

**EXPLORING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP ROLES:  
A CASE STUDY OF FOUR PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE  
LOWER UMFOLOZI CIRCUIT**

by

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**PERMISSION BY SUPERVISOR TO SUBMIT THESIS:**

“As the candidate’s Supervisor I agree / do not agree to the submission of this thesis.”

  
.....  
Dr S Maistry

## DECLARATION

I, Mr John Elphas Masina, declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree Master of Education in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



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Mr John Elphas Masina

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this book to:

My late Mother, Annah Nontzanjana Masina, who planted in me a love for learning;

My wife, Lungile G Masina, who has been a source of inspiration and encouragement through my tertiary learning;

My daughters Nonkululeko, Nonhlanhla, Boitumelo Nompilo and Ntokozo Evidence, and my son, Scelo Andile, for teaching me how to use computers and for their prayers;

My mother-in-law, Bertha Tobile Khanyile and my late father-in-law, Kenneth Mangempi Khanyile for their prayers.

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, South African education has been characterised by a number of reforms, changes and transformation. These changes to education were followed by a variety of curriculum legislations and policies which propagated curriculum transformation at the school level. Such curriculum reforms emphasised facilitative and participative curriculum development, as well as a management model for schools. This, in turn, suggested that the principal's role with respect to 'curriculum development leadership' needed to be reconfigured in order to suit a new curriculum dispensation. The purpose of my study was to investigate primary school principals' understandings of their curriculum development leadership role at the school level. The study also sought to understand how primary school principals lead curriculum development in their schools.

Located in the qualitative interpretative paradigm, my study describes a general sense of the curriculum development leadership role experienced by principals in a selection of four primary schools. Adopting a case study methodology, with theoretical underpinnings of the participative / facilitative leadership theory, the study reveals that the primary school principals who participated possess a limited understanding of their curriculum development leadership role. The participants in my study were purposively selected and the data was gathered through –semi-structured interviews, observation sessions, document analysis, as well as personal reflective journals. Data was analysed and interpreted through a process of extrapolating salient themes. The findings of this research project illustrate that the primary school principals who participated tend to construe themselves mainly as curriculum development managers, however, perceive themselves as being curriculum development leaders. The study recommends that principals shift their grasp of their curriculum development leadership role from that of being managers to leaders, as well as seek to empower themselves in terms of skillsmanship and qualifications (*e.g.* enrolling for postgraduate studies), in order to try to fulfil their changed role. Further, it suggests the establishment of principals' centres, which could enable them by offering a valuable support base.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

By adopting a case study design, this study attempts to investigate the curriculum development leadership role of primary school principals deriving from the Lower Umfolozi Circuit of KwaZulu -Natal. This chapter presents the background of the study by describing and comparing old and new curriculum policies, versus the principal's roles and responsibilities, their expectations, as well as challenges encountered through curriculum transformation. It also defines the study terms of clarifying the research's focus and purpose, its critical questions and rationale. The chapter concludes by providing a synopsis of each chapter in the study.

#### **1.2. Background of the study**

##### **1.2.1 Principal's role in the development of old and new curriculum policies in South African schools**

During the past few decades the leadership role of the principal with respect to curriculum development has undergone radical change. Traditionally, the role of the principal was encapsulated in the title 'head teacher' or headmaster' signifying the person largely responsible for the teaching and learning of learners. In addition to ensuring that the school environment is conducive to the delivery of education, the principal was also seen to be responsible for nurturing contact at grassroots level by being a classroom practitioner himself or herself (Bhagawat, 2006).

To perform his / her role, the principal was required to have obtained professional training and experience in order to manage a school. The traditional view alludes to the notion that a competent educator, with a certain number of years of experience as well as the 'right

personality', is well equipped for the task and the demands of being a principal. However, it is arguable that many principals brought with them inadequate skills and knowledge with regard to leading curriculum development at the school level. Within the South African context, the apartheid government designed school curricula in accordance with their perceptions of how and what different racial groups ought to learn. They gave strict instructions as to what had to be taught within each subject, in each standard, and they retained strict control over learning and teaching (Department of Education, 2000).

In such a context, principals may not have served to provide meaningful form of curriculum development leadership, serving instead to control teachers and learners in main. One of the main roles of the principal was to collect curriculum materials in the form of subject syllabi, scheme books and mark schedules. In addition, they would monitor and supervise teachers to ensure that they taught no more and no less than the prescribed syllabi, and that they only used approved textbooks. The principal's curriculum development leadership role seemed restricted to the allocation of curriculum duties and responsibilities to teachers at the beginning of the year, as well as registering learners' results at the end of the year (Department of Education, 2000). This meant that the principal's role was to implement a curriculum that was envisaged by, developed and designed at national level. For many decades, principals were exposed to a top-down curriculum leadership and management system, where they found themselves at the receiving end (Department of Education, 1996) In this regulated work environment, fulfilling instructions from departmental officials, was perceived to be a paramount importance in curriculum development leadership. This led to the onset of poor curriculum development leadership and management in the majority of South African schools (Steyn, 2002).

Internationally, the curriculum development leadership role of the principal is characterised by dynamic tendencies. Due to externally curriculum development legislation and other related demands, it has begun to evolve for over two decades in countries like Australia, England and Wales (Bhagawat, 2006). The curriculum development policies in these countries advocated decentralisation of curriculum development leadership and management, resulting instead in the practice of site based curriculum development leadership and management. This practice moved the emphasis from principals as curriculum implementers and transmitters to an emphasis on principals as curriculum development leaders. However,

the continued reality of curriculum restructuring and reformation attempts demands a further reconfiguration of the principal's role (Bhagawat, 2006).

A similar trend has reached South Africa, with the declaration of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and the National Curriculum Statement (2001), both having emerged in the last decade. The new curriculum policies require principals who are able to work in democratic and participative ways to build relationships, as well as ensure that their own accord, they are engaging in effective curriculum development leadership (Department of Education, 1996). At the core of these curriculum policy initiatives is a process of decentralised decision-making about developing the curriculum at school level, and a significant process of democratisation concerning the ways in which 'curriculum development' is led and managed. These processes and structures are connected to a move towards school-based curriculum development leadership and management (Mosoge & Van der Westhuizen, 1998).

In school-based curriculum development leadership and management, the decision-making process about the curriculum usually moves to a school curriculum development team headed by the principal. The implementation of participative curriculum development leadership and management calls for the delegation of curriculum-related issues from higher to lower levels, for instance, heads of department to educators (Mosoge and van der Westhuizen, 1998). The devolution of the role curriculum development leadership, through decentralisation, is the first dimension of school-based curriculum development leadership and management. The second dimension of school-based curriculum development leadership and management involves the participation of education stakeholders, for instance, subject advisors and district curriculum support staff.

The changes brought about through curriculum development leadership and management called for the role of principals to be reconceptualised (Bhagawat, 2006). According to Article 16 in the South African Schools Act 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) and other curriculum policies (Department of Education, 2000), principals are responsible for and expected to provide effective curriculum leadership and management at their schools. This is in order to ensure that the relevant policies on curriculum and assessment are available to all teachers under their supervision. It is also to ensure that an equitable distribution of the workload

comes into effect, taking into account the experience and expertise of teachers. Overseeing curriculum planning and implementation in the school, and conducting class visits is also part of the role.

The implementation of the new curriculum depends on the concept of whole-school development.

The principal and his / her school management team are specifically responsible for:

- ensuring that teaching and learning time is used effectively
- developing and managing assessment policies – each school is expected to have an assessment policy
- ensuring that classroom activities are learner-paced and learner-centred
- promoting team planning and teaching strategies
- engaging in quality monitoring processes
- creating an environment that promotes effective teaching and learning
- making a concerted effort to realise the school's vision and mission through implementation of the curriculum
- managing resources such as time, space, textbooks and learner support material
- guiding and monitoring educators
- enhancing the professional competence of educators through the course of supervising their work
- organising management meetings to monitor levels of progress in teaching learning and assessment
- ensuring that curriculum support structures and systems are in place.



Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) of 1999 outlines the principal's curriculum development leadership role as follows, in terms of the duties he / she is expected to perform:

- engage in class teaching according to the workload of his / her post level and the needs of the school
- be a class educator if required
- assess and record the attainment levels of the learners he / she teaches
- guide and supervise the work, as well as performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, support non-teaching and other staff
- observe class teaching and offer professional advice to educators where necessary
- ensure that workloads are equally distributed amongst members of staff
- be responsible for the development of staff training programmes, both school-based, school-focused and externally directed, as well as assist educators in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school
- participate in agreed-to school or educator appraisal processes in order to review professional practice regularly, with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management
- ensure that all evaluation or forms of assessment that are conducted in the school are properly and efficiently organised
- play an active role in promoting extra-curricular and co-curricular activities in the school, plan major school functions, and encourage learner's voluntary participation in sports programmes, in addition to educational and cultural activities that may be organised by community bodies
- engage with the relevant structures in place with regard to school curricula and curriculum development
- meet with parents on a regular basis concerning learners' progress and conduct.

Principals are challenged to translate reforms in the curriculum into plans and practices that provide a supportive environment at the schools, and which, importantly, extend increased levels of support into the classroom. The infiltration of curriculum policies and the curriculum restructuring process into schools has marked implications for principals, who are expected, for the first time, to draw on a multitude of roles and skills rather than merely relying on bureaucratic direction, as was customary in the past (Bhagawat, 2006).

The role of the principal as designated 'curriculum implementer', as was evident in the past, took on a reconfigured definition, to accommodate the new role of curriculum development leader'. This role demands the acquisition of a host of new curriculum skills and knowledge, such as delegation, strategic planning, policy formulation, induction and mentoring, as well as curriculum supervision and implementation. At the same time, the role necessitates the establishment of collaborative curriculum development, pointing to the need to forge relations with all stakeholders within the school, for instance heads of department and teachers. The idea of fostering an environment in which staff share input with respect to curriculum development thus becomes crucial.

### **1.2.2 Principals' and teachers' expectations of new curriculum in South African schools**

The curriculum reform and revolution has created different expectations amongst principals and teachers. It may well be said that principals expected a 'top-down' curriculum development system, whereby the curriculum would be developed and designed at national level, and thereafter, transmitted to them for the purposes of their role as curriculum implementers. Possibly, they may see themselves assuming the role of 'curriculum administrative managers' who are not required to engage in class teaching and who do not function as class educators if and where necessary. They may also expect that their role as 'curriculum administrative managers' points to the idea of excessive delegation of the curriculum development role to their heads of department. The role, however, does encompass guidance and supervision, induction and monitoring, problem-solving and support over curriculum-related issues. On the one hand, some principals may expect that the new curriculum will relieve them of the curriculum management 'burden'. On the other hand, however, others might expect that the pressure of accountability could be alleviated through the distribution of curriculum development tasks among heads of department and teachers. This means that if any curriculum programmes fail, the blame will not only be directed to principal, but also, to curriculum development stakeholders.

Yet, some teachers might expect that the new curriculum will provide them with simpler teaching and learning methods in the classroom, compared to those of the previous dispensation. To many teachers, the new curriculum's emphasis on 'learner-centred'

education may construe that teaching will be minimal, and that somehow, a greater level of learning will transpire on the part of learners. They may also expect that the establishment of a subject advisory directorate will make their teaching and assessment procedures simpler and faster compared to that of their past experiences.

### **1.2.3 Challenges of the new curriculum policies facing principals in South African schools**

Changes in the new curriculum leadership and management system have resulted in principals who are unprepared for their new role of curriculum development leaders or managers (Steyn, 2002). They may also experience difficulty in adapting to their new curriculum development leadership role. The new curriculum has brought new channels of communicating with and cascading curriculum-related issues amongst the school management team and teachers. In 1994, Dimmock and Hattie (Steyn, 2002) found that some principals failed to adapt to such new channels of communication, which resulted in role ambiguity for them. The curriculum development changes required a host of new skills and knowledge, which many principals, heads of department and teachers do not possess. Where skills and knowledge are lacking amongst principals with respect to curriculum development leadership, a multiple-strategy approach to train them should be adopted, thereby enabling them to fulfil their newfound roles (Terry, 1999).

### **1.3. Focus and purpose of the study**

The development of the new curriculum in South Africa demands effective leadership and management of its programmes among principals. The new curriculum development system has resulted in school principals who found themselves unprepared, unclear and uncertain in terms of their role in the new curriculum. The new curriculum dispensation requires a host of new skills, understanding and knowledge of curriculum development leadership and management at school level, which many principals, including myself, do not possess.

The school-based curriculum development leadership and management system has led to the emergence of power struggles within schools, since principals are required to work hand-in-hand with heads of department, teachers, parents and learners, each of whom hold different

values. In particular, the researcher has observed that within the Lower Umfolozi Circuit of KwaZulu-Natal, primary school principals and teachers alike experienced difficulty in adapting to their roles, as well as the new channels of communicating and cascading curriculum-related matters amongst themselves within the school. The situation has resulted in role ambiguity occurring amongst primary school principals and members of their school staff within this circuit. It is thus the purpose of this study to explore principals' curriculum development leadership roles at school level within the Lower Umfolozi Circuit.

#### **1.4 Critical questions**

The research project focuses on the following critical questions:

- A. What are primary school principals' understandings of their role as curriculum developers?
- B. How do primary school principals lead curriculum development in their schools?
- C. Why does curriculum development leadership happen within primary schools in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit of KwaZulu-Natal the way it does?

#### **1.5 Rationale for the study**

The idea of school-based curriculum development leadership and management is no longer an option in South African schools, but a mandatory requirement (Steyn, 2002). The infiltration of new curriculum policies marked an end to the 'top down' curriculum development system. It also marked an end to the principal's role of merely functioning as a designated curriculum implementer and controller. Furthermore, it effectively reconfigured the principal's role of headmaster to that of a participative 'curriculum development leader / manager'. This new role demands a host of novel skills, understanding and knowledge on the part of principals, which, from the researcher's own observations, many primary school principals do not seem to possess.

The chief motivation for conducting this study emanates from the researcher being a principal in a primary school within the Lower Umfolozi Circuit of KwaZulu-Natal. I was promoted to the position of principal on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2004, unprepared, confused, unclear and uncertain of my new role as 'curriculum developer' in my school. Initially, it seemed that I

possessed inadequate and limited understanding of my role as 'curriculum development leader'. I also lacked skills and knowledge concerning curriculum development leadership and management, which were requirements outlined in the new curriculum. Moreover, I expected unlimited and unconditional support from the district's Curriculum Support Services (CSS). From my experiences, the subject advisors from this directorate seemed to offer limited support to principals at school level. In addition, I encountered difficulty in obtaining assistance and support from experienced principals within the circuit, despite the fact that we may have experienced similar problems.

Further, research on the role of principals as curriculum developers at school level is limited. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (Bhagwat, 2006) proffer that research on the role of the principal gained momentum in the eighties, and serves to indicate the central role of the principal as 'curriculum implementer'. Also, a major part of existing literature describes what curriculum development should be like, while fewer items of literature, if any at all, document the curriculum development leadership role of principals in schools. Ornstein and Hunkins (2004, p.25) assert that "most experts who have examined school leadership (or the principal's role) have focussed unduly on the principal as a lender of instruction, ignoring the role of curriculum development leader". Nevertheless, research in South Africa is yet to make its mark on the principal's role in curriculum development leadership and management, and it is the area I wish to traverse and study.

The study will shed light on the types of leadership skills and competencies required for leading curriculum development at school level. It will also explore existent theories of leadership and management that principals may be drawing from to lead and manage curriculum development within their schools. It will investigate whether principals are limiting themselves to their schools. It will investigate whether principals are limiting themselves to their personal working theories, or whether they are actively engaging with leadership theories such as 'participative curriculum development', as defined by Kok (2004). The study will provide an informed understanding of the four criteria suggested for successful curriculum development leadership management at school level. These four prerequisites may delineate the minimum training and qualification needed for those who wish to be curriculum development leaders and managers. Additionally, the study will provide insight into much needed In-Service Education and Training (INSET) programmes that can assist primary school principals in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit with regard to curriculum

development leadership and management. These programmes may serve to equip and empower principals with rudimentary skills, knowledge and understanding of curriculum development leadership and management that can be integrated into their schools.

On a personal level, the study will also equip me with skills, understanding and knowledge with respect to leading and managing curriculum development at my school. In addition, it is going to empower me in my position as a primary school principal, in terms of how to improve leadership and management with regard to the same in my school. Thorough and continuous engagement with curriculum development leadership and management issues have, to date, provided me with a clearer focus on my own curriculum development leadership role as a principal. It is my intention to draw upon these experiences in the course of this research project, which could help shed light on how the new role principals are challenged with can be interpreted. Interacting with primary school principals from different school contexts has been an empowering experience in itself, and in the other ways, an eye-opener.

### **1.6. Research methodology**

The study is located within a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm. It took the form of a case study of four primary schools, as a research method. Increasingly, contextual issues are beginning to play a distinctive and important role in South African schools, due to the complexity of social, economic, and political factors that come to the fore in different communities. The decision to adopt a qualitative, interpretive approach for the study is aimed at collecting, gathering and developing in-depth understandings of contextual factors.

