

**ENACTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS WORKING IN
THE ZONE OF THE CLASSROOM**

BY

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DATE SUBMITTED: 21 December 2023

DECLARATION


I, SIPHOKAZI MKHIZE, declare that

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This Dissertation is submitted with my approval.

Signature



Professor I Naicker

22 December 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandmother, Ida Nosinala Ntlebi, my late Mom, Nomlisi Agnes Vellem, my husband, Dr J.J.T Mkhize, my late mom-in-law, Adelaide Mamfene Mkhize, my children Linda, Sandile, Portia, Siphelo, my sisters, Lindeka, Nomakhaya, Vuyokazi, my brother Mzamo Vellem and my late sister, Bulelwa Vellem. Without their solid teachings on the importance of education as the ultimate key to the future and their unwavering support for me, calling them in unbecoming hours when technology escapes me, I would not have finished this degree. For their words of encouragement, when health issues caused by Covid 19 came in the way of my doing this task at most difficult times and when I wanted to give up, they kept pestering me to soldier on. Thank you, my family. I felt the love.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the teacher leadership practices by post level one teachers in the zone of the classroom. Grant (2010) stipulates four zones in which teacher leadership is enacted. The first zone is that of enactment of teacher leadership practices in the zone of the classroom which aligns with this study. The aims of the study were to explore leadership practices of level one teachers in their interactions in the zone of the classroom. The case study school, Freedom High, has been referred to as a T60 school because of its underperformance, despite being newly built and fully resourced by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DOE). According to the Department of Education, the National Senior Certificate is a yardstick that measures a school's performance. I used qualitative approach and case study methodology to understand how the five participants understood their leadership practices. I generated the data using the focus group interview and observation methods. This was done by capturing the responses that emerged from the participants to clarify their understanding of their leadership practices and how they enacted these practices in the classroom. The study draws on distributed leadership and teacher leadership as its theoretical framework. What stemmed from the study was that teachers understood teacher leadership practices but they were experiencing challenges in exploring practices fully. Another finding was that principals do not give teachers the freedom to lead in their classrooms for fear of being overshadowed as instructional leaders. It also emerged that principals do not promote nor encourage teacher leadership from post level one educators and they regard this practice as an option rather than mandatory.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

C2005	Curriculum 2005
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DOE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DL	Distributed Leadership
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
EFAL	English First Additional Language
FET	Further Education and Training
KZNDOE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Committee
NEP	National Education Policy
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PILO	Programme to Improve Learners' Outcomes
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SMT	School Management Team

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Post 1994 symbolized the end of 40 years of apartheid and a new democracy was ushered in to build a just and an equal society in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996). One major aspect that defined apartheid was the education system that defined citizens along racial lines with deep inequalities in schooling (Christie, 1999). The education system in South Africa has undergone many changes since the democratic dispensation, with a new curriculum put in place and a new *South African Schools Act, 84 of (1996)* enacted to address and dismantle the imbalances of the past (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Then the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, Department of education (DoE, 2008) was introduced to provide new policies that embrace all races and are non-discriminatory. The framework was meant to address the needs of a democratic South Africa and to undertake the demanding tasks of teachers to enhance their professional competence and performance (DoE, 2008). The *Norms and Standards for Educators (2000)* stipulates in its framework that teachers are the main curriculum instructors and they should contribute to good quality education in the classroom (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

In view of the past discriminatory education policies, this study aimed to focus on teacher leadership practices in the zone of the classroom by post level one teachers. This study was conducted at Freedom High School (a pseudonym has been used). which is situated in an informal settlement on the outskirts of Pongola near the Mozambican border in KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa. The school is resourced with state-of-the-art computer, science, and information technology laboratories. Despite being in a poverty-stricken environment, the Department of Education (DoE) has ensured that the children of this community, who go to this school, have a chance to change their situation through education. Despite all the resources, the school's performance in the final National Senior Certificate Examinations (NSC) has consistently been below 40% in the past six years.

This chapter starts with the background to the study, followed by the research problem and then the rationale and motivation of the study are discussed. Furthermore, the significance of the study will be discussed and then the aims and objectives of the study will be laid out. The study will then list the critical questions that underpin this study, as well as the key concepts that inform this study. In conclusion, the five chapters that constitute this study will be outlined.

1.2 Background of the study

There have been curriculum reform efforts over a period of 24 years to transform the curriculum bequeathed to the democratic society by the apartheid regime (Jansen, 1998). From the beginning, the curriculum has been built on the values that are inspired by the *Constitution Act 108 of (1996)* (Republic of South Africa, 1996) to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values (Jansen, 1998). The presentation of this background provides the curriculum changes that have been implemented over the years since 1994 to try and transform the system of education in a democratic society. The effects of these curriculum changes on teachers are then discussed, as the approach used is often hastily implemented with scanty teacher training and professional development to empower teachers to effectively deliver new shifts of curricular (Eadie, Villers, Gunawan & Haq, 2021).

1.2.1 Curriculum changes

Since the dawn of democracy, there have been several curriculum-related reforms that intended to democratise education and eliminate inequalities. Further, these reforms seek to standardise education in a non-racial and gender friendly form by National Curriculum Development Committee (NCDC, 1996). Carnoy and Samoff (1991) argue that the school curriculum holds an important symbolic value in transitioning societies to address political constraints of the past. Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (DoE, 1997) was introduced as a means of opening grounds to a more embracing curriculum that is non-discriminatory and non-racial. The Outcomes Based Education (OBE) became the most comprehensive approach that underpinned the new curriculum, which proved a dilemma in its implementation strategies (Jansen, 1997). It was criticised for not giving learners the opportunity to show what they learned and how to use their knowledge (Marzano, 1994; Jansen, 1997).

Then, in 1997, Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced hastily, however, it proved to be jargon-ridden and had complex learning programmes, but, above all, teachers were inadequately trained. A review committee was established to look into possibilities of refining Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was introduced (Christie, 1999).

NCS (DoE, 2004) became problematic, as it needed more educational resources and educators' training in curriculum implementation was inadequate, as it turned out to be a refined version of the Outcomes Based Education (Gultig, 2002). The National Curriculum Statement was, however, fraught with problems and had to be reviewed and restructured into Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2005). Harley and Wiedekind (2004)

argue that RNCS brought back the past inequalities, as it widened the gap between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools. Again, the deep desire to erase the traces of the apartheid regime had to contend with challenges, as these new curriculum policies were hastily introduced with minimum inclusion of the teachers' input (Sayed & Jansen, 2001).

