was formerly known as the Natal Government Railway School as it catered for the education of boys whose parents worked for the railways and harbours. With the establishment of several barracks for the Indian community around the school the name was changed to Depot Road Government Indian School.

I cherish the moments I had in my first school. We were one of the best schools in the whole of Durban for sports and music, but it was music in which we really, really excelled. I remember that in 1963 when I was doing STD 1, Mrs Joseph trained us to perform Hiawatha. This is a long poem about the life of Hiawatha, a Red Indian chief who led a tribe in America. Mrs Joseph wrote the complete music dialogue and got us to go on stage and

perform it. She converted that poem into a musical. We were a group of about fifty. We performed as if we were like the acclaimed Drakensberg Boys' Choir.

"A musical performance to remember" was performed at the Durban City Hall. Although we lived in central town we were not allowed to go there because of apartheid. To this day, I still remember and sing the following song as it always sticks in my mind:



Kill for us a deer with antlers!"
Forth into the forest straightaway
All alone walked Hiawatha
Proudly, with his bow and arrows;

Figure 3.18: Jeff's favourite song

I suddenly experienced an abrupt end to a happy time at school. The changing political landscape of this country marked a sad end to my happy schooling in the mid-1980s. That was when the apartheid government introduced the 'Group Areas Act' which kicked us out of the Central Business District (CBD) and dumped us in a township in Chatsworth. The Law was so intense that no 'non-white' could live within a 30km radius of the CBD. I was eleven years old and in STD 4 then. This was the beginning of a series of challenges as we were forced out of a well resourced school in the CBD, to an extremely poor township school. Conditions were pathetic. The school was 7km away from home and we had to walk. We began to experience territorial battles, where there were 'no go' areas, depending on which side of the township you came from.

It was when we moved to Chatsworth that my community called me a 'human rights lawyer.' In the harsh apartheid days, boys would ever so often be arrested because of their involvement in territorial fights. As an energetic young man, my task was that every afternoon I would go to the police and plead with them to release the boys. In most cases, I would get them released; hence my local community named me 'lawyer.'

Becoming a teacher

I was drawn to the teaching fraternity by fate. Throughout my high school days, I was dreaming of pursuing studies towards a degree in Law. My dream of becoming a lawyer was shattered when I completed STD 10 (today's equivalent of Grade 12). My parents could not afford to send me to a university. My father was earning only thirty Rand (R30.00) a month. When I completed Matric, Springfield College of Education was offering a bursary of one hundred and twenty five Rand per year (R125.00). So I went to the college and enrolled to become a teacher.

I felt privileged to be appointed as a teacher to the primary school where I attended as a little boy when we were kicked out of the CBD. I was happy when the school authorities changed its name back to its original name - Depot Road Memorial Primary School. The Department wanted to retain the name of the old school because of its dynamic and strong history.

Being a teacher in my 'alma mater' was such a great experience. I was privileged to serve under a very supportive principal who taught me many lessons. I have never forgotten one of the lessons I learnt from him in my eighteen years as a principal, I always relate this to my teachers. He said these words in 1978 and to this day, they vibrate in my ears, "always as a teacher, make sure you have a piece of chalk in your hand. Whenever you get angry, crash that chalk, never crash the child."

Moving into principal's position and its challenges

When I got promoted as principal in Phoenix in 1998, it was like jumping into fire. Rejection was my reception. I received absolutely no support at my arrival. I felt like I was thrown at the deep-end.

The different Departments of Education amalgamated with the change in the political landscape in the country. There was such a sudden change when I became principal and there were no more cleaning services, no textbooks were supplied and all other resources were taken away.

I walked into a school where the school fees per year, was only two Rand (R2.00) per learner. The grass was tall. Phoenix is a very poor community; hence people from different parts of the community were selling things to children. The school was utilised by certain external

organisations, paying a rent of two Rand (R2.00) per month. There was no security. Drug addicts would utilise the school for all sort of illegal activities at night. I had to be at school at 6h45 so that I could go around with the caretaker and pick up condoms. The drug addicts would even defecate and leave their stools in the children's washing basins. That is the culture I found. My first three months as principal was a horrific experience. I had to devise survival mechanisms.

Finances - my worst challenge

So far I consider the finances to be the worst challenge in running the school. This is due to the minimum funding that is offered by the State, hiding behind the curtain of quintile ranking. Imagine a school being ranked as Quintile 5 in a township of Phoenix. I recall that the government subsidy for my school in 1999 was only nineteen thousand Rand (R19 000.00). Funding from the Department was absolutely pathetic. The question is: "how does a principal manage the school with such little funding?" Money becomes such an important criterion to run the school. When I became principal of Cubs Primary School (in Stanger) in 2013, I experienced similar financial difficulties. This school is ranked Quintile 5, yet it has learners from poor communities. The school has a budget of seven hundred thousand Rand (R700 000.00); yet due to its Quintile ranking of 5 the government subsidy is only sixty-five thousand Rand (R65 000.00) a year. With this money I have to pay for municipality services like water and electricity; the telephone account; the security company; the cleaners; the office stationery; cleaning equipment and consumables; and many other necessities for the day-to-day running of the school.

Poverty and its effects have a serious bearing on my work. Working in schools with learners from poor communities poses a number of challenges. One of these is abusing poverty as a reason for failing to maintain a clean school environment. Quite often you will observe that learners from poor backgrounds have a tendency of throwing litter anywhere on the school premises.

How I turned things around

Turning things around became my mission. I had to bring the SGB on board to put things into place. I introduced the idea of putting a school tuck-shop on tender. When I presented the budget in September, I recommended an increase of school fees from two Rand (R2.00) to

two hundred Rand (R200.00) per year. Staff members initially resented such change, but they soon came round to my way of thinking.

We reviewed the rental charge paid by the organisations. The greatest challenge was to change the community mind-set. Community members were raving, but the SGB was calm and said “Let’s face the reality. We’ve got no more cleaners.” By raising funds we were able to change a lot of things. We were then able to employ four cleaners. I then started resourcing the school, buying essential cleaning equipment. By year 2001, the school became the ‘household name’ in the whole of Phoenix. This changed the entire mind-set of all the teachers.

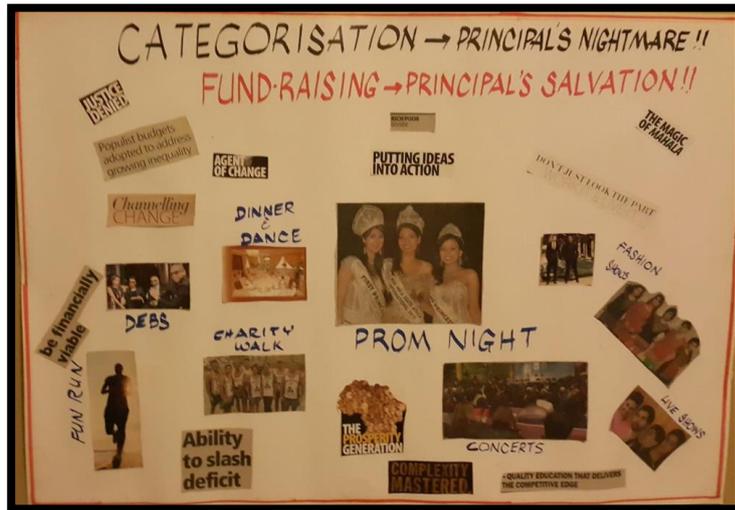
To turn things around I also ensured that the drug addicts came on board. I addressed a group of smokers that were messing the school at night. I made them understand why it was important to take care of the school. Some of them had children in the school. I tried to get them to realise that if they destroyed the school, they will destroy their own children. I told them that the school was the only institution they had for their children. As they were in drugs and unemployed, their children were their last hope. The way ‘those thugs’ changed was unbelievable. They pledged to help me. When the roof tiles broke, they repaired the roof. They would sort out window panes and even assisted with painting the school. They virtually ended up owning the school. In the fifteen years I was in the school, we never had a single broken window pane that remained unattended. In 2013, I was transferred to serve as principal at my current school in Stanger, where the challenges were no different.

Networking

Although I experienced challenges posed by categorization of schools in Phoenix, I have always found networking to be easing the burden carried by principals. We would always meet the challenges by supporting one another. Underperforming schools would be twinned with performing ones, resulting in a drastic overall improvement of the circuit. We even rotated meeting venues so that we knew conditions in every school. Then we were able to support more needy schools. We formed a Poverty Reduction Association (formed from 18 schools). This organisation feeds breakfast to all poor learners in the schools. It also supplies these poor learners with warm winter blankets, gloves and the like.

Fundraising

I consider fundraising as a solution to school financial challenges. I have found fundraising to be an ongoing exercise. This is well expressed by the collage below:



I rely on a number of fundraising drives which range from deb's ball, to proms, fashion shows, live shows, concerts, dinner dances, fun runs and charity walks. Now that the school was ranked as Quintile 5, even though it is situated in a township in Phoenix, I had to become an *agent of change*. I

Figure 3.19: Jeff's collage – fundraising, principal's salvation

believe so much in action, hence *'don't talk; you got to walk the talk.'* I make it a point that every activity I engage in is *financially viable*. The budget of the school has to *'slash deficit'*, considering that funds are limited. Despite all the challenges I face as a principal, I still ensure that my school offers quality learning and teaching, hence *complexity mastered*.

Instilling good values to children also goes a long way in making the school a success. I always remind my learners that *'cleanliness is next to Godliness'* and that *'poverty must never be used as an excuse not to be clean.'* When children are exposed to clean practices and are constantly taught clean habits, they eventually become clean. Litter was a major issue at my current school when I arrived. Not a single class had a proper bin, hence litter was strewn anywhere. Despite the lack of sufficient funds and the constant moans of being Quintile 5, I organised a simple fund-raising activity and purchased bins for each and every class; as well more to be placed at vantage points around the school. When I arrived at this school the yard was overgrown with weeds and the grass was almost knee-high. The trees were unkempt and the yard was shabby in appearance. To improve the image of our school premises, I also undertook the task of trimming and pruning the trees and painting them arctic white in colour

and cutting the grass. From the beginning of 2014, the entrance of the school has a very pristine look, as shown in the picture below:

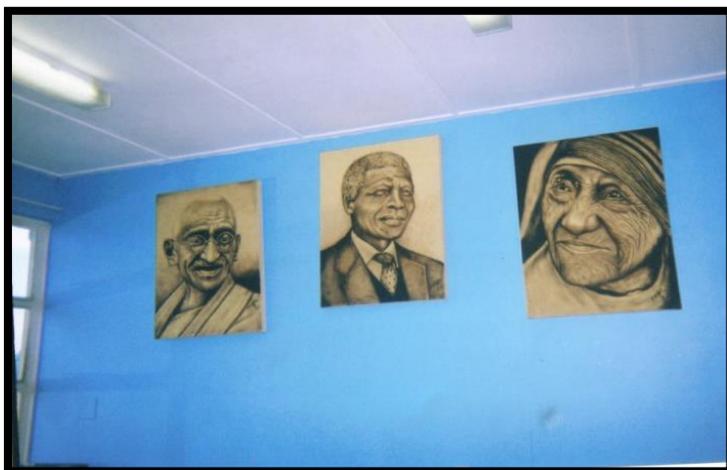


The school grounds suddenly became free of litter and very neat in appearance. Our school suddenly became much in demand by community based organisations wanting to host sporting events and family fun days. I readily accommodated them for a fee and managed to raise much needed funds for the school.

Figure 3.20: Jeff's school yard

Role-modelling

I have also found preaching the gospel of role-modelling to be working for my school. Educators, learners and parents need role models to inspire them, motivate them and shape their lives. Success comes to those who live by values and beliefs and who are inspired to unleash their true potential and achieve their goals. The following artefact shows paintings which hang in my office:



These paintings are the three of the greatest 'saints' in modern history whose lives and contributions to the betterment of their fellow beings are a testimony of what can be achieved if all humanity embraces their values and ideals. These paintings of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and

Figure 3.21: Jeff's artefact – office wall paintings

Mother Theresa help everyone entering my office know my vision and mission.

I have no regrets for being here

Considering that my first choice was Law, it is very strange that today I have absolutely no regrets for being a teacher. I love my job and I am proud of my achievements. I am very happy that despite the challenges of underfunding imposed by school categorization, I have managed to take the school I am managing to new heights. I always tell my staff, “If you want joy from teaching, you got to give a lot. You must be able to sacrifice your time, and know that a reward you get at the end, no amount of money can buy that.”

Conclusion

In this chapter, narrative accounts of four principals were presented. These have enhanced my understanding of how much principals deal with in their day-to-day practice. Through these narratives I have come to know how these professionals experience school categorization. In the next chapter, the ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual frame and poetic enquiry are employed to identify school principals’ challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization.

Chapter Four

Moving into new spaces: Learning about the principals’ challenges of everyday practice

Introduction

This chapter explores the principals’ challenges of everyday practice, and therefore responds to the research question: “*What are school principals’ challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization?*” I have divided this chapter into three sections. Section A employs the ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework and poetic inquiry to understand the challenges each of the four school principals (that participated in this study) faces on a daily basis. The ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework explains that the lived experience must be understood in all its complexity. In Section B, I present the common challenges experienced by the four principals. Section C presents a discussion and analysis of these challenges.

SECTION A

Principals’ lives in dilemmatic spaces

In this section, I offer an analysis of the challenges school principals face daily, by employing a ‘dilemmatic spaces’ conceptual framework. For each principal that participated in the study, I begin by developing a **pantoum poem** (composed from each narrative) to evocatively represent the structural and material challenges around schools categorized according to quintiles. I then offer each principal’s brief **personal perspective**, since it is important to understand who principals are outside their professional life; and how this informs the choices they make, in responding to everyday challenges. Thereafter I present the **school context**. Finally I present the individual’s **professional perspective** (by using a diagrammatic representation explaining each principal’s dilemmatic space, accompanied by selected excerpts from the storied narrative presented in Chapter Three).

ROJAVU

Rojavu's Poem

Caught in the middle

Life has never been easy

Infrastructure a serious challenge

Dilapidated structure

A hazard for teachers and learners

Infrastructure a serious challenge

Limited in finances

A hazard for teachers and learners

Quintile ranking a challenge

Limited in finances

Dilapidated structure

Quintile ranking a challenge

Life has never been easy

Personal perspective: *Being the son of a 'man of clothe'*

Rojavu is an African male. He is the first child and only boy in his family as he states “*I was born ... the first child... I have three siblings and I am the only boy.*” Rojavu describes his childhood as follows:

Being the son of a 'man of clothe' exposed me to being a traveller, as I had to move with my parents from place to place. As a result of travelling I never stayed in any school for long. At times, my parents were forced to leave me behind to complete certain grades, such as the years I spent with my grandparents.

Rojavu was surrounded by family members who were steeped in a Christian way of life. Due to his father's church responsibilities and movement from one place to another, Rojavu had to be 'on the move' for much of his life. His grandparents also played an important role in his growing up years. It is a norm in rural South African families to rely on grandparents for raising children under compelling circumstances (Ruiters & Wildschutt, 2010).

Moving into Teaching

After completing Matric, Rojavu narrates...

My parents wanted me to go straight to a university or college. I felt that I had to work for at least three years in order to cover my tuition fees so that my father could focus on my siblings. Therefore, I started teaching without a 'teaching licence.'

Reports show that "a third of existing teachers are untrained in Southern African countries" (Dladla & Moon, 2002, p. 3) such that teaching without a qualification is a norm. The DoE reports that in 1994 thirty-six percent of South African teachers were either unqualified or under-qualified (Department of Education, 2005). Rojavu was also in the category of teachers that taught without qualifications.

In those three years I was able to accumulate a sizeable amount of money to carry on with my studies... I decided to pursue a teaching qualification. In 1991, I was enrolled in KwaGqikazi Teachers' College.

Rojavu narrates ... "The first two schools in which I served after qualifying as a teacher were located in farms", such that he maintains "It was like I was meant to serve in farm schools." He got a "promotion as principal in 2000" within his farm school.

Rojavu's school context

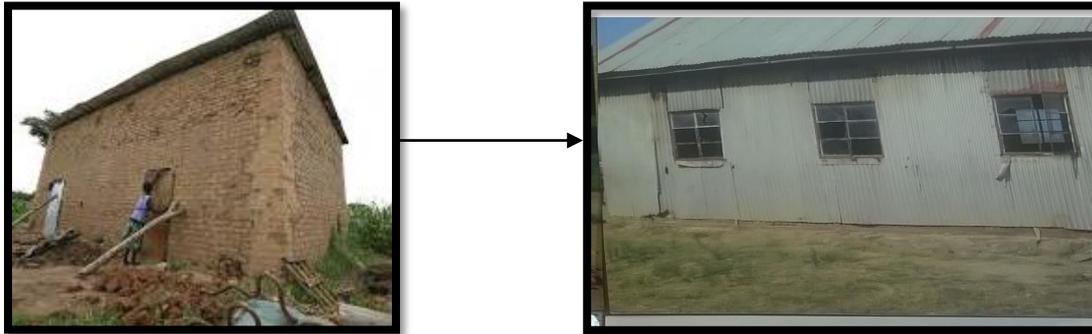


Figure 4.1: Rojavu's school context

It is year 2000. Rojavu is promoted as principal to a farm primary school.

My promotion as principal in 2000 was quite a milestone... My school used to be a farm institution that catered for farm workers' children before 1994. The history of the school can be traced way back to 1910 when it was started as a missionary school to this far during times of a new democratic South Africa.

In the apartheid era farm schools used to cater “for black children on white farms” (Christie & Gaganakis, 1989, p. 77). There were a lot of challenges in these kinds of schools which ranged from “limited levels of schooling [to] extremely poor facilities” (Christie & Gaganakis, 1989, p. 78). Fataar (1997) describes farm schools as the massively under-resourced institutions. In fact “farm schools [were] the poorest in apartheid education” (Christie & Gaganakis, 1989, p. 88). Rojavu's school was no exception. It experienced the same challenges as he states that ...