Data gathering methods called for the use of the following research instruments: the researcher's reflective journal, meeting observations, interviews with principals, and document analysis. The first phase of interviews was conducted to collect baseline data, for instance, reasons for taking part in the study, and the second phase served to capture and summarise data with respect to the principal's role in leading curriculum development in their schools. The study was conducted to examine and investigate phenomena in their natural settings, so the utilisation of the case study research method seemed appropriate in the data gathering process. I took on an observer-participant role in the study, in order to capture a more in-depth understanding of participants when conducting meetings. I also conducted

various meetings with the circuit personnel, ward managers and principals to negotiate about access to information and the notion of establishing relationships with the principals. The selection of methods and instruments was informed by symbolic interactionist theory, since this qualitative study was sensitive to the context within which principals worked.

## **1.7 Synopsis of the chapters**

### **1.7.1 Chapter 1**

This chapter is an introduction chapter, which provides a brief overview of the study. It also describes the background of the principal's role as 'curriculum development leader', as advocated by old and new curriculum policies in South Africa. Further, it focuses on principals' and teachers' expectations, as well as on challenges presented to them by the new curriculum dispensation. The focus and purpose of the study, as well as the critical questions that are relevant to the research are also outlined in this chapter. Finally, it underscores the rationale and methodology of the study.

### **1.7.2 Chapter 2**

This chapter examines existing literature linked to curriculum development as a process, as well as its applicable areas in general education. It also describes 'leadership' as a concept and examines relevant leadership theories underpinning curriculum development leadership. These theories are: instructional, transformational, facilitative / participative, process and team, and managerial leadership. Thereafter, the chapter discusses the dichotomy inherent to the principal's curriculum development leadership role, by focusing on the idea of 'management' versus 'leadership'. The chapter concludes by highlighting the characteristics of a good leader, and outlines the principal's role as 'staff developer' in curriculum development leadership.

### **1.7.3 Chapter 3**

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in the study. It also details the data gathering strategies employed to yield the rich data necessary to give an in-depth

understanding into the principal's role as 'curriculum development leader'. It also brings to attention the challenges and concerns I encountered in trying to gain access to certain schools and participating principals.

#### **1.7.4 Chapter 4**

This chapter provides narrative vignettes of both participating schools and their principals, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants, their environmental settings, as well as their biographies, since these could allude to their personal engagement with curriculum development leadership. It concludes by presenting and discussing the findings of the study.

#### **1.7.5 Chapter 5**

This is the concluding chapter of the research. It serves to synthesise the arguments in the study by briefly summarising the main findings, as well as the background, purpose and critical questions of the research project. To draw the study to a close, recommendations are made to empower primary school principals to face their curriculum development leadership challenges. Finally, it highlights further areas of research which need to be investigated.

### **1.8 Conclusion**

Chapter 1 presented the background, aims and purpose, critical questions, methodology, and rationale of the study. It also depicted a synopsis of each chapter. The following chapter reviews existing literature on the curriculum development leadership role of principals, by focusing on leadership theories and management models underpinning curriculum development.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter I presented the background of the study, statement of purpose, critical questions and rationale of the study. In this chapter the focus will be on curriculum development as a process, its place within general education, and leadership as a concept. Focus will be also be given to leadership theories underpinning the curriculum development process. Different types of leadership include instructional, transformational, facilitative / participative, process and team, as well as managerial leadership. The implication of these theories will also be discussed in this chapter. This chapter will also focus on leadership and management roles of principals, as well as the style approached with regard to curriculum development leadership. It will conclude by providing an overview of characteristics of a good curriculum leader and the role of staff development in curriculum development leadership.

#### **2.2 Curriculum development leadership: is there a definition?**

It seems that everybody understands the concept of curriculum development leadership, but if asked for a definition, each differs. There are as many different views of curriculum development leadership as there are people trying to define it. The definition of the concept is arbitrary and very subjective (Yukl, 2002). However, given the widely accepted significance of curriculum development leadership for school effectiveness, it is important to establish a working definition of the concept. Curriculum development is viewed as a process whereby a set of learning outcomes are derived for an educational institution. It is also considered as comprising those deliberate activities through which courses of study or patterns of educational activities are designed and presented as proposals for those in educational institutions (Salia-Bao, 1989). It refers to the ways in which systematic and efficient goals, selection and ordering of contents, learning experiences, planning of teaching-learning situations and learners' assessment are developed (Volschenk, 1988). It is also viewed as an

idea showing how the curriculum is planned, implemented and evaluated, as well as what various people, processes and procedures are involved in the construction of the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Althorn, Jones and Bullock (2006), on the other hand, refer to it as the process of teachers working together to clearly identify their curriculum within the frame of content, standards and curriculum materials. With reference to the above definitions, curriculum development is a planning enterprise.

There are many ways of conceptualising what curriculum development is and a number of components are central to its phenomenon. Boa (1989) describes it as a process. It is not a linear, one-way occurrence, but an interactive one between the principal and teachers. It also involves planning, human energy and skills (Steyn, 2002).

### **2.2.1 Arenas of curriculum development**

Curriculum development occurs at different levels of remoteness relative to the learners for whom it is intended. These levels are societal, institutional and instructional (McNeil, 1996). The participants at the societal level include the board of education, that is, national, local or state, federal agencies, publishers, national curriculum, ministerial and review committees. While in a South African context, curriculum development occurs at macro-level (national level), meso-level (provinces, districts and schools) and micro-level, that is, the planning of individual lesson or units (Chisholm, 2008).

It is worth noting that curriculum development is also facilitated by the district's participation, through the district Teachers Learners Support (TLS) sub-directorate committee. Subject advisors form part of this committee.

The roles and responsibilities of subject advisors include, amongst others:

- Support education in the classroom
- Improve educator's competence
- Improve learner's performance
- Promote learning area / phase specialisation / knowledge

- Find creative and innovative ways to develop content knowledge
- Provide expert advice on the learning areas
- Conduct cluster meetings.

School and class visits are the core function of Teachers' / Learners' Support (Department of Education, 2009). This district support structure needs to liaise with principals and teachers to assist and support curriculum development at both meso and micro-levels. The instructional level refers to teachers, under the leadership of principals, deciding upon purposes that are appropriate for the learners within the school (Kruger, 2003). As mentioned above, one of the central components of curriculum development is planning. When engaged in any curriculum planning, the principal ensures that the three levels of planning, namely, Learning Programme, Work Schedule and Lesson Plans have taken place (Overview, 2000). A learning programme is a long-term plan that provides a framework for planning, organising and managing classroom practice and is drawn directly from the work schedule (Department of Education, 2003). It describes concretely and in detail, teaching, learning and assessment activities that need to be implemented in any given period of time (RNCS Overview, 2002). The principal needs to ensure that aspects such as the curriculum budget, policy compliance, resources, staff development and support are in place, as these aspects engender effective curriculum development and planning at the school. This is one of principals' roles with respect to curriculum development leadership in schools.

### **2.3 Leadership: is there a definition?**

Definitions of leadership are as numerous as the scholars engaged in its study. There are more than 350 definitions of leadership but no clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders (Cuban, 1988). There are, however, many similarities in the following definitions: leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes (Bush & Glover, 2003). The general attributes of leaders is their ability to inspire and stimulate others to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation (Yukl, 2002). Leadership is the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organisational goals (Dubrin, in Kok, 2004). Kowalski and Reitzug (1993), cited by Kok (2004), define leadership as a process that results in the

determination of organisational objectives and strategies, and entails building consensus to meet those objectives, while influencing others to work towards the fulfilment of those objectives. Furthermore, leadership is concerned with the implementation of those policies and decisions which assist in directing the activities of an organisation towards its specified goals. Thus, leadership is the process of influencing the activities and behaviour of an individual or a group in efforts towards goal achievement in a given situation (Pillay, 2003).

There are numerous ways of conceptualising what leadership is, but we can isolate a number of components that are central to its phenomenon (Kok, 2004). Bush and Glover (2003) view leadership as a process. It is an alternative event between the leader and his followers. Leadership also involves influence. Viewing it closely, principals exert influence on curriculum development activities as well as teachers behaviour, to engage in the process of curriculum development (Marsh, 2003). Leadership also occurs in a group of teachers and other stakeholders within the school context, in order to achieve curriculum goals and standards.

## **2.4 Theorising about leadership in curriculum development**

Traditionally, the role of primary school principals was viewed as that of manager and administrator (Steyn, 2002). They had more curriculum, managerial and administrative tasks and less or even no teaching duties. In a study conducted in the United States of America, it was discovered that principals were of the opinion that curriculum development and reform brought additional curriculum responsibilities without removing any responsibilities (Porter, 2000). There is, however, common agreement that the principal's curriculum development workload in South Africa is also becoming unmanageable, and that many primary school principals lack time for, as well as an understanding of, their curriculum development leadership role (Budhal, 2000).

### **2.4.1 Instructional leadership**

Instructional leadership is a combination of several tasks, including, amongst others, supervision of classroom instruction, learning area/subject curriculum, staff and curriculum

development (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). It expects instructional leaders to set out clear curriculum development expectations, maintain discipline and implement high standards, with the aim of improving teaching and learning at a school (Steyn, 2002). It is the one professional activity that determines the distinctiveness of a school leader. Principals, as instructional leaders, urgently need to return to strong instructional leadership as a core-element in their curriculum activities (Kok, 2004).

The role of instructional leader describes the principal as a visionary, leading the school community in its development to use more effective teaching and curricular strategies. It involves supporting educators' efforts to implement new programmes and processes that can improve the quality of teaching. The primary school principal, as an instructional leader, performs the following curriculum development tasks (Steyn, 2002):

- Defining and communicating a clear mission, goals and objective of curriculum development: formulation of mission, goals and objectives needs to be done with the collaboration of staff members, in order to try and realise effective teaching and learning.
- Managing curriculum and instruction: managing and coordinating the curriculum in a way that teaching time can be done optimally. Principals need to ensure that the relevant policies on curriculum and assessment are available to all teachers. They also need to equitably distribute work loads by considering the levels of experience and expertise of teachers. For effective curriculum and instructional management, they need to oversee curriculum planning and implementation practically, through classroom visits. They also need to organise management meetings in order to monitor the programmes being used in teaching, learning and assessment. Further, primary school principals need to ensure that curriculum support structures and systems, such as the School Curriculum Committee (SCC) and Staff Development Team (SDT), are in place.
- Supervising teaching: ensuring that educators receive guidance and support that would enable them to teach as effectively as possible. This task requires a principal, as a curriculum developer, to articulate a coherent learning philosophy, while having a good understanding of the practical and theoretical issues that underpin curriculum, learning and assessment. The principal, as an instructional leader, will be up to date

with the latest ‘thinking’ with respect to the advancement of the curriculum. This entails having to possess a thorough understanding of new learning developments (Kok, 2004).

- Monitoring learner progress: monitoring and evaluating learners’ progress through various forms of assessment. Examples of these forms are assignments, case studies, investigations, tests and projects (National Policy on Assessment, 2007). The results are used to provide support to both learners and educators, to improve as well as assist parents in understanding where and why improvement is needed.
- Promoting an instructional climate: creating a positive school climate in which teaching and learning can take place. In a situation where learning is made exciting, where teachers and learners are supported, and where there is a shared sense of purpose, learning will be less likely to be difficult. It is the responsibility of the principal, as a curriculum developer, to create a disciplined climate that is conducive for effective learning to occur.

#### **2.4.2 Transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be commitment, as well as the capacities of organisational management. The highest levels of personal commitment to organisational goals, and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals, are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). It is about building a unified, common interest between leaders and followers (Gunter, 2001). It also builds on people’s need for meaning and purpose in organisational life, and involves leaders and follower engaging with each other in such a way as to lift one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Northouse, 2001). Transformational leaders motivate followers to do more than what is expected of them by:

- Raising the level of consciousness of followers concerning the importance and values of specified and idealised goals pertaining to curriculum development.
- Encouraging teachers to put their own interests aside for the sake of the team or the school.

- Motivating teachers to address higher levels of curriculum needs (Bass, cited by Kok, 2004).

What are the specific attributes of a transformational leader? A transformational leader has a 'charisma' or idealised sense of influence, permitting him or her to act as a strong role model for followers. Followers, in turn, identify with him/her and tend to seek very much to emulate the example set by her/him (Northouse, cited by Kok, 2004). 'Charisma' is that which provides vision and a sense of mission; in addition, it instils pride, as well as can gain respect and trust (Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders communicate high curriculum expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to, and part of, the organisation's shared vision.

This type of leadership stimulates teachers to be creative and innovative, challenging their own curriculum beliefs, as well as those of the principal and the school. This intellectual stimulation promotes the capacity for teachers to 'think things out' on their own and engage in careful, considered problem-solving with regard to the curriculum. Here, curriculum development leaders provide a supportive climate where they listen carefully to the individual curriculum needs of teachers. Curriculum development leaders are councillors and advisors, assisting individuals to become fully actualised (Kok, 2004).

Transformational principals also seek to enlist the support of teachers and other education stakeholders, in order that they may also participate in a process of identifying and addressing curriculum concerns (Bush & Glover, 2003). Instructional leadership should not be the predominant role of principals, but rather, ought to be that of teachers; principals, on the other hand, ought to be leaders of the team (Hollinger, 1992). This means that principals need to develop their sense of instructional leadership in assisting their teachers.

According to the Department of Education (2009), transformational leadership implies that primary school principals, in particular, require the following competencies as curriculum developers:

- A comprehensive understanding of the curriculum
- The ability to manage resources for the purpose of maximising curriculum development
- An understanding of the opportunities and challenges related to leading and managing the curriculum, against the backdrop of national transformation
- The ability to identify, collect and use data and evidence to inform planning
- The ability to lead and inspire by example, through dedication, commitment and honesty
- Strong personnel management skills
- Managing quality and ensuring the prevalence of accountability
- Developing and empowering self and others.

These transformational leadership competencies can assist principals and teachers in developing effective curricula, which in turn, can result in effective teaching and learning within schools. In short, principals who function as transformative curriculum developers, that is, particularly within a primary school context, serve to motivate, inspire and unite educators with respect to offering curriculum programmes that have high creative value (Steyn, 2002). They also have the ability to achieve productivity through people.

### **2.4.3 Facilitative / participative leadership**

Many education systems are in the process of implementing reforms. This reform initiative rests on the assumption that the participation of educators, learners and parents can enhance the achievement of the desired transformation (Mosoge & van der Westhuizen, 1998, cited by Steyn, 2002).

This can be attained through shared decision-making that encourages people to change and to address curriculum problems at school level.

Participative leadership assumes that the curriculum decision-making process of the group ought to be the central focus of the group (Leithwood *et.al*, 1999). Collegiality is one normatively preferred type of participative leadership. The primary school principal, as



curriculum development leader, is expected to adopt strategies which acknowledge that curriculum-related issues may arise from different parts of the school (Bush, 1995). These curriculum-related issues can be resolved through a complex, interactive process. The principal is the facilitator of the participative curriculum development process, which can be conceptualised as 'distributed' curriculum development leadership (Neuman & Simmons, 2000), and also as facilitative leadership (Steyn, 2002). This approach to leadership is concerned primarily with the process of decision-making. It supports the notion of shared or distributed curriculum development leadership, and is linked to democratic values and the notion of empowerment (Bush & Glover, 2003).

Participative / facilitative leaders are at the centre of curriculum management and they involve educators, learners, parents and others in facing new challenges, problem-solving and improving learners' performance (Black, 1998). This means that primary school principals are required to organise team meetings, wherein all members of the group are welcome to participate (Pretorius, 1998).

Further, curriculum development leadership requires school managers who are able to work in democratic and participative ways. The main purpose is to establish and ensure effective delivery of curriculum programmes (Department of Education, 2001). The role of participative leaders also necessitates that they delegate authority from higher to lower levels, for instance, to deputy principals, heads of departments and educators (Mosage & van der Westhuizen, 1998, cited by Steyn, 2002).

Gultig and Butler (1999) outline the key roles with respect to the ways in which principals should manage and lead curriculum initiatives in their schools as follows:

- Principals should lead rather than instruct. Principals should rely on the support of staff. Their status will depend on the ability to lead and motivate their team of educators in curriculum planning.
- They should create a more open and participative structure, rather than a hierarchical system. This will enhance the flow of curriculum information and create an atmosphere where all members experience a sense of curriculum "ownership".

- With the development of teams, responsibilities should be shared. Where teams operate, the principal cannot be blamed for problems that may arise, since teams work together to solve curriculum-related problems.
- Leadership is about empowering participants. Principals and senior management members should see their roles as empowering others, to make decisions about curriculum operations, rather than controlling them, by providing teachers with greater autonomy and creating opportunities for teachers to engage in curriculum-related conversation. The result is the development of a supportive environment, and in turn, a culture of commitment may be created.

#### **2.4.4 Process and team leadership**

The 'process leadership' viewpoint suggests that everyone possesses leadership qualities. As a process, leadership can be observed in the behaviour of leaders, and it is something that can be learned (Kok, 2004). The educators learn their leadership roles through teams meetings, in which they participate as members of a small group. In these meetings, educators learn how to solve curriculum-related problems, such as challenges faced in making the curriculum accessible to learners, assessment strategies and learner-centred lessons (Black, 1998).