South African educators experienced problems in understanding and implementing curriculum policies such as C2005, NCS, RNCS and these problems made it necessary for the Department of Education to introduce the national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DoE, 2010). The aims of CAPS, according to the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga's statement (DoE, 2010), was to improve teaching and learning and to address the concerns of transition between grades and phases' continuous assessment. Themane and Mamabolo (2011) argue that CAPS necessitated the need for new resources and also posed problems in increased workload for teachers.

In 2018, an approach to improve the implementation of the CAPS curriculum in the classroom was introduced by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and it was called Jika Mfundo (DoE, 2015). This is the campaign aimed to improve curriculum coverage in all the schools in KwaZulu-Natal Province (Pillay, 2020). Jika Mfundo sought to change the teachers' classroom practices and instructional approach. This intervention is somewhat prescriptive, and it confines the dynamics of diversified learners, as the pace of learning by learners varies, and, for this reason, the approach became a challenge (Grossman, 2021). In terms of this blueprint, there is a tracker that gives instructions on what to be covered and it informs the teacher on what needs to be improved and all the steps to be covered in delivering the lesson, according to the school survey undertaken by the Programme to Improve Learners Outcomes (PILO, 2015).

It focuses on increased curriculum coverage as a lever for improving learner outcomes but does not consider that learners' capacity ranges from slow to fast learners, so teachers need more time to emphasize the lesson again, despite Jika Mfundo setting time frames (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). Schiedewind (2011) argues that de-professionalising the teaching profession by making teaching a routinized job, rather than a field that requires comprehensive education, confines teachers into being inexpressive in curriculum implementation practices. Teachers should be creative and teach learners to be critical thinkers who are able to engage deeply with ideas and not only be teachers who need to follow a scripted curriculum that is geared towards finishing syllabus and passing standardized tests (Schiedewind, 2011).

The arrival of Jika Mfundo provided no room for teachers to be creative, given the demographics of learners. Jika Mfundo prevented teachers as classroom leaders using innovative teaching and assessment methods to get the curriculum across to the learners (Molapo & Pillay, 2018). Lai and Cheung (2015) argue that teachers have to attempt to identify leadership practices, as they engage in

effective change initiated by curriculum reforms and transformation for learner achievement.

1.2.2 The pressure to perform

The National Department of Education's focus on improving Grade 12 results has been the main priority (DoE, 1996). This is because the matriculation examination has remained as the number one performance indicator for learner achievement and the measurement of school performance (Manyaga, 1997). In this sense, Mtshali, Ngwenya and Myende (2020) indicate that DoE has been introducing initiatives to bolster the academic performance of Grade 12 learners. The matric pass rate is seen as an important benchmark to measure learners' performance and the standard of education throughout the country (Mtshali, et al., 2020). The department of education has continuously introduced intervention programmes to improve academic performance of learners. Bessong and Ogina (2022) emphasize that teacher development programmes have the potential to enhance teacher knowledge which plays an important role in improving learner academic performance. KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DoE, 2010) introduced Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) in 2010 to assist learners and teachers in underperforming schools by hosting winter and Saturday classes.

Gauteng Department of Education (GDE, 2010) introduced the Secondary School Intervention Programme (SSIP) in 2010, which aimed to improve the matric pass rate. Lenyai (2006) underscores the issue of interventions by stating that all efforts which are undertaken by the Department of Education are about improving learner performance. Subject advisors identify lead teachers with a good track record in producing matric results to undertake the extra classes and given a stipend. Darling-Hammond and Prince (2007) argue that there is pressure on educators to provide quality education and improve learner performance. Provinces try their best to put in resources to improve learner performance.

According to the Medium-Term Budgetary Policy Statement, every year, a higher proportion of the budget is assigned to education (Republic of South Africa, 2016). Governments and taxpayers are willing to provide all the funding to improve education in many first world countries and South Africa is no exception and, therefore, outcomes should live up to expectations (Picketty, 2014; Ginscow, 2013). In spite of the full support schools are getting from the Department of Education, some schools fail to achieve the desired performance.

Manyaga (1997) argues that Grade 12 symbolizes the end of basic schooling in learners and passing this Grade is regarded as an achievement and is also a gateway for access to tertiary education and job opportunities. Teachers are the ones mandated to teach for success, according to *Employment of Educators Act, 76 of (1998) (EEA)* (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It is in the classroom where a teacher is mandated to use every effort to ensure that learner performance is improved and that teachers need to practice leadership skills to cope with the daunting task of helping diverse learners with diverse

challenges (Ginscow, 2013).

Barth (1988) states that teachers harbour leadership skills and their leadership capabilities can improve the achievement of learners and improve the school. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that learner performance is maximized. Irrespective of great leadership skills from the school management team, the buck stops with the teacher. The *South African Schools Act, 84 of (1996)* (Republic of South Africa, 1996) requires schools to transform and teachers to become teacher leaders (Grant, 2006). Senge (2017) terms the schools that transform as learning organizations. Grant (2006) further speaks of four zones of teacher leadership, one of them is leading within the zone of the classroom.

The Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) stipulates that, teachers should assume seven roles in their duties and one of those roles is that of being a leader in the school, according to the *National Education Policy Act, 27 of (1996)* (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The duty is to make decisions that are appropriate to the level where teachers manage learning in the classroom in order to facilitate the process of teaching and learning effectively. The policy further stipulates that these duties will be performed in ways which are demonstrating in response to the changing classroom circumstances and needs as indicated in the *National Education Policy Act, 27 of (1996)* (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

1.3 Research problem

The pressure to continually improve the educators' instructional practices intensifies daily and the introduction of different types of curricula often leads to the de-professionalization of teachers (Schiedewind, 2014). The curriculum that keeps changing, since the dawn of democracy, means that some changes will pose challenges in the classroom. Jika Imfundo is a good example of a restrictive and a highly prescriptive teaching approach that leaves very little room for teacher creativity in the classroom and it monopolizes the instructional space and does not cater for different capabilities of learners (Pillay, 2018). Given the poor performance of some schools in the National Senior Certificate Examinations (NSC), some changes should be enacted for teachers to assume teacher leadership in the classroom to improve learner performance.