Life has never been easy in this category of schools ... Infrastructure has always been a serious challenge for our school... We had 6 classrooms... We had packed classes with an average of 100 per room.

Professional perspective

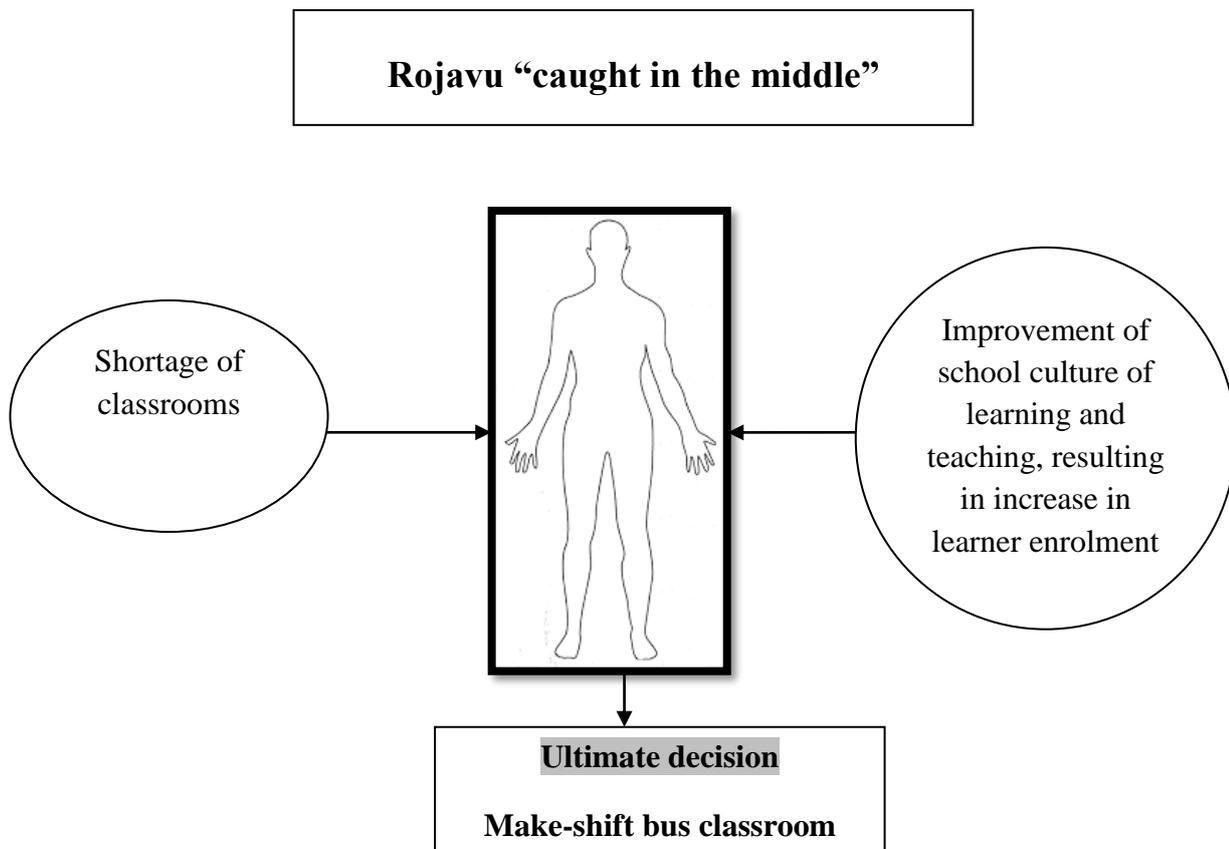


Figure 4.2: Rojavu's dilemmatic space

When Rojavu was appointed as principal of the farm school, he narrates that...

When I assumed my position as principal I tried to improve the school's culture of learning and teaching (COLT). This situation resulted in an increase in learner enrolment in my school. In 2000 when I became principal, the school only had 250 learners and 6 educators. In 2001, there was an increase in the enrolment to 640 learners and during this time there was a shortage of classrooms.

The absence of a culture of learning and teaching (COLT) in South African schools "is a major concern" (Lethoko, Heystek, & Maree, 2006, p. 311), hence principals attempt to inculcate this culture. The dilemma for Rojavu is that as he improves the COLT, this results in an increase in learner enrolment. On the other hand, there is a shortage of classrooms. He anguishes "I was caught in the middle."

As a manager Rojavu had to do something about the situation...

I tried to think out of the box. There is an English expression that says 'desperate times call for desperate measures.'... I decided to approach a local scrap metal company that was buying scrap vehicles, stripping them and selling parts. I said: "Guys I can see in your premises you've got a double-decker bus. Can you take this bus and place it in my school, remove all the seats and convert it into a make-shift classroom?"

By using a bus that was about to be scrapped Rojavu manages to address the challenge of classroom shortage. However, there comes another issue...

This type of classroom had its own disadvantages and challenges. In summer it was very hot, in winter it was very cold. Over time it developed holes underneath that allowed reptiles to enter into this makeshift classroom. This was just a hazard for teachers and learners.

The above excerpt expresses what was put forward by Groundwater-Smith et al. (2011) where they likened dilemmas to being "trapped between a rock and a hard place" (p. 12) such that whatever decision is taken, is accompanied by difficulties. However, despite the challenges accompanying this bus classroom, it was used by the school for several years as Rojavu states that "This bus was used by the Grade 1's between the years 2001 to 2005." In this way Rojavu managed to address his psychological state of being "Caught in the middle."

From scrap-yard to school-yard

Rojavu's dilemma arises out of his need to ensure that the increasing learner population who live in poor farming communities can be accommodated in his farm school; versus the lack of infrastructure to accommodate more learners. His childhood tells that he was exposed to travelling because of his father's job. This could have been by bus, which explains why he sees the bus as a solution to his school floor space problem. To address the dilemma in question, Rojavu removes wheels from the bus to ascertain it stays stationary as he cites "...tow the bus to my school...removed the wheels and put it on the ground."

As a principal, Rojavu wants to make sure the bus provides a school-room to enable the farm children to attend school without the disruption of moving to another school – which is what happened to him as a child. The removal of the bus's wheels was an important act of stability and creativity/innovation to his leadership and more importantly the options and choices that

he had to negotiate to manage the psychological distress he experienced due to a shortage of classrooms. It reflected Rojavu's leadership in that he looked beyond the obvious and this provided a solution to his frustration of "*I was caught in the middle.*"

THABISILE

Thabisile's Poem

Trapped in the middle

Finances a matter of concern

Quintile ranking so frustrating

Insufficient financial support from the State

Minimal subsidy from the State

Quintile ranking so frustrating

Poverty rates are rife

Minimal subsidy from the State

Life not easy at all

Poverty rates are rife

Insufficient financial support from the State

Life not easy at all

Finances a matter of concern

Personal perspective: Humble beginnings

Thabisile is an African female who comes from a very poor family background as she cites the following about her childhood...

I grew up in a deep rural area, ... where poverty was just a norm, such that I was not the only child without school shoes... almost everybody in the area was the same. Besides, I had never experienced a better life than this one, so I thought, this is the life. It was only when I grew older and got exposed to other lives, that I realised that "ha! I am coming from such a poor background!"

Reddy and Moletsane (2009, p. 3) relate poverty to “the lack of basic requirements such as food, shelter, health and education... absence of an income, ... survival is compromised.” Reid (2011, p. 7) notes that “living in a rural area represents a material disadvantage in many ways, compared to urban areas... rural areas have objectively higher levels of poverty, fewer resources and less access to facilities.” Thabisile experienced these conditions. Because of poverty levels in her family, she had to walk long distances to school as she expresses that: “*I had to walk 20km to school because my mother could not afford the ten cents bus fare.*”

Unterhalter (2009, p. 16) asserts that “the long distances to travel to access... education” add an extra burden to poor women in rural areas. Thabisile was also subjected to what she terms “*unsympathetic teachers,*” because she was often late for class as her walk often took longer than planned.

Teachers... would not bother to ask why I was always late for school. In winter, I would arrive to class freezing. The teacher would punish me. My hands were so hard because of the frost, such that when the teacher hit me the stick would sound ‘qhu, not phaca.’

It is unfortunate that Thabisile was exposed to unsympathetic teachers while learner support by schools is considered critical to address “women’s marginalised position in society” (Bhana & Mcambi, 2013, p. 12). These researchers further assert that “a lack of support from schools and teachers may impede [learners’] ability to succeed,” (p. 12) yet the reality is that in South Africa “the actual experience of schooling is unsupportive” (p. 13).

Thabisile further shares that her own parents never had much access to education, yet did all they could to educate her...

Both my parents were not privileged in terms of accessing education. My father never went to school. My mother was schooled to Grade Two... Neither of my parents ever had a decent job. But my mother...despite the odds would do everything to ensure I received education.

According to Unterhalter (2009), no matter how poor parents may be, they know that educating their children is a way of improving their lives. Thabisile further narrates that her family was so poor that they only had one goat, which ultimately had to be sold in order for her to get access to education...

As a family we had one goat... one day ...mummy told us: "This goat does not belong to us anymore...Where do you think I found the money to pay your secondary school fees? I sold this goat!"

Moving into Teaching

Initially Thabisile intended becoming a nurse as she cites that...

Teaching was not my first choice. My first choice was Nursing, not because I liked it, but because while training, I would be getting paid. Then I would be able to help my mom. Unfortunately, I was not accepted at a Nursing college. Later, however, I was offered a bursary by the Roman Catholic Church which enabled me to enter a teachers' training college to become a qualified teacher.

Micou (1989) notes that it was a common practice by churches to offer bursaries in South Africa. Thabisile got appointed as a teacher at...

Nkanyezi Primary School... It is incredible to think that I have been at the same school for twenty-seven years. I have been here since my first day of teaching, 23 May 1989. I have never taught in another school... Some years later, I was promoted as DP and subsequently as principal in January 2012.

It is worth noting that while "54 per cent of educators had considered leaving the education profession" (Department of Education, 2005, p. 11), some stay in the profession for quite longer. It is interesting for instance, to note that Thabisile has served in her school for 27 years.

Thabisile's school context

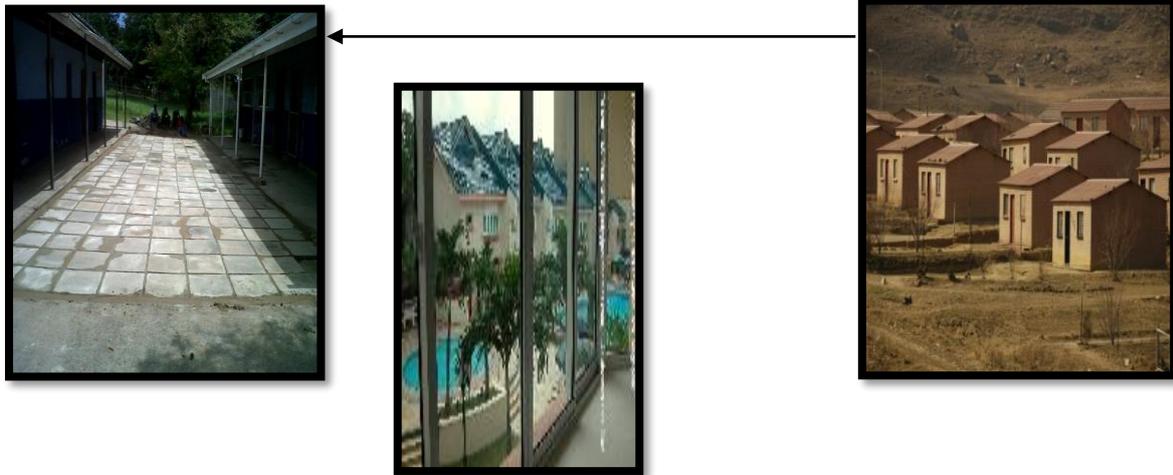


Figure 4.3: Thabisile's school context

Thabisile becomes a principal in a poor school that is located “*just behind a middle class suburb at Umhlali,*” and is therefore fee paying. The school is under-resourced and is catering for learners that come all the way from poor communities that occupy RDP housing. This is in line with Mestry's (2013, p. 169) argument that some learners do not reside in the area where the school is located “but commute daily to school from outside.”

Professional perspective

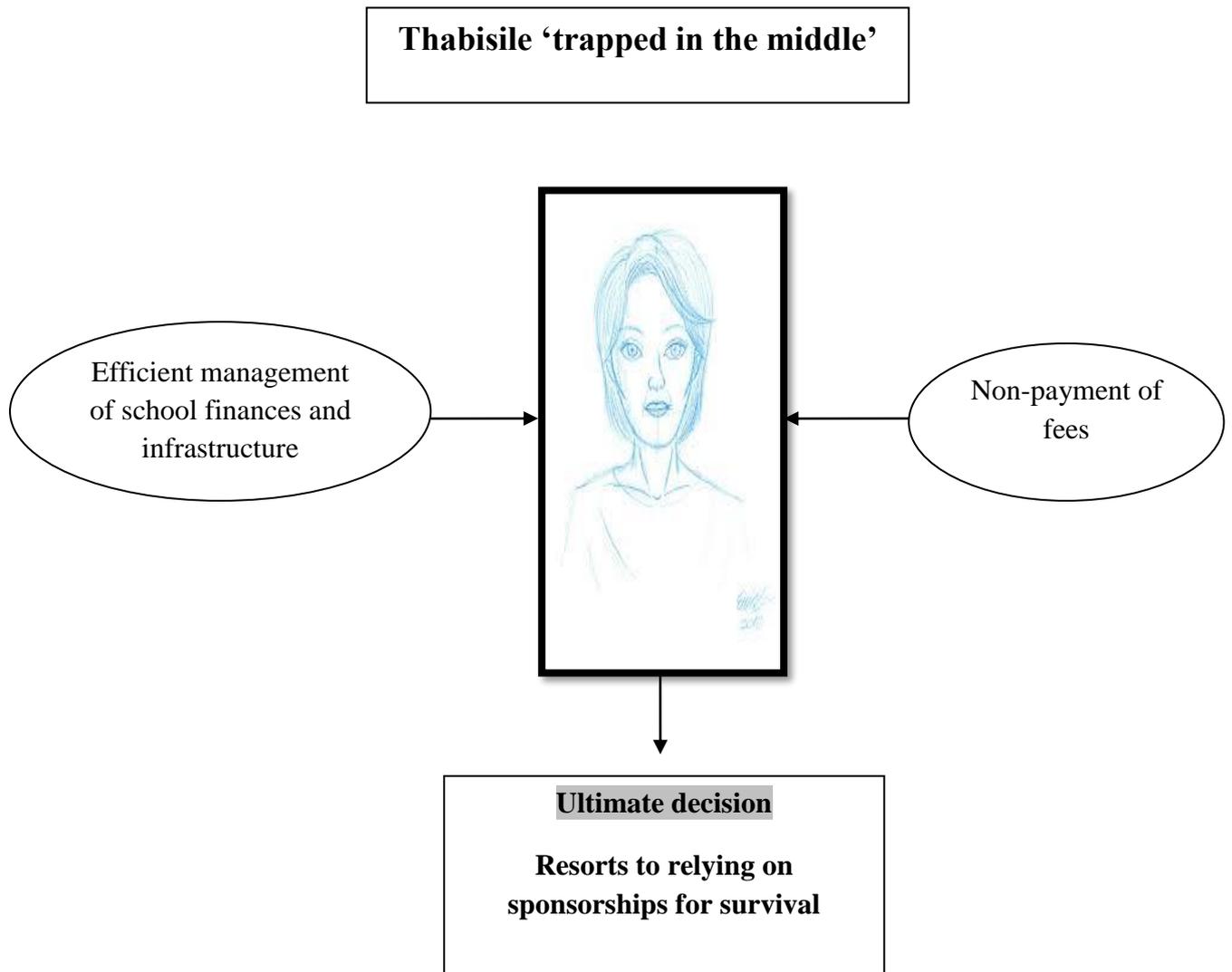


Figure 4.4: Thabisile's dilemmatic space

Thabisile experiences anxiety due to the location of her school in an affluent area which results in learners having to pay fees; yet learners come from very impoverished communities.

Finances are a huge matter of concern in my school. It is located in an affluent area... poses a challenge to our school as it is ranked as Quintile 4; yet is serving communities that are housed in RDP housing. Some community members live in shacks. The unemployment and poverty rates in the area from where my students come are rife.

Quintile ranking refers to the categorization of schools in terms of poverty levels, or on the basis of the "Socio-Economic Status (SES)" (Bayat et al., 2014, p. 186) of the area where

they are located. Thabisile experiences great challenges as she says that ... *“Running a school that has been given a wrong quintile ranking is so frustrating. The school fees are very low; yet more than fifty percent of parents do not pay.”*

The South African government has declared some schools no-fee and others fee-charging (Naong, 2009) on the basis of the socio-economic status of the area where they are located. Parents of children in Thabisile’s school leave ‘no fee’ schools in their neighbourhood and choose to take their children to Thabisile’s school; thereby exercising their right since they are “constitutionally free to choose the school that their children attend” (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, the State stipulates that low income parents should be exempted from paying school fees (Veriava & Wilson, 2005).

Another challenge for Thabisile is that most parents cannot afford school fees because they rely on social grants...

A substantial number of these families live on social grants and are therefore entitled not to pay school fees. When I did my research in 2014, I discovered that of my 800 learners, 523 were from families who received a social grant. This means that only 277 parents or 35% pay towards the upkeep of the school.