Sharing ideas through a more co-operative approach, within an effective team, is likely to produce better results and greater productivity compared to traditional, hierarchical and individualistic structures (Clark, 2007). There is strong motivation for curriculum development leadership and management through teamwork (van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). In such teams, both principals and teachers have freedom to generate their own curriculum vision, rather than merely create ways to achieve purposes that are set by others (McNeil, 1996). The school that has an effective learning culture has leadership that invests in people, decentralises curriculum decision-making, trusts the judgement of others and facilitates participation (Department of Education, 2003).

The principal needs to develop a school climate which encourages and welcomes staff members. This enables the principal and teachers to work together as a team, to develop the 'best curriculum' for their learners (Ediger, 2009). The curriculum decision-making process

is based on consultations and discussions (Dunford, Fawcett & Bennett, 2000). The impact of teamwork in site-based curriculum development management is evident in the teaching and learning process (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). It is evident whereby the decision-making process, which usually starts at senior management meetings, is fed through heads of department for discussion among the whole teaching staff. This results in a high degree of ownership of the curriculum throughout the whole school. The principal therefore leads the curriculum development plan team, emphasising the central importance of the process to the overall management of the school (Dunford *et.al*, 2000).

The principal's role is to inform the curriculum team to develop learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans. The main tasks of the teams are to provide teachers with curriculum information, to organise meetings for different phases and assist teachers to design short-term lesson plans, as well as to call the group for meetings in which each team presents its curriculum to a group of educators for discussions. Teachers in these teams need encouragement, recognition and celebration as they progress. They also need someone to confront those individuals or teams of teachers who fail to fulfil their curriculum development responsibilities. All these tasks are overseen by the principal (DuFour, 2002). If these teams are not effectively managed and led, they can become ineffective and problematic (Clarke, 2007).

#### **2.4.5 Managerial leadership**

'Managerial leadership' focuses on functions, tasks and behaviours (Bush & Glover, 2003). It also assumes that the behaviour of organisation members is largely rational, and that influence is exerted through positional authority linked to the organisational hierarchy (Leithwood, *et.al*, 1999). Contemporary curriculum development is characterised by a high level of freedom bestowed upon schools to initiate innovation within the limits of a nationally prescribed and broad curriculum framework (Lewy, 1991). It is further argued that, from the national curriculum framework, each school is expected to select, adapt, as well as develop courses and modules. From these, it derives programmes appropriate to the school needs, which are, in turn, compatible with the availability of staff resources (Lewy, 1991). This is done in the form of curriculum development plans (Department of Education, 2009).

Clarke (2007) argues that curriculum development management becomes effective when systems are put in place to ensure that staff and students are aware of what is expected, *i.e.* they know what is contained within the policy document and curriculum development policies. More importantly, systems are put in place to ensure that the school operates according to the national and school policies, as well as procedures, as outlined in these documents (Clarke, 2007). Furthermore, Levacic, Glover, Bennett and Crawford (1999, cited by Bush, Bell, Bolam, Glatter & Ribbins, 1999) aver that if heads (principals) are expected to implement external policy decisions, such as curriculum development policy, they are engaging in a process of managerial leadership. Once policies and procedures are in place, it is important that the principal and management team delegate to individuals and groups the responsibility for ensuring that curriculum plans, policies and procedures are adhered to (Clarke, 2007).

According to McNeil (1996), 'system technology' puts principals at the forefront of designing curriculum plans that are consistent with state and district intentions. He further argues that, as principals create curriculum plans at the centre of the school, they are encouraged to look for ways to expand on what teachers are already doing in the classroom, with the idea of seeing how teachers can organise and manage the classroom, as envisioned by state and district curriculum makers (McNeil, 1996). The principal and teachers from the same school decide upon any necessary steps they will take to translate their curriculum plans into practice.

The curriculum managerial leadership at a school must ensure that national curriculum statements and assessment policies are implemented. They must also ensure that a conducive environment is created for teaching and learning. Moreover, the availability of support programmes that address barriers to teaching and learning is important. They need to ensure the development of a school assessment plan that is aligned to learning programmes and that is communicated to parents and learners. They must also ensure that the curriculum is readily accessible to all learners. Finally, they need to ensure that adequate and relevant learner-teacher support materials are readily available as well, for curriculum delivery (Department of Education, 2009).

## 2.5 Leadership and management

The terms 'leadership' and 'management' are often used interchangeably, yet they mean very different things. The duties and responsibilities associated with leadership require very different responses from those associated with management. Leadership may be viewed as a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired curriculum development purposes (Bush & Glover, 2003). Leadership concerns direction and purpose (Clarke, 2007), while curriculum development management, on the other hand, relates to the implementation of school curriculum policies, as well as to the efficient and effective maintenance of the school's current curriculum activities (Bush & Glover, 2003).

The difference between curriculum leadership and management is based on the roles and tasks performed by individual principals (Kok, 2004). One can be a curriculum leader without necessarily being a curriculum manager. The principal can, for instance, fulfil many symbolic, inspirational, curricular and normative functions linked to being a curriculum development leader, but without having to carry any of the formal 'burdens' of curriculum development management (Kok, 2004). On the contrary, a principal can manage without leading. A principal can monitor and control the school's activities, make decisions and allocate curriculum resources, without necessarily fulfilling the symbolic, normative, inspirational or curricular functions associated with curriculum development leadership (Schon, 1983, cited by Kok, 2004).

To understand curriculum leadership, it is imperative to identify its differences from curriculum management. These pertain to factors such as planning, organising, directing and controlling. Seemingly, 'leading' is a major part of a manager's job, but a manager is also required to plan, organise and control (Pillay, 2003). Leadership tends to deal with the more interpersonal aspects of a manager's work, whereas planning, organising and controlling tend to deal with the administrative aspects (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

Which of the two concepts, then, seem more important in and to curriculum development? Sterling and Davidoff (2000) state that both of these concepts work well together, being two sides of the same coin. A principal in a curriculum development leadership position cannot be

effective as a curriculum leader if he/she is an incompetent curriculum manager. Conversely, a principal in a curriculum management post often cannot be effective as a curriculum leader (Kok, 2004). In essence, a curriculum leader needs both leadership and managerial skills to be effective as a curriculum leader within the school context. Functions such as strategic planning, building of the school's vision, liaising with all education stakeholders, as well as staff development, can be identified as the functions of a curriculum leader. The managerial curriculum functions would include teachers' curriculum meetings, duty rosters and the administering of curriculum resources (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000).

## **2.6 Style approach and curriculum development**

The 'style approach' focuses on what curriculum leaders do and how they act during curriculum development processes. Here, curriculum leadership is viewed as being composed of two general kinds of behaviour, namely, 'task behaviours' and 'relationship behaviour'. Task behaviour facilitates the accomplishment of curriculum development goals, helping group members to achieve their curriculum objectives (Kok, 2004). The curriculum leader ensures that the curriculum is being developed in the school. He/she is also expected to provide a high level of support to her teachers, in order to develop the curriculum as effectively as possible in the school. Relationship behaviour, on the other hand, assists those under the leader's authority in feeling comfortable with themselves, amongst each other and within the situations in which they find themselves (Owens, 1998). Through this behaviour, the principal provides individual care, pastoral and personal support to the teachers. The main aim is to satisfy the needs of the individual teacher in order to help ease up his/her curriculum duties, and to work hard towards the achievement of curriculum goals (Pillay, 2003).

## **2.7 The characteristics of a good curriculum leader**

### **2.7.1 Planning**

Until now, curriculum leaders have not tended to see planning ahead as a priority, in a South African context. Constructing a long-term view of the curriculum was unheard of in curriculum management circles. Instead, principals were frequently preoccupied with

operational issues, as well as solving curriculum challenges as they presented themselves (Kok, 2004).

This lack of attention to curriculum planning is now rapidly disappearing. This is because the importance of strategic thinking and forward planning for curriculum leaders becomes inevitable, as they now assume responsibility for their own curriculum budgets and resources (Jenkins, 1991). There is a strong need for principals to display managerial intelligence, a kind of intelligence with which they need to work with and through other people (Lydd *et.al*, cited by Pillay, 2003). Managerial intelligence considers planning to be an important aspect of curriculum development. Planning involves relating present needs to those aspired toward for the future, recognising and differentiating between what is important and what is merely urgent, anticipating future trends, as well as analysing (Pillay, 2003). The ability to identify, collect and use data, as well as evidence to inform planning, is required by curriculum leaders for effective curriculum development (Department of Education, 2009).

Recently, schools have become obliged to present their School Development Planning (SDP) and Curriculum Management Planning, setting out priorities for curriculum development and how they go about implementing them, in addition to anticipating future resources (Jenkins, 1991, cited by Kok, 2004). Curriculum planning has to do with addressing curriculum problems of today and tomorrow, prioritising and allocating resources on a short-term basis.

### **2.7.2 Creating fair and caring systems**

To put it simply, a good curriculum leader is deemed to be consistently fair and takes care of his/her staff. To do this, such a leader would need to have integrity and trust, a caring attitude towards staff and adeptness at the reduction of micro-politics in the institution (Kok, 2004). With the demands of teaching, schooling staff are often inclined to feel uncared for and undervalued, so curriculum leaders must ensure that all teachers are treated fairly, with proper care and consideration. A good curriculum leader aims to end inter-departmental rivalries, stops staff members blaming and criticizing each other, and removes any tendency to resort to manipulation and politics, as well as curb the desire to over-control staff. Instead, a fair leader aims to work with people in such a way that nobody gets hurt, while also

striving to build trust and support (Jenkins, 1991, cited by Kok, 2004). The implication here is that curriculum leaders need to take into consideration the welfare of their staff, in order to develop high quality curricula and ensure effective performance of their curriculum duties.

## **2.8 The role of the principal in staff development**

Unprecedented changes within society and schools (*e.g.* the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the emergence of child-headed households in South Africa) mean that all personnel should undertake training throughout their professional lives. Senior management, as well as educators, need to be abreast of development in their subject areas and adopt new teaching techniques (Pillay, 2004). A prominent way in which principals shape teaching practices within schools is through their beliefs and actions regarding staff development (Youngs & King, 2002). There is a direct connection between the degree and nature of staff development and the involvement of the teacher in curriculum development (Carl, 1995).

I concur with Ediger (2009), in perceiving that the following benefits are gained by the school through staff development:

- Staff development leads to greater professionalism.
- A more professionally competent staff is able to deal more efficiently with curriculum development.
- There is a greater contribution by staff to overall development in the school when principals, as curriculum developers, distribute influence over decisions related to curriculum and staff development. Increased trust among teachers and enhancement of collective responsibility for student learning may come about (Youngs & King, 2002).
- Upgrading of teachers' knowledge and skills. New developments, philosophies, theories and research result in teachers realising what is presently being emphasised in the curriculum. Thus, the need for staff development is necessary.

If the school has competent and confident staff, such staff will be able to tackle the implementation of tasks as a challenge. They will have the capacity to work together with the



principal to develop the best curriculum possible for students (Ediger, 2009). They will also be able to work together to improve the academic programme of the school. Curriculum development initiatives, to be effectively and successfully implemented, and to benefit learners, need a planned, coherent approach to long and short-term development opportunities (Pillay, 2003). Workshops and courses are required, in order to acquaint and familiarise teachers with the background, methods and purposes of new developments, while continuing development opportunities should be offered simultaneously, to extend teachers' knowledge.

A vital task of the principal as curriculum leader includes teacher empowerment. This entails having to keep educators informed about curriculum development and progress. In this role, the principal is seen as a facilitator and a curriculum leader who empowers teachers. The implication here is that principals have a role in overseeing, supervising, monitoring and encouraging staff development, so that teachers become efficacious in developing the curriculum.

The role of principals is seen as that of constructing general understandings and a shared sense of purpose to the school, to construct a community of learning. The curriculum needs to be managed if it is to add up to a set of learning experiences that are meaningful and coherent for the student (Nixon, 1995). With this statement, the inference is that the principal, as a curriculum leader, has a pivotal role to play in managing the curriculum and learning programmes in school. The principal, as a head teacher, is seen as having an important responsibility for the implementation of education policies and management of school property, *i.e.* resources. He/she is perceived as a curriculum leader of his/her school; the impact of possessing this identity varies from person to person. Those who are more involved in what is happening within the classroom tend to be more influential. Generally, they are seen to be of greater assistance to teachers with regard to their teaching (Ross & Offerman, 1997). The implication here is that managing curriculum innovations is an integral task of the principal. He/she is required to lead the academic programme of the school by knowing what is happening within the classrooms, that is, the prevailing quality of learning and teaching, and to assist teachers at all costs.

Some of the responsibilities of principals are: staff supervision, appraisal and development (Seyfarth, 1999). Staff development is the central focus of successful curriculum

development and this is seen as being part and parcel of curriculum planning, with the principal functioning as a curriculum leader, encouraging teachers to take responsibility for their professional growth (McNeil, 1996).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed curriculum development as a process, its levels in general education within a South African dispensation, as well as the conceptualisation of leadership. Leadership and its different theories, which underpin curriculum development, have been a focal point in this chapter. The different leadership and management roles of principals, in relation to curriculum development, were also discussed. The chapter also reviewed the attributes of a 'good' curriculum leader. Finally, the connection between staff development and curriculum development was also a focal point in this chapter. The following chapter will focus on research design, methodology and the range of data gathering techniques at the disposal of the qualitative researcher. Sampling, the complexities of gaining access to schools and dealing with blockages are discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, a full description and explanation of the relevant literature on the phenomena under study was presented. In this chapter, the research design and methodology come under discussion. The research methodology describes and explains how data was collected in order to investigate primary school principals' curriculum development leadership role. It also presents the research design, data garnering methods, sampling process, data analysis methods, dress code of the interviewer, theoretical framework guiding the study, limitations of the study, as well as ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research design**

##### **3.2.1 Qualitative approach**

The research study is located within the interpretative paradigm and adopted a qualitative approach, with the aim of garnering data to provide answers to research questions. The study aimed to capture the life experiences of participants in order to attempt to understand, describe and interpret their feelings and experiences. Particularly, the study investigates primary school principals' understanding of the curriculum development leadership role they command in their schools. It essentially required having to collect data that would ultimately produce descriptive analysis which would emphasise deep, interpretative understandings of the social phenomena under study (Henning, 2004). According to Maree (2007), fundamental assumptions of the interpretative paradigm include the following: firstly, people are not regarded as passive vehicles in social, political and historical affairs, but rather, have certain inner capabilities which can allow for individual judgements, perceptions and autonomy with respect to decision-making. Secondly, the belief that any event or action is explainable in terms of multiple interacting factors, events and processes. Thirdly, the view that the purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of individual cases, that is, when pertaining to this study, primary school principals, as opposed to universal laws. Fourthly, the view that the world consists of multifaceted realities that are best studied as a whole, recognising the significance of the context in which 'experience' occurs. These assumptions underpin all elements of my study.

The afore-mentioned assumptions are related to my study in the sense that, firstly, primary school principals voiced their concerns about their ambiguous role in the new curriculum dispensation. Secondly, the principals' curriculum development leadership role was explored in terms of multiple interacting factors, events and processes that occurred during curriculum reforms and change within and to South African education. Thirdly, the purpose of the study was to explore a selection of individual principals' understandings of their curriculum development leadership role within their specific schools. This study was conducted with primary school principals in their respective leadership and management positions at school level.

Generally, the interpretive paradigm pointed to the use of qualitative research methods, in the processes of collecting, generating and analysing data. In particular, the employment of the qualitative approach was well-suited to the study conducted. Qualitative methods enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of how primary school principals lead and manage curriculum development within their schools. Moreover, they enabled me to explore various principals' understandings of their role as curriculum development leaders.

A qualitative orientation assisted me in investigating principals' experiences and actions as they occurred within the 'natural setting' of the school (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Furthermore, the study aimed at developing an understanding of a selection of individual principals' experiences and expectations in their working and living environments, *i.e.* within their unique contexts and backgrounds (Henning, 2004). The study is also based on the view that curriculum development leadership research should be designed in conjunction with the environment in which it is implemented (Steyn, 2002).

In interpretive research it is assumed that the participants are not passive vehicles, but rather, that their voices should be heard in order to provide both data and the method in which the data is to be analysed (Maree, 2007). In this study, to make the participants active vehicles, or rather, to make their voices heard, I employed different techniques. These procedures included interviews with individual principals, observation phases, document analysis and the keeping of a personal 'reflective journal'. The issue of context is always an important factor in South Africa, a country with complex socio-economic and political peculiarities. Contextual factors have a particularly compelling diversity and power in South African

schools (Maistry, 2008). The interpretive researcher is, hence, required to go beyond patently observable parts of the phenomena, through exploring the diverse contextual factors underlying the phenomena being studied. Thus, a qualitative research design would be deemed appropriate in trying to gain an in-depth understanding of principals' varied experiences and meanings of their role as curriculum development leaders.