According to Grant (2006) and Singh (2000), teachers need to be leaders; those leadership roles should start within the classroom, where teachers assume more responsibilities, as mandated by the *Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998* (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Grant (2006) is of the view that teachers should keep in line with the new demands of the curriculum. Grant (2006) further states that teachers who are recognised in their leadership roles, effect changes in the school and within the classroom and go beyond the call of duty in implementing the teaching practices that seek to improve

learning. Heystek (2004) challenges the school management team to include activities that support teaching and learning and acknowledge the teachers' talents and skills by creating the environment of teacher leadership practices.

The focus of this study is to explore how teachers practice teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. Against this backdrop, the purpose is to explore how teacher leaders manoeuvre their practices as teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom in order to effect teaching and learning for the improvement of learner outcomes.

1.4 Rationale and motivation

The rationale of the study is defined as to how the researcher developed an interest in the topic and why the research is worth being done (Vithal & Jansen, 2006). Research indicates that one of the reasons for failure to deliver learner improvement that is sustainable in schools is caused by the lack of adopting concepts such as teacher leadership (Harris & Muijs, 2002). These scholars further argue on this point by stating that an effective classroom is the one where teaching and learning take place and the desired outcomes are achieved (Harris & Muijs, 2002).

1.4.1 Personal rationale

Parents of school-going children often observe the struggles their children face in academic performance, despite having access to resources, such as study guides, online access, and workbooks. These resources are intended to enhance learners' performance, yet there remains a gap in achieving desired academic outcomes.

1.4.2 Professional rationale

Being a post level one teacher who has taught for twenty-four years in high schools, the researcher developed an interest in this concept of the informal role of teacher leadership. As a professional with extensive teaching experience, various leadership roles have been undertaken, including serving as a curriculum transformation leader in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, acting as a subject head, and participating in numerous informal school committees. Currently, the role of a lead teacher of English is held in the Gqibithole district at Pongola, in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, under the guidance of subject advisor. Involvement in content workshops for English First Additional Language literature (EFAL) is a key responsibility, especially when new set-works are introduced.

These workshops aim to ensure standardisation and foster a unified understanding of poetry and novels among educators. However, a common challenge noted by teachers during these sessions is the

difficulty in translating the content effectively in the classroom environment, despite grasping it well in the workshop setting. Issues such as learner ill-discipline and lack of commitment are frequently cited as obstacles. Despite these challenges, there is a general openness among educators to embrace suggestions for improvement.

1.4.3 Theoretical rationale

Teachers often find themselves in formal and informal leadership efforts, including collaborative planning and instructional coaching in order to modify their own teaching practices in the classroom to better meet the needs of the students (Topolinski, 2014). In all the efforts that teachers make in the classroom, there is a strong desire to be leaders in their field to support student welfare and learning, which motivates them to better performance (Smulyan, 2016; Wenner, 2016). Huang (2016) takes the theory further by arguing that teacher leaders are highly motivated to support student learning in all forms to increase student achievement. Cosenza (2015) argues that teacher leadership means taking action and personal responsibility for the goals and outcomes of the learners within the classroom and the school at large.

Berry, Byrd and Weider (2013) call teacher leadership, the 'Fourth wave', with the first being formal leadership in union representative or department chair. The second wave becomes instructional and curriculum implementation. The third one is the professional learning committee, where teachers learn and grow and, lastly, is when the teacher stays in the classroom to develop policies, execute them in the best interest of the students and their learning for school improvement. Smulyan (2016) states that teacher leaders become eager for opportunities in order to deepen their understanding of teaching and learning and also to take on the responsibilities within the confines of the classroom.

This research, thus, had to be conducted to explore the teacher leadership practices that are implemented by teachers when they find themselves in the confines of a prescriptive way of implementing curriculum for the benefit of the learners in the zone of the classroom.

1.5 Significance of the study

Smulyan (2016) argues that teachers often seek for more teaching practices to improve their curriculum implementation strategies and increase learner achievement. Grant (2006) states that teacher leadership is not a popular concept in schools in the South African context and, therefore, this research will explore teacher leadership practices and create awareness on how teachers manoeuvre leadership practices to improve learning outcomes. More specifically, it is envisaged that this study will shed some light on

how distributed leaders can be leveraged by schools to move quickly and efficiently to enact teacher leadership.

Teachers in neighbouring schools will copy and replicate these practices of teacher leadership to advance their own learner performance.

1.6 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is:

1. To explore the leadership practices of post level one teachers in their interactions within the zone of the classroom.

1.7 Critical questions

The following are the research questions that guide this study:

1. What are the practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom?
2. Why do leaders in the case study school enact such practices in the zone of the classroom?
3. How can teacher leaders, as agents of change, sustain creativity in the zone of the classroom?

1.8 Key concepts

1.8.1. Leadership

Cuban (1988) defines leadership as the process that is influential, purposeful and that is intended to lead to specific outcomes, thereby bending certain actions and motivations of others to achieve the desired goals. Bush (2012) states that leadership implies taking initiatives and risks and that leadership should be intentional, purposeful, and influential to the values and purposes. Davis (2003) states that the term leadership implies movement, taking the organization in a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programmes, building organizational structure, and improving quality for change. Leadership in schools is primarily located at the top structure, with principal enjoying powers and authority to lead (Grant & Singh, 2009). Teachers in the zone of the classroom are not regarded as leaders and hence they don't have authority to take initiatives in the zone of the classroom that may impact teaching and learning (Grant & Singh, 2009).

1.8.1 Teacher leadership

Teacher leadership, as defined by Reeves (2009), is the informal engagement by a person in the act of influencing the classroom practices of professional teachers for the benefit of learner outcomes. Harris and Muijs (2005) define teacher leadership as an exercise by teachers, regardless of their designation or position to influence teaching and learning within and outside the classroom. Teacher leadership is a focused leadership that is aimed at an improvement in instruction and the quality of student learning, in that the teacher gives voluntary support to learners without occupying a formal position and with no expectation of financial reward (Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995).

1.8.2 Leadership practices

Leadership practice refers to the capacity that a leader should possess to lead organizations (Brewer, Flavell, Trede, & Smith, 2016). Mkhize and Bhengu, (2022) refers to this concept as the influence to achieve the goals of the organization. To achieve organizational goals, Brewer, et al. (2016) posit that a leader should be able to “change the behaviours, creating shared meanings, and integrating physical and technology-mediated interactions in smart working environments”. Reardon, Fite, Boonec & Sullivan (2019) also state that leadership practices are characterized by a leader who is critically reflective and continually assesses the progress of the organization or that of individuals towards achieving the goals and modify identified behaviours in an effort to meet unique organizational goals. This description concurs with Brewer, et al. (2016) as they indicated that leadership practices refer to leadership that “combines agile logics and change management practices to align interests at different levels of the organization”.