Importantly while Thabisile’s school is categorized as fee-paying; in terms of the South African Schools’ Act (Department of Education, 2006, Section 1, paragraph c.), any “person who receives a social grant on behalf of a child” is exempted from paying school fees. Child support grant was introduced to alleviate poverty (Haysom, 2009). It is worth noting that “food insecure families rely on social grants... for their survival” (Ruiters & Wildschutt, 2010, p. 22) as well as for needs like transportation fares.

Challenge with managing services

With more than fifty percent of learners who cannot afford school fees, managing the school becomes a challenge for Thabisile...

Non-payment of school fees by most parents does not make life any easier at all. We still have to pay for services like telephone, water and electricity. The municipality charges us the same fees as other people in the neighbourhood. You know, sometimes I feel like I am trapped in the middle.

The situation faced by Thabisile is well described by Bush and Heystek (2003, p. 133) who argue that “the low level of fee payment in some schools clearly has the potential to damage the fragile financial position of many schools.” Thabisile laments about the minimum funding her school receives from the State due to the Quintile ranking of 4. She expresses that “*Due to a Quintile ranking of 4, the school receives minimal subsidy from the State.*”

Thabisile further reports that due to the distance between the school and the community from where learners come, parents prioritise transport fare over payment of school fees...

Since none of my students come from the rich area where the school is located, they either come by ‘omalume’ (uncles driving learner vans) or by train. Even those that come by train walk quite a distance from the station. A few of them walk to and from school... These parents actually cannot afford to pay school fees because they have to pay train fare or omalume every month.

What Thabisile faces is common as “most learners from the townships depend on public transport ... to get to school, since many parents do not have their own means of transport” (Bhana & Mcambi, 2013, p. 13).

Counting on community partnerships

On one hand Thabisile has the school infrastructure and bills to manage as the municipality expects the school to pay bills on time like other households in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, there is non-payment of fees by most parents. To address this tension, Thabisile resorts to relying on sponsorships for survival, as she states...

To see to it that the school runs smoothly, I have learnt to devise a variety of survival tactics. I cannot sit down and relax. I have made friends with the community for the school to survive. As a principal I approach various people and organisations for help.

According to Epstein (1995), the development of school community partnerships is integral to the improvement of school programmes, and this is what Thabisile is attempting to do when she makes friends with communities.

By law Thabisile has an obligation to ascertain that learners in her school have access to education as the “South African Schools’ Act (SASA) promotes access... in the schooling system. It aims to ensure that all learners have access to quality education without

discrimination” (Department of Education, 2005, p. 29). While she honours the Departmental policies (such as the parents’ right to choose a school; fee-paying/no-fee schools; and school fee exemption), Thabisile finds herself “*trapped in the middle.*”

Prioritizing transport over school fees

Thabisile’s dilemma arises from the tension raised by learners who attend her fee-paying school; yet do not pay school fees. Despite non-payment of fees, Thabisile still has to ensure that the school is managed efficiently. The stance by Thabisile is not to demand fees from parents and this is informed by her own personal experiences. Even though she is frustrated, Thabisile is very sensitive when it comes to matters of poverty. This is based on the context of the learners in her school and her own poverty background.

It is not easy either for Thabisile to ignore the importance of transport for learners; otherwise her learners will not attend school. She definitely remembers how she personally struggled with this as a child when her mum could not afford the bus fare. Thabisile’s dilemma is informed by the question of priority which is in line with the view of Fransson and Grannäs (2013) that a dilemma may be informed by one’s priorities. Thabisile’s high level of sensitivity to poverty is also informed by her own personal experience of what she terms “*unsympathetic teachers.*” To deal with the financial challenges in the school, Thabisile opts for other survival mechanisms such as lobbying for sponsorships and fostering community partnerships.

NALEDI

Naledi's Poem

My school, a mystery

Quintile ranking, a thorn in the flesh

Poverty levels are rife

Funding by the Department very little

Infrastructure so dilapidated

Poverty levels are rife

Conditions not favourable to teaching and learning

Infrastructure so dilapidated

Begging for human resources

Conditions not favourable to teaching and learning

Funding by the Department very little

Begging for human resources

Quintile ranking, a thorn in the flesh

Personal perspective: Unpleasant childhood

Naledi is an African female who grew up under very difficult circumstances as she was not brought up by her biological parents and the financial conditions under which she grew up were difficult...

I wasn't brought up by my parents. I only got to know my mother ... for the first time at the age of ten ... She was staying in Maphumulo. All along I knew my aunt, to be my mother.

However, Naledi had an advantage of growing up in a rural community which happened to be “strong in terms of social cohesion, family identity and ... social capital, compared to urban communities” (Reid, 2011, p. 2). She was taken care of by her aunt.

We were struggling financially as my aunt was earning only eight Rand a month... I only had my first pair of school shoes when I went to the secondary school in Form 1 (today's Grade 8). I still remember that my first pair was the ... 'hush puppies'... They were the only shoes I had.

Unterhalter (2009, p. 15) highlights that “female headed households are generally poorer, because women have less access to jobs in the formal sector.” This then makes “female-headed households ... more vulnerable to poverty than households headed by men” (Posel & Rogan, 2009, p. 26).

Naledi narrates that: *“To supplement her pay, aunty sold all sorts of vegetables, like madumbes, sweet potatoes, spinach, tomatoes and even mealies at times.”* Naledi’s aunt was doing what is common in South Africa as it is a norm for rural African women to rely on “reproductive and productive” (Kleinbooi, 2009, p. 43) farming activities, such as planting vegetables or running chicken projects. Ruiters and Wildschutt (2010, p. 12) also point out that “rural people grow, produce and sell the surplus to obtain resources to buy other food products they cannot grow.”

Growing up in a strong Christian background strengthened Naledi’s belief in God such that she always has hope, which helped her to face the harsh realities of life...

My aunt was a Christian and used to pray a lot... If it were not for my aunty's prayers, I would have not got money to go beyond Form 3 (today's Grade 10) with my studies. She used to say: “The birds are not worried about tomorrow. You must live like a bird that does not worry about what it is going to eat. You must trust God for everything for tomorrow.”

Naledi’s Christian beliefs got her going as Plante and Boccaccini (1997) associate religion with increased self-esteem and sense of hope.

Moving into Teaching

Naledi maintains that through her aunty's prayers, she managed to get funding to train as a teacher.

The missionaries miraculously offered me a loan after one of my aunt's prayers. I am ever so grateful to those missionaries for giving me the opportunity to go to Appelsbosch Teachers' College.

In 1982, Naledi "started teaching at Maphumulo." She became principal in 2009. Her aunt's strong Christian beliefs were really instilled in Naledi such that to date, as principal she attributes all achievements to prayer...

By the power of God I believe miracles could still happen again, because I have seen and I believe in these miracles. And I know that if anything happens by the power of God, it will be exceptional. My God does not just give me ordinary things, He gives me great things.

Plante and Boccaccini (1997, p. 371) assert that "religious beliefs are instrumental in providing many people with a source of hope." This explains why Naledi is always hopeful for miracles because of her belief in God.

Naledi's school context



Figure 4.5: Naledi's school context

Naledi's Lobi Primary School is located at Lindelani, an informal settlement that is 5km away from Stanger where poverty prevails as she states that "The poverty levels in the area

where the school is located are rife. Most parents work in sugar cane farms and are therefore not earning much.”

Ruiters and Wildschutt (2010, p. 12) declare that “resources are not easily obtained in a context where there [are] high levels of low-skilled or unskilled workers.” This is the case in Naledi’s school as it is within an informal settlement where even the quality of housing is very poor. As most parents work in sugar cane farms, they do not earn much and therefore, they cannot afford to provide their children with the school necessities.

Naledi’s school is very poor as she points out that...

To this day, I am running the school from a store room because it has no administration block... Even my clerk has no space to do his work. My school has no library. It has no Science or Computer laboratory. So our learners are struggling.

Unterhalter (2009, p. 22) maintains that “investment in... infrastructure since 1994 has been very poorly and unequally distributed” in South Africa and this is reflected in Naledi’s story as to this day, her school lacks basic rooms like office and specialist rooms like laboratories.

Professional perspective

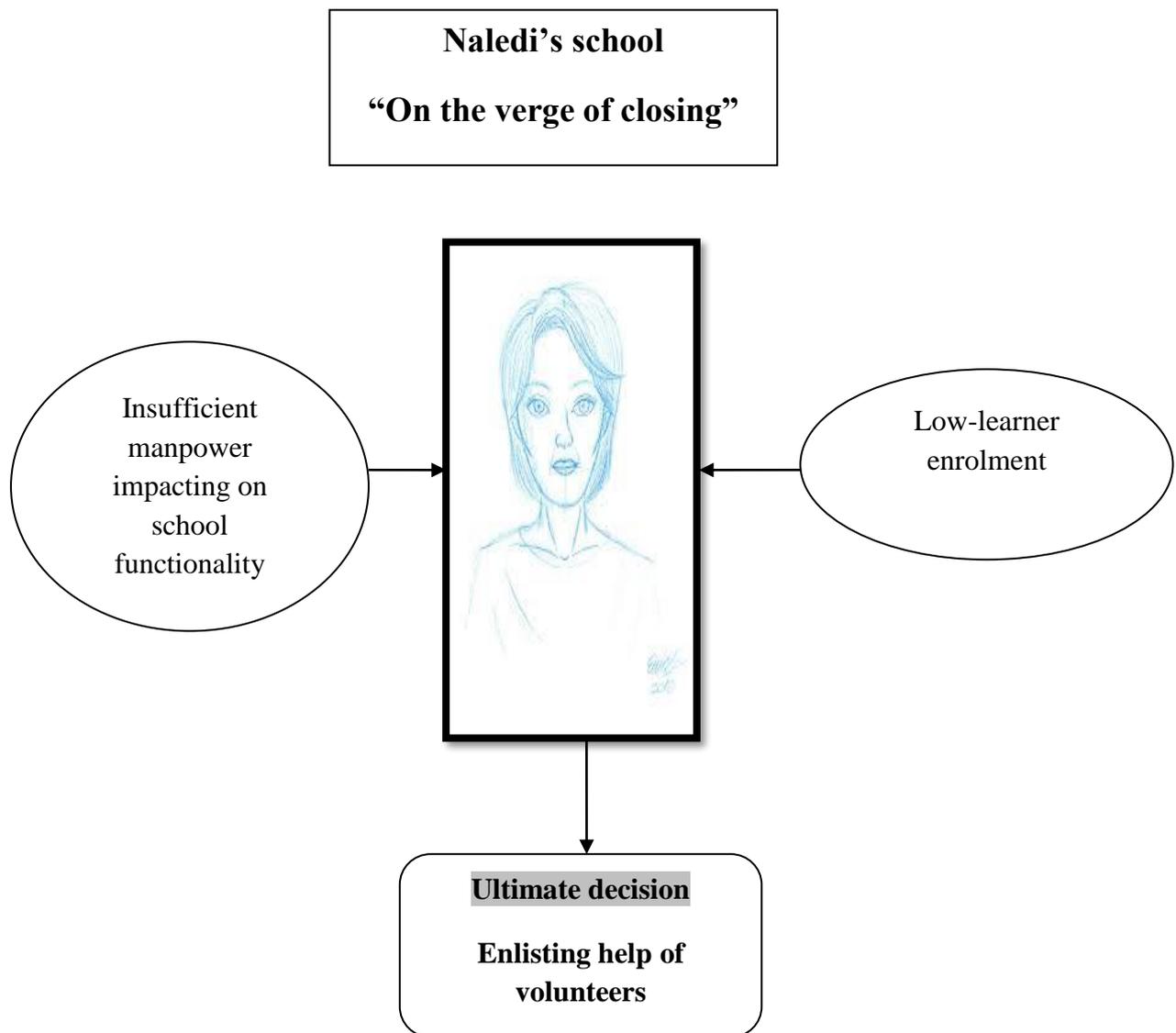


Figure 4.6: Naledi's dilemmatic space

It is year 2009. Naledi gets appointed as acting principal of Lobi Primary School. Eventually she ends up being placed there permanently...

I was ordered by Mr J.G. Govender, the Superintendent in Education Management (SEM) to act as principal at Lobi Primary School (pseudonym) in Lindelani, an informal settlement that is 5km from Stanger in September 2009... where I have been permanently placed as principal.

When Naledi arrived at Lobi Primary School, the school had only three educators.

When I initially reported at Lobi Primary School, I was told that I was going to serve there for three months because the school was going to close down and be converted to a Further Education and Training (FET) college. The school enrolment was too low, (88 learners)... Due to the low numbers, the school had only three teachers; yet it catered for eight grades (R to 7).

One of the ways of grading South African schools is “the number of educator posts allocated to [it] in terms of national norms” (Education Labour Relations Council, 2006, p. 2). The number of educator posts allocated per school is in turn determined by the number of learners (Department of Education, 2009). Due to the low-learner numbers, Lobi Primary was allocated only four posts, including the principal.

Unfavourable teaching and learning conditions

Naledi explains...

The conditions there were not favourable for teaching and learning... The community believed there was no teaching and learning taking place in the school. So they were taking their children to other schools in the area. The school was chaotic and was such a mess.

It is interesting to note that even poor parents have a desire “for schooling for [their] children” (Unterhalter, 2009, p. 16). This is evident in that, since Lobi Primary School was chaotic and a mess, parents were sending their children to other schools.

Counting on volunteers

The challenge with running a school with a low-learner enrolment is that it has few teachers; yet all the subjects have to be offered as stipulated by the curriculum to ensure school functionality. In Naledi’s case, the school has 8 grades that have to be taken care of by just three teachers. This poses a dilemma for her. She is also worried by the fact that her learners’ parents have confidence in her...

I had been a manager for an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Centre for quite some time in the area. The parents of most of the learners in Lobi Primary School were

enrolled in my adult centre. They appreciated that they had learnt to read and write. They then asked: "How come is it that we are in school for only two hours, and we are able to read and write; yet our own kids are there for the whole day, yet they are unable to read and write? We want the centre manager to come and assist our kids." That is how I was appointed as principal.

Naledi happened to serve as a manager of an ABET centre in the area where her school is located. The community had confidence in her. She, therefore, did not want to disappoint these parents, yet the reality was that she had insufficient manpower. She narrates that *"I said to myself, I cannot do a thing (in a school with 8 grades) with three teachers."*

Clearly, she felt she had to do something...

I devised a means to turn things around ... I sat down with my ABET teachers and said: "Guys, I have a problem in my day school. Can we make two shifts? We will work with kids during the day, and come back late as I am doing, and teach the ABET students. I need you to volunteer... because the school has no money. Please guys, help me out."

This quote reflects the finding that "volunteers are a cost-effective way to expand the range of activities at the school," (Lemmer, 2000, p. 72) because they often offer their services free of charge.

Those ABET teachers helped me out. When parents realised that there was improvement in the school, they brought their kids back in numbers...Eventually, the DoE allocated me five extra teaching posts in 2011, thereby increasing the teaching staff from four to nine. Later, I was allocated a Grade R post and a tenth staff member.

In terms of government policy, a school may be re-graded either upwards or downwards depending on the changes in the number of educator posts over "two consecutive years" (Education Labour Relations Council, 2006, p. 2); hence DoE's reconsideration of Naledi's staff situation in 2011.

Despite the fact that the DoE appointed Naledi to manage the school for three months, more than six years have passed and she continues to be the school's principal. As a result, Naledi views the existence of her school as a mystery such that she expresses... *"Whenever I look at*

my school today and reflect on how far I have come, the state in which it is, remains a mystery to me.”

From ‘the verge of closing down’ to ‘cutting edge’

The two factors that result in tension and thus lead to a dilemma in Naledi’s school are: the low-learner enrolment; and the insufficient human resources resulting from this. The allocation of only a few teachers to cope with the children in eight grades, in turn impacts on school functionality. Naledi therefore has to come up with a plan to see to it that the school is functional. That is when she enlists the help of volunteers to ensure that there is teaching and learning in her school.

Despite the circumstances in her school, Naledi is very unlikely to give up easily since she has a strong belief in God and His miracles. Spiritual values shape Naledi’s approach to dilemmas. For example, she still quotes her aunt with regard to living for today when she makes reference to *‘living like a bird’*. Strong Christian beliefs therefore explain Naledi’s positive self-esteem and determination to make her school a success story despite the odds; hence, her positive intervention that kept the school going while it had been given a three-month grace period before being closed down. It is on this basis that Naledi views the existence of her school *“a mystery.”*

JEFF

Jeff's Poem

Thrown at the deep-end

Principalship, a horrific experience!

Frustrations caused by school ranking

Finances the worst challenge

Funding from the Department absolutely pathetic

Frustrations caused by school ranking

Shortage of resources a struggle

Funding from the Department absolutely pathetic

Learners from poor communities

Shortage of resources a struggle

Finances the worst challenge

Learners from poor communities

Principalship, a horrific experience!

Personal perspective: Thrown out of the CBD by the apartheid regime

Jeff is an Indian male who experienced growing up under very poor conditions in the barracks in the 1960s as he narrates “*I was born in the barracks in central Durban... Life there was pathetic because we did not even have a decent toilet system. The bucket system was in operation.*” Vahed (2001) maintains that Indian “municipal workers were provided with housing that was concentrated mainly at the ... barracks that had been built in 1884 on 25 acres of land relatively close to the city centre” (p. 107). Vahed further reports that the housing conditions in these barracks were “deplorable and condemned from the beginning” (p. 107).

Despite the harsh conditions under which Indian communities lived, they instilled the value of quality education in their children as to them, “Education was a virtual obsession ... and ... arena in which they rallied around common interests. Parents strongly believed that education held the key to occupational mobility and improvement in material conditions” (Vahed, 2001, p. 109).

Although the conditions in the barracks were pathetic, Jeff recalls the good days he had in his first school in central Durban as he states that: “*We were one of the best schools in the whole of Durban ... we really, really excelled... I cherish the moments I had in my first school.*”

As a consequence of the Group Areas Act of 1950, Jeff and his family had to move from the CBD and this resulted in...