### **3.2.2 Case study**

'Case study' was employed as an appropriate method for gathering data within a natural setting. A case study, as a research method, is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest (Maree, 2007). This case study attempted to systematically investigate and inquire about a selection of South African principals' understandings of their curriculum development leadership role in the context of the primary school. It also attempted to describe and explain how principals lead curriculum development within their schools. Further, it is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and where multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984). This study explores primary school principals in their real-life contexts, that is, the school. Case study research also investigates and reports the complex dynamics and factors that may be found in a unique instance (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001). Thus, this study investigates and reports the complexity and dynamics of South African principals' curriculum development leadership role in primary schools.

A case study design is employed with the aim of gaining a detailed understanding of a situation and its meanings for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than specific variables, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1999). The interest in this study pertains to a process of principals' leading and management of curriculum development in their schools. Case studies are distinguished from other types of qualitative research in that they are intensive descriptions that involve analysis of a single unit or bounded system, such as an individual, a programme, event, group, intervention or a community (Henning, 2004). Additionally, a case study demands that the researcher be sensitive to the context in which he/she works. The phenomenon under study cannot be studied outside and separately from its context. A case study approach provided me with the

capacity to investigate the relevant phenomenon in-depth within its particular locale. I attempted to embrace the principles offered by case study research with an objective to find answers to the research questions. A boundary identified in the study was the participation of primary school principals representing just four schools. The principals were studied within the school-based curriculum development context. The focus was on how they lead curriculum development in each of their schools. In this study, it is the case and the interaction between context (school) and action (curriculum development leadership) that yield the unit for analysis.

The case study method is characterised by fundamental features which guided my research. It strives towards an understanding of how participants relate to and interact with each other. Moreover, it provides a multi-perspective dimension, in which the researcher considers the views of the relevant group of actors, as well as the interaction that occurs between or amidst them.

This allowed me to focus on the interaction between context and action. The case study requires multi-methods in order to truly capture the case in some depth (Henning, 2004). Through the utilisation of different data gathering methods, an in-depth grasp of principals' curriculum development leadership role was gained. The application of multi-methods in the data collection process is the fundamental strength of the case study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

### **3.2.3 Theoretical framework**

This study is situated in an interpretive research paradigm, which is characterised by its concerns with meaning and its quest to seek an understanding of social members' definitions and grasp of situations (Cohen *et.al*, 2007). The social members in this study are primary school principals, and their individual role ('curriculum development leader') is explored and investigated within the context of their organisations (schools, which are in the process of developing their curriculum as per new curriculum policies).

It follows then that the study would be informed by the theory of participative and facilitative leadership, which is based on the assumption that curriculum decision-making processes of

the group (the group being teachers and school management teams) ought to be the central focus of the group (Leithwood, 1999). This is a normative model which is basically located on, firstly, the notion of participation / facilitation, which will engender the likely effectiveness of school curriculum development. Secondly, it is justified by democratic principles. Lastly, in the context of site-based curriculum development leadership and management, leadership is potentially available to any legitimate stakeholder (Leithwood, 1999).

‘Collegiality’ is one normatively preferred type of participative / facilitative leadership. The principal, as curriculum development leader in a school, is expected to adopt strategies which acknowledge that curriculum issues may arise from different parts of the school and be resolved in a complex, interactive process. The principal is, therefore, the facilitator of an essential participative process (Bush, 1995). Participative / facilitative leadership may also be conceptualised as ‘distributed leadership’. Neuman (check spelling) and Simmons (2000) argue that there should be a departure from single-person leadership to an approach which emphasises collaborative decision-making on curriculum development issues. Distributed leadership calls on principals, deputy principals, departmental heads, parents, teachers and district personnel, to take responsibility with respect to leading curriculum development within the school, and to assume leadership roles in areas in which they are competent and skilled (Bush, 2000).

Whilst the theory of participative / facilitative leadership is not without its value and advantages (Bush & Glover, 2003), the importance of a participative approach lies in its success in bonding staff together, and in so doing, easing the pressures experienced by school principals. Furthermore, the burdens of curriculum development leadership would be reduced if its functions and roles were to be shared, and if the concept of ‘leadership density’ were to emerge as a viable replacement for ‘principal leadership’ (Bush & Glover, 2003). Participative / Facilitative leadership is, arguably then, an attractive notion underlined by democratic ideals. It has been popular in literature for many years, however, evidence of its successful implementation in schools is sparse (Webb & Vulliamy, 1996).

Despite the above-mentioned evidence there is a continuing focus on participative and distributed curriculum development leadership. Harris (2002) argues that democratic

leadership styles are inevitable within the complex and rapidly changing world inhabited by schools in the twenty-first century, despite the current emphasis on individual curriculum development leaders. The rationale for selecting the theory of participative / facilitative, or distributed leadership, lies in the fact that the South African education system is currently implementing radical curriculum reforms in order to adapt to a changing world.

A current international trend in education reform is the devolution of curriculum development decision-making powers from central level to the school level (Steyn, 2002). This reform initiative rests on the assumption that the participation of educators, learners and parents can cumulatively enhance the achievement of the desired curriculum development goals. A strictly school-based curriculum development role is no longer an option for South African school principals. As per the new curriculum policy framework, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, principals should adopt a new role of ‘participatively’ leading curriculum development at school level.

### **3.3 Sampling and access**

Non-probability and purposive sampling processes were used in order to generate a sample of primary schools and principals who would be participants in this research project. Furthermore, the criterion purposive sampling process was used in the selection of participating schools and principals. Criterion sampling was employed due to the inclusion of ‘typical’ characteristics of the participants. Criteria used included gender and profession. The criteria that I selected assisted me in selecting participants who possessed experience, knowledge and insight into the research topic. Selection of the purposive sampling technique implies that the sample should be chosen for a certain purpose (Cohen *et. al.*, 2007). For the purpose of this study the primary school principals were selected and sampled at the Lower Umfolozi circuit. Two male and two female primary school principals were selected to participate in the study. The circuit and ward databases for primary schools were used. From the circuit and ward databases, every fifth school (that is, starting from one to five and moving from six to ten *etc.*) were selected in order to draw a sample of participants. The participants sampled were engaged with their unique phenomenon under study, *viz.* the curriculum development leadership role of primary school principals. Attention was also given to sampling of sites in which in-depth, rich data could be gathered, as well as the



contexts in which participants work. Maree (2007) refers to ‘purposive sampling’ as a selection of participants because of some defining characteristic that makes them holders of the data needed for the study. Sampling decisions are therefore taken with the intended aim of gaining the richest possible sources of information to try to find answers to the research questions (Maree, 2007). The sampling process of participants in my study was guided by these principles.

Gaining access to schools and principals is a process that has to be dealt with in a sensitive manner (Maistry, 2008). The following extract from my personal reflective journal explains the process I followed:

### **Extract from my Reflective Journal**

Gaining access to school principals is a process that demands patience and commitment. I had to request permission to enter the schools selected for this study from the circuit and ward manager respectively. They initially denied me access to schools due to unknown reasons. I made another appointment with both of them in order to access circuit databases of the schools for sampling purposes. In the meeting, I firstly described and explained the purpose and benefits of my study before they allowed me access to principals and their schools.

After I had been granted access to schools, I immediately made an appointment to meet the principals in the conference centre at the Lower Umfolozi circuit. In this meeting I explained the purpose of the study, the likely benefits that could be derived, as well as clarified its process and the potential advantages for their schools. Similar appointments and meeting were done with the School Governing Bodies of participating schools. The principals who participated in the study had been in their current positions for more than ten (10) years, with the exception of one principal who had remained in his position for seventeen years. None of the participants had previously been involved in any such study.

Three principals were eager to participate in the study, while one principal was initially reluctant to participate in the research. Both circuit and ward managers, and participating principals understood that the study would be beneficial to them, in terms of gaining

curriculum leadership and management competences. The circuit and ward managers were also eager to support their principals' professional development. They encouraged the researcher to conduct the study in primary schools under their circuit. Initially, the fourth principal expressed reluctance to be interviewed. She refused the document analysis process and observation of her meetings. This principal expressed her fear that the research findings would be dispensed and divulged to the public as well as the Department of Education. Eventually I secured her participation through conducting an interview with her in her first language, *i.e.* IsiZulu. To secure her participation, I was required to verbally swear before the School Governing Body Chairperson that no findings would be dispersed – neither to the public, nor the Department of Education.

### **3.3.1 Dress code of the interviewer**

Babbie (1986) made a pertinent statement regarding dress code of the interviewer. He stated that, as a general rule, the interviewer should dress in a fashion similar to that of the people she / he will be interviewing. Sudman and Bradburn (1983), as well as Caplovitz (1983) commented that an interviewer who dresses in a manner that reflects wealth will probably encounter difficulty in eliciting co-operation and responses from poorer participants who may share his / her contention. On the other hand, a 'poorly dressed' interviewer may encounter similar difficulties with respect to interviewing respondents who may be wealthier. In this research project involving primary school principals, I did not experience any difficulty since I am a principal who is familiar with the psychological impact of dress code.

### **3.4 Data gathering methods**

In this section, I present information on how data was gathered. The data collecting process started in March 2009 and continued to the end of October 2009. The data was collected and gathered from a homogeneous group of participants, *i.e.* they were all IsiZulu speaking participants working in rural contexts, and they were two male and two female participants. The homogeneity of the group enabled me to develop a rich and comprehensive understanding of participants since they derived from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A key strength of the case study is the use of multiple sources and techniques in

the data gathering process (Cohen *et. al.*, 2007). A researcher becomes a ‘craft person’ who has access to many tools that can be used skilfully at appropriate times (Henning, 2004).

Furthermore, Janesick (2000) proposes that the term ‘crystallisation’ should be used instead of ‘triangulation’ in qualitative research. This should be done because crystallisation provides a better lens through which to view the components involved in qualitative research. Basically, ‘crystallisation’ refers to the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis (Maree, 2007). Informed by the above principles, I used different methods of data gathering to facilitate the crystallisation technique, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of my study. Multiple levels of data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with principals, observations of curriculum meetings, document analysis, as well as my reflective journal. Data was systematically gathered and recorded.

### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Interviews were selected as a method of gathering data for my study. An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer poses a question (or questions) to the participant in order to generate data and learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviour of the participants (Niewenhuis, 2007). The purpose of the interview in this study was to gain rich descriptive data that would assist me in understanding primary school principals’ role with respect to curriculum development leadership in their schools. The key strength of an interview is that it allows the researcher to clarify or rephrase the question, as well as probe the interviewee for the specific meaning of a response, or to investigate aspects of a response that one might not have found in any other way (Cohen *et. al.*, 2007).

After confirming with principals their willingness to participate in the study, I held an informal meeting with each of them to negotiate all data collection visits at her/his convenience. Being fully versed in their seemingly countless administrative responsibilities, we agreed on tentative dates for interview sessions, observation phases and document analysis sessions. During these initial meetings, I attempted to gain a preview of the contexts within which each participant was working.

The interviews with four participants spanned eight sessions, with two sessions per participant, each one lasting approximately one hour. Initial interview sessions were conducted to obtain background and structural information of the schools, as well as the biographies of principals who participated in the study. The second interview sessions were conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of how principals lead and manage curriculum development in their schools. They also endeavoured to explore principals' understanding of their curriculum development leadership role as per the new curriculum framework. In addition, they aimed at assisting me in gaining insight as to why curriculum development leadership tends to happen the way it does in primary schools. One-to-one semi-structured interviews were employed, in order to probe further in search of responses to the broader research questions being posed. The interviews also allowed me to negotiate and embark on discussion with the interviewees regarding their responses (Henning, 2004). Furthermore, they provided me with flexibility to probe, clarify responses and engage in a follow-up pertaining to any matters that arose during the interview processes (Merriman, 1999).

### **3.4.2 Observations**

'Observation' is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. During the course of observation, we use not only our senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell, but also our intuition to gather bits of important information, as data gathering techniques in a case study within the realm of qualitative research (Ivankova, 2007).

Van der Westhuizen (2007) identifies four types of observation methods. Firstly, it is essential to be a 'complete observer'. Here, the researcher is a non-participant observer, looking at a situation from a distance (called an "etic" or "outsider" perspective). Secondly, to be an 'observer as participant': in this instance, the researcher gets into the situation, but focuses mainly on his / her role as observer in the situation. Thirdly, to be a 'participant as observer': here, the researcher becomes part of the research and works with the participants in the situation to design and develop intervention strategies. Fourthly, to be a 'complete participant': here the researcher is expected to become completely immersed in the setting, to such an extent that those being observed do not know that they are being observed. For the purpose of my study, I opted for the role of 'observer as participant' in order to capture the

behavioural patterns of principals when they conduct curriculum development meetings with their teachers. Further, I also opted for this observation method in order to understand the principals' assumptions and beliefs regarding their role of being curriculum development leaders.

In this study, I conducted four observation sessions – one observation session for each principal. For each session, the curriculum development meeting conducted by each principal was observed. The focus was on the principals' behavioural patterns and the teachers' actions, including reactions, during these meetings. Moreover, I focussed on each principal's assumption and belief about his/her role as curriculum developer within the school. The purpose of conducting observation sessions was basically to gain a deeper insight and understanding into how principals lead curriculum development processes in their schools. During the observation sessions, I used anecdotal records (see Appendix B). These assisted me in describing principals' basic actions, as well as capturing key phrases and words uttered by the principals during curriculum development meetings.

### **3.4.3 Personal Reflective Journal**

A personal reflective journal was utilised mainly to record my informal observations, as well as interactions with primary school principals in schools, principals' meetings and workshops. It assisted me to record an in-depth description of the four primary school contexts selected for study. Further, it helped me to record conversations, attitudes, expectations, problems experienced by principals and the behaviour of principals in relation to their role as curriculum developers in the new curriculum dispensation. This was important to keep track of and record all behaviours, actions, attitudes and interactions emerging within the field. The upkeep of these records is central to good research practice in qualitative research (Yates, 2004). I kept and utilised my reflective journal as a systematic way to facilitate the interpretive process, which is, as Niewenhuis (2007) postulates, at the centre of qualitative research. Writing and keeping a personal reflective journal is the starting point of interpretive work in the research field (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007).

The personal reflective journal helped me to compare and contrast the conversations held with, as well as the actions of each principal. It also assisted me to interpret the principals'

assumptions, beliefs utterances and expectations regarding their curriculum development leadership roles. Additionally, it assisted me to conceptualise their leadership beliefs and expectations in order to relate them to participative and facilitative leadership, which is the theoretical framework at the crux of this study.

### **3.5 Document analysis**

Documents are recorded evidence of what people do and what they claim to have done. They are also the means of communication, either handwritten or in electronic format, that relate to the research questions and that may shed light on the phenomenon under investigation (Niewenhuis, 2007). Documents are also material artefacts to support or refute verbal accounts (Fadeeva & Leire, 2004). Their advantages are to provide a comprehensive account of events in organisations, and to become another source for data crystallisation (Fadeeva & Leire 2004).

Moreover, documents can “recall” more details than human memory. One should, however, note that what appears in documents is not always an accurate reflection of daily practices, since such documents can be used as “gatekeepers” or “power control” in organisations (Fadeeva & Leire, 2004). Guided by these principles, I have used document analysis as another data gathering technique. In this research project, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding and thick description of the phenomena under investigation, the administrative documents belonging to participating principals were analysed. These documents are minutes of a curriculum development meeting, School Management Teams, correspondence books, and also minutes of departmental curriculum meetings. I used these documents with the aim of validating the claims of participants.

### **3.6 Method of data analysis**

Merriam (1998) maintains that data collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. Furthermore, Niewenhuis (2007) states that qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative, or non-linear, process, meaning that data collection, processing analysis and reporting are all intertwined. For this study, data analysis was an ongoing process. This simply implies that data analysis was continuous from the first stage of

data collection and once data collection had been complete. Field notes were taken during the observation and interview sessions.

In analysing data, I utilised a thematic code with the aim of capturing qualitative richness of the responses made by the principals under study (Henning, 2004). This simply means that after transcriptions, I categorised the data into logical and meaningful themes, as well as examined and interpreted the given data in relation to the key research questions. My preliminary framework for analysis was based on the following themes, *viz.* planning and budgeting, monitoring provision of support, delegation, communication, technical support and empowerment.

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

This study possesses some limitations that were caused by time and budget constraints. Due to time constraints, only four primary school principals were selected as participants. The study would perhaps be more worthy if more primary and secondary schools principals were to have been involved. Further, if the research project had had more participants involved, more ideas and data would have been generated, thus making the study more convincing. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to the wider populace of South African school principals.

Participating principals were always busy with their seemingly countless administrative functions, which at times, made it quite difficult for them to honour the set appointments. Furthermore, the researcher was not funded and that required him to pay from his own pocket. Since the researcher is also a school principal within the same ward and circuit as that of the participants, at times, participants found it difficult and became very cautious when giving information, sometimes seeming to give information that they thought would please the researcher.

### **3.8 Ethical issues**

All interpretive researchers have to bear ethical responsibility for their research and its effect on society. Ethical practice within research aims at minimising the risks of abusing and/or

misusing participants (Dubazane, 2007). Some of the key values and practices are to “do good and avoid harm”, care for people’s –well-being and human rights, treat them with dignity and respect, act with integrity, honesty and self discipline, and to build harmonious relationships that are non-racist and non-sexist (South African Council for Educators, 2002 p.11).