In the context of this study, operationalization of leadership practices is reflected in the zone of the classroom by teachers who continuously and critically adapt to change the environment for the achievement of educational goals in the classroom.

1.8.3 Leadership enactment

Defining leadership enactment, especially in the field of education, has received a variety of interpretations (Nguyen, Harris, and Ng, 2020). However, there is common understanding that teacher enactment happens within and outside of the school to effect school-wide instructional practice (Nguyen, et al., 2020). According to Bradley-Levine (2017) leadership enactment is the sum of the interaction between contextual factors and activities performed by the teacher leaders, which are teachers. Lund (2021) emphasizes the role of the context in which teacher leadership is enacted. According to Lund (2021) this context is essential and forms the basis for teacher leadership enactment.

It is also important to note that teacher leadership is connected to activities, not to a job title and these activities include assessment, planning and ensuring the connection between practice and pedagogical goals (Heikka, Kahila & Suhonen, 2020). These activities are the foundation of the profession for teacher leaders, and they assist them in decision making (Heikka Kahila, & Suhonen, (2020). According to Heikka, et al. (2020) teacher leaders are based on the pedagogical knowledge, guidelines set in law and in national curricula frameworks.

Teacher leadership enactment applies both within the school and beyond. Within the school, teacher leaders lead their colleagues towards a planned pedagogy and ensure the connection between practice and the agreed goals Kahila, Heikka &. Suhonen (2020). Furthermore, teacher leaders support team members to recognize the link between the broad goals of the whole school and pedagogical practices with individual groups and children (Halttunen, Waniganayake & Heikka, 2019). In their study, Nguyen, et al. (2020) found that teacher leadership enactment is mainly concerned with influence on teachers' professional development, school change and improvement and beyond. Beyond the school, teacher leadership enactment focuses on the needs of the child. In this regard, teacher leadership liase with parents and communities in the best interests of the child and to support children's learning and development outside the school (Kahila, et al., 2020).

In the context on the study "Enacting teacher leadership: a case study of teachers working in the zone of the classroom", teacher leadership enactment is described as the professional activities that teacher leaders execute within and beyond the zone of the classroom for the purpose of enhancing change in the school. Teachers work collaboratively with teacher leadership for the benefit of the school and the child, irrespective of the position they hold within the school.

1.8.4 Zone of the classroom

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) define the classroom as the learning space that is created for educational practices to take place and are constantly improved for the desired outcomes of learners. Hoyle (1988) speaks of a classroom as a designated setup where learner interest in learning is promoted and the desired outcomes are attained. Smylie, Bay and Tozer (1999) argue that the classroom is an environment where teachers create and sustain the conditions of productive learner development and better performance.

1.9 Organization of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of five chapters, which are divided as follows:

Chapter One

The chapter serves as an introduction to the study, and it highlights mostly the reasons why this study had to take place. It starts with the background of the study that gives clarity to the main purpose of the study. Furthermore, it states the research problem followed by the rationale and motivation of the study, then follows the significance of the study, culminating into aim of this study. Critical questions are enlisted, then the key debates that are briefly defined and discussed and, finally, the organization of the dissertation.

Chapter Two

This chapter engages in literature review and as the researcher, I provide an overview of what scholars say about the topic of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. What are the key debates and arguments that the scholars argue about and discuss from the broader literature? The theoretical and conceptual framework will then be presented and explained to be linked with the topic and what the scholars say about these theories.

Chapter Three

The chapter dwells on the research design and methodology. It initially provides the research steps that have been implemented in the study to get what the participants view as their role in the teacher leadership concept, as well as outlines the methodology that has been employed and what informed the decision to select that type of methodology.

Chapter Four

The chapter will present data collection instruments, data collection methods and data generation methods that were used on five teachers in a high school teaching at a Further education and training phase (FET).

Chapter Five

Chapter five presents the findings emanating from the focus group interview on what the five participants said.

1.10 Conclusion

The chapter introduced the study and presented the background to the study. The research problem and the rationale and motivation for the study were highlighted. Furthermore, the significance and the aims of the study, together with the critical research questions that the study intends to answer. Finally, the key concepts were explained to facilitate a common understanding of the concepts. The next chapter will present the review of related literature and then the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the background and orientation of the study, as well as the rationale and the motivation of the study being foregrounded. The chapter also provided the problem statement, research problem, significance of the study, aims of the study and the key issues of study, as well as critical questions.

Section A of this chapter commences with the review of literature on teacher leadership. This review of related literature is presented around the themes, namely, conceptions of teacher leadership; enactment of teacher leadership; factors that promote teacher leadership; barriers that hinder teacher leadership. Section B of this chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of the study, namely, Distributed leadership (DL) and Teacher leadership (TL) theories.

Section A

2.2 Literature review

This literature review will present the three key issues that researchers have debated that underpin the study of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom, namely, leadership, teacher leadership, and the zone of the classroom. These key issues emanate from the literature written both locally and internationally by scholars who identified the need to improve the learner performance in the zone of the classroom.

2.2.1 Leadership

The concept of leadership is often associated with the development of people to become independent and confident in their work abilities, enabling them to stand on their own. Various scholars have defined leadership differently, but a central feature agreed upon is that leadership involves influencing others (Sivarat, Thamma & Kenaphoom, 2021). Iannotta, Meret and Marchetti (2020) present 'smart leadership' as a different definition of leadership. According to Iannotta, et al. (2020) this definition was originally coined by Finkelstein and Jackson (2005) and that smart leadership is evident in leading smart organizations. Elwell and Elikofer (2015) present 'trauma leadership' as another example of leadership. Elwell and Elikofer (2015) attribute trauma leadership to nurses who lead trauma centres on daily basis in developing and sustaining these centres. When nurses care for patients and help family members of patients, they are actively engaging in leadership activities (Elwell & Elikofer (2015)).