An abrupt end to a happy time at school. The changing political landscape of this country marked a sad end to my happy schooling in the mid-1980s... when the apartheid government introduced the ‘Group Areas Act’ which kicked us out of the CBD and dumped us in a township in Chatsworth...I was eleven years old and in STD 4 then. This was the beginning of a series of challenges as we were forced out of a well-resourced school in the CBD, to an extremely poor township school. Conditions were pathetic.

Chatsworth is situated “about 15 kilometres outside of Durban and was created in the 1960’s to accommodate at least 25 000 people of Indian origin in accordance with the Group Areas Act of 1950” (Pattundeen, 2008, pp. 61-62). Pattundeen asserts that this it is “a low income housing township” (p. 61).

Moving into Teaching

Jeff states...

I was drawn to the teaching fraternity by fate. Throughout my high school days, I was dreaming of pursuing studies towards a degree in Law... My parents could not afford to send me to a university. My father was earning only thirty Rand (R30.00) a month. When I completed Matric, Springfield College of Education was offering a bursary of one hundred and twenty-five Rand per year (R125.00). So I went to the college and enrolled to become a teacher.

Studies on reasons why students chose teaching as a profession have revealed that quite a number of them “came from poor, lower educated families who mostly lived in villages or townships... and met their financial needs with bursaries or student loans” (Balyer & Özcan, 2014, p. 110). Even Jeff was channelled to the teaching profession by a bursary, as his family could not afford university fees.

Jeff further stated...

I felt privileged to be appointed as a teacher to the primary school where I attended as a little boy when we were kicked out of the CBD ... got promoted as principal in Phoenix in 1998... I became principal of Cubs Primary School (in Stanger) in 2013.

Jeff’s school context



Figure 4.7: Jeff’s school context

Jeff was promoted to principal of a school in Phoenix in 1998. Phoenix is a township that was constructed in the mid-1970s for working class Indian communities. This was another move initiated by the “Group Areas Act of 1950” (Singh, 1996, p. 101). Singh (1996) describes Phoenix as a township that is characterised by “endemic poverty” (p. 102). The picture on the left above depicts Phoenix, and the school in which Jeff gets promoted as principal in 1998 serves this community.

When he gets to this school, he faces a number of challenges including vandalism by drug addicts...

Drug addicts would utilise the school for all sort of illegal activities at night. I had to be at school at 6h45 so that I could go around with the caretaker and pick up condoms. The drug addicts would even defecate and leave their stools in the children’s washing basins.

That is the culture I found. My first three months as principal was a horrific experience. I had to devise survival mechanisms.

The DoE notes that “security in schools is an issue in all urban centres, particularly in neighbourhoods most exposed to conditions that would foster... poverty... drugs...” (Department of Education, 2005, p. 59). Nadvi (2009) highlights that youth who are exposed to poverty are vulnerable to social ills such as drugs.

Professional perspective

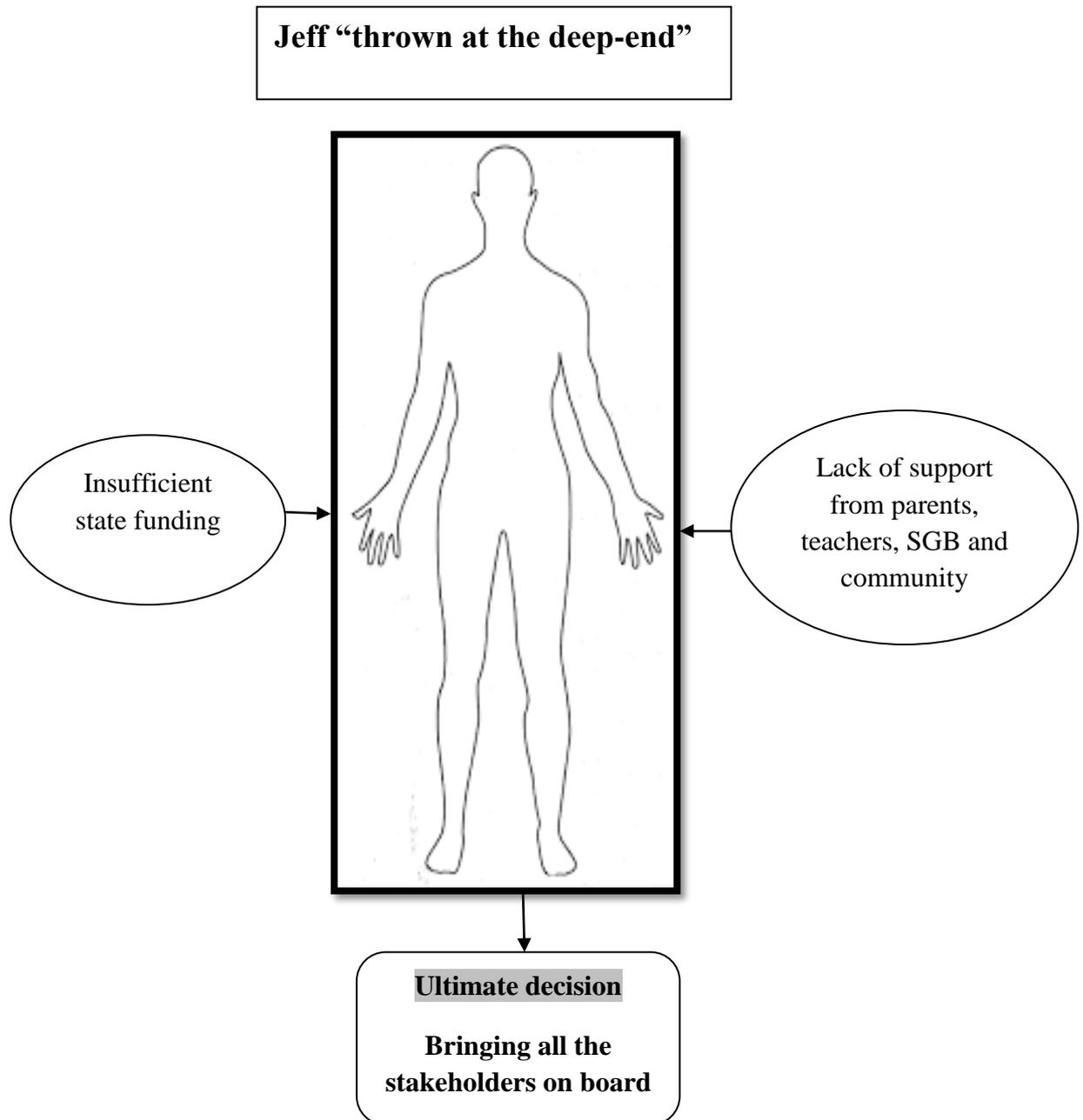


Figure 4.8: Jeff’s dilemmatic space

School finances – the worst challenge

In 1998, Jeff is appointed principal in Phoenix. However, he found managing the school not easy at all.....

So far I consider the finances to be the worst challenge in running the school. This is due to the minimum funding that is offered by the State, hiding behind the curtain of quintile ranking. Imagine a school being ranked as Quintile 5 in a township of Phoenix... Funding from the Department was absolutely pathetic.

Being graded Quintile 5 meant that the school was considered affluent, hence little funding was provided by the State. Due to the challenges he faced as a principal, Jeff felt like he had been thrown at the deep end...

When I got promoted as principal... it was like jumping into fire. Rejection was my reception. I received absolutely no support at my arrival. I felt like I was thrown at the deep-end... I walked into a school where the school fees per year, was only two Rand (R2.00) per learner... Phoenix is a very poor community... The school was utilised by certain external organisations, paying a rent of two Rand (R2.00) per month... My first three months as principal was a horrific experience. I had to devise survival mechanisms... We reviewed the rental charge paid by the organisations.

External organisations' use of a school is in line with "contextual relations between school and community, often resulting in expectations for the school to function as a broad-based community-service centre" (Department of Education, 2005, p. 61). As such, Jeff was able to raise much needed funds through renting out the school premises to these external organisations.

Even with this monthly rental, Jeff's school could not survive. Therefore, he had to consider increasing school fees...

When I presented the budget in September, I recommended an increase of school fees from two Rand (R2.00) to two hundred Rand (R200.00) per year.

The issue of increasing school fees was not an easy one. In as much as the South African government encourages the SGBs to collect school fees in order to supplement school funds;

“a school can impose such fees only when authorized to do so by a majority of parents attending a budget meeting at the school” (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p. 6).

Dealing with resistance from staff and parents

While enforcing decisions, Jeff had to deal with the resistance from teachers, parents, SGB and organisations that were used to paying the minimum amount. It was only after he got all stakeholders on board that he got the support he so needed, hence he states that...

Staff members initially resented such change but they soon came round to my way of thinking. I had to bring the SGB on board to put things into place... This changed the entire mind-set of all the teachers... The greatest challenge was to change the community mind-set. Community members were raving.

The dilemma in Jeff's case was posed by a number of forces that were at play. These ranged from parents, to SGB, to teachers, to external organisations; as well as the realities within the school that demanded additional funding for survival. Fransson and Grannäs (2013) allude to the fact that a particular situation is usually viewed differently by different individuals, for example, the lens from which a principal views a scenario might not necessarily be the same as the one for a teacher, learner, parent or Department official. Therefore whether the decision is right or wrong is determined by “the perspective or position from which something is examined” (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013, p. 7). These researchers conclude that “although one teacher might experience something as a dilemma it does not mean that other teachers in the same situation will experience it as a dilemma. It depends on people's different values, priorities or knowledge” (p. 8). It was on this basis that Jeff had to bring the other stakeholders on board, as they did not value the decision that parents should pay school fees.

By bringing all the stakeholders on board, Jeff was able to turn things around. He was even able to gain the support of a problem group of thugs who were drug addicts that were vandalising the school...

Drug addicts came on board. I addressed a group of smokers that were messing the school at night. I made them understand why it was important to take care of the school. Some of them had children in the school. I tried to get them to realise that if they destroyed the school, they will destroy their own children.

Henderson and Mapp (2002, p. 8) maintain that “all parents—regardless of income, education, or cultural background... want their children to do well.”

As they were in drugs and unemployed, their children were their last hope. The way ‘those thugs’ changed was unbelievable. They pledged to help me. When the roof tiles broke, they repaired the roof. They would sort out window panes and even assisted with painting the school. They virtually ended up owning the school.

Studies demonstrate that community involvement is beneficial for the schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). By bringing all the stakeholders on board, Jeff was relieving himself from the psychological stress of feeling like being “*Thrown at the deep-end.*”

From rejection to reception

The dilemma in Jeff’s case arises from tension caused by lack of support from stakeholders like teachers, parents, SGB and communities; and insufficient State funding. What helped Jeff address the dilemma was bringing all the stakeholders on board. Jeff’s personal background goes a long way in informing the way he deals with the dilemma at hand. He was a victim of poor conditions as he experienced the same kind of life as a child. Growing up in pathetic conditions and experiencing marginalisation by the apartheid government - he knew well what it meant to grow up where unemployment, poverty and crime were and are a way of life.

Besides being marginalised, the value of quality education was instilled in Jeff while growing up since education was important to Indian communities. Jeff’s experience of a good school before they were removed from the CBD is also responsible for the value he places on quality education.

Closing remarks on dilemmatic spaces

By employing the dilemmatic spaces conceptual framework, I have got a deeper understanding of how principals make choices in response to dilemmas they face in their place of work. I have also learnt that their choices are shaped by their personal perspectives. In the next section, I employ poetic inquiry to identify principals’ common challenges of everyday practice.

SECTION B

Use of poetic inquiry to identify principals' common challenges of everyday practice

In this section, I employ poetic enquiry to identify principals' common challenges of everyday practice. The use of poetic enquiry as a research method is advocated by Leavy (2008, pp. 63-64) who asserts that poetry ensures the “evocative presentation of data [and] is not simply an alternative way of representing the same information; rather, it can help the research evoke different meanings from the data.” In support of the use of poetic analysis, Furman et al. (2010) said that poems “as a method of data analysis and re-representation of the narratives highlight key themes induced from thematic analysis” (p. 61).

From the poetic representation in Section A, it is evident that each principal experiences a range of challenges. Although the material for the poems came from the storied narratives, the choice and arrangement of that in the poetic form was fore-grounded as much, if not more, about my reading of the reconstructed narratives of the four principals (Furman et al., 2010).

After I composed the four pantoums, I then created a summative pantoum poem. I did this by selecting (across the four pantoums) the seven lines (so that one line would serve as the caption for my poem), which I deemed to be capturing the challenges experienced by principals in their everyday practice. Below I present the seven lines that were selected from the four pantoums. A letter in brackets represents the source of that line where: J- is Jeff, N- Naledi, R – Rojavu, and T- is Thabisile:

Quintile ranking a thorn in the flesh (**N**)

Principalship, a horrific experience! (**J**)

Conditions not favourable to teaching and learning (**N**)

Poverty rates are rife (**T**)

Life not easy at all (**T**)

Finances the worst challenge (**J**)

Caught in the middle (**R**)

When I analysed the four poems, I developed a deeper understanding of principals' common challenges, although with slight differences in wording. For example, *ranking* and *finances* appear in all the four pantoums; poverty *rates* are mentioned by three of the participants (T, N and J); life *that is not easy* is mentioned by two (T and R); while *caught in the middle* is mentioned by three (R, T and J). Below is the summative pantoum that I created:

Quintile ranking a thorn in the flesh

Principalship, a horrific experience!

Conditions not favourable to teaching and learning

Poverty rates are rife

Life not easy at all

Conditions not favourable to teaching and learning

Finances the worst challenge

Life not easy at all

Caught in the middle

Finances the worst challenge

Poverty rates are rife

Caught in the middle

Principalship, a horrific experience!

The above poem attempts to express the structural and material forces that are always in tension in the principals' every day running of schools. This is in line with Morrow's (2007, p. 15) viewpoint that ...

teaching is not impossible, but it needs to be differently pursued in different circumstances. But we make it impossible if we 'define' it in terms of its material elements while ignoring the actual conditions in which teaching is expected to take place.

Since my intention was to refine and filter the essence of my learning from the four reconstructed stories in relation to my research agenda, I then drew on the traditional Japanese poetic format of a tanka poem (Furman & Dill, 2015). I selected words and phrases from the summative pantoum that would best allow me to craft my tanka poem, using a version of the format that has five lines, with a 5/7/5/7/7 syllable count in the lines (Featherstone, 2009). As Furman et al. (2010, p. 63) described, by using the tanka format, I was able to present “a great deal of emotional and descriptive information in a few words.” In this way, I was able to convey the ideas that are in the four pantoums, in only five lines of the tanka poem. Below I present the tanka poem that I drew from the summative pantoum:

TANKA (5/7/5/7/7 – syllable format, per line)

Poverty rates rife

Conditions not favourable

Caught in the middle

Principalship horrific

Finances the worst challenge

I then used the tanka poem to explain my overall learning from the narratives presented in Chapter Three. This is in line with the stand taken by Furman et al. (2010, p. 63) on tanka poems as they assert that this “Japanese poetic form... helps researchers focus on important themes of ... data.” Engaging with the tanka I identified the four major challenges that are faced by principals in their everyday practice. These are: **Poverty rates are rife; Unfavourable work conditions; Insufficient finances; as well as the horrific nature of the principals’ job.** These themes enabled me to identify and communicate what I found most critical and striking about each poem. In the section that follows, I deliberate on these common challenges that are experienced by principals on a daily basis as shown by the poetic inquiry.

SECTION C

Analysis of principals' challenges of everyday practice

In this section, I deliberate on principals' challenges of everyday practice that have been identified through poetic inquiry. It is evident that there are certainly challenges in the management of schools in the context of categorization. For instance, Rojavu puts it this way... "*Challenges I had to put up with there were unimaginable.*" Thabisile also makes reference to "*Challenges I encounter on a daily basis.*" Naledi in the same vein maintains "*Being a principal came with its own challenges.*" Sharing the same sentiment Jeff makes reference to "*challenges I face as a principal.*"

Through poetic inquiry the following four themes were identified:

1. Poverty rates are rife
2. Unfavourable work conditions
3. Insufficient finances
4. The horrific nature of the principal's job

These themes are in line with the findings of the DoE, that teachers who intend quitting their jobs attribute their decision to factors such as...

unfavourable working conditions, lack of facilities for teaching...severe overcrowding of schools and classrooms ...policy overload, leading to dissatisfaction with time allocation, and making working conditions unbearable through the increase in administrative work... Teachers claim they have to adapt and adopt a multitude of roles depending on circumstances presented at school (Department of Education, 2005, p. 12).

In this section, I present excerpts from each principal's story to illustrate how each participant experienced the challenges cited above.

Theme One: Poverty rates are rife

All the four principals that participated in the study voiced concerns about the school ranking and rife poverty rates that affected their students. It appears that there is a serious mismatch with the schools' quintile ranking which contrasts against the low income reflected by the families of children who attend the school. Thabisile for instance states that her school ...

is located in an affluent area... it poses a challenge to our school as it is ranked as Quintile 4; yet is serving communities that are housed in RDP housing. Some community members live in shacks. The unemployment and poverty rates in the area from where my students come are rife.

Poverty levels in communities also impact on the functionality of schools, such that Rojavu maintains that...

One of the challenges is safety and security as the school is within a community with a high unemployment rate... All the learners are from disadvantaged families and occupying the RDP housing... The poverty levels in the community I am serving are very rife. Therefore, parents cannot afford to buy the school uniform.

Similarly, Jeff states that “*This school is ranked Quintile 5, yet it has learners from poor communities... Phoenix is a very poor community.*” Naledi echoes the same sentiment as she maintains that...

The poverty levels in the area where the school is located are rife. Most parents work in sugar cane farms and are therefore not earning much... I consider quintile ranking a thorn in the flesh. When I came in 2009, the school was ranked as Quintile 5. Just imagine a school right in the informal settlement.