I have sought to follow these ethical guidelines in conducting my research study. The selected primary schools are public schools and the participants (principals) are employed by the Department of Education in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I sought and obtained permission from the circuit officials, Ward Manager (see Appendix C), as well as primary school principals. This is not an unusual requirement, because Stake (1995) argues that the researcher has an obligation to think through the ethics of the situation and take the necessary steps prior to requesting access and permissions. Further, Maistry (2008) asserts that to gain access to gatekeepers, there should be trust and mutual respect that is existent between the researcher and participants. Therefore, after gaining permission from the circuit and ward managers, I organised informal meetings with participating principals to explain the purpose of my research undertaking and its benefits to them. In these meetings, the moral and ethical issues that were addressed were informed consent, the right to withdrawal and the right to privacy. I assured them that I would keep their identities confidential and anonymous, in order to elicit their full disclosure about their curriculum development leadership role at their schools. They were also assured that pseudonyms rather than real names would be used for the schools and principals involved in the study, that data collected would be treated with confidentiality, and that it would only be used for study purposes. All the recorded tapes and related documents would be kept safely and disposed of after five years (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). Anderson and Arsenault (1998) warn against the use of volunteers in study because they tend to be a powerless sector within the school and society. My study did not use volunteers as participants.

Further primary school principals who participated in the study signed the consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the data construction process (see Appendix E). McNamee and Bridges (2002) identify the inviolable principle of consent, which assures that participants receive a full explanation of all pertinent dimensions about the study before they decide whether or not to participate in the research. They warn about the notion of ‘assumed’



consent, *i.e.* when only the authorities, for instance, the circuit and the ward, grant permission to participate but without the consent of the participants. To avoid this risk of assumed consent, I debriefed the primary school principals on the purpose, procedures and benefits of the research. Through the course of the study, I consciously sought to abide by these ethical principles.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the main aspects of the design and methodology used in this research project and the rationale for the choices made. It also described the limitations and strong points of the methods and techniques used within the study. The chapter concluded by reflecting upon the ethical issues that were considered in this study. The next chapter will provide an analysis of the data collected through various data gathering techniques.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

As was revealed in the previous chapter, data was gathered through the utilisation of interviews, observation of curriculum development meetings, document analysis and the keeping of a personal reflective journal. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse data that captures the 'general setting' in which curriculum development leadership tends to occur. In addition, it aims to capture the role of the principal with respect to curriculum development leadership within four primary schools based in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit. Specifically, the data analysis attempted to encapsulate the evolving role of principals as curriculum development leaders in their schools. Several key themes emerged from data analysis, and accordingly, this chapter is organised as follows, before concluding with a discussion of the findings:

- Narrative vignettes of participants
- Principals' understandings of their role in curriculum development leadership
- Principals' perception of their curriculum management role as a curriculum leadership-orientated role
- Principals' limited involvement in curriculum planning
- Principals provide inadequate supervision and monitoring with regard to curriculum development programmes in their schools
- Principals have limited involvement in the organising and staffing of curriculum development programmes in their schools
- Principals tend to provide limited support to newly-employed and existing educators
- Principals tend to delegate core curriculum development leadership duties and functions to School Management Team members
- Principals have a closed system of cascading information on curriculum-related issues
- Principals provide technical support rather than qualitative curriculum support
- Principals struggle to understand and apply ideas presented at principals' workshops

- Principals' prior training does not support their role as curriculum development leaders.

## **4.2 Narrative vignettes of participants**

The data presented in this study emerged from case studies of four primary school principals. The purpose of presenting narrative vignettes of participants is to highlight their understanding of their role as curriculum developers in the context in which they operate, which, in turn, could be compared to the actual practices of curriculum development leadership in their schools. The principals' biographies, as well as the environment of the schools in which they work contribute in part to their understandings of their curriculum development leadership role.

In analysing the data I have been guided by Wolcott (1994), who states that more recently, researchers have been allowed and even encouraged to make connections with the personal (or parts of everyday experience) to such aspects as one's own expectations, to experience, to conventional wisdom and also, to social norms. In aiming to interrogate principals' responses to the interviews, observation sessions, as well as to my reflective journal, I constantly found myself reflecting upon my experience in education, particularly, to my role as primary school principal for more than five years. The data presented emerged from observation sessions, interviews and my reflective journal. On the point of identity, the actual names of the principals who participated have been replaced by the use of pseudonyms, in order to reserve their right to anonymity.

### **4.2.1 A narrative vignette of Mr Shabane**

The first participating principal, Mr Shabane, has been teaching for seventeen (17) years. He was promoted to the position of principal in 1998 and has since been a principal for eleven years. He is an IsiZulu-speaking black African male who was born forty-one years ago in a deeply rural area, namely, Kwa-Ngwanase. He holds a Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) obtained at Esikhawini College of Education, as well as a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree obtained at UNISA; both qualifications are related to the fields of management and leadership.

Mr Shabane's school is poorly built with dilapidated buildings. It has eleven classrooms, a principal's office, staff room and two offices for the Heads of Department. The principal's office is very small, neat and well-organised. It has one steel cabinet and one table, which is full of papers and documents that are neatly stacked.

The school is situated within the deep, rural area of Sangonyana. It was established in 1974. The school starts from Grade R and progresses to Grade 7. It has an enrolment of 370 learners. The learners' ages range from 4 – 20 years. Most learners come from the local community of Sangonyana, which falls under the Ntambanana Municipality, and they walk approximately 10 – 20km to school. The Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) of the school is 11, *i.e.* one principal, two heads of department, eight posts for level one educators, and two posts for level one educators who are volunteers at the school.

The school is classified in the quintile 2 category, and no school fees are due as a result of the low socio-economic status of the surrounding community. It has a nutrition programme provided by the National School Programme, an initiative run by the Department of Education and Health. The majority of the parents are poor and unemployed. They earn their living through pension and grants, as a result of which it tends to become difficult for them to participate in school activities. All teachers, with the exception of volunteers, reside in the towns of Empangeni and Richards Bay. They travel approximate 60km to school.

#### **4.2.2 A narrative vignette of Mrs Mshazi**

The second participating principal, Mrs Mshazi, has been teaching for more than thirty years and has been a head of department for eighteen years. She was promoted to a principal's post in 2002 and has since served as a principal for seven years. She was born fifty-five years ago in the town of Stanger. Mrs Mshazi is an IsiZulu-speaking African black woman, who has vast experience with regard to a hierarchical management system. She holds a Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC) and a Further Diploma in Education (FDE). She is currently registered for an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) on school leadership and management. The formal qualifications

she currently holds are not particularly related to curriculum development leadership and management.

Mrs Mshazi's school is securely built with thirteen classrooms, six offices, a strong room, as well as running water and toilets. It is protected by means of a razor-wire fence. The principal's office is well-furnished and decorated with trophies and certificates achieved by the school. In addition, it is large and has a reception area.

The school was established in 1975. It was built by the Department of Education and Training and named after the local chief's (Inkosi) great grandfather. It is situated in the deeply rural area of Ntambanana. It was built due to the forced removal of Mandlazini people from Richards Bay. The school has an enrolment of 706 learners, who range in age from 4 – 19 years. It starts from Grade R, and progresses up to Grade 7. The learners travel approximately a 10 – 20km distance to school. The school has a PPN of 21, *i.e.* one principal, one deputy principal and three heads of department. The school is situated within a poverty-stricken community, in which 99% of parents are without employment. Parents within this community earn their living through pension and social grants. The majority of teachers reside in the towns of Empangeni and Richards Bay. They travel approximately 36km to school.

#### **4.2.3 A narrative vignette of Ms Langa**

The third participating principal, Ms Langa, has been teaching for twenty years. She has taught in her school since 1989 and was promoted to the position of principal after her former principal retired in 1993. She had not previously been exposed to management positions, such as head of department and deputy principal. Further, she had never taught in any other schools previously, with the exception of the school at which she presently serves. Ms Langa was born forty-eight years ago in the Mbazwane area within the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal. She is an IsiZulu speaking black African female school manager, who holds a Primary Teacher's Diploma and Adult Basic Education and Training Certificate. However, none of her qualifications are directly related to curriculum development leadership and management. Currently, Ms Langa is registered for a School Leadership and Management Certificate with UNISA.

Ms Langa's school has been relocated from where it had been previously located, and rebuilt by the Department of Education. It consists of eight classrooms, three offices, a sick room, reception area, kitchen, stationery room, as well as a strong room. Her office has sufficient space, is neat and well-painted. It has one table, an armchair and a wooden cabinet which contains a few documents and books.

Ms Langa's school was established in 1972. It was situated in a farm called Heatonville. The buildings belonged to the Roman Catholic Church under the diocese of Eshowe. When people were removed from the area, the church authorities converted the church into a school to provide education for the children of local farm workers. However, due to the increase in vandalism, robbery and assault, which were directed toward educators and learners alike, the Department of Education (KZN) decided to relocate the school to a safer place at the Somopho Tribal Authority in 2003. In the year 2006, the school was officially reopened.

The school has a computer laboratory, media centre and administration block. It has an enrolment of 223 learners, and starts from Grade R progressing up to Grade 7. The learners, whose ages range from 3 to 17 years, derive from the local community, predominantly from the nearest sugar cane farm, *viz.* Heatonville. They travel approximately a 15 to 25 km distance to school. Additionally, the school has a PPN of 7, *i.e.* one principal, one Acting-Head of Department and five posts allocated to level one educators. All educators reside in the towns of Empangeni and Richards Bay, and travel approximately 15km to reach school. Learners' parents chiefly earn their living through pension and social grants, due to the low socio-economic background from which they derive.

#### **4.2.4 A narrative vignette of Mr Mtshali**

The fourth participating principal, Mr Mtshali, has sixteen years of teaching experience and has been a Head of Department for two years. He has been a principal for seven years and has taught in more than four schools. Mr Mtshali, an IsiZulu speaking black African male, was born thirty years ago in Durban. He is a South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) chairperson at Melmoth. Furthermore, he is a cluster co-ordinator for Economics and Management Sciences

(EMS) at the Obuka ward. Mr Mtshali holds a Senior Primary Teachers Diploma (STPD), Further Diploma in Education (FDE), as well as a Bachelor of Education Honours (B.Ed HONS) degree. All his qualifications are related to leadership and management.

Mr Mtshali's school has poorly built classrooms with no offices; consequently, different grades are combined in one classroom. He uses a Grade 7 classroom as an office. The eastern corner of the classroom has an old steel cabinet that is full of books, papers and documents.

Mr Mtshali's school is situated within the deeply rural area of Melmoth, based in the vicinity of Biyela. The school was named after the local chief, (Inkosi) Velemandleni Biyela in 1995. It starts from Grade R and advances to Grade 7. Learners derive from the local community of Yanguye and walk a distance of approximately 5-7 km in order to reach school. The school has enrolment of 283 learners; its PPN is: seven educators, one principal and six posts assigned to level one educators. There is no deputy principal, nor a Head of Department (HOD), due to the school's enrolment. The learner's ages range from 4 – 19 years. The school is categorically listed as quintile one, due to its positioning within a low socio-economic community. It is also a section 20 school. Most learners' parents earn their living through pensions and social grants. The learners and teachers come from an IsiZulu-speaking community. Some teachers reside in local homes around the school and others travel from Empangeni, approximately a 105km distance away, in order to reach school.

The above description of principals' biographies and the school environment casts light upon and connects to their curriculum development leadership role.

### **4.3 Principals' understandings of their role in curriculum development leadership**

To determine a sense for how the curriculum development leadership role occurs in primary schools, I extracted data from interviews with principals, observation of curriculum meetings, document analysis, as well as the keeping of a reflective journal. Specifically, data analysis attempted to encapsulate the evolving role of primary school principals as leaders of curriculum

development within their schools. For this purpose, thematic categories have been drawn up to aid in the analysis of the data.

#### **4.3.1 Principals' perceptions of their curriculum management role as a curriculum leadership-orientated role**

As primary school principals are the focal point of many efforts embarked upon by the school, their thinking / perceptions are critical variables in the curriculum development leadership process (Steyn & Quelch, 1994). However, what the study intended to uncover is the likely extent to which their perceptions about their curriculum development leadership role are synchronised with their actual practice. The principals' responses to the question of what they believe to be the main role of the principal, were orientated largely in favour of curriculum development management rather than curriculum development leadership (See Appendix A). They responded as follows:-

*It is to teach (for a) few hours, I think to know how to allocate curriculum duties to teachers in terms of the duty loads, as well as helping HOD's in terms of supervising teachers. To identify problem areas and help teachers to develop where they are lacking; it can be in terms of inside and outside workshops. I think that is all. (Shabane)*

*I think the principal should make sure that resources are available for teachers... To ensure that teachers attend workshops organised by the department of education... To encourage my teachers to read curriculum policies and other curriculum related articles. (Mshazi)*

*To see (to it) that teaching and learning is taking place, as the school is a school because of teaching and learning. I think it is a 'first role'. Another role is to listen to teachers, especially when they need something to aid them to teach. (Langa)*

*Maybe I can say, to organise training inside the school... To draft and develop programmes together with educators, for mentoring and induction of new or novice educators. Another thing:*



*to invite subject advisors or other teachers with expertise in other schools (in order) to assist the educators, if you feel that there is a gap in a learning area or a certain phase... To be accountable as a person, to check and supervise educators' and learners' work. Those are what I think are the principal's roles. (Mtshali)*

In responding to the question on perceived curriculum development leadership, principals in the study tended to identify their roles with a curriculum development management orientation rather than with that of curriculum development leadership. The principals' responses reveal that they perceive the management of curriculum development within their schools to be that of a curriculum development leadership role (the reasons for this perception will be discussed in the following section of this study, *i.e.* a discussion of the findings). The principals' responses hence suggest that while they believe their roles to be curriculum development leadership-oriented, they are actually more curriculum development management-oriented. The participants' responses indicated that as principals, they remain quite focused on realising their vast array of curriculum development management functions, to the extent that they seem to construe these as the fulfilment of their curriculum development leadership role.

#### **4.3.2 Principals' limited involvement in curriculum planning**

The ability to identify, collect and use data and evidence to inform planning is required by curriculum leaders for effective curriculum development (Department of Education, 2009). However, up until now, curriculum leaders have not seen the planning of curriculum ahead of time to be a priority (Kok, 2004). The study intended to uncover the likely degree to which principals are involved in initiating and leading curriculum planning meetings in their schools. The principals' responses suggested that they have limited involvement in the curriculum planning processes that occur within their schools. Thus, their roles tend to be more aligned with management. In response to the questions of whether they have curriculum planning meetings with their teachers and when do such meetings are constructed, the principals replied as follows:-

*To me, curriculum planning is the duty and the responsibility of every HOD in their phase. They do have planning meetings on Mondays... but truly, I am not involved. (Shabane)*

*We do come together for planning. The heads of department hold meetings at the beginning of every year. I am always busy with other administrative duties. (Mshazi)*

*My acting HOD is responsible for organising those meetings; they conduct them at the end of the year. I am sometimes involved but not always. I also involve subject advisors in planning (Langa)*

*We do have planning meetings; as you can see, we are now onto the planning process for 2010. We usually conduct them at the end of the year. (Mtshali)*

In contrast, the extract from my reflective journal dated 15 / 09 / 09 reflects that:

*I don't understand these issues of curriculum planning. The HOD attended many planning workshops and they understand those things. (Shabane)*

*I don't participate in planning. I am very selective about what I want to participate in. (Mshazi)*

*I give them time and space to meet for planning. In reality, I never attended even a single planning meeting. (Langa)*

*I don't want to lie to you. I only provide time and space for educators to meet for the following year's planning. I am always committed to rebuilding and renovation of the school, since our classrooms are deteriorated, with no administration building. They meet under the supervision of senior teachers since I do not have a SMT; I also invite subject advisors to assist us in planning. (Mtshali)*

The evidence above reflects that the principals provide space and time for teachers to meet for curriculum planning, either at the beginning or at the end of the year. They also claim that they are involved in such meetings; however, the evidence from my reflective journal indicates

otherwise. The principals were of the view that it is the duty of the heads of department, acting heads of department and senior teachers to involve teachers in curriculum planning meetings.

The second observation phases were conducted in order to obtain a deeper insight into and understanding of curriculum development meetings that were conducted by the primary schools principals who participated in the study. In all these meetings, I assumed an observer-as-participant role. Mainly, I focused on my role as an observer in the situation. The observation phases were conducted to gain an understanding of how principals lead curriculum development in their schools.

The observation phases revealed that the principals do not conduct curriculum planning meetings. These meetings are led by heads of department and acting heads of departments. Even though Mtshali claims that he is partially involved in curriculum planning, he does not have a School Management Team. From observation, we can see that the principals' roles in these curriculum planning meetings involve delegation of such duties, and providing resources for implementation of the curriculum.

It becomes clear that the heads of department are acquainted with curriculum planning and that in certain instances, the deputy principals are excluded in meetings of this nature (as was the case at Mrs Mshazi's school). The evidence from document analysis indicates that, in the majority of cases, the principals who participated in this study do not attend curriculum planning meetings. It also reveals that the participating schools are highly dependent on Subject Advisors (as opposed to principals) on the issue of curriculum planning.