Klein (2020) describes leadership as the act of guiding a group in an organization for policy implementation and transformation. In the realm of education, a significant gap in leadership among principals has been identified, with a tendency for principals to act more as administrators and implementers of department of education policies, often leading to friction within the school community. However, as indicated by sections 1.8.1 to 1.8.3, leadership in schools is not confined only to principals. Teachers in the zone of the classroom play professional leadership roles, as alluded to by Nguyen, et al. (2020).

International scholars like Leithwood, Sun, and Schumacker (2020) suggest that effective leadership can have a significant impact on the teaching and learning process, thereby influencing the learning achievement. Leadership that prioritizes teaching and learning over administrative tasks is deemed most effective (Northouse, 2021). This type of leadership, often referred to as instructional or learning centred leadership, focuses on educational aspects rather than organizational management (Bellibaş, Gümüş & Kılınç, 2020).

Cary (2023) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that leadership effectiveness in teaching and learning is not centralized around the principal but is rather distributed among various stakeholders in a school, particularly teachers. Gómez-Leal et al. (2022) argue that leadership greatly contributes to teaching and learning when it embraces shared processes across stakeholders, with the principal actively participating in power distribution for the school's success.

Principals, as formal leaders mandated by the Department of Education, are advised to focus their time on monitoring instructional processes, since teaching and learning are the core activities in schools. The leadership process involves principals participating in instructional practices, promoting teaching and learning, and supporting teacher development to enhance classroom performance (De Jong, Lockhorst, de Kleijn, Noordegraaf & van Tartwijk, 2022). Bellibaş, Gümüş, and Liu (2021) suggest that leaders provide effective feedback on teacher performance, engaging in and evaluating teaching practices and curriculum.

Principals, through their leadership roles and involvement in instructional improvement support, are seen to build teacher capacity, care for their staff, and solve problems arising in the work environment (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020). Day, Sammons, and Gorgen (2020) note that school leaders are instrumental in creating environments that enhance the impact of good leadership practices.

Talebizadeh, Hosseingholizadeh, and Bellibaş (2021) mention that embracing a learning- centred leadership, which prioritizes learning, helps foster a vision for learning and creates a supportive environment for student learning and teacher development (Kulophas & Hallinger, 2021). Learning centred leadership involves strategizing to support teacher leadership tasks, encouraging learners, and

allocating resources for teacher development (Qadach, Schechter & Da'as, 2022).

Kılınç et al. (2022) argue that leaders can influence teacher commitment to change and transformation within their leadership roles, as they engage in instructional processes. De Jong et al. (2021) also state that teachers should be encouraged to experiment and participate freely, without feeling intimidated by the principal's formal position. Freeman and Fields (2023) believe that the practices in which principals engage and focus on are crucial. Time spent by principals in classrooms is considered an effective instructional practice to fulfil their leadership roles (Özdemir, 2020). Literature suggests that effective principals assume assertive instructional roles by conducting classroom walk-throughs, engaging in dialogue about instructional strategies with teachers, and providing teacher development opportunities (Voigt, Chatmon, and Ruiz-Mills, 2022).

Allensworth, Sebastian, and Gordon (2020) argue that effective leadership practices shape school improvement and may directly influence leaders' actions. Shava, Heystek, and Chasara (2021) agree with Allensworth, Sebastian, and Gordon (2020) that effective leadership focuses on school improvement and improves teaching and learning indirectly. Kedo, (2021) suggests that school leadership has a greater influence on teaching and learning, when it is widely practiced.

2.2.2 Distributive leadership

Grant (2017) indicates that distributive leadership as a concept has gained traction in international research on educational leadership. According to Grant (2008), distributive leadership is a shared leadership activity that involves a school wide range of social relationships. In this form of leadership, teachers are regarded as change agents aiming at improving teaching and learning in the zone of the classroom. Furthermore, Grant (2008) distinguishes distributive leadership as inclusive of all (including other staff members) and it is an integrated part of teaching and learning. Kamaruzaman, Musa and Hashim (2020) concluded in their study that distributive leadership is “a form of leadership based on shared leadership among organizational members”. It is a form of flexible leadership that leans strongly towards change while also providing opportunities for staff to solve problems in the organization.

Distributive leadership presents this study with the understanding that leadership in schools should be devolved to the zone of the classroom to be inclusive of all teachers. Including all teachers in the school aids easy problems solving and enhances academic performance of both teachers and learners.

2.2.3 Defining teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is a well-researched concept, with local and international scholars bringing different definitions to broaden the understanding of the concept (Nguyen, Harris and Ng, 2020). Schott, Van

Roekel, and Tummers (2020) describe teacher leadership process as the instance where highly effective educators who do not occupy any leadership positions in the school undertake leadership roles in the classroom to advance and increase access to teaching practices and learning for the improvement of education and its effectiveness. Shen, Wu, Reeves, Zheng, Ryan, Anderson (2020) defines Teacher Leadership as the role a teacher undertakes in the classroom as a guide to students to make them understand learning and be able to use the knowledge they have acquired.

A study by Hallinger and Kulophas (2020) refers to teacher leadership as a constituent of instructional leadership that puts emphasis on teacher characteristics as being influential on learners' performance, where learners have access to effective learning for effective performance. Baker-Doyle (2021) refers to teacher leadership as an improvement for change and transformation of schools. Pollino (2020) contends that teacher leadership is the exercise of leadership practices by the teachers, irrespective of their designation or the position they hold within the school community. Supovitz (2020) describes teacher leadership as a model where teachers are being given the opportunity to lead within the organization. Kruse (2021) further describes teacher leadership as an enactment of influence by the teachers in a collective form or as an individual in all the school stakeholders for the improvement of teaching and learning.

2.2.4 Conceptions of teacher leadership

According to Pollino (2020), teacher leadership can be practiced formally and informally by teachers in a school. Teachers are enabled through the teacher leadership concept to hold a variety of formal and informal positions and roles as they engage in their daily duties within the school (Woulfin & Gabriel, 2022). The teacher leadership theoretical framework promotes teachers who might not have the formal designation to lead within the school, to express their leadership skills within the classroom and beyond, according to Supovitz, Margolis, Harrison and Berg (2020). Teachers should be afforded the leadership roles to enhance their teaching and improve their teaching practices for the betterment of learners' achievement.

Teachers' roles shift from following what the principals instruct them to do and they take on leadership roles. Teacher leadership takes effect in teaching and learning in the classroom and in the implementation of school programs, including school policies that should be followed.