Clearly, the above excerpts from principals’ narratives show that the country’s quintile ranking system is a mismatch with poor communities that are characterised by the lower-middle class, yet schools are ranked in relation to their location (without consideration of who they actually serve). For instance, the prioritising of quintile 1 to 3 schools at the expense of quintile 4 and 5 schools impacts negatively on teaching and learning, as the latter category of schools receive less attention when it comes to issues of infrastructure.

The issue of poverty is voiced out by Wood and Olivier (2008, pp. 151,156) as they declared that “despite the fact that South Africa has reached the proverbial Promised Land of a fair ... educational system for all,” our education system is still confronted by socio-economic challenges. Voicing their concern about poverty, Bhana, Morrell, Epstein, and Moletsane (2006, p. 8) maintain that learners that are exposed to poverty are likely to depend solely on schools for care and support “yet lack of resources, an overloaded curriculum and multiple

complex demands on teachers mean that such responsibilities are very difficult and may go unperformed.”

Theme Two: Unfavourable work conditions

The four principals echo each other in respect of their suffering because of the conditions that are not favourable to teaching and learning. These include insufficient material and human resources. Rojavu for instance cites that in his farm school *“infrastructure has always been a serious challenge... We had packed classes with an average of 100 per room. At some stage Rojavu’s school was using mobile classrooms which are “not the best type of classrooms one can think of. They are very hot in summer and very cold in winter because their making is not a permanent structure.”*

Thabisile points out that when she was appointed as principal *“There was no functional library in my school.”* Jeff also cites that *“Not a single class had a proper bin, hence litter was strewn anywhere.”*

Similarly, Naledi complained about *“running the school from a store room because it has no administration block... Even my clerk has no space to do his work.”*

It is worth noting that even the DoE acknowledges that *“Infrastructure in education remains a concern,”* (Department of Education, 2005, p. 8) such that *“ morale is low because of poor conditions of service and the dire teaching environment”* (p. 14) in many rural schools.

The concern about unfavourable work conditions in schools is also raised by Reschovsky (2006) who maintains that some schools lack basic facilities such as toilets and classrooms. The circumstances are below par in some schools despite the DoE’s commitment to ensure *“that educators and school management teams operate within a conducive environment”* (KZN Department of Education, 2010, p. 8). In the same vein, the national DoE aims to provide *“enabling physical teaching and learning environments ... for all learners in South Africa”* (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p. 4). This is in contrast to what the principals are experiencing, because in theory what the DoE wants to happen is not happening in the principals lived experiences.

Theme Three: Insufficient finances

The issue of insufficient finances is a concern to all the principals that participated in this study. Thabisile, for instance, states that *“Finances are a huge matter of concern in my school. ... Due to a Quintile ranking of 4, the school receives minimal subsidy from the State.”*

Jeff also echoes the same concern about finances as he cites that he considers *“the finances to be the worst challenge in running the school.”*

Even with quintile 1 schools which tend to be funded better than other categories, it appears that the system of controlling certain functions by the DoE impacts on the school. Hence Rojavu laments that even though his school is quintile 1...

the challenge is that the school has a Section 21 status without function (c). This, therefore, means that the school does not have a full financial management as some financial aspects are controlled by the State. If you are limited in finances it doesn't give you a scope to come up with new things.

Previous researchers assert that insufficient finances impact on the work of teachers. For instance, Wood and Olivier (2008) maintain that insufficient resources result in teachers' negative emotions such that, teachers have a feeling that the system has forgotten them (Mitchell, De Lange, & Thuy, 2008).

Theme Four: The horrific nature of the principals' job

As I went through the principals' narratives I realised that they all expressed some social affects, which are defined by Dale and James (2015, p. 93) as “particular mental conditions we experience.” For instance, principals' jobs can be so frustrating that they crash sometimes. Throughout their narrative accounts, principals express the deep psychological and emotional feelings of anxiety, ‘drowning’ under the strain, being overwhelmed, frustrated, and caught in the middle as if there is no escape, marginalised, suffocating and irrelevant as if not needed. Schools “are places with high levels of ...anxiety”(James, 2011, p. 128). James further asserts that it can be very difficult to handle these feelings of anxiety.

Naledi for instance narrates that when she got appointed as principal of Lobi Primary School *“The infrastructure was so dilapidated that I cried when I came to this school.”*

Due to the challenges he faced when he was promoted to principal, Jeff maintains that...

When I got promoted as principal ... it was like jumping into fire. Rejection was my reception. I received absolutely no support at my arrival. I felt like I was thrown at the deep-end.

In the same vein, Rojavu likens difficulties accompanying principalship with being “*caught in the middle.*” Due to frustration caused by dealing with learners from very poor backgrounds, there was a stage when Rojavu felt he was not needed anymore. He remembers...

the learners were not used to the modern toilet facilities. In our first few months, most of our ablution facilities were broken. That was when I started feeling that maybe I'm not needed in this facility anymore.

To voice her frustration in her job caused by the ranking of the school, Thabisile states that “*Running a school that has been given a wrong quintile ranking is so frustrating ...sometimes I feel like I am trapped in the middle.*”

Due to circumstances under which principals work, they end up performing duties outside their job description. In support of this, Rojavu states that...

We do not have cleaners, and therefore learners themselves have to keep their school premises clean. I remember that at some stage I had to clean the walls and toilets with them.

In support of the fact that teachers end up doing what is outside their scope of work, Morrow (2007, p. 17) also stated that “our context forces on them a range of labour intensive and energy-consuming responsibilities not intrinsically related to teaching.” Just like Rojavu’s experience in the previous paragraph. Due to the bad experiences, Jeff considers “*principalship ... a horrific experience.*”

It is also evident from principals’ stories that the nature of their jobs either makes them feel like quitting or missing being post level one teachers. Thabisile states “*I miss the good old days. I certainly miss my days as post level one.*”

It is worth noting that even the DoE acknowledges “the emotional and psychological pressures of classroom teaching (especially in over-crowded environments)” (Department of Education, 2005, p. 60).

Conclusion

This chapter responded to the critical question, “*What are school principals’ challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization?*” Through poetic analysis, I learnt that each principal experiences challenges in relation to a specific school context. It also emerged that there are common experiences principals go through. The next chapter addresses how principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice.

Chapter Five

How do principals negotiate the challenges of everyday practice as they walk through their professional journey?

Introduction

In this chapter I present analysis of how principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice. The ways in which principals respond to challenges of everyday practice is viewed from the lens advanced by the ‘transformational leadership theoretical perspective.’ Hence, I first deliberate on this model of leadership. I have divided this chapter into three sections. In Section A, I describe my process of using collage portraiture as an analysis tool to identify ways in which each principal responds to challenges of everyday practice. I also analyse what informs the individual principals’ choices from the lens of the transformational leadership model. In Section B, I highlight common themes that emerge from the four portraits. In Section C, I present this study’s perspective of the transformational leadership model.

Principals negotiating challenges from a transformational leadership theoretical perspective

Transformational leadership is defined by Burns (1978) as a “process by which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of **morality and motivation**” (p. 20). Burns also argues that transformational leadership advocates **social** as well as **spiritual values** in order to motivate the followers. Values become in part internalised in individuals who are being led in this kind of leadership. This in turn uplifts them as they connect to a higher purpose. Burns (1978) ethical dimension to his transformational leadership theory places ethics and people first.

Burns (1978) believes that a transformational leader inspires his followers by being a **role model**. Therefore, a leader advocating this style of leadership leads by example. In this way, the leader is walking the talk (Bass, 1985). Bass (1985) further adds that under such leadership, followers get **motivated**, their morale and performance get enhanced and they are also prepared to go an extra mile, beyond expectations.

Bass (1985) perceives that transformational leaders encourage employees to work for the **benefit of the organisation or community rather than focusing on self-interests**. In this way employees are more concerned about how they can improve the lives of others instead of theirs as individuals. This is to the extent that a transformational leader can make **a sacrifice in the interest** of the organization or community. This model therefore promotes persuasive appeals by the leader.

In the next section I employ collage portraiture as a research method to analyse ways in which principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice.

SECTION A

Use of Collage Portraiture analysis

In this section, I will show how I brought my learning of the different principal participants into dialogue through a process of composing Collage Portraits of the different principals. Using themes of data generated from the poems and reconstructed stories I composed collage portraits as a way to analyse the ways in which principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice. Gerstenblatt (2013) promotes the use of collage portraiture as a method of analysis since it “has the potential to support and enliven the analysis of otherwise dry and detached interview data, thus producing new knowledge and interpretation” (P. 296). Gerstenblatt (2013, p. 305) also argues that “collage portraits offer scholars a venue for producing research that is adaptable to diverse populations and conveys meaning beyond the constraints of language.”

I drew on rich data that I had generated from my participants’ narrative accounts, to create individual collage portraits that respond to the critical question, “*How do principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization?*” As I was re-reading the re-constructed narratives presented in Chapter Three, I kept highlighting statements that best reflected the ways in which principals responded to various challenges of their everyday practice. I then cut the statements and printed them so that they could be stuck on the charts I was using to create collage portraits. This was in line with the idea advanced by Gerstenblatt (2013) that “creating a collage portrait ... allows for a multisensory interaction with the data, with the researcher literally touching the words and images of the narrative” (p. 296).

In this section, for each principal I will present the following: **collage portrait** to address the question: *“How principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice”*; **what each principal does to negotiate challenges of everyday practice?** (In this section will I draw on the excerpts from stories in Chapter Three to explain principals’ strategies); and **what informs what each principal does from the lens of the transformational leadership model?**

Rojavu's Collage Portrait

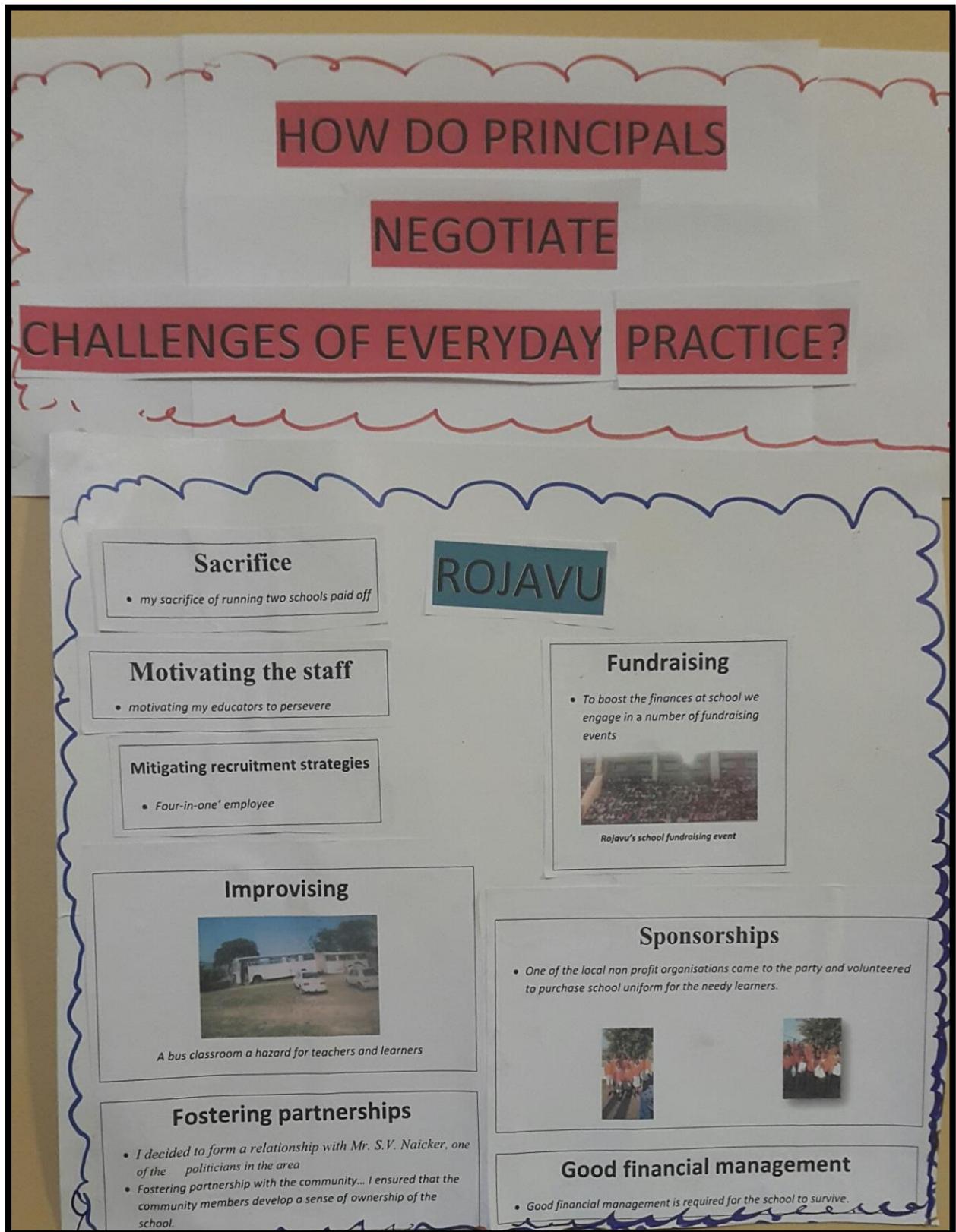


Figure 5.1: Rojavu's collage portrait

What does Rojavu do to negotiate challenges of everyday practice?

Working creatively through the financial crisis

Rojavu has a challenge of seeing to it that his quintile 1 school provides quality education under difficult circumstances. He expresses how much sacrifice was needed to work in bad conditions of his farm school when he got promoted as principal. He states that “*This was such a dangerous site because it was surrounded by a natural forest with snakes, monkeys and other forest animals.*”

There were years when Rojavu had to run a school from two sites that were 18km apart, at his own cost...

Managing two schools came with a baggage. This was the most challenging administrative period ... I had to run two schools at my own cost in the meantime. I had to drive between two sites without claiming anywhere for my additional transport costs. I had to manage staff in both sites.

The above excerpt highlights Rojavu’s struggle as a principal running two schools. He found it financially burdensome as well as administratively challenging. Rojavu’s experiences are in line with the argument advanced by Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) that says that the principal’s professional work is very demanding and “has become incredibly more complex” (p. 3). However, Rojavu does not regret his sacrifice as he asserts that “*At the end, my sacrifice of running two schools paid off.*”

Four-in-one employee

Due to financial constraints principals have got to a point where they **mitigate recruitment strategies**. Considering the financial challenges facing Rojavu’s no-fee quintile 1 school, it is impossible for the school to afford maintenance personnel. Rojavu, therefore, devises a recruitment strategy where he recruits a State-paid security guard that is multi-skilled...

Due to financial challenges in the school, I have learnt to survive by employing a ‘four-in one’ employee for school maintenance. I have a security guard that is multi-skilled. In one man I have a guard, carpenter, plumber, electrician, basically every maintenance expertise. I make it a point that when professional expertise is enlisted, I instruct my guard

to observe everything that is done by those people, so that in future he can attempt those tasks on his own.

Maintaining the school, despite the financial responsibilities was and is important to Rojavu. Amongst the functions of SGBs and principals there is maintenance and improvement of “the school's property, buildings and grounds” (Mestry, 2006, p. 28). Multi-skilling was one way of maintaining the upkeep of his school at a minimum cost. To stress the significance of proper maintenance of infrastructure Earthman and Lemasters (1996, p. 11) maintain that there is “a positive relationship between building condition and achievement of students.”

Creative Improvising

Rojavu cites a scenario where he had to improvise by using a scrap bus as a classroom and staffroom due to infrastructure challenges in a farm school he was managing...

Desperate times call for desperate measures... Part of this bus was also used as a staffroom because we did not have one. This type of classroom had its own disadvantages and challenges... It called for perseverance.

Besides using a scrap bus as a makeshift classroom, Rojavu's school once improvised by using mobile classrooms. He cites...

The mobile classrooms themselves are not the best type of classrooms one can think of. They are very hot in summer and very cold in winter because their making is not a permanent structure.

Fostering partnerships

In order to raise much needed funds and sponsorships, Rojavu ascertained that he fosters a strong partnership with the community and businessmen where his school is located. This ensures that the school is taken care of even after school hours...

I ensured that the community members developed a sense of ownership for the school... There is an occasion when I received a call late at night from a community member reporting there was a suspicion that there was a break-in, in the school. I drove to the school to find that there were already about twenty-five community members around the premises.

Rojavu further talks about forming a partnership with a politician in order for his requests for the school to be given attention...

I decided that 'now I must be smart with my moves'. That's when I decided to form a relationship with Mr. S.V. Naicker, one of the politicians in the area and said: "Can you adopt our school so that when you go to parliament you represent our request." This indeed fast tracked our application.

Rojavu also talks about the significance of building relations with business people in order to survive...

Another financial survival strategy is to engage in 'gentlemen's agreements' with business people. When the going gets tough and there are absolutely no funds in the school account, I plead with service providers to supply services and pay in the following financial year.

Rojavu also states: "to boost the finances at school we engage in a number of fundraising events."

Due to poverty rates parents cannot even afford a uniform. Sponsorships, to this effect, came to Rojavu's rescue...

The poverty levels in the community I am serving are very rife. Therefore, parents cannot afford to buy the school uniform. One of the local non-profit organisations volunteered to purchase school uniforms for the needy learners.

Good financial management – a requisite

Rojavu considers good financial management as a requisite for the principal's success. He actually asserts that "Good financial management is a must." He regards dependence on the State as a huge challenge. He then indicates how important it is to have good financial management skills in order to survive as a school principal...