#### **4.3.3 Principals provide inadequate supervision and monitoring with regard to curriculum development programmes in their schools**

The main roles of the curriculum development leaders entail supervision and monitoring of curriculum development programmes within the school (Pillay, 2003). However, the study's core objective was to uncover the principals' role in supervising and monitoring the work and

performance of educators and learners. The principals' responses show that they play a limited role with regard to supervising and monitoring teachers' and learners' work. In response to the question of who is responsible for supervising and monitoring curriculum development programmes in their schools, the principals responded as follows:

*The HODs are responsible for supervising and monitoring teachers' and learners' progress and performance; I am supervising and monitoring the HODs. We need to monitor (the) curriculum.* (Shabane)

*I attended the workshop on monitoring and managing curriculum and I am responsible for supervising and monitoring the teachers' and learners' progress and performance, that is, (the) supervision of teachers' work and kids' performance.* (Mshazi)

*(The) Acting HOD does the work of monitoring and supervision. I intervene when there is a problem... to see (to it) that teaching and learning is taking place.* (Langa)

*As I told you, there is no HOD at my school, so I am responsible for supervising and monitoring all curriculum-related matters and am an accountable person. I have to check and supervise educators' and learners' work.* (Mtshali)

The evidence above illustrates that the principals are unclear as to their curriculum development roles at their schools. Two principals (Shabane and Langa) delegate their main roles of supervising curriculum activities, as well as the monitoring of both teachers' and learners' work, performance and progress, to heads of department and other educators who may serve in an acting capacity. However, Mtshali would have delegated these roles to the heads of department were his school to have been qualifying for senior posts.

Having taught for thirty-five years, Mshazi perceives the roles of a principal based on the evidence of a hierarchical structure in place at her school. From observation and document analysis, such a structure permits that principals play a limited role with regard to supervising

and monitoring their School Management Teams, as well as the work, performance and progress of educators and learners. It becomes clear that the staff at Mrs Mshazi's school do not conduct any meetings for feedback purposes upon delegation of curriculum development activities. From the above discussion, it is clear that the principals who participated in the study do not understand their role as curriculum developers.

#### **4.3.4 Principals have limited involvement in the organising and staffing of curriculum development programmes in their schools**

The organisation and staffing of curriculum development programmes in the school is one of the duties with which a curriculum development leader is tasked (Kok, 2004). Data analysis in this research project intended to uncover the roles of principals in putting planned curriculum activities and systems into place. Moreover, it aimed to investigate how principals tend to delegate functions to individuals and groups of teachers. In addition, it aimed to shed light upon the question of how many teachers, heads of department and deputy principals within the participating schools are responsible for organising workshops and meetings on issues of teaching, learning and assessment. The principals responded as follows:-

*HODs organise those meetings and workshops; I only facilitate and monitor. The HODs know the teachers expertise and they allocate duty loads. (Shabane)*

*That is the duty of the heads of department. I am just at the back, just to support them; they also allocate duties to teachers. (Mshazi)*

*We (are) highly dependent on departmental workshops, organised by the district... if there is something wrong with curriculum issues and I organised a phase meeting... but the acting HOD organises workshops and meetings and does (the) staffing work. (Langa)*

The responsibility for ensuring that curriculum plans, policies and procedures are adhered to, is exposed in the following response:

*I am the person who is responsible for organising workshops, meetings and allocating duties to teachers; as I told you, I do not have a SMT. I do everything myself. (Mtshali)*

The above evidence reflects that the principals who participated in the study have limited involvement concerning the organisation and staffing of curriculum development activities within their schools. Such duties are discharged by the heads of department, as well as by the acting heads of department in three schools. The principals are also dependent on the district's Curriculum Support Services for such workshops and meetings. Nonetheless, Mtshali is directly involved in organising workshops, meetings and the allocation of duties to teachers, since he does not have an official School Management Team, due to his school's small learner enrolment.

It becomes clear that a lack of knowledge and skills on curriculum development, on the part of the acting heads of department and senior educators, blurs the purpose of curriculum development leadership and management in these schools. An extract from my reflective journal bears the following evidence, the data of which was obtained from informal conversations with principals after the interview sessions:

*I do not trust senior educators because they claim to know everything in curriculum-related issues, but practically, they do not know. (Shabane)*

*The heads of department – especially in my school – are lazy to read; that is why I depend on subject advisors to assist us with curriculum workshops. Practically, they don't know how to conduct workshops (or what to discuss). They usually fail to assist teachers in their departments with their learning areas. (Mshazi)*

*Although she (the Acting HOD) is new in the acting post, she is trying. I know she lacks some of the skills and knowledge on curriculum matters, but she is better than me on curriculum matters. (Langa)*

*I sometimes use senior educators, but they lack knowledge on curriculum development management in the school since some of them are under-qualified. (Mtshali)*

The evidence that emerged from observations and document analysis reflects that the selection of principals who participated in the study do not attend curriculum development meetings and workshops. From the discussion, it is patent that principals lack skills and knowledge in respect of how to lead curriculum development in their schools.

#### **4.3.5 Principals tend to provide limited support to newly-employed and existing educators**

The principals' responses were related to inducting and assisting newly-employed and existing educators on curriculum development issues. They are also related to the diagnosis and formulation of solutions pertaining to curriculum development problems. In response to the question of describing some of the issues related to teaching, learning and assessment, the principals discussed the process of induction and the scheduling of problem-solving workshops at their schools. They responded as follows:-

*I made appointments (for) teachers and heads of department to induct newly-appointed educators and (to) help existing educators on curriculum problems. HODs need to identify problem areas and help teachers in terms of workshops, and organise (for) the subject advisors to assist them. (Shabane)*

*HODs are there to assist new and old educators. For instance, the policy documents are problematic...educators found it very difficult to understand them and (the) HODs used to explain to (those who did not understand) or invite subject advisors. (Mshazi)*

*(The) Acting HOD solves curriculum problems ...only (an) unqualified educator does not understand (the) policy document. [I intervene] She usually invites district subject advisors to help us. She also helps newly-appointed and existing educators. (Langa)*

However, it is evident that Mtshali provides a greater degree of support to newly-employed and existing educators because his school does not have a SMT:

*(The) principal's role is to develop programs for mentoring and induction for old and novice educators; as I told you, I have no HOD; I do that myself, as a cluster co-ordinator for EMS. I liaise with subject advisors in the district to help us when we encounter problems which we cannot solve. (Mtshali)*

From the responses above, we can see that the principal's role is to appoint new teachers, with the aim of providing curriculum development programmes along with human resources. The mentoring of newly-appointed educators is done by the heads of department and acting heads of department in three schools. Mtshali appoints new educators and provides induction for them due to the non-existence of senior posts in his school. Three of the participating principals do not induct newly-appointed educators on curriculum development activities. Furthermore, they also provide limited support to existing educators on curriculum development issues.

The evidence above reflects that the majority of principals who participated diagnose or identify curriculum problems through their heads of department. This means that, practically, the heads of department identify the curriculum-related problems existent within the school. They are also not necessarily capable of providing curriculum development solutions and are highly dependent on district subject advisors for the provision of curriculum solutions. Mostly, these subject advisors seem to have received less training on the curriculum than the teachers themselves and do not seem to carry with them experience of teaching the curriculum.

#### **4.3.6 Principals tend to delegate core curriculum development leadership duties and functions to School Management Team members**

One of the roles of curriculum development leaders entails having to delegate some of their functions to middle managers (Kok, 2004). In respect of this, the principals' responses were related to the existence of school management teams in their schools. The principals' responses



made mention of how they delegate curriculum development leadership functions and in so doing, distribute power to middle managers within their schools. In response to the question of how many teachers, heads of department and deputy principals serve in each participating school, and how the principals work with them, the following statements were made:-

*I have eleven posts (allocated to) level one educators; two heads of department and no deputy principal. I first call the HODs and discuss with them what are problem areas found in their phase meetings with teachers, and then we design strategies (that could help in) assessing those problems. I also use subject heads in (respect of) supervision. (Shabane)*

*I have sixteen posts (allocated to) level one educators, three heads of department and one deputy principal. I also have extra staff, that is, (the) admin clerk and two Grade R educators. We do come together (HODs), and educators discuss the policy documents and other issues, such as resolving problems and making decision. (Mshazi)*

*We have six posts (assigned to) level one educators, one principal, one acting head of department and no deputy principal. I don't have a SMT, but luckily, the teacher who is an Acting HOD is very committed and dedicated to school work. I also appointed senior educators to monitor educators in the intermediate phase. (Langa)*

*I have six posts (assigned to) level one educators, one principal, no HOD and no deputy principal. I use educators whom I regard as senior educators. I use them most of the time I delegate; as I told you, there are no HODs and DP. I use these educators when I cascade information, maybe from the circuit to other educators and learners. (Mtshali)*

From the evidence, we can see that the principals who participated in the study tend to delegate their main curriculum development roles to heads of department. These roles include curriculum planning and resourcing, organising and implementing curriculum development programmes, as well as providing support to newly-employed and existing educators. The data obtained from the

observation phases and document analysis reveals that the principals seem to delegate their crucial roles, associated with supervision and monitoring, to middle managers.

However, Mtshali and Langa do not have School Management Teams; they utilised the services of acting heads of department and senior educators in the implementation of curriculum development programmes within their schools.

#### **4.3.7 Principals have a closed system of cascading information on curriculum-related issues**

Communication is important to all phases of curriculum development leadership and management. New, as well as existing staff members need to be oriented on the new curriculum in terms of philosophy, rationale, the nature of the content involved, as well as the utilisation of new material. Such curriculum information needs to be cascaded to all levels of educators and stakeholders within the school (Virgilio & Virgilio, 2001).

The principals' responses were related to forms of communicating and cascading curriculum-related information to teachers. In response to question of what different channels exist for communicating curriculum-related information in their schools, the principals asserted that:-

*There are some times when there is something required very quickly. Verbally, I have to call the SMT. There is formal communication which is done in a communication book for all teachers, communicating those important issues in the form of a meeting. (Shabane)*

*There is verbal communication, (as well as) briefings, and we have written forms of communication and staff meetings. (Mshazi)*

*In writing, with parents and (the) SGB. It is verbal, and (there is a) 'communication book' with teachers. (Langa)*

*I use educators whom I regard as senior educators to cascade information, maybe from workshops and (the) circuit, to other educators and learners. (Mtshali)*

The responses above illustrate that the participating principals primarily cascade and communicate curriculum development issues throughout meetings, briefings, verbal communication, as well as through the dissemination of communication books. Furthermore, the evidence from observation and document analysis indicates that they also cascade curriculum development information via heads of department and senior teachers. The process of cascading and communicating information seems subject to individual interpretation, which could possibly result in confusion amongst educators. It is also subject to different interpretation from school to school.

#### **4.3.8 Principals provide technical support rather than qualitative curriculum support**

The principals' responses made mention of curriculum support that they offered to teachers. In response to the question of whether their educators come to them for assistance and support on curriculum development issues, the principals responded by stating:-

*Yes, they come – to such an extent that if we do not have expertise within the school... that is why we go out to look for someone who can address those issues. (Shabane)*

*Yes, they come for assistance such as resources, time to meet, personal problems and (to address issues relating to) timetabling. For curriculum matters, I refer them to the HODs. (Mshazi)*

*No, but only one educator who is unqualified and who works with me, used to come to me to discuss the policy documents. Others go to the acting HODs for curriculum-related support. (Langa)*

*Most of the time, they use me as a resource person. Mostly in issues of assessment and moderation, the cluster uses me, too. (Mtshali)*

On the one hand, from the participating principals' responses, it is evident that they do furnish their educators with technical support. On the other hand, the idea of 'qualitative curriculum support' seems to be minimal among these principals. However, Mtshali attempted to provide qualitative support with regard to curriculum development issues, such as advice over assessment and moderation. The evidence from observation and document analysis reflects that there are no Curriculum Management Guides (CMG) in these schools, which could have served to ensure more effective support given to teachers concerning curriculum matters. Moreover, the school management teams of these schools provide inadequate support to teachers on curriculum development issues. This is as a result of the fact that they are not sure of how to provide curriculum support and how to address the concerns of some of the teachers. Although principals and heads departments do make efforts through inviting and drawing upon the expertise of external figures, *i.e.* subject advisors, it is clear that they received little training on curriculum development and support.

#### **4.3.9 Principals struggle to understand and apply ideas presented at principals' workshops**

The principals' responses were associated with the meetings and workshops on curriculum development leadership that they had attended. They also cast light upon whether such workshops, training sessions and meetings equipped them with curriculum development knowledge and skills. In response to questions of whether they underwent any training or workshops on new curriculum developments, and whether these had equipped them for their role as curriculum developers, the participants stated the following:-

*Yes! Yes! ...because the workshops, particularly for principals, tend to dwell on (the subject of) 'how can a principal manage the whole curriculum?' Their perception is that we don't teach; their perception is that they need to give us skills as to how to manage the new curriculum...but I don't have time to give feedback to teachers, and these workshops on managing curriculum are difficult to understand because even the facilitators from the curriculum support services do not understand it. (Shabane)*

*Yes I did, because even in (the) Media in Education Trust we were trained, even (on) how to develop material you have in hand. These workshops are meant for principals, so there is no need for feedback. It is also not easy to understand because facilitators tell us different and conflicting things. (Mshazi)*

*Yes, the department organised workshops for teachers and organised workshops for us as principals. No feedback for teachers. I don't do that, because I am always busy. (Langa)*

*Yes, I think three workshops. We dealt with assessment, recording, planning, learning programmes, work schedules and lesson planning. We also dealt with NCS management. Yes, I do (provide) feedback to teachers. (Mtshali)*

The evidence above indicates that principals attended workshops and training sessions on new curriculum developments, but struggle to acquire knowledge and skills; this is evident in their struggle to apply new ideas pertaining to curriculum developments that are presented at such workshops and training sessions. Nevertheless, Mtshali disclosed that he usually conducts meetings with his teachers for feedback purposes. It is patent though, that three principals do not assist their teachers and school management teams with curriculum development skills and knowledge presented at the workshops and training sessions they attend.

On the question of whether the workshops and educational training on new curriculum management equipped the participating principals, they responded by stating:

*Yes, because they look at current issues and (especially at) those issues because, I remember (from) the one that we attended recently, they looked at how (Education White) Paper 6 (could) be incorporated in the school; how we can notice if teachers are out of order; how we can see if teachers are not addressing relevant issues in the curriculum; whether the timetable addresses the correct hours of teaching to avoid over-teaching and under-teaching. (Shabane)*

*Yes, but not fully; we needed (the workshop and training sessions) sometimes really when (we were) tackling it. You see sometimes that 'okay, I am here'... We need more training. (Mshazi)*

*Yes, I learnt how to do planning and (how to) organise time for teachers to meet. (Langa)*

*Yes, like if you can look at the...now we have changed the way we design our lesson plans. We are following the way, I think, the Foundation for Learning requires us to do, like how to group learning activities such as class work and homework, based on lesson plans. I gained a lot. (Mtshali)*

The principals' responses reflect that all attended educational workshops and training sessions, and claimed that they were subsequently equipped with knowledge and skills on curriculum development leadership, as well as management. However, from the interviews it became clear that Shabane and Mshazi attended these training sessions and workshops four years ago. The evidence that emerged from observation and document analysis indicated that Langa never attended any curriculum development workshop. Further, it was also revealed that Mtshali attended workshops organised by subject advisors and district staff. These subject advisors have never taught the curriculum and, arguably, received a lesser degree of training on curriculum development than the principals and teachers themselves. Suffice to say, the principals also resorted to developing tools, as well as the interpretation of policies and guidelines, which could have contributed to confusion and a proliferation of documents and paper work. It is patent that they acquired different and inadequate theories of curriculum development from these workshops. Therefore, the implementation of these curriculum development leadership theories would differ from school to school. It may well be said then, that the principals who participated in this research project did not acquire any skills and knowledge of curriculum development leadership that were consistently applied to schools.

On the question of how often the principals attend learning area meetings where curriculum-related issues are discussed, the responses were as follows:-

*Not that often, because sometimes, those meetings are called by the district and (they often tend to) coincide with principals' meetings, and (so) I fail to attend that meeting. For example, there is this cluster thing going on. I did not even go to one cluster meeting because I don't have time for that. (Shabane)*

*Whenever there is a workshop concerning my learning area, Social Sciences, I do attend those meetings. As a principal, I do go there because I teach Social Sciences at school. (Mshazi)*

*No, I did not attend even a single meeting because most of them were conducted after the second term. Even during the first term, one of the educators who attended the workshops assisted me by providing information on issues related to (certain) tasks. In short, I didn't attend any workshops. (Langa)*

*At school level, Yes I am (the) Inqaba cluster co-ordinator for EMS. So, I attend mostly my learning area meetings. I also attend those organised by the department. (Mtshali)*

The evidence above reveals that principals do not attend learning area meetings where matters pertaining to the curriculum, new developments and new methods of teaching, are discussed. It would seem that they strictly attend workshops on curriculum management for principals. From the discussion above, we find that the principals struggled to organise meetings or conduct school-based workshops where curriculum development ideas would be presented to teachers in their schools. It becomes clear that they tend not to assist their teachers with curriculum development skills and knowledge presented at such workshops. The data bears evidence that the principals who participated in this study lack necessary skills and knowledge to lead curriculum development in their schools. This, coupled with their failure to attend workshops whereby they would be better equipped to deal with curriculum development skills and knowledge, would severely impact upon the fulfilment of their curriculum development leadership role within their respective schools.