Harris et al. (2019) divided teacher leadership into three areas of activity:

- Coach and monitor teaching and learning practices.
- Monitor effective teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Provide professional development.

According to the study conducted by Grossman (2021), teachers are the most important resource in a school, as they perform different and difficult tasks, starting from teaching in the classroom as the core business of the school. Supovitz, Margolis, Harrison and Berg (2020) argue that teachers are leaders in the classrooms and in their learning areas. Teachers are the custodians of the curriculum, and it is important that they lead their classroom by implementing effective teaching strategies (Norwani, Yusof, Mansor & Dawid, 2016).

Wang and Ho (2020) further contend that, teacher leadership has been globally advocated to take centre stage in school improvement and school reforms. Supporting this view is the study conducted by Pont (2020) wherein the scholar reiterates that teacher leaders have to influence the reforms for success and successful reforms lead to change. The researcher agrees with these scholars on teacher leadership playing an integral part of global education reforms and that South Africa is no exception with the curriculum reforms. Since the dawn of democracy, the South African education system has experienced a much-needed transformation to overcome the past inequalities and teacher leadership forms part of that transformation on how things should be world-wide (Clercq, 2020).

Furthermore, teacher leadership is responsible for influencing the improvement of educational outcomes of the learners and the teacher practices (Shen, Wu, Reeves, Zheng, Ryan & Anderson 2020). The core of teacher leadership is an act of influence in achieving shared goals, that of learner achievement and effective schooling (Shen et al., 2020). Currently, globally, a successful education system is measured by the outcomes of the learner's performance and countries implement measures to ensure that their education systems are successful and effective. Shen et al. (2020) put an emphasis on the influence teacher leaders have on learner improvement and effective learning. According to Nguyen, Harris and Ng (2020), teacher leadership becomes an activity rather than a title in a school that embraces shared leadership and shared goals. For teacher leaders, the school culture enables them to manage the concept as a day-to-day activity that seeks to improve teaching and learning and supersedes the formal role prescripts (Schott, van Roekel & Tummers, 2020). When teachers view teacher leadership as a task, they will, in turn, shy away from participating in the informal leadership practices, as they will regard it as a chore, rather than a day-to-day activity. Similarly, Warren (2021) suggests that, for Teacher leaders to lead teaching and learning in the classroom, they should take this concept as an activity not a title.

2.2.5 Enactment of Teacher Leadership

A study conducted by Shava, Heystek. and Chasara (2021) suggests that enactment of teacher leadership cannot be developed in South Africa, if schools hold the old style of hierarchy in advancing

leadership. The old hierarchical structure that exists in South Africa, according to Makoelle and Makhalemele (2020), delays the teacher leadership development in schools. Teacher leadership is informed by collaboration of all the stakeholders in the school community, especially the principal, the school management team, and the teachers. Literature suggests that collaboration is the core of teacher leadership and that the distribution of power is at the heart of teacher leadership. A culture of partnership, collaboration, collective team decision-making and teamwork should be embraced by the schools that wish to pursue teacher leadership.

The *South African Schools Act* (1996) and the *Norms and Standard for Educators* (2008) stipulate that the School Management Team (SMT) should no longer take unilateral decisions but there should be collegiality and collaboration that involve the teachers who hold no formal positions in the school. Furthermore, the *Norms and Standards for Educators' Act* (2002) stipulates that teachers have several roles to play in schools and, therefore, it is important to acknowledge that every teacher possesses leadership skills.

The enactment of teacher leadership in a school is dependent on the SMT's determination to relinquish power and authority to all the teachers in the school (Jennings, 2021). The SMT can no longer monopolize decision-making and, therefore, teacher leadership should be informed by collaboration of all stakeholders in the activities of the school (Nhlapo, 2023). Teachers without formal positions always feel excluded by the SMT in decision-making strategies and the teachers tend to focus on the leadership roles within the classroom because the classroom allows them to lead and express their leadership skills (Woo, Le Tendre, Byun, Schussler, 2022). Damkuvienė, Valuckienė, Balciunas and Petukienė (2023) opine that, teachers feel that they are restricted to practice teacher leadership only in the classroom and in the classroom, they are free to practice their leadership skills and their strength is in the classroom.

Teacher leadership practices find strength in maintaining classroom-based teaching to enable learners to achieve their best performance (Chaaban & Sawalhi, 2020). Teacher leadership starts with the teacher's quality of instruction (Pan & Chen, 2021). Effective instruction has a bearing on learner achievement (Maponya, 2020). Teacher leaders review and reflect on their own teaching practices, experiment, and mentor learners (Shenet al., 2020).

Damkuviene et al. (2023); Kahila, Heikka and Sajaniemi (2020) discuss the enactment of Teacher leadership within the classroom by elaborating on the following engagements:

- Teacher leaders improvise in their teaching practices by using resources in an appropriate form.
- In record keeping, teacher leaders employ innovative processes that are in line with assessment guidelines.
- Teacher leaders make sound decisions to make changes happen for the benefit of learners in the classroom.
- Teacher leaders engage in reflective practices so that they enhance their instructional practices.
- Teacher leaders initiate new and appropriate teaching and learning assessment strategies within the classroom for the benefit of learning.
- Teacher leaders maintain effective classroom discipline for a conducive environment.

According to Zydziunaite, Kaminskiene and Jurgile (2021), teacher leaders reflect on what is good for their learners and plan their educational interactions in relation to their learners' capabilities. When teacher leaders reflect on their practices and the impact they have on learners, the reflection is intended to assess how teaching and learning is affected and how learners are receiving the instructions for their benefit.

A study conducted by Theoharis and Scanlan (2020) identifies the diversity of students in their instructional needs as one of the focus points that teacher leaders should engage with. Students come with diverse learning needs and require diverse instructional practices from teacher leaders and teacher leaders should express insight and have practical strategies to successfully address the diverse needs (Maggin, Hughes, Passmore, Kumm & Scaletta, 2020). I am of the opinion that students have different levels of acquiring knowledge and it is the teacher leader who should identify those shortcomings and deal with those complexities within the classroom for the success of teaching and learning. There are reluctant students in class, eager students, over-zealous and over-enthusiastic ones and, therefore, teacher leaders should create and communicate appropriate expectations that support their learning under these diverse conditions (Halpern, Szecsi & Mak, 2021).