As principals we wait until May or June each year before the DoE deposits funds into school accounts. Good financial management is required for the school to survive from January to this time. I have got to a point where I have learnt to buy in bulk when funds are available. In some year I bought enough duplicating paper to carry us through three

years. I am being very strict with the way the monies are spent in the school. As a result, sometimes I face angry teachers who accuse me of being stingy as if the school monies are mine; yet I have to ensure the continuous smooth-running of the school.

In terms of the SASA, one of the responsibilities of the school principal, is management of “the finances of the school” (Mestry, 2006, p. 27), and this is irrespective of the circumstances principals face in their everyday practice.

What informs Rojavu’s actions from the lens of the transformational leadership model?

Rojavu, ... *being the son of a ‘man of clothe’* instilled strong **spiritual values** in him. A higher purpose always has and still does matter to him. This is reflected when he motivates his team... *“I keep reminding my colleagues that what they are doing is for God, not just those kids or their parents. We have to await blessings in the future.”*

However, Rojavu does not seem to be driven by **social values**. In terms of the transformational leadership model, a leader would place people first in his decisions. On the contrary, when it comes to this, Rojavu puts money first, evident in this statement... *“I think I am a leader because I also think about how the money is spent. ‘Best value for money’ matters.”* This statement was uttered by Rojavu when he rejected an offer by the municipality to build 14 classrooms to alleviate the overcrowding problem. Instead, Rojavu said: *“Developing a school where it was, was going to be a wasteful expenditure.”*

Rojavu was more concerned about money that would go to waste than the well-being of teachers and learners. This was despite the unfavourable conditions teachers and learners were subjected to.

As a **role-model**, Rojavu embraces *‘Leading from the front.’* Being faced with a mounting learner enrolment and being understaffed, Rojavu decided to lead the way by devoting himself to extra teaching...

The very first challenge I had to face was the learner enrolment that was mounting ... I decided to involve myself too much in teaching. I had a lot of teaching load just to set the

example. I was seeing to it that I come early to school, as well as teach during the weekends.

Even when dealing with learners, Rojavu employs **role modelling**. He asserts “*It is important to lead from the front and show learners how things are done.*”

In terms of the transformational leadership model, a leader instils or portrays sacrifice **for the benefit of the organisation against self-interests**. She/he is also persuasive in nature. Rojavu displays this character trait as his narrative repeatedly brings up how he attempted to persuade his staff...

I had to persuade the educators to think first about the community before thinking about themselves... We had 6 classrooms, the bus being the seventh. We had packed classes with an average of 100 per room. I was motivating my educators to persevere.

Rojavu’s persuasive nature is indicated through his colleagues’ behaviour as they now use their private cars to transport learners to the clinic...

Teachers on a daily basis are facing the challenges of observing learners from poor backgrounds. Our learners fall sick during the school day. When we phone parents, they have no means to come and pick them up. Many a times teachers end up taking these kids to the clinic using their own cars at their own cost.

Rojavu’s and his teachers’ behaviour is reflected in findings by Bhana et al. (2006, p. 5) that “teachers in the schools with the least resources are frequently those required to provide the most demanding forms of support and care to learners.” The level of sacrifice portrayed by his colleagues certainly shows Rojavu’s success in persuading his teachers to help out, even though it was and / or is at a cost to themselves.

Thabisile's Collage Portrait

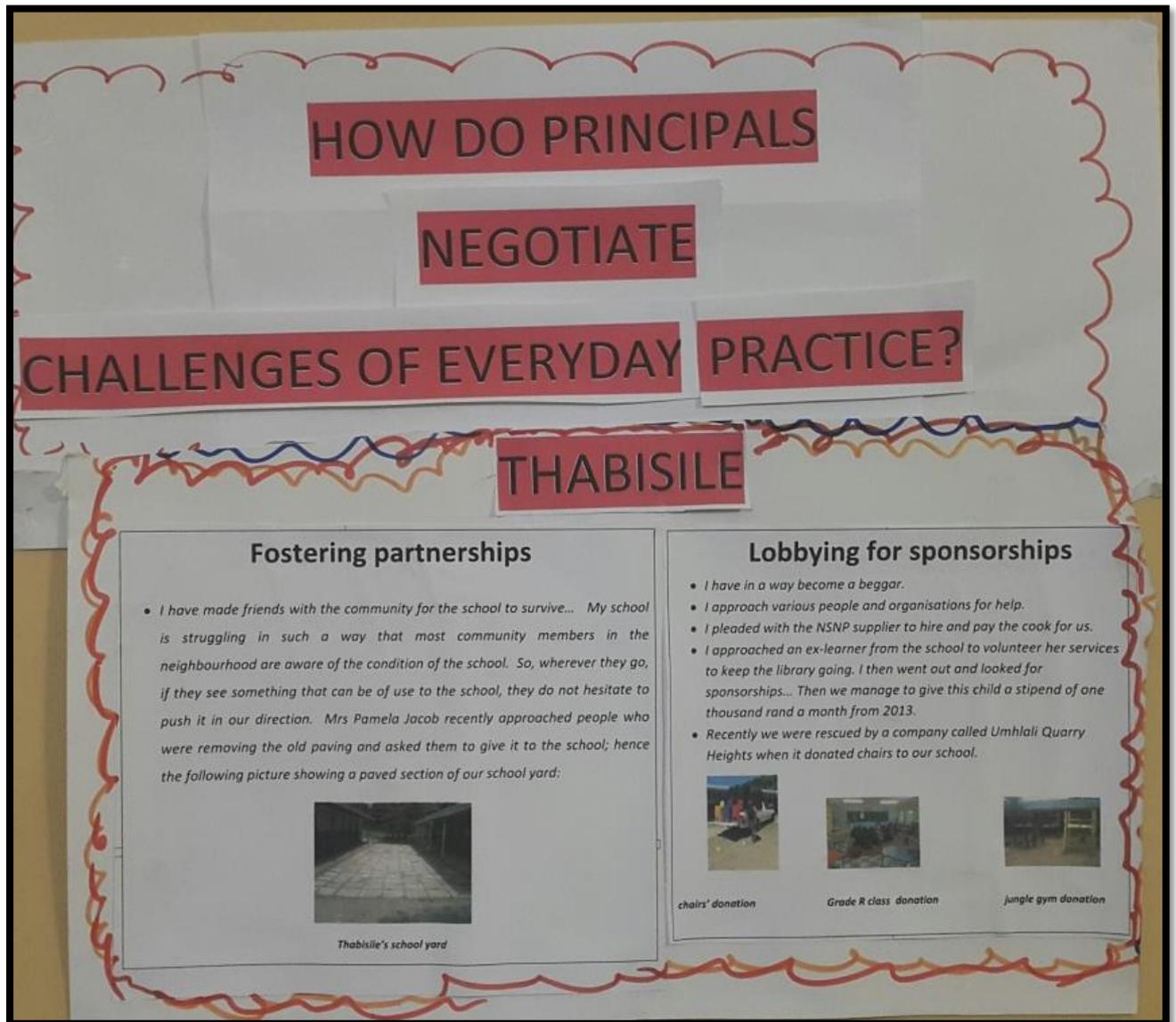


Figure 5.2: Thabisile's collage portrait

What does Thabisile do to negotiate challenges of everyday practice?

Surviving through fostering partnerships and lobbying for sponsorships

For her school's survival Thabisile relies on fostering partnerships with community members as she maintains... *"I have made friends with the community for the school to survive."* Her relationship with the community is at a point that makes Thabisile regard her school as every community member's baby...

Every 'neighbour's baby'... most community members in the neighbourhood are aware of the condition of the school. So, wherever they go, if they see something that can be of use to the school, they do not hesitate to push it in our direction.

Thabisile cites how she relies on lobbying for sponsorships in order to survive.

As a principal I approach various people and organisations for help. For instance, with regard to the issue of one cook for the whole learner population, I pleaded with the NSNP supplier to hire and pay the cook for us... Otherwise, only God knows how one cook would survive.

NSNP is a National School Nutrition Programme that was introduced by the DoE in 2004 to ensure that learners in poorest schools get a nutritious meal (Department of Basic Education, 2010). If it was not for this programme, most learners from poor families would be going to school on empty stomachs, which would make learning very difficult for them.

Thabisile also goes all the way to plead with an ex-learner to take care of the library as she mentions that *"I approached an ex-learner from the school to volunteer her services to keep the library going."* She then went out lobbying for support to raise a stipend for her volunteer librarian...

I then went out and looked for sponsorships. Fortunately, I managed to get two sponsors, each giving us five hundred Rand (R500.00) towards this, so we were able to pay this ex-learner a small stipend of one thousand Rand (R1 000.00) a month from 2013.

Considering a variety of sponsorships that Thabisile has secured, it appears that this is the major source of her school needs...

Umhlali Quarry Heights ...donated chairs to our school. Adrian and his wife, a local couple added more chairs for us... A White family in the neighbourhood donated the ... jungle gym to the school.

Actually, the scale at which Thabisile relies on sponsorships has made her regard herself as a beggar as she states that *“I have in a way become a beggar.”* Thabisile has got to a point where she instils this begging in her own colleagues...

Even teachers in the school have learnt to ask for sponsorships. Through the efforts of Miss Khuzwayo and Mr Dlamini (who is late), we were able to get the state of the art Grade R class...These colleagues got this sponsorship from Isibaya Casino.

What informs Thabisile’s actions from the lens of the transformational leadership model?

Thabisile’s actions are driven by a determination to see her school running. She states that *“To see to it that the school runs smoothly, I have learnt to devise a variety of survival tactics.”*

Whatever Thabisile does is informed by strong **social values** in her. It is evident in the following statement, that making a difference in people’s lives matters to her... *“Wa! This is me! It means I am doing great. I am making a difference in people’s lives.”* Another area that demonstrates that Thabisile embraces social values is the way in which she embraces diversity...

My school embraces diversity and this ...helps people to learn to tolerate one another, love one another and also to work with one another harmoniously. I hope that this... will help reduce xenophobic attacks that seem to ruin the relationships in our country at present.

Thabisile’s concern for embracing diversity stems from fierce xenophobic attacks that were experienced in South Africa on 11 May 2008 (Steenkamp, 2009). The SASA is also committed to “protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages” (Department of Education, 1996). Furthermore, the promotion of social cohesion is amongst the goals of the Department (KZN Department of Education, 2010). Thabisile’s vision is therefore, in line with the goals of the DoE.

Thabisile is also driven by **spiritual values**...

I remember my first day as principal. I was very scared. I recall very well that before I stepped out from the car, I prayed: "Now God, You've given me this; please give me the strength to face whatever challenge that comes my way."

Thabisile talks about '**Leading by example**'...

On yearly basis, the Link Church ... members choose a day to come and help in various ways, such as painting, planting flowers and general cleaning of the school. On this day about one hundred people participate in the cleaning project. I always make it a point that I lead by example, by ascertaining that I am always part of the team. I can't be an on-looker while everybody is working.



Naledi's Collage Portrait

HOW DO PRINCIPALS

NEGOTIATE

CHALLENGES OF EVERYDAY PRACTICE?

NALEDI

Improvising

- Operating from a store room - to this day I am running the school from a store room because it has no administration block.

Fostering partnership with the community and its leadership

- Fostering good relationships with the community leadership has also helped the school a lot... Community members have also developed sense of ownership for the school.
- The ward councillor ... brought four jojo tanks to the school with the stands and fitted them.
- Up until today the people sent by the ward councillor cut the grass all the time.

Sponsorships

- Knocking from door to door.
- The following pictures show the state of this block before and after the intervention by Unitrade:



Before



Now
Naledi's school block

Begging for human resources

- I sat down with my ABET teachers and said: "Guys, I have a problem in my day school. Can we make two shifts? We will work with kids during the day, and come back late as I am doing, and teach the ABET students. You are going to volunteer. You are not going to be paid because the school has no money. Please guys, help me out."

Poverty alleviation projects

- One class, one garden - To alleviate poverty, I sold the idea of vegetable gardens to teachers... The following pictures display our flower gardens that were later replaced by vegetable ones:



Before



After
Naledi's one class, one garden project

Unitrade also repaired our old desks. The pictures below show desks before and after repairs:



Before



Now
Naledi's school desks

- Unitrade also donated school library books to the school. In 2013 they sponsored a jungle gym for our pre-school. In simple terms, this company just adopted the school.
- African Bank donated five computers to the school.
- The local Taxi association, Sathya Sai Service Group and Nedbank always donated school uniform to our needy learners.

Figure 5.3: Naledi's collage portrait

What does Naledi do to negotiate challenges of everyday practice?

Counting on sponsorships and partnerships for survival

To keep her school going Naledi relies on community partnerships...

Community members have also developed a sense of ownership for the school such that even when there is a leaking pipe after school hours, they call me to report it... The community has actually adopted me because I give so much of myself to building a school to improve the lives of their children.

Lemmer (2000, p. 61) argues that “good school, family and community partnerships lead to improved academic learner achievement... Parents and teachers experience mutual support and satisfaction in achieving positive changes in children and the school.” This is exactly what Naledi is experiencing by fostering a good community partnership, as her school is taken care of by community members.

Naledi also said ...

I also improved conditions by making the school a community centre. The DoE officials did not approve of the KwaDukuza Municipality’s decision to build the toilets right in front of the school gate. So, instead of demolishing these, I decided to convert them into a school kitchen and a ‘Phila mntwana’ centre which is used by community members as a clinic that renders service for zero to five-year old children. This facility is meant to assist malnourished children.

Naledi’s action cited in the above excerpt is in line with the goals of the Department (KZN Department of Education, 2010) which envisages that schools should improve “the lives of communities surrounding them, particularly in under developed areas where economic and social activity is limited... ensure that schools in the province rise to the occasion by becoming multi-purpose centres for community development.” (p. 6)

Naledi has also fostered partnership with community leadership...

Fostering good relationships with the community leaders has also helped the school a lot... The ward councillor... said to me: “If you need any help, just shout.” I then told him: “Baba there is no water at the school.” The following day he brought four Jojo tanks

to the school with the stands and fitted them...He also took it upon himself to see to it that grass was cut at no cost such which still continues today.

To show how much she relies on sponsorships, Naledi talks about knocking at every door in order to survive.

Drawing on the support of volunteers

Naledi narrates how she called on the support of volunteers at some stage to address understaffing of her school. “Volunteers are a cost-effective way to expand the range of activities at the school” (Lemmer, 2000, p. 72). Volunteers certainly worked in favour of Naledi’s school as she was able to improve the conditions with their help.

Improvising

Naledi talks about how she improvises as she runs a school without the administration block. She narrates *“I am running the school from a store room because it has no administration block... Even my clerk has no space to do his work.”*

Poverty alleviation projects

Considering the rife poverty rates in a community she serves, Naledi goes as far as introducing *‘One class, one garden’* as a poverty alleviation strategy. Naledi’s establishment of food gardens in her school is in line with the strategic plan of the Department (KZN Department of Education, 2010). It has become a norm for South African teachers to engage in programmes to address issues of poverty as Bhana et al. (2006, p. 16) report that teachers have started and now support “feeding schemes out of their own pockets and with help from sympathetic colleagues.”

What informs Naledi’s actions from the lens of the transformational leadership model?

Naledi’s choices are shaped by her determination to turn things around as she asserts *“I devised means to turn things around.”* Naledi’s religious background instilled **spiritual values** in her. She is a strong believer as she asserts ...

By the power of God I believe miracles could still happen again, because I have seen and I believe in these miracles. And I know that if anything happens by the power of God, it will be exceptional.

Social values seem to equally matter for Naledi. This is displayed in her concern about the poor community such that she introduced the idea “*of vegetable gardens to teachers.*”

Naledi asserts that the success of her school is due to **going an extra mile**, as she puts it this way... “*I have managed to achieve all of this, by going an extra mile, begging for assistance.*” Naledi also shows that she is strong at **role modelling** to a level of influencing the team to go an extra mile...

I thank my team which is doing a great job. Today’s enrolment of five hundred and thirty-five against eighty-eight in 2009, proves that my team is top quality and we live up to the best that we can do.

Naledi also has the **persuasive skill** as she was able to plead with ABET Centre teachers to volunteer their services to her understaffed school.