On the question of whether the principals are familiar and acquainted with the latest thinking on new curriculum developments, through the availability of curriculum policy documents in their schools, the responses show the following:-

*Yes, all teachers have a bundle of (information on) all learning areas, to accommodate integration...but I don't read them due to various commitments. (Shabane)*

*Yes, I am familiar but I don't usually read them and all teachers have their copies...but as I have said from the beginning, all levels of educators need to be trained on curriculum policy documents – even myself. I don't understand them at all because I don't read them. (Mshazi)*

*Yes, we work with other primary schools which are well-equipped in terms of resources. So, we made document copies for teachers but I don't read them. (Langa)*

*Yes I am familiar with the policy documents, teachers' guide, assessment guidelines and overview. We always use them. They assist us a lot in curriculum development. My teachers do have such copies. Due to administrative commitments, I can't read them. (Mtshali)*

The principals' responses indicate that all are familiar and acquainted with all curriculum policy documents, and that their teachers do have copies of curriculum policies. However, all the principals regard availability of some curriculum policy documents as being much the same as familiarity and acquaintance, whereas, this view does not necessarily point to an in-depth understanding or proper application of policy documents during the actual teaching and learning process that takes place in classrooms. From the discussion above, we find that the principals tend not to read the curriculum policy documents, which results in inadequate understanding and a lack of effective leadership with respect to curriculum development programmes within their schools.



#### **4.3.10 Principals' prior training does not support their role as curriculum development leaders**

The principals' responses touched upon the educational institutions where they trained as teachers, and whether their training equipped them with skills and knowledge on leading curriculum development in their schools. In response to the questions of where they trained to become teachers, and whether such training equipped them to become curriculum development leaders in their schools, they averred that:-

*I trained at Eskhawini College of Education. No, it did not equip me. You see, we learnt only methods of teaching. (Shabane)*

*I was trained at Endaleni Teachers College. No, nothing (that) I learnt (was) on curriculum development leadership. We concentrated only on 'drilling methods'. (Mshazi)*

*I was trained at Indumiso College of Education. There's nothing much I learnt at the college, except teaching. (Langa)*

*I was trained at SACTE. No, we were dealing with classroom management and teaching methods. (Mtshali)*

From the evidence above, we can see that the principals did not acquire any skills and knowledge on leading curriculum development in their schools, from the educational institutions at which they trained. It is also clear from the principals' claims that the educational institutions which they mentioned do not provide courses on curriculum development leadership. Instead, it seems that these institutions tend to highly concentrate on how to teach and assess pupils. It also becomes clear that the participating principals are sorely lacking in curriculum development leadership because the educational institutions at which they were educated spent a limited amount of time focusing on curriculum development leadership. It is probable that this is due to

a lack of understanding on the part of these institutions concerning curriculum development leadership.

#### **4.4 Discussion of findings**

Collectively, the evidence above reveals that principals do not possess a fair understanding of their role as being that of curriculum development leaders in their schools. This is indicative in their limited involvement as regards curriculum planning and budgeting within their schools. Additionally, the principals' limited involvement in the organisation and staffing of curriculum development programmes in their schools, further shows that they do not fully understand their curriculum development leadership roles. A lack of understanding of their curriculum development leadership role is also evident in their failure to apply curriculum development skills and knowledge that they gained in workshops. From the discussion above, we find that principals tend not to read curriculum policy documents. This is another indication of a lack of understanding of the curriculum development leadership role, among the principals who participated in this research project.

It becomes clear that the sample of principals who took part in this study are inadequately involved in leading curriculum development within their schools. Their limited involvement in supervising and monitoring curriculum development activities, lack of support offered to newly-appointed and existing educators, and inconsistent delegation of curriculum development activities, all illustrate an insufficient degree of involvement in curriculum development leadership. Inappropriate methods of cascading curriculum development information to their staff, and the provision of technical rather than qualitative curriculum support, may contribute in part to an inadequate level of involvement in curriculum development leadership on the part of these principals within their schools.

The evidence indicates that three participating schools have a learner enrolment of less than 500, with the exception of Mrs Mshazi's school, which has an enrolment of 706 learners. All schools involved fall into the no-fee bracket and are categorised as quintile 2. The Department of Education allocates funds and school-based management posts depending on the learner

enrolment in each school. It would stand to reason then, that the lesser the learner enrolment, the lesser the funds and management posts allocated to the school. It appears that these schools' allocations are far lesser than their curriculum development needs dictate. Consequently, the principals fail to provide adequate curriculum development leadership in their schools, since, for example, some of the schools do not have official School Management Teams (SMT). This situation bedevils curriculum development leadership in these schools.

From the discussion above, we find that principals who had been teaching for more than seventeen years were exposed to a top-down model of curriculum development leadership. This means that the curriculum was designed and developed at a national level and principals were recipients of a curriculum developed by others. At the national level, curriculum development includes specifications as to what should be taught and tested, development standards, goals and objectives, as well as textbooks to be used at schools. The role of the principals was to implement a curriculum developed at national level, yet the principals who had been teaching for over seventeen years are currently being exposed to new, participatory models of curriculum development leadership. This model emphasises that principals should lead, rather than instruct, curriculum development activities in their schools. From the evidence, it is manifest that principals who had been teaching for more than seventeen years fail to adopt new, participatory models of curriculum leadership.

It is apparent that the participating principals are highly dependent on subject advisors to provide solutions to their curriculum-related problems. They are also dependent on these personnel to act as intermediaries between curriculum policy and classroom implementation. Ironically though, these advisors seem to have received less training than the principals themselves, and have not garnered experience in teaching the curriculum. From the discussion above we could infer that the way in which curriculum development leadership tends to happen in the primary schools that were involved in this study, could be a microcosm of a wider lack of curriculum development leadership occurring in public schools within KwaZulu-Natal.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on an analysis of data collected through interviews, observations and document analysis. Data analysis of the interviews and observation phases focussed on principals' biographies and the contextual backgrounds of the schools that participated. An analysis of data gained from four participating principals has been categorised according to management and leadership themes. The findings were also discussed in this chapter. These findings reveal that the primary school principals who participated in this study lack an in-depth understanding of their role in curriculum development leadership in their schools. Finally, the present situation may well be the result of the Department of Education's failure to provide direction with respect to leadership policy and monitoring. The recommendations formed from the findings, as well as the need for further research on curriculum development leadership will be focal point of Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SYNTHESIS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter data collected through the use of various methods was presented and analysed. The principals' responses were thematically categorised and guided by the critical questions of the research. Chapter 5 will present the key findings and related issues that have emanated from this research. To draw the study to a close, recommendations are made that could serve to empower principals, Department of Education officials, as well as other stakeholders in education, to face the challenging role of being curriculum development leaders within their schools. Finally, a reflection on the limitations of the study will be described and areas which require further research will be presented.

#### **5.2 Synthesis of the study**

Over the past few decades it has become widely evident that curriculum leadership has undergone radical change. Traditionally, the main role of the principal was to ensure that teaching and learning takes place within the school, in conducive environments. The South African government designed different school curricula for different racial groups. It gave instructions regarding what was to be taught in each subject and each standard, as well as kept strict control over learning and teaching. The principal's role was restricted to allocation of curriculum duties and responsibilities to teachers at the beginning of the year, as well as the recording of learners' results at the end of the year. This meant that the principal's role was to implement the curriculum as developed and designed by others at the national level. Hence, principals were exposed to a top-down curriculum development leadership style and management system.

Internationally, however, the curriculum development leadership role of principals was characterised by dynamic tendencies, particularly in countries like Australia, England and Wales. The curriculum development policies in these countries advocated for the decentralisation of curriculum development leadership and management, which resulted in a site-based approach to the same. This practice moved the emphasis from principals as curriculum implementers and transmitters to a refocused emphasis on principals as curriculum development leaders. In the South African context, curriculum policies tend to require principals who are able to work in democratic and participative ways, to ensure effective and participatory curriculum development leadership within their schools.

The literature review revealed that the new curriculum policies and legislations expected principals, as instructional leaders, to set clear curriculum development expectations, as well as implement high standards with the aim of improving teaching and learning in their schools (Steyn, 2002). Furthermore, the literature reviewed stated that principals, as transformational leaders, are also agents of curriculum development change. They stimulate teachers to be creative and innovative, challenging their own curriculum beliefs as well as those of other principals. This intellectual stimulation promotes the prospect of teachers' thinking on their own and engaging in careful curriculum problem-solving. Here, curriculum development leaders are tasked with aiming to provide a supportive climate, whereby they can listen carefully to the individual needs of teachers (Kok, 2004).

The literature reviewed elicited that curriculum reform initiatives rest on the assumption that the participation of educators, learners and parents can collectively enhance the achievement of the desired level of curriculum development and transformation at school level (Steyn, 2002). Participative curriculum development leadership assumes that the curriculum-decision making processes of a group of education stakeholders ought to be the central focus of the group (Jatzi, Leithwood & Steinbach, 1999). Collegiality is one normatively preferred type of participative curriculum development leadership. The primary school principal, as curriculum development leader, is expected to adopt strategies which acknowledge that curriculum development issues may arise from different parts of the school (Bush, 1995). Thus, curriculum development issues can be resolved through a complex interactive process. Here, the principal is a facilitator of

participative / facilitative curriculum development processes. It can be conceptualised as distributed curriculum development leadership (Neuman & Simmons, 2000), and also as site-based curriculum development leadership (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008).

Finally, the literature reviewed revealed that contemporary curriculum development is characterised as a high level of freedom bestowed upon schools to initiate innovation within the limits of a nationally prescribed and broad curriculum framework (Lewy, 1999). From the national curriculum framework each school selects, adapts and develops courses and modules; from these, it derives programmes that are appropriate to school needs and which are usually dependent on the availability of curriculum resources (Lewy, 1991). The principal, as curriculum leader, is at the forefront of designing these plans (Mc Neil, 1996). By locating my study within the interpretative paradigm and adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher aimed at capturing the life experiences of participants in order to understand, describe and interpret their feelings and experiences. Particularly, the study investigated primary schools principals' understanding of their curriculum development leadership role within their schools. It also aimed at generating data to provide answers to research to the key questions. In addition, it also required to collect data that would sought to produce descriptive analysis that emphasised deep, interpretative understanding of social phenomena under study (Henning, 2004).

Methodologically the study took the form of a case study conducted with four primary school principals in the Lower Umfolozi Circuit of KwaZulu-Natal. The data presented in this study was gathered using a variety of techniques, *viz.* interviews, observation sessions, document analysis and a personal reflective journal. Interviews were utilised and designed to gain rich, descriptive data that would assist the researcher in understanding the primary school principals' role of curriculum development leadership in their schools. The main aim of observation sessions was to capture the behavioural patterns of principals when they conducted curriculum development meetings with their teachers. I also opted for observation in order to understand the participating principals' assumptions and beliefs with regard to their role as curriculum development leaders. The use of document analysis was intended to obtain an in-depth understanding and thick descriptions of how primary school principals conduct curriculum development meetings with their teachers and also, to validate the claims of participants.

In analysing the data, I used a thematic code with the aim of capturing the qualitative richness of the principals' utterances (Henning, 2004). This simply means that after transcription of the tape-recorded interviews, I placed the data into logical and meaningful themes, and interpreted the given data in relation to the research questions about the principals under study. A vignette of four cases was presented and narrated. The primary school principals' biographical backgrounds and school contexts were also discussed, due to their influence on the curriculum development leadership role of principals. They also assisted me to gain an understanding of the primary school principals' backgrounds within which the data for critical questions were to be gathered.

It became clear that principals' biographical contexts influenced the way they lead curriculum development in their schools. These contexts include: the way they were trained to be teachers; their qualifications; age, as well as exposure to different leadership and management theories and models. The school structural context can promote or hinder the adoption of participative curriculum development leadership and management. Moral and ethical issues that were considered were: permission to gain access to primary schools and their principals from ward and circuit managers in order to conduct my research; informed consent and the right to withdrawal, and privacy. Assurance of participants' confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed.

### **5.3 Research findings**

#### **5.3.1 The principals' perceived 'curriculum management' oriented roles reshaped as 'curriculum leadership' roles**

The research findings reveal that, while principals perceived their role to be curriculum development leadership oriented, their perceptions / thinking are actually more curriculum development management oriented. The reason for this outlook is that principals mostly attend to the basic needs of their schools. Thus, they tend to pay more attention to fulfilling their vast array of curriculum development management duties to the extent that they seem to construe them as curriculum development leadership duties. The principals in the study experienced difficulty in separating their curriculum development management role from their curriculum



development leadership role. Principals can, hence, manage curriculum development without necessarily leading it. A principal can monitor and control curriculum development activities, as well as allocate curriculum resources without actually fulfilling symbolic and normative functions of curriculum development leadership (Kok, 2004). However, a principal in a curriculum development management position cannot function as an effective curriculum manager if he / she is an incompetent curriculum leader (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). For principals to be effective curriculum developers, they need to fulfil both curriculum development leadership and management functions (Pillay, 2003). In essence, a curriculum development leader requires a combination of both leadership and managerial skills in order to be an effective curriculum developer.

### **5.3.2 Principals have limited involvement in curriculum planning**

The ability to identify, collect and use data, as well as evidence to inform planning, is required by curriculum development leaders for effective curriculum development within the school (Department of Education, 2009). However, the findings indicate that the principals, who are curriculum developers, are not adequately involved in curriculum planning activities within their schools. Often, it is the case that they primarily involve themselves in these programmes by providing space and time for teachers to meet for curriculum planning. The study reveals that the principals hold the view that it is the responsibility of the heads of departments / acting head of departments and senior teachers to involve teachers in curriculum planning activities. As curriculum development leaders in their schools, they do not seem to see curriculum planning as a priority in an organisation (Kok, 2004).

### **5.3.3 Principals play a limited role with respect to curriculum supervision and monitoring in their schools**

The findings uncover that principals provide inadequate supervision and monitoring of their teachers. This means that they do not provide adequate guidance and support to teachers to develop the curriculum as effectively as possible. The findings also reveal that they play a limited role with respect to monitoring teachers' and learners work respectively. However,

supervision involves ensuring that teachers receive guidance and support to enable them to develop the curriculum effectively, in order that they may articulate a coherent curriculum development philosophy, while at the same time, having a good understanding of the practical and theoretical issues that underpin the concepts of curriculum development, *i.e.* teaching, learning and assessment (Steyn, 2002). Further, monitoring involves observing and evaluating the performances and progress of both teachers as well as learners, through various forms of assessment and evaluation. These forms include tests, case studies, investigation and examinations for learners, as well as Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and Continuing Professional Teachers Development (CPTD).

#### **5.3.4 Principals have limited involvement with regard to organising and staffing (resourcing) of curriculum development programmes in their schools**

Organising and staffing (human resourcing of curriculum development programmes within the school) is one of the core duties and functions of a curriculum development leader (Kok, 2004). These core roles involve putting planned curriculum activities and systems into place. They also encapsulate principals' delegation of responsibilities for ensuring that curriculum plans, policies and procedures are adhered to (Clarke, 2007). Conversely, the principals in the study do not resource (provide staffing for) curriculum development activities in their schools. These core functions are instead discharged by heads of departments or senior teachers within the school. The study also reveals that principals evidently do not organise school-based curriculum development workshops. If such meetings and workshops are being organised by heads of departments, they do not attend them. Moreover, the heads of departments are also responsible for allocating duties to teachers, that is, human resourcing of curriculum activities.

#### **5.3.5 Principals provide limited support to newly employed and existing teachers**

Mentoring involves induction, assistance and support provided by principals to their newly employed as well as existing teachers on curriculum development issues. This notion is based on theories of managerial leadership (Bush & Glover, 2003) and participative leadership (Gultig & Butler, 1999), whereby principals empower their teachers concerning curriculum development

issues. In contrast, the findings reveal that principals do not provide adequate support to both newly employed and existing teachers.

#### **5.3.6 Principals have a closed system of cascading curriculum information to their teachers**

Communication is an important practice in all phases of curriculum development leadership and management. Novice as well as existing staff must be orientated towards new developments in the curriculum, in terms of philosophy, rationale, the nature of the content and utilisation of new material. This curriculum information needs to be cascaded to all levels of educators and stakeholders within the school (Virgilio & Virgilio, 2001). The principals in the study tend to cascade such information through meetings, briefings, verbally and communication books. These are forms of a closed communication system (Pillay, 2003). An open system of communication, on the other hand, involves in-service training and school-based workshops, in order to cascade curriculum-related issues to teachers (Virgilio & Virgilio, 2001).