Campbell, Wenner, Brandon and Waszkelewicz (2022) delineated five tasks that characterize teacher leadership enactment:

- To improve learning and increase achievement.
- To improve student behaviour in line with teaching and learning.
- To work with students within the classroom.
- To lead professional learning that improves teaching practices.

- To be involved in curriculum improvement and implementation, including curriculum policies.

2.2.6 Factors that enhance Teacher Leadership

The following factors, as espoused by different scholars, play a huge role in promoting teacher leadership in the school. They are collaboration, dispositions, years of experience, school management teams and the school culture.

- **Collaboration**

According to Bauman and Lucy (2021), collaboration enhances the overall teaching and learning experience and it builds lasting relationships that are able to overcome challenges. Bovill (2020) further argues that collaboration challenges the school community to improve to be better in their practices. Collaboration helps a school to become a community of teaching and learning (Bauman & Lucy, 2021).

- **Dispositions**

Other important factors that promote teacher leadership are that of the core beliefs, attitudes, and values that are a foundation to build on to this concept of teacher leadership (Zhang, Tian, Ni & Fang, 2021). When teachers uphold professional and ethical standards, these give confidence in their ability to be leaders, as they embrace diversity in their abilities in the classroom and beyond (Zhang et al., 2021).

- **Years of experience**

Sawalhi and Sellami (2021) argue that years of teaching experience as a teacher may enhance teacher leadership perceptions leading to student achievement. Sawalhi and Sellami (2021) further expand on this notion of experience in teaching by stating that teachers become eager for opportunity to deepen their understanding of teaching and improve on it within the classroom using their experience.

- **School culture**

Kara (2022) defines culture as everything the school community believes in and everything that enables community members of a school to identify with people who are like-minded in their quest to put the school through success. School culture refers to the guidelines that the school uses to function on its daily basis (Bayar & Karaduman, 2021). Acton (2022) describes the school culture that enhances teacher leadership as the one where issues and mistakes of daily activities are treated as learning tools.

Askell-Williams and Kuhn (2020) argue that sustainable improvement in the education of students is dependent on the school culture that supports teacher leadership. Azeem, Mataruna, Dos-Santos and Abdallah (2020) state that in the presence of an embracing school culture, schools are on the right track in keeping pace with the changing, transformational goals for teacher leaders. A school culture that is supportive brings the atmosphere for teachers to perform beyond their call of duty and the supportive culture encourages the teachers to use innovative teaching practices that help them to take more

responsibility for learner achievement (Campbell, Wenner, Brandon & Waszkelewicz, 2022).

Culturally responsive leadership practices can positively influence teacher leadership practices effectively as well as student learning enhancement (Khalifa, 2020). The culture of collaborative practices enhances teacher leadership practices where shared norms and practices as well as decision-making practices are shared and agreed upon by all stakeholders (Brown, Altrichter, Shiyan, Rodríguez Conde, McNamara, Herzog- Punzenberger & Sánchez, 2022).

- School management team

The role of the principal and the school management team is to enhance teacher leadership and to generate opportunities for teachers to lead by using their strengths and expertise as well as talents (Nguyen et al., 2020). Principals play a critical role in developing teacher leadership practices by supporting these roles undertaken by teachers and providing a credible environment for the concept to be a success in producing good results (Warren, 2021). The researcher's opinion is that teachers need space to perform their leadership roles without making the school managers feel threatened in their formal positions.

- Trust

Mutual trust is key to the success of teacher leadership practices in a school (Kılınç, Bellibaş & Bektaş, 2021). Trust means believing that as a team we have one goal that we focus on and we will not deviate from it as long as the school benefits (Sahlberg & Walker, 2021). According to Bovill (2020), in an engaging school culture, teacher leaders co-create learning and enable learners to be active partners in the classroom, as they regard learning as a collaborative process that seeks to improve their grasp of learning.

The school management team, together with the staff members, should trust one another that the goal is to improve and emancipate learners with learning for the benefit of the school (Kılınç et al., 2021). An element of trust enables the immediate efforts of school leaders to motivate and support teacher leadership, according to Hendawy Al-Mahdy, Hallinger, Emam, Hammad, Alabri and Al-Harhi (2021). Trust has an impact on the motivation of teachers to take on leadership roles and engage in the development and success of schools. According to Day, Sammons and Gorgen (2020), school leaders are motivated by trust in their efforts to improve classroom practices for learner improvement.

2.2.7 Barriers to Teacher Leadership

Practicing teacher leadership in an organization may not be a familiar tenure in the scope of South African education system but, internationally, the practice has been embraced to improve the transformation of schools (Acton, 2022). Given the unfamiliar environment the teacher leadership

concept brings, it may be hindered by a number of factors and it might be seen as a threat to the hierarchical powers, especially the principal. The following factors, as espoused by different scholars, play a huge role in hindering teacher leadership in the school. These are culture of the school, school management teams and time.

- Culture of the school

The term school culture refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, written and unwritten rules that guide, shape, and influence every aspect of how schools should function (Nerlino, 2020). A culture in a school refers to how the organization does its programmes guided by the Department of Education (DoE) policies and regulations. Campbell et al. (2022) identified change-resistant school climate as a condition that inhibits teacher leadership by introducing the terms overly rigid and loosely rigid school culture.

Campbell et al. (2022) argue about an overly rigid school culture that has centralized education policies, which characterizes the top-down decision-making that discourages teacher leadership practices. Supporting this view is literature written by Wang and Xia (2022) stating that overly rigid culture reduces teaching effectiveness, thereby discouraging teachers to display their leadership skills within the classroom to improve learning. Overly loose culture has the same effect of hindering teacher leadership practices because, loosely translated, it means there is no structured protocol to be followed (Gülmez, 2022).

Educational policy, in its hierarchical structure, places the principal as the central figure in decision-making and the policy restricts the teacher professionalism and is a hindrance to teacher leadership (Liu & Xue, 2022). Campbell et al. (2022) suggest that teacher leadership thrives in an environment that is welcoming and a negative environment hinders this practice. Nerlino (2020) further reiterates that school culture entails how things are done with the mind set as to why things are done. In a school where culture speaks of systems and procedures, introducing a concept of teacher leadership as an informal role can prove detrimental to the status quo of the organization.