Jeff's Collage Portrait

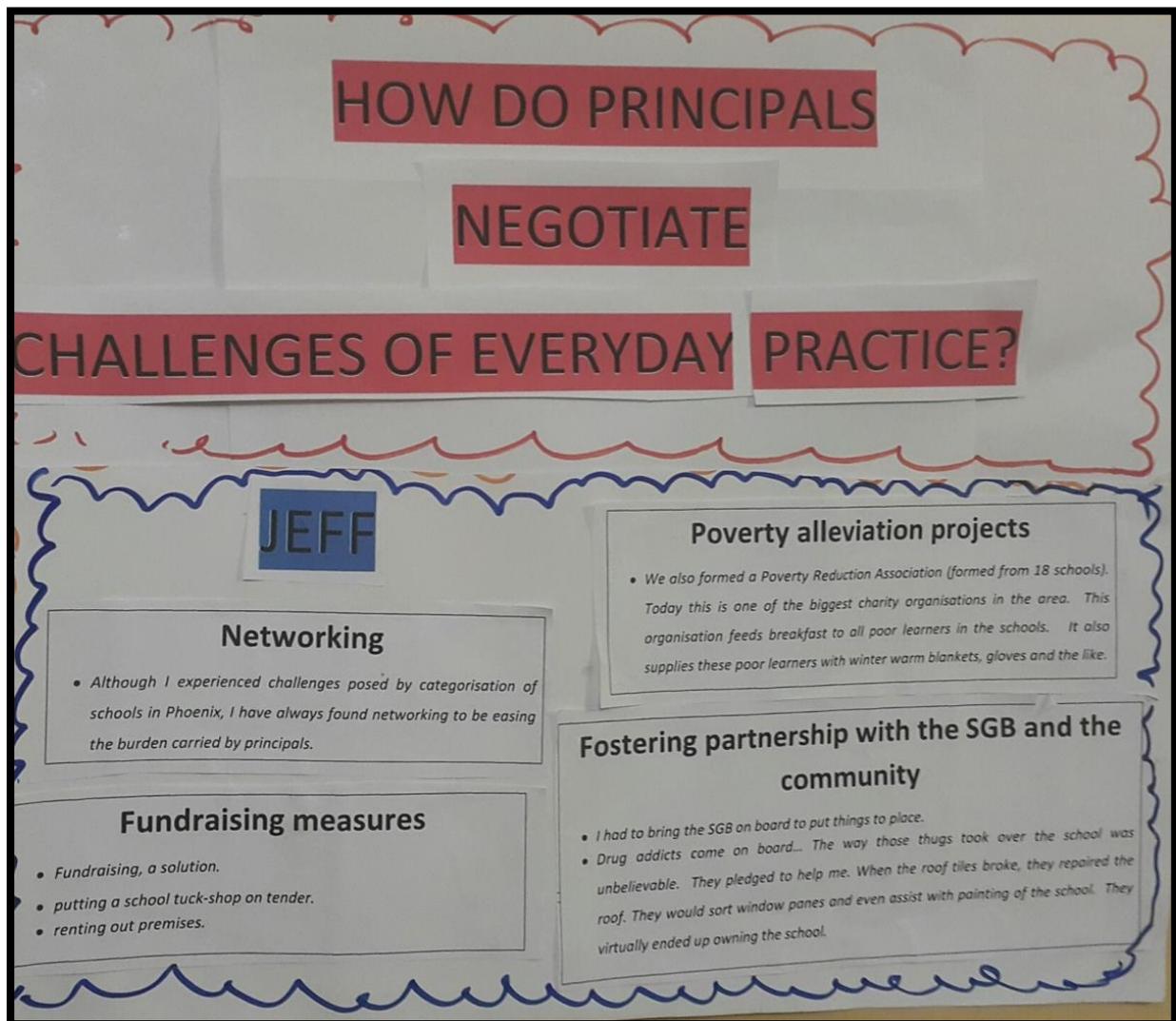


Figure 5.4: Jeff's collage portrait

What does Jeff do to negotiate challenges of everyday practice?

Relying on partnerships and networking for survival

To manage running an under-resourced school, Jeff always counted on partnerships as he maintained that when he got appointed as principal he “*had to bring the SGB on board to put things into place.*” Incredibly, Jeff was even able to get the thugs that had been troubling the school on board.

Jeff even fostered a partnership at a professional level with his colleague principals in the area his school is located. He considers **networking** as a means of easing the principals’ burden as he asserts that...

Although I experienced challenges posed by categorization of schools in Phoenix, I have always found networking to be easing the burden carried by principals. We would always meet the challenges by supporting one another.

By networking Jeff and his team of principal colleagues were able to alleviate poverty in the area where their schools are located by forming an Association.

Through networking, individuals work together “to enhance information exchange, dissemination of good practices, and the organisation of mutual support and learning... networking may occur between individuals or groups within individual schools or in collaboration with other schools” (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002, p. 301). It was through networking that Jeff and his colleagues managed to work together to alleviate poverty in their schools.

Fundraising measures

Jeff considers “*Fundraising as a solution*” such that when he took up his appointment as principal, he considered a number of fundraising mechanisms and asserted that ...

I introduced the idea of putting a school tuck-shop on tender... I rely on a number of fundraising drives which range from deb’s ball, to proms, fashion shows, live shows, concerts, dinner dance, fun runs and charity walks.

What informs Jeff's actions from the lens of the transformational leadership model?

For Jeff to negotiate challenges of everyday practice he felt obliged to make some means for his school to keep going, as he says *"Turning things around became my mission."* **Social values** emerge as a core factor in Jeff's nature. When he was growing up, he was considered by his community as *'lawyer.'*

In addition to helping his own community, and in line with a definition of transformational leadership, Jeff shows a strong social value in terms of **uplifting others**. This is displayed in his networking approach.

By forming a *'Poverty Reduction Association'* with other principals, it shows that the well-being of people really matters to Jeff. Jeff also looks up to great historical personalities as a sign of a strong **social value** structure. This is evident in Jeff's office wall paintings...

These paintings are the three of the greatest 'saints' in modern history whose lives and contributions to the betterment of their fellow beings are a testimony of what can be achieved if all humanity embraces their values and ideals. These paintings of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Mother Theresa help everyone entering my office know my vision and mission.

Whenever he addresses his staff, Jeff always quotes his former principal...

I always relate this to my teachers. He said these words in 1978 and to this day, they vibrate in my ears, "always as a teacher, make sure you have a piece of chalk in your hand. Whenever you get angry, crash that chalk, never crash the child."

Jeff also displays **spiritual values** as when motivating learners, he makes reference to...

Success comes to those who live by values and beliefs and who are inspired to unleash their true potential and achieve their goals.... I always remind my learners that 'cleanliness is next to Godliness.'

Jeff also advocates **role-modelling** such that he asserts that... *"Educators, learners and parents need role models to inspire them, motivate them and shape their lives."* Jeff further asserts: *"I believe so much in action, hence don't talk; you got to walk the talk."* He displays

role modelling skills as he was able to influence his colleagues. This is evident in that he changed the mind-set of his staff when he got promoted... “*Staff members initially resented ... change, but they soon came round to my way of thinking... This changed the entire mind-set of all the teachers.*”

Jeff advocates **sacrifice** as he said...

I always tell my staff, “If you want joy from teaching, you got to give a lot. You must be able to sacrifice your time, and know that a reward you get at the end, no amount of money can buy that.”

In the next section I highlight common themes that emerged from individual ways in which principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice.

SECTION B

Common strategies employed by principals to negotiate challenges of everyday practice

From the actions and choices made by individual principals three common themes were pronounced as ways in which principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice. The three common themes that emerged are:

1. Common approaches
2. Embracing values and attributes
3. Employment of skills

Theme One: Common approaches

From the stories told by each principal I have gathered that for them to address the challenges of everyday practice, they applied common approaches, such as fundraising; seeking sponsorships; networking; fostering partnerships; poverty alleviation strategies; and mitigating recruitment strategies. These approaches are in line with expectations, as South African teachers “are expected to provide support, address social inequalities...” (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, & Ngabaza, 2010, p. 874). By employing approaches cited above, principals are trying to meet this expectation, as they supplement the insufficient funding that is provided for their schools. By engaging in poverty alleviation projects, principals show care and this contributes “to the process of better schooling outcomes” (Bhana & Mcambi, 2013,

p. 18). The reality is that “in the context of poverty, learners have access to few support structures” (Bhana et al., 2006, p. 17). It is unfortunate to note that in South Africa “there is no cohesively articulated program of poverty reduction strategies” (Bennett, 2009, p. 61). Such a programme could support the principals in their efforts.

Theme Two: Embracing values and attributes

It is evident from the principals’ narrative accounts in Chapter Three, that they rely heavily on attributes such as motivation, sacrifice and role modelling in order to ‘get going’ in their place of work. I have gathered from their narrative accounts that; the principals’ persuasive appeals go a long way in keeping their staff members as well as learners motivated. Even the DoE acknowledges that without “motivated teachers, it is impossible to achieve improved quality education for all” (Department of Education, 2005, p. 21). Sacrifice also plays an important role in keeping principals and their staff going. Despite that their sacrifice in support of learners is not acknowledged and rewarded, principals still embrace this attribute (Bhana et al., 2006). Principals also address challenges they encounter in their workplace by role-modelling what they expect of their colleagues. Furthermore, they ascertain that they go an extra mile to keep their schools going.

Theme Three: Employment of skills

Principals also count on skills like improvising and engaging in financial management work in order to face challenges of everyday practice – skills which are necessary as Mestry (2006) states that it is mandatory for the principal to manage the school finances.

SECTION C

The study’s perspective of the transformational leadership theoretical model

As I was excavating lives of principals through the stories of their lived experiences, I deepened my understanding of how they negotiate everyday challenges. This has enabled me to extend Burns’ transformational leadership theory; as it is limited to only two sets of values that delve on the spiritual and social dimensions. The additional values that emerged to further reflect the principals’ dimensions are **professional**, **political** and **philosophical** in nature.

Professional values are manifested in the manner in which principals commit their lives to their work. The professional values inform decisions principals adopt in their work. Rojavu for instance cites *“When I assumed my position as principal I tried to improve the school’s culture of learning and teaching (COLT).”* He further cites *“I was seeing to it that I come early to school, as well as teach during the weekends.”*

Thabisile also shows a high degree of commitment as she cites... *“I also took an initiative to introduce the library service to our learners in school.”* Naledi also shows commitment to her profession... *“I devised means to turn things around.”* Jeff also talks about... *“Turning things around.”*

Political values emerged as the principals cited that in all that they do, they push to bring about change in the communities they serve. They are also determined to earn respect from the communities they are serving. Thabisile, for instance, maintains that leaving an impact on the community matters, as she said: *“Wa! This is me! It means I am doing great. I am making a difference in people’s lives.”*

Naledi states that... *“With all the transformation that has happened in the school, I still have so much to do.”* Jeff states that ... *“I had to become an agent of change.”* He further talks about his intervention that led to the transformation of the circuit in which his school is based... *“...resulting in a drastic overall improvement of the circuit.”* Jeff adds *“I am very happy...I have managed to take the school I am managing to new heights.”*

Philosophical values stood out as principals’ stories tell that they stand their ground in response to what they believe in. Rojavu stood by the principle of Batho Pele, meaning people first (Mofolo & Smith, 2009) when he opted for rejecting the erection of a 14 classroom project in his temporary site. He says... *“Well, I think I am a leader because I also think about how the money is spent. ‘Best value for money’ matters in terms of Batho Pele.”* The following statement demonstrates that Thabisile is also driven by philosophical values... *“I hope that this yearly event in my school will help reduce xenophobic attacks that seem to ruin the relationships in our country at present.”*

Naledi also shows she is driven by philosophical values as she is concerned about ... *“Making the school a community centre.... changing the mind-set of the community.”* Jeff also makes reference to standing his ground though it was a challenge *“The greatest*

challenge was to change the community mind-set.” Surprisingly, he also “changed the entire mind-set of all the teachers.”

Conclusion

This chapter has responded to the critical question, “*How do principals negotiate the challenges of everyday practice?*” In the first section I used the collage portraiture to gather how individual principals respond to challenges at hand. I also analysed what informs the individual principals’ choices from the lens of the transformational leadership model where I learnt that principals’ daily work is value-driven and they negotiate their everyday challenges by embracing personally meaningful – spiritual and social values. In Section B, I highlighted common strategies employed by principals. In the third section of this Chapter, I presented this study’s perspective of the transformational leadership model. It emerged that this model is limited to two sets of values, while the study has extended these to five, by adding political, philosophical and professional values that are embraced by principals as they negotiate challenges of everyday practice in the context of school categorization.

In the next chapter, I present my findings from the study by citing the methodological reflections of the study, the contributions of the study, as well as recommendations based on the findings generated by this study.

Chapter Six

The way forward

Introduction

I commenced this study two years ago, focusing on school principals' stories of work in the context of school categorization. Drawing on their reconstructed stories of lived experiences, I am able to better understand how particular school principals negotiate the challenges of everyday work in the context of school categorization. School principals' work is negotiated in relation to particular structural and material conditions. The perspective they adopt in negotiating the dilemmas they face in everyday situations, is informed by particular values, beliefs and priorities.

Methodological reflections of the study

I found qualitative research approach, interpretivist paradigm and narrative inquiry appropriate for my study. The above mentioned aspects of research that I employed for this study indeed deepened my understanding of the principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization. Narrative Inquiry gave me insight into their intellectual, ideological, emotional and psychological state of mind. I found unstructured oral interviews, art-based methods, artefact retrieval and photo-voice to be ideal for my study as these various methods opened up my understanding and enabled me to address the three research questions that drove this study. The art-based methods employed to generate data, went beyond what principals told me during interviews. The following data sources: stories, artefacts, collages and photos generated a rich and nuanced portrayal of critical moments and experiences of a life lived.

How principals experience categorization of schools

This study has enhanced my understanding of the principals' experiences of school categorization; the challenges they face; as well as what ways were adopted to negotiate these everyday situations. The narrative accounts presented in Chapter Three were reconstructed narratives of the lives of principals, told and experienced in the context of school categorization. Through the lives of these four principals I came to the nuanced understanding of the principals' experiences. I have come to understand that the principals'

lives in their everyday practice are complex; that their work is challenging intellectually, psychologically, emotionally and professionally; that they face numerous tensions and anxieties while negotiating everyday situations and the choices they make are informed by particular beliefs and priorities.

Principals' challenges of everyday practice

The 'dilemmatic spaces' conceptual framework deepened my understanding "of the complexity of [principals'] everyday work practices" (Fransson & Grannäs, 2013, p. 4). It foregrounded the range of forces that they have to negotiate as school leaders. The quintile ranking policy and how it is practiced impacts seriously on the principals' operations. The school contexts are dynamic as there are many structural and material forces that principals have to negotiate. From the analysis of data generated through this study it is evident that principals experience a number of challenges in their day to day practice from which I identified the following four themes: **Poverty rates are rife; unfavourable work conditions; insufficient finances; as well as the horrific nature of the principals' job.**

From this study I have learnt that the poverty rates in communities from where learners come have a bearing on what happens in most schools. Wood and Olivier (2008, pp. 151,156) also express the point that socio-economic challenges continue to confront our education system "despite the fact that South Africa has reached the proverbial Promised Land of a fair ... educational system for all."

This study clearly indicates that the conditions in which principals work are not favourable to teaching and learning. Lack of proper infrastructure, for instance, impacts negatively on the quality of teaching and learning. From the study it emerged that insufficient funding affects principals irrespective of the quintile ranking of their schools. The issue of poor school infrastructure is also raised by Reschovsky (2006) as he asserts that there are schools that lack basic facilities such as toilets and classrooms.

Wood and Olivier (2008) are of the view that insufficient resources result in negative emotions in many teachers. To show how frustrating the teachers' jobs are, Mitchell et al. (2008) state that teachers have a feeling that the system has forgotten them. Due to "a lack of material aids to accomplish tasks efficiently [teachers suffer from stress which in turn results in] burnout and ill-health" (Montgomery, Mostert, & Jackson, 2005, p. 266).

This study has also revealed that the principals' job is frustrating, such that all the participants expressed feelings of anxiety caused by their daily practice. The DoE acknowledges that to retain teachers in the system they "need to be released from administrative tasks and other activities that increase their workload and distract attention from their fundamental responsibilities" (Department of Education, 2005, p. 16). In support of this, Morrow (2007, p. 13) contends that teachers are "constantly and chronically overloaded." He actually describes the teachers' workload as being suicidal in nature. This is to the extent of principals' despair. Throughout the narrative accounts principals express the deep psychological feelings of anxiety, 'drowning', being overwhelmed, frustrated, being caught in the middle as if there is no escape, marginalised, suffocating and irrelevant as if not needed.

How principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice

To address the question of how principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice, I employed collage portraiture and the transformational leadership theoretical model. From their narratives, I learnt that to negotiate challenges of everyday practice, principals draw on innovative and alternate partnerships and alliances to create and support a conducive teaching and learning schooling environment for learners and teachers; and engage in a range of practices to assist them maintain well-functioning schools. Principals leading schools that are adversely affected by inappropriate categorisation, enact decisions that are informed by particular personal attributes (motivation, sacrifice, care), to assist them to go beyond their professional responsibility.

Limitations of the study

I acknowledge that this study has some limitations as "no study is perfect" (Murray & Beglar, 2009, p. 183). Tuli (2011) proposed that every research methodology is prone to weaknesses and strengths, hence none is ideal. Therefore, the acknowledgement of limitations of every study is vital. Vithal and Jansen (2010) put forward that by acknowledging limitations of the study, the researcher enables the reader to identify the challenges that were attached to the study. The relationship between the narrative account, interpretation and the retelling of the story has to be ethically negotiated. Mack (2010, p. 8) stated that "one of the limitations to interpretive research is that it abandons the scientific procedures of verification and therefore results cannot be generalized to other situations." The interpretivist paradigm is also criticised for its subjective nature (Mack, 2010). Another limitation with narrative inquiry is that since

it deals with specific experiences of certain individuals, a researcher cannot simply draw generalizations on its basis.

Theoretical contributions of the Study

Prior to this study I read the literature that has been conducted on principals' work, as well as on categorization of schools. I learnt that only a paucity of knowledge has been covered on issues that pertain to the principals' daily experiences in the context of school categorization.

Morrow's perspective of the principals' work

I explored the school principals' stories of work in the context of school categorization from the perspective advanced by Morrow (2007), whose discourse stems from the debate posed by Shulman (1983, p. 151), where he asserts that "teaching is impossible." However, despite all odds, principals are able to negotiate the challenges they face. I have come to the understanding that principals are confronted by a number of material and structural issues which present constraints in their work environment. Therefore, the social realities in which they find themselves are intellectually, emotionally, psychologically and professionally challenging.

Transformational leadership model

In terms of the theoretical leadership model, for principals to negotiate challenges they face on a daily basis, they draw on **spiritual** and **social values** which help them sustain commitment. There appears to be a strong relationship between spirituality and motivation. However, from their narratives I discovered that the principals' work is not just underpinned by spiritual and social values, but a substantial number of other values help principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice. These are **professional, political** and **philosophical** values.

The professional values are manifested in the manner in which principals commit their lives to their work. These values inform their decisions. Political values also emerged from the way in which principals negotiate challenges of everyday practice. This is evident in that principals have a drive to bring about change in the communities they serve. They are determined to earn respect from the communities they are serving. Philosophical values also underpin the principals' work. This is evident in the manner in which they stand their ground

in response to what they believe in. On the basis of the above mentioned values that have emerged from the study, I am of the view that the transformational leadership theory is limited as it only cites the spiritual and social values.