#### **5.3.7 Principals provide technical support rather than qualitative curriculum support to teachers**

Qualitative support involves, among others, addressing teachers' curriculum concerns, as well as providing assistance with respect to curriculum-related challenges that may blur curriculum development processes within the school (Clarke, 2007). The findings reveal that the principals provide technical support, such as provision of resources, space and time to meet, whereas qualitative support on curriculum development issues such as learner assessment, remedial instructions and curriculum planning, is provided by either head of departments or subject advisors, who have little training on curriculum development support (Taylor, 2009).

#### **5.3.8 Principals struggle to understand and apply ideas on the new curriculum dispensation that are presented at principals' workshops**

The infiltration of curriculum policies and legislation within the South African education system demanded the reconfiguration of principals' curriculum development role. Henceforth, principals require skills and knowledge to effectively lead and manage the new curriculum (Bhagawat,

2006). In contrast, the findings indicate that the principals attended workshops concerning the new curriculum, though struggle to understand and apply ideas presented at these workshops. It may well be the case that little or no information with respect to developments in curriculum skills and knowledge may have been acquired by the principals. The findings also show that the principals do not attend their learning area workshops and meetings, and that they also do not provide themselves with sufficient time to read curriculum documents and curriculum-related articles.

#### **5.3.9 Principals' prior training does not support their role as curriculum development leaders**

Higher education institutions and teacher training colleges seem poised to dwell on teaching methods, instruction and learner evaluation, while ignoring curriculum development leadership (Ornstein, 2004). The findings indicate that, accordingly, the principals did not seem to acquire sufficient skills and knowledge with respect to leading curriculum development in their schools. It becomes clear that the educational institutions where the principals trained as teachers may not have provided courses that dealt with curriculum development leadership.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

The role of primary school principals in the context of educational change and curriculum reform demanded reconfiguration in order to understand its incremental demands. Principals are struggling to come to terms with their multifaceted roles; they are no longer bound and confined to the role of educational managers, but rather, need to extend themselves to become chief executive officers tasked with leading curriculum development in their schools (Bhagawat, 2006).

Primary school principals tend to manage and lead curriculum development in different ways. They access the human and material resources for effective curriculum development at school level, implement curriculum policies and develop curriculum improvement plans. However, if principals wish to effectively lead curriculum development in their schools, it is necessary for

them to shift their thinking from managers of curriculum development to leaders of curriculum development at the school level.

For decades, primary school principals have depended on their teaching experience and on their own theories that suit them, to assume their curriculum development leadership roles. While experience cannot be discounted and undermined, continued development programmes can only empower principals to become better curriculum development leaders. It would be a sensible to identify the difficulties and problems that are experienced by primary school principals, and thereafter, design and develop appropriate development strategies to combat and stop them.

Due to education reforms internationally, institutions for higher education in Australia and America have recently established centres for principals. For instance, as Barth (Bhagowat, 2006) mentions, the principal centre at Harvard, Victoria's Australian Principal Centre and the University of Melbourne (Caldwell, 2003), as well as the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England (Bhagowat, 2006). Since South Africa has implemented radical national curriculum reform, which resulted in the reconfiguration of primary school principals' roles, it would be most appropriate to establish support centres for principals within higher education institutions, such as universities, following a national pattern and model. Such centres could assist principals in coping with the reality of their curriculum development leadership role, and in addition, to explore new conceptions of curriculum development leadership.

At district and circuit levels, principals' forums should be established which may provide innovative and supportive assistance. These forums should discourage the primary school principal's tendency to work in isolation, and motivate them to mingle with other principals in order to share their successes and challenges, to establish meaningful networks, as well as foster partnerships. They must also be responsible for organising regular meetings, workshops and seminars for primary school principals, which discuss their curriculum development leadership roles.

In view of my experience as a primary school principal, I recommend that primary school principals should enrol in postgraduate studies on curriculum management and leadership in

order to gain exposure to new curriculum development leadership research. This would empower and equip primary school principals with new skills and knowledge in order to reflect on their practice more critically.

I also strongly recommend that primary school principals need to ensure that all non-policy documents, acts and legislative documents pertaining to effective curriculum development leadership and management at school-level, are available and accessible to teachers. These documents should preferably be read and interpreted in a uniform way. They can serve to assist and guide primary school principals and their teachers with regard to planning, teaching, supervision, assessment strategies and the provision of detailed monitoring plans, in order to monitor and support the new curriculum according to policy requirements (Clarke, 2007).

For effective curriculum development to transpire, principals should replace the old autocratic forms of leadership with new transformational, facilitative and participative forms of leadership. Transformational leaders can motivate, inspire and unite teachers on common curriculum development goals (Steyn, 2002). Facilitative and participative principals involve educators, learners and other stakeholders in curriculum initiatives, solving curriculum-related problems and improving learner performance (Black, 1998). This suggests a need for principals to involve teachers in teams, where they can participate as members offering their input with regard to leading curriculum-planning within their schools.

The school-based Specialist Educators stream consists of Teaching and Learning Specialists (TLS) and Senior Teaching and Learning Specialists (STLS). The number of these posts will be established relative to the number of existing heads of department and deputy principal posts in each school. This means that Langa's and Mtshali's schools will not benefit from these collective agreements since they do not qualify for both head of department and deputy principal posts. I strongly recommend that the Department of Education distribute these posts to all schools regardless of the existence of senior posts in the school.

Finally, the primary school principals who participated in this study are highly dependent on subject advisors and district staff concerning curriculum development in general, and in

particular, principals are heavily reliant on them to lead and manage curriculum development in their schools. In several provinces, including KwaZulu-Natal, it seems that there are many newly-appointed subject advisors who have received less training on the curriculum than principals and teachers themselves, and do not seem to have a fair degree of experience in developing and teaching it (Taylor, 2009). It is necessary for the Department of Education to design development strategies for subject advisors and clearly define their intermediary roles in assisting schools.

### **5.5 Limitations of the study**

This study has some limitations as a result of time and budget constraints. Due to time constraints, only four primary schools principals were selected. The study would be more worthwhile if more primary and secondary schools principals were involved. Furthermore, had the study involved more participants, a greater amount of ideas and data would have been generated, thus making the study more convincing. Essentially then, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to the wider population of school principals in the province of KwaZulu-Natal or South Africa.

Participating principals were always busy with their seemingly endless administrative functions and, at times, it was difficult to honour the set appointments. Further, the researcher was not funded and that required him to pay from his own pocket. Since the researcher is also a school principal in the same ward and circuit as the participants, at times the participants found it difficult to respond and became very cautious when giving information, sometimes seeming to give information that they thought would please the researcher.

### **5.6 Suggestions for further research**

This study has implications for further research areas. Participative and facilitative curriculum development leadership, as promulgated by the South African Schools Act (1996), demands the involvement of heads of departments and deputy principals in curriculum decision-making processes. The curriculum development leadership roles held by these middle-managers needs to

be examined further. Additionally, principals need to be agents of transformation in their schools. It is incumbent that they should lead the development of curriculum in order to transform their schools. This alludes to the transformational leadership role of principals. The extent of principals' transformational leadership role in curriculum development needs further investigation. Also, the curriculum development leadership roles of Teaching and Learning Specialists and Senior Teaching and Learning Specialists needs to be explored against the curriculum development leadership roles of heads of department and deputy principals at school-level.

### **5.7 Conclusion**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate primary school principals' understanding of their curriculum development leadership role and how they lead curriculum development within their schools. The key findings reveal that primary school principals have a limited understanding of their role as curriculum development leaders, and that they claim to be leading curriculum development whereas they are instead managing it. The overall findings indicate that this status of curriculum development leadership is perpetuated by primary school principals' inadequate understanding of their role as curriculum developers, ambiguity in the roles of subject advisors and district staff with respect to curriculum development leadership in schools, and also, by primary schools principals' misperceptions on leading curriculum development as opposed to the present reality of them managing it.



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# APPENDICES

# **APPENDIX A**

## Semi-structured interview schedule

(to last 60 minutes)

Interviewees: Primary school principals

- The purpose of this interview schedule is to gather information from primary school principals on how they perceive their roles as curriculum development leaders at their schools.

General questions:

- a. For how long have you been in this school and profession?
- b. In what ways has your own experience of schooling and teaching influenced how you lead (as a teacher, Head of Department or Deputy Principal)?
- c. What formal qualifications do you hold? Are any of your qualifications related to management and leadership?
- d. Do you feel that your training has equipped you as a leader in your school?
- e. Where did you train to become a leader?
- f. How many teachers, Heads of Department and Deputy Principals are there in your school, and how do you work with them?
- g. Are you studying further at the moment (or have you in the past)? For what qualifications?
- h. What are different channels through which curriculum-related information that exists at your school is communicated?

Curriculum development questions:

- i. What do you think are the main roles of a school principal in terms of curriculum development?
- j. Can you tell me a little more about curriculum development at your school?
- k. Who is responsible for organising workshops / meetings on issues that deal with issues of teaching, learning and assessment in your school?
- l. How often do you attend learning area or department meetings where curriculum-related issues are discussed?
- m. Do you hold curriculum planning budgeting and assessment meetings with your teachers? If yes how often?

- n. When do you conduct meetings whereby teachers' duties and responsibilities are re-allocated?
- o. Can you discuss some of the issues related to teaching, learning and assessment which you discuss at your school's induction and problem-solving workshops?
- p. Can you tell me, did you undergo any training or attend workshops pertaining to new curriculum developments?
- q. Do you feel that such educational training or workshops that you attended equipped you sufficiently for your role as 'curriculum developer'?
- r. Do your educators come to you for assistance and support on curriculum development issues?
- s. Can you tell me, are you familiar with various curriculum documents and policies for different subjects / learning areas?
- t. Lastly, some school principals consider their main roles simply as being administrators, while others feel that they have to teach and lead curriculum development within their school. What is your position on that?

I would like to thank you for your time and the information you have shared with me.

Thank you.

## **APPENDIX B**



## Observation schedules

### Observation schedule

Date: 27 July 2009

1<sup>st</sup> primary school

Time: 9h40

Starting time: 10h00

### Purpose

To observe the principal of the first primary school conducting a meeting on curriculum development.

### Target group

Principal, Senior Management Team (SMT) and teachers.

- The meeting was opened in prayer.
- Two teachers were not present.
- The meeting was held in the principal's office since the school does not have a conference or staff room.
- The principal outlined the topic of the day: 'The assessment process in both junior and intermediate phase has produced a high failure rate in both phases. The report by the HODs showed that the teachers do not follow the assessment procedures outlined in the assessment policy document'.
- The school does not have a school assessment policy in operation.
- One of the teachers stated that she is unclear about the assessment processes in the intermediate phase since she had just joined the school.
- The principal assigned the induction task to one of the HODs.
- Most teachers do not have a copy of the National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for schools in the GET band.
- The principal read some of the important items outlined in the policy document for assessment.
- In conclusion, the principal has to organise an expert on assessment to come to school to workshop teachers the same.
- The principal and some members of the SMT do not understand assessment processes as outlined in the National Policy on Assessment.
- The meeting was adjourned at 11h20.

### Observation schedule

Date: 07 August 2009

2<sup>nd</sup> primary school

Time: 08h10

Starting time: 08h15

Purpose:

To observe the principal of the second primary school conducting a curriculum development meeting with her teachers.

Target group:

Principal, SMT and teachers.

- The meeting was opened in prayer.
- The Deputy Principal was not present.
- The meeting was held in the staff room.
- The principal stated the agenda of the day: 'The responsibilities of the SMT and teachers in curriculum planning, development and management of / within the school. The principal has recently attended departmental workshops'.
- The level of performance of the educators and learners was included in the agenda.
- Heads of Department dominated the meeting by raising problems experienced in their phases.
- The Heads of Department are sources of information concerning curriculum-related issues; they came up with solutions.
- The Principal outlined the roles of the SMT, as she recently attended a workshop.
- She motivated her Heads of Department to do their work.
- No roles were outlined for Deputy Principals.
- Not enough curriculum resources were said to be available.
- Teachers were unclear in their understanding of the curriculum policy documents.
- The Principal encouraged teachers to read the necessary documents and other curriculum-related articles.
- Lastly, the staff agreed to design developmental programmes.
- The meeting closed at 11h35.

Observation schedule

3<sup>rd</sup> primary school

Date: 12 August 2009

Starting time: 09h00

Purpose:

To observe the principal of the third school conducting a curriculum development meeting with her teachers.

Target group:

Principal, SMT and teachers.

- The meeting was opened in prayer.
- The Principal wasn't part of the meeting because she was busy with administrative duties. She sent an apology.
- The Acting-Head of Department outlined the agenda of the meeting: 'Feedback for the cluster workshops to be incorporated into planning'.
- The Acting-HOD and one educator tended to dominate the meeting.
- The teachers seemed to be unclear in their understanding of the process to be followed in planning their lessons.
- The Acting-HOD tendered assistance in this respect.
- No curriculum resources, such as textbooks, were said to be available.
- It was evident that no records of meetings are kept, such as minute books.
- The Acting-HOD discussed the submission of educator files.
- No educator portfolios, as well as educator resource files were existent.
- Additionally, no curriculum support is reportedly tendered to the school by the personnel of the Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) organisation from the district.
- No materials for learners were consequently tendered.
- The meeting was adjourned at 10h20.

Observation schedule

4<sup>th</sup> primary school

Date: (to be added)

Starting time: 09h00

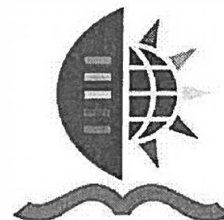
Purpose:

To observe the principal of the fourth primary school conducting a curriculum development meeting with his teachers.

- The meeting was opened in prayer.
- Two teachers were absent.
- The Principal outlined the agenda: 'The problems faced in recording learner performance'.
- No Heads of Department or Deputy Principal were present.
- The Principal delegated tasks to two senior educators functioning in the junior and intermediate phases respectively; he is personally responsible for the senior phase.
- The Principal is the main resource person on curriculum issues.
- No specific days for monitoring and supervision are apparently earmarked.
- The rate of absenteeism in school is very high.
- No assessment policy for the school presently exists.
- The Principal attended workshops and provided teachers with feedback.
- Teachers do not clearly understand the planning, assessment and recording procedures to be followed, since 50% of the teachers are unqualified.
- Not enough curriculum resources are reportedly available.
- There are policy documents available for teachers at the school.
- Teachers have their educator files but no educator portfolios, resource files, as well as learner support materials.
- Curriculum Support Services (CSS) reportedly does not tender any support to the school.
- When the CSS official is invited to the school, she has not honoured her appointments in the past, and if it had happened that she did, not enough support was tendered on her part since she reportedly does not seem to understand curriculum development issues.
- The principal keeps records such as log books, as well as minute books.
- The meeting was adjourned at 10h30.

# **APPENDIX C**

Ethical Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL : [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

28 NOVEMBER 2008

MR. JE MASINA (20200085)  
EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Masina

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0761/08M**

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

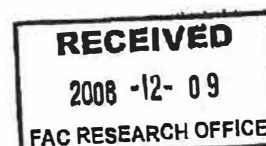
*"Exploring curriculum development leadership: A case study of four primary school Principals in Lower Mfolozi"*

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

Yours faithfully

MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Dr. SM Maistry)  
cc. Mr. D Buchler



## **APPENDIX D**

**Letter of informed consent to the Circuit Manager**

P.O. Box 861  
Empangeni  
3880

14 March 2009

*For att:* The Circuit Manager  
Lower Umfolozi circuit  
Private Bag X 14  
Empangeni Rail  
3910

Dear Sir / Madam

**Re: Request for permission to conduct research within four selected primary schools in the lower Umfolozi circuit**

I am presently studying towards a Masters in Education degree, in the School of Education Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. One of the components of the degree entails the completion of a short dissertation. I will be conducting observations of curriculum development meetings in four participating primary schools, interviews with principals and document analysis. My study is entitled, "Exploring curriculum development leadership: a case study of four primary school principals in the lower Umfolozi circuit".

I hereby request permission to conduct a research project in four selected primary schools within your circuit, and to introduce myself to the principals of those schools. This study will begin in May, when they are most likely to have settled into a new year. Congruently, I would like to indicate that any disruptions to principals' time will be minimised. The findings from this study will be used in the writing up of my dissertation.

Thank you in advance for your kind co-operation as regards my request.

Yours sincerely,

John Elphas Masina (Mr)



# **APPENDIX E**

**Letter of informed consent to participants**

P.O. Box 861  
Empangeni  
3880

14 March 2009

Dear Participant

**Re: Request for your participation in research project**

I am presently studying towards a Masters in Education degree, in the School of Education Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. One of the components of the degree entails the completion of a short dissertation. I will be conducting observation of curriculum development leadership meetings, interviews with principals and document analysis. The documents that will be analysed are school management terms 'minute books' and any other relevant documents. My study is entitled, "Exploring curriculum development leadership: a case study of four primary school principals in the lower Umfolozi Circuit".

The findings from this study will be used in the writing up of my dissertation. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. However, your full commitment, participation and answers would be highly appreciated. Your confidentiality will be guaranteed, and pseudonyms will be used in order to protect your identity.

Please complete, detach and return the slip of acknowledgement of consent to participate in this research project, which appears on the following page.

Thank you for your support and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

John Elphas Masina (Mr)

(Cell: 073 217 0140)

(E-mail: info@sinas.co.za)

**Acknowledgement of consent to participate in research:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this documents and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