Personal-professional reflections of the study

In this section, I briefly share how much I value the study as a researcher, as well as a principal. In Chapter One, I likened the principal's management journey with the act of walking with the aid of a baby-walker, where a toddler needs support and stability in order to walk effectively. The toddler is provided with back and arm support and bands that connect the seat to the top and the bottom circles to enable him/her to move without falling. The toddler is in a sense encased within a structure that when works enables him or her to move forward. If, however, the structure is not working, for example 'the wheels got stuck'; the toddler is also stuck and is without direction.

This analogy is befitting in my case. Through this study I have found my ground as a researcher and principal. Without the enormous support I enjoyed through the study, I would not be the same. I have got a nuanced understanding of the lives of principals out there. This study has indeed furnished me with wheels that enabled me to access spaces that I would have not accessed before. I have enjoyed the support that was provided by numerous structures, such as my supervisor, co-supervisor, critical peers as well as the funding for this research.

In terms of my analogy, without all the support structure the toddler would fall all the time. This study has helped me understand strategies that principals employ to keep going; thereby giving me strength and skills to carry on with my job as principal in this system that categorizes schools in diverse ways. It has further furnished me with a strong foundation for the next layer of my research, as I pursue further studies.

Being the principal in the South African public education system has subjected me to numerous lived experiences. As a principal I would always wonder if what I am experiencing is also experienced by colleagues elsewhere. This study has indeed helped deepen my understanding of my participants' lived experiences. By engaging with the stories of the four principals, I have a better understanding that I am not alone. By responding to the three critical questions that drove the study, I have developed more of an understanding of

my own struggle. This, then, keeps me going, despite the challenges in my continuing professional walk as principal.

My poem (presented in Chapter One) cites that my baby-walker ‘*came at a crucial time of my professional career*’, while I was ‘*still a vulnerable novice teacher*’ for ‘*helping me find my ground.*’ While this device is meant for helping the toddler find her ground, I view this study in the same light. This study has indeed served as my baby-walker. Through this study, I have managed to ‘find my ground’ as a principal by understanding how other principals of schools, experience categorization through their stories.

Implications for policy

The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa is concerned with ensuring “that teachers are properly equipped to undertake their essential and demanding tasks” (Department of Education, 2007, p. 2). This suggests that the DoE acknowledges the challenges faced by teachers. The question is whether the policy framework does really meet its obligation in terms of skilling teachers to deal with demands of their duties. The DoE further acknowledges that teachers “work in extremely complex conditions, largely due to the pervasive legacies of apartheid, but also as a result of the new policies needed to bring about change in education”(Department of Education, 2007, p. 4). A point to ponder about here is how often the policies are revisited to ascertain their impact on employees.

The DoE further reflects that the challenging conditions in which teachers work cause “diminishing interest in teaching as a career” (Department of Education, 2007, p. 10). This raises a question of what the DoE is doing to address this situation. This study has clearly shown that there certainly is a need for intervention, before the teaching fraternity loses more personnel because of loss of interest caused by harsh work conditions.

Implications for principals’ practice in schools

This study has revealed numerous challenges that principals face on daily basis; as well as strategies they employ to negotiate these challenges. The baby-walker analogy fits here as well, as the findings of this study could be invaluable to practicing principals. As this study has revealed ways in which the participants negotiate challenges of everyday practice, other principals could also tap on those mechanisms of survival. Furthermore they may also

establish professional learning communities through which they can share the challenges at hand, thereby easing the burden that is carried by individuals in their specific school contexts. This would in turn enable principals to run and manage their schools effectively, despite the odds. Therefore, just as the baby-walker furnishes the toddler with wheels for mobility to be possible, principals would enjoy mobility through the findings of this study.

Now the question that is left with officials in the TD directorate is the extent to which these wheels are strengthened. I therefore hope my study comes handy to DoE officials that are engaged in Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD). The four school principals' experiences have identified what support they require. Their narratives give a glimpse into what hardships they face and what they need for their schools to continue to prosper.

This study has also revealed how principals' exposure to unfavourable work conditions has subjected them to feelings of emotional and psychological stress, such that they view their job as being 'horrific'. This raises the concern about how the CPTD initiatives address these needs.

Implications for further educational research

Since my study focused on how principals experience school categorization, I have gathered the impact categorization has on these professionals. This throws up the possible research that would seek to understand how categorization impacts on the next level of professionals in the school setting. It would be interesting to explore how school categorization is experienced by other teaching practitioners like deputy principals, heads of departments as well as teachers.

Conclusion

Reflecting on all the activities that the principals engaged in to negotiate challenges of everyday practice, I reached a point where I noticed that in the private sector, each of these activities would be allocated to specific personnel. These include fundraising, networking, fostering partnerships, staff recruitment and financial management. This takes us back to Morrow's (2007) discourse (presented in Chapter One) that in addition to the core function of schools which is teaching, there are numerous additional tasks that are performed by teachers. The question that is posed by Morrow is "whether others should be employed for this work,

enabling schoolteachers to focus more sharply on their defining function” (p. 3). Morrow (2007, p. 4) attests that when he started teaching he was so overwhelmed to an extent that he “ceased to have any life outside of teaching.”

The complexity of the principals’ work that has been revealed by this study poses a challenge to policy-makers and teacher-developers in respect of how they ascertain that the services of these practitioners are maximised and retained.

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Appendix 1: Request for permission to conduct research (Circuit Manager)

P.O. Box 2336

Esikhawini

3887

..... Circuit Manager

Department of Education

Stanger

4450

10 December 2014

Dear

Request for permission to conduct research.

I am currently pursuing studies towards a Master of Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My specialization is in Teacher Development Studies. To fulfil the requirements of the degree I will be conducting a research study titled: *'Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.'*

I hereby humbly request that you grant me permission to conduct the study. The objectives of the study are to better understand the lived experiences of principals in the context of school categorization; to understand how school categorization enables/disables the principals' work; as well as to understand how principals negotiate the challenges that might arise as a result of categorization of schools. I hope that the findings of my study will add to the understanding of how the categorization of schools impacts on teaching and learning.

..... School, which is under your supervision, has been identified through voluntary inclusion process as a possible site of research for this project to

produce some data that will help us understand how the categorization of schools impacts on teaching and learning.

The data production process will involve a personal narrative of the principal, unstructured oral interviews, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo-voice. I assure you that the study will not compromise teaching and learning time as it will be conducted after school hours. Therefore it will not interfere with the day-to-day activities of the school. The data collection will extend over a period of three months, commencing in February 2015 and will take place at a time and venue convenient to the principal as participant.

The participant will be apprised of the research process, his/her participation and his/her rights in the research processes, through the informed consent form. His/her permission will be sought prior to his/her participation in the data collection process. The research is scheduled to take place once you have granted permission. Permission is also going to be sought from the Department of Education to conduct the study.

Please note that:

- All confidentiality will be guaranteed by using the pseudonyms to protect the school and the participant's anonymity.
- Any information given by the participant cannot be used against him/her, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participant. He/she will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The participant's involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you require any information about this study upon its completion, I will be most willing to provide you with this.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the following contact details for any enquiries.

Thanking you for your assistance

.....

Praisewell Nonhlanhla Dube (Mrs.)

Contact Details:

Email : nonhlanhladube@yahoo.com

Tel (Work) : 032 552 5390

Cell : 082 6932 882

Supervisor's details:

Name : Dr Daisy Pillay

Institution : University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood)

Email : pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za

Tel (Work) : 031 262 9411

Cell : 0827765751

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

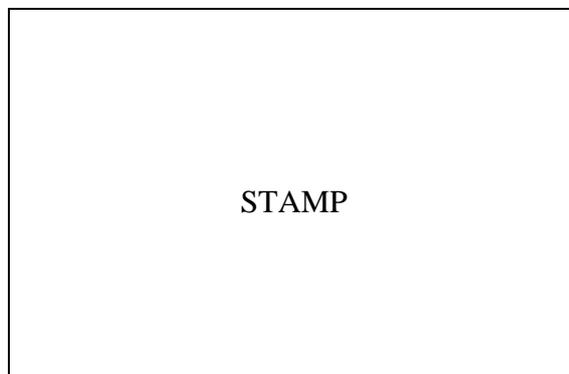
Title of study: *Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.*

Authorization:

I.....
(Full Name), Manager of Circuit, hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give permission for Iziphozethu Primary, which is a school under my supervision to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw the school under my supervision from participating in the project at any time, should I so desire. I also understand that the participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time if she wants to, without negative or undesirable consequences to herself.

Signature of Circuit Manager: **Date:**



Appendix 2: Request for consent to participate in a research study.

P.O. Box 2336

Esikhawini

3887

The Principal

.....
.....
.....
.....

12 February 2015

Dear

Request for consent to participate in a research study.

I am currently pursuing studies towards a Master of Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My specialization is in Teacher Development Studies. To fulfil the requirements of the degree I will be conducting a research study titled: *'Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.'*

I humbly request that you assist me, by participating in the study. The objectives of the study are to better understand the lived experiences of principals in the context of school categorization; to understand how school categorization enables/disables the principals' work; as well as to understand how principals negotiate the challenges that might arise as a

result of categorization of schools. I hope that the findings of my study will add to the understanding of how the categorization of schools impacts on teaching and learning.

Participation in the study is voluntary. I will use narrative inquiry, unstructured oral interviews, artefact retrieval, collage inquiry and photo-voice to generate my data. In this study I would like to interview you, have a conversation on the collage that will be created by you and the artefact chosen by you; as well as photographs you might like to take during the course of the study. Our conversation will be digitally recorded in the audio format and I would like to photograph your collage and artefact. Participation in this research will involve four meetings of approximately an hour each. These meetings will be held at a venue and time convenient to you.

If I get informed consent from you, I will use the data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. Your name or any other information that might identify you or the school will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of this study. The data will be anonymous, i.e. it will not be possible for it to be linked to your name or school since pseudonyms will be utilized in the dissertation. Copies of your contributions will be securely stored and disposed of, if no longer required for research purposes.

As a participant you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time if you feel you need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way. There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research regarding the lived experiences of school principals in the context of school categorization.

I hereby humbly request your participation in the study. The research is scheduled to take place once you have agreed to participate.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the following contact details for any enquiries that may relate to the rights of research participants.

Thanking you for your assistance

.....

Praisewell Nonhlanhla Dube (Mrs.)

Contact Details:

Email : **nonhlanhladube@yahoo.com**

Tel (Work) : **032 552 5390**

Cell : **082 6932 882**

Supervisor's details:

Name : **Dr Daisy Pillay**

Institution : **University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood)**

Email : **pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za**

Tel (Work) : **031 262 9411**

Cell : **0827765751**

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title of study: *Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.*

Authorization:

I.....
(Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I read the above understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I consent to all the audio-recording of unstructured oral interviews, discussions on collage, artefacts and photographs; as well as photographing of collage and artefacts. I understand that I may refuse to participate or I may withdraw from the study at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to myself. I also understand that if I have any concerns about my treatment during the study, I can contact the lecturer on the number provided.

Signature of Participant: **Date:**

Signature of Researcher: **Date:**

Appendix 3: Request for permission to conduct research (KZN Department of Education)

P.O. Box 2336

Esikhawini

3887

The Head of Department

KZN Department of Education

Pietermaritzburg

21 January 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to conduct research.

I am the principal at Stanger South Secondary School and am currently pursuing studies towards a Master of Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My specialization is in Teacher Development Studies. To fulfil the requirements of the degree I will be conducting a research study titled: *'Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.'*

I hereby humbly request that you grant me permission to conduct the study. The objectives of the study are to better understand the lived experiences of principals in the context of school categorization; to understand how school categorization enables/disables the principals' work; as well as to understand how principals negotiate the challenges that might arise as a result of categorization of schools. I hope that the findings of my study will add to the understanding of how the categorization of schools impacts on teaching and learning.

The following five schools in Ilembe District have been identified through voluntary inclusion process as possible sites of research for this project: Stanger South Secondary,

Stanger Heights Primary, Sizani Combined Primary, Iziphozethu Primary and Newark Primary.

The data production process will involve personal narratives of principals, unstructured oral interviews, collage inquiry, artefact retrieval and photo-voice. I assure you that the study will not compromise teaching and learning time as it will be conducted after school hours. Therefore it will not interfere with the day-to-day activities of the schools. Data generation will extend over a period of three months, commencing in February 2015 and will take place at a time and venue convenient to the principals as participants.

The participants will be apprised of the research process, their participation and their rights in the research processes, through the informed consent form. The permission will be sought prior to their participation in the data collection process. The research is scheduled to take place once you have granted permission.

Please note that:

- All confidentiality will be guaranteed by using the pseudonyms to protect the schools and the participants' anonymity.
- Any information given by the participants cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participants. They will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The participants' involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If you require any information about this study upon its completion, I will be most willing to provide you with this. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor at the following contact details for any enquiries.

Thanking you for your assistance

.....

Praisewell Nonhlanhla Dube (Mrs.)

Contact Details:

Email : **nonhlanhladube@yahoo.com**

Tel (Work) : **032 552 5390**

Cell : **082 6932 882**

Supervisor's details:

Name : **Dr Daisy Pillay**

Institution : **University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood)**

Email : **pillaygv@ukzn.ac.za**

Tel (Work) : **031 262 9411**

Cell : **0827765751**

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Title of study: *Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.*

Authorization:

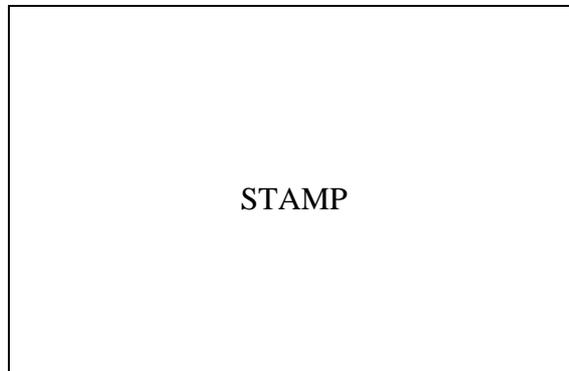
I.....

(Full Name of the Department of Education Representative), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give permission for Praisewell Nonhlanhla Dube to conduct the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw the schools from participating in the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Department of Education Representative:

Date:



Title: Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.

Appendix 4 – Unstructured oral interview

What are your everyday experiences as a principal at your school?

Please share memories of your life as far back as you can remember in relation to:

1. Growing up as a child- family/community etc

- Your early schooling days.
- Your Secondary/High School days.

2. How/Why you chose to become a teacher.

- Your tertiary days.
- Your professional life.
 - ✓ Your journey from first year of principalship to date.
 - ✓ Brief description of category/categories of school/s in which you serve/d, e.g. Section 20/21; Quintile ranking level; Fee or no-fee paying; Rural/urban/semi-urban; Primary/Secondary/Combined; Mainstream/LSEN; Public/independent; Performing/under-performing.
 - ✓ Any memories relating to individuals that had an impact on your life and how they have contributed in shaping your identity
 - ✓ Critical incidents/events

3. Becoming a School Principal

- Relationships
- Institutional Culture

Title: Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.

Appendix 5 – Artefact retrieval.

Artefacts are objects that have a meaning to individuals associated with them. These may be pieces of objects of any kind, including old pictures, old documents, newspapers, to mention a few.

Please select any three artefacts that are of importance to you.

In respect of each artefact, briefly explain:

1. What it symbolises to you in respect of your life history.
2. How old it is.
3. Why you chose it.
4. What emotion/s is/are brought by the artefact in question.

Title: Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.

Appendix 6 – Collage-making.

Dear Participant

- Please single out one extra-ordinary moment/event/occasion in your life as a principal of the school.
- Using cuttings (words or pictures) from newspapers or magazines please make a collage that captures this moment/event/occasion.
- When you have completed the collage, briefly unpack what it signifies.

Title: Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.

Appendix 7 – Photo-voice.

Dear Participant

- Over the next 4 weeks, you are requested to use the disposable camera provided, to take between 6 to 10 pictures that capture important moments/spaces/events in your daily routine at school.
- In our next session, you are requested to select the best 5 pictures. During the session you will be requested to explain the significance/meaning of pictures you will have selected.
- Please be advised that in the interest of ethics, photos that you take should be staged, such that no faces of individuals are portrayed. It is advisable to take pictures at a distance or without people.

Title: Stories of school principals' lived experiences in the context of school categorization.

Appendix 8 – Copies of emails requesting Ilembe schools' quintile list.

Assistance with a research project

Wednesday, November 26, 2014 9:51 PM

Mark as Unread



From:

'Nonhlanhla Dube' <nonhlanhladube@yahoo.com>

To:

'ntokozo.khuzwayo@kzndoe.gov.za' <ntokozo.khuzwayo@kzndoe.gov.za>

[Full Headers](#) [Printable View](#)

Hallo gal

Hope u r doing well.

I need your assistance.

I am currently reading for a Master of Education degree (specialising in professional development and higher education) with the University of KZN.

I am desperately in need of data, in respect of which schools in our district fall in different quintiles.

Kindly assist me my dearest sister. I have to interact with principals in all the five categories. If I have data indicating this information, then I am in a position of selecting colleagues that may be prepared to participate in my study.

Please toe.

Kind Regards

Nonhlanhla

RE: Assistance with a research project
Thursday, November 27, 2014 9:35 AM

Mark as Unread



From:

'Viveka Vandayar' <Viveka.Vandayar@kzndoe.gov.za>

To:

'Nonhlanhla Dube' <nonhlanhladube@yahoo.com>

[Full Headers Printable View](#)

Hi Mam Dube

No problem. I have a hard copy, can u pls pick it up.

-----Original Message-----

From: Nonhlanhla Dube [mailto:nonhlanhladube@yahoo.com]

Sent: Wednesday, November 26, 2014 9:57 PM

To: Viveka Vandayar

Subject: Assistance with a research project