Protocols and procedures are disturbed and, therefore, this disturbance can hinder the practices of teacher leadership in the organization (Gülmez, 2022). Wang and Xia (2022) argue that cultural norms challenge teachers from indulging in leadership practices in some school context, and it becomes a responsibility of teachers in leadership positions to identify themselves as leaders for fear that it may harm their relationship with colleagues. They would not want to unsettle the formal management in the form of the school management team (SMT), especially with post level one teachers. This could lead to SMT thinking that post level one educators want to force being part of the decision-making processes on how a school should be managed and they would not want to step on anyone's toes in their quest to develop themselves into leadership positions.

Harfiani and Mavianti (2022) suggest that cultures vary from school to school and there is no uniform implementation of teacher leadership practices and, as a result, the process of teacher leadership becomes ineffective. The miscalculation of teacher- cultural norms and social norms can be a barrier in the implementation of teacher leadership and, therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth analysis of these norms before undertaking teacher leadership practices (Harfiani & Mavianti, 2022). Substantial resistance faced by teachers because of school culture can also be a hindrance to teachers for undertaking teacher leadership roles within the school (Harfiani & Mavianti, 2022).

- School Management Team

The school is led by the (SMT), comprising of the heads of the department, deputy principal and headed by the principal (DoE, 1996). The SMT is responsible for the delegation of leadership responsibilities in the school and, if the delegation is unsupported, then the teacher leadership task fails (Kamaruzaman, Musa & Hashim, 2020). Where the support of the SMT is inadequate, possibilities of teacher leadership in action are reduced (Acton, 2022). Within the struggles in schools, where animosity develops among the staff members, especially between the school managers and post level one teachers, the management team can choose whom to give the teacher leadership roles, which might cause division and make teachers to work in isolation and not as a team.

Interpersonal conflicts such as inferiority complexities caused by levels of education in post level one educators versus the SMT within the school can be a barrier to the enactment of teacher leadership practices (Mosoge & Mataboge, 2021). In elaborating on this, the principal may think that, as a level one educator whose qualifications are higher than the principal's, he may feel undermined when the educator wants to pursue teacher leadership roles.

- Time and Capacity building

There might be too little time allotted to classroom time to complete the required tasks within the prescripts of the timetable, thereby hindering the teacher from expressing his leadership skills to enhance the lesson (Gümüş, Çağatay Kılınç & Bellibaş, 2022). There is a standard time of seven hours stipulated by the department of education (DoE, 1996), which accommodates all the school subjects and, therefore, if time is not managed accordingly, teacher leadership abilities can be hindered, thereby denying the learners what they are capable of achieving (Acton, 2022).

- Lack of capacity

Teachers are gatekeepers to change and transformation and they tend to prefer the existing beliefs and stick to the known, rather than the unknown, by referring to prior experiences when attempting to introduce transformative teaching practices into their own instructional practices (Gümüş et al., 2022). According to Acton (2022), this practice is detrimental to the teachers' own development and there is a need for teachers to be capacitated. A lack of capacity can be a barrier to

teacher leadership instructional practices within the classroom (Acton, 2022). Their capacity needs to be built when new learning and new teaching paradigms are introduced (Gümüş et al., 2022).

The above section presented key literature review of key concepts that pertain to this study. Concepts of leadership, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, leadership practices, leadership enactment and zone of the classroom were delineated to understand their basis for this study. The review revealed that although leadership is defined in varying ways by researchers, there is a common thread among the various definitions.

Literature review also revealed that leadership in schools is centred around the top echelons, particularly the principal of the school. This narrative invalidates the role that teachers play in the zone of the classroom as leaders. Teachers play a critical role in leading change in schools, particularly with regards to the implementation of the continuous changes in the curriculum in South Africa.

The next section will present the theoretical framework that I used to explore the leadership practices of post level one teachers in their interactions within the zone of the classroom.

Section B

2.3 Theoretical framework

In this study, two theories are employed, namely, distributed leadership theory and teacher leadership. In the initial discussion of the distributed leadership theory and teacher leadership theory, this study will explain what theoretical framework is. According to Varpio (2020), a theory is a notion that the researcher chooses to direct the research that is being conducted for the desired outcomes. The theoretical framework is applied to clarify what is explained in the study that is conducted (Varpio, 2020)

2.3.1 Distributed leadership

After 1994, there was a change in policy directives that were brought about by the transformation of the education system from apartheid inequalities to the system that accommodated all races, according to the *South African Schools Act, 84* (1996). Institutions are mandated to engage in distributed leadership styles to enhance participation and collaboration among the stakeholders, according to *Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher*

Educational Qualifications in South Africa (2008). Modeste (2022) suggests that there is a need to explore new forms of leadership in schools, hence the distributed leadership theory. O'Sullivan and Mac Ruairc (2023) agree with this notion of exploring new forms of leadership in the name of

distributed leadership by stating that school leaders are essential in providing the directive on how leadership should be shared in order to improve the school performance.

Many scholars have come up with a variety of meanings of distributed leadership, but they all come to one conclusion that it is a shared leadership within the school community. Adams et al. (2020) briefly define distributed leadership as a multifaceted leadership that involves both formal and informal positions. Adams et al. (2020) define distributed leadership as a multifaceted leadership that involves both formal and informal positions. Ospina et al. (2020) further expand on this definition by stating that distributed leadership is a collected and shared endeavour that requires the engagement of all members of the organization. According to Harris, Jones, and Ismail (2022), distributed leadership is a form of leadership where all people in the organization act as leaders. Freeman (2020) describes distributed leadership as any shared, collaborative or extended leadership practice among the school community members in an informal manner.

Grubbs (2021) states that distributed leadership has emerged as an important practice in the education system and that schools should adopt this practice to succeed. García-Carreño (2021) supports this notion that distributed leadership can play an important role in the school effectiveness, depending on collaborative decision-making. Literature suggests that schools can only be successful by relying on shared leadership practices (Thompson, 2020). Supporting this view is the research done by Printy and Liu (2021) stating that distributed leadership is the preferred leadership model that produces effective schooling in the 21st century. Thompson (2020) further argues that stakeholders within the education system, as individuals or as groups, ought to take the leadership role to ensure transformation in the system.

The South African schooling system, that is still undergoing transformation, after years of inequalities caused by apartheid, needs this type of shared leadership to detach it from the monopoly of one person in the form of a principal. Shared leadership has a potential of bringing more ideas for the transformation of the school system and the members of the school community work as a team to enhance team-working abilities as a whole (Cheng & Szeto, 2016). Thompson (2020) and Printy and Liu (2021) refer to distributed leadership as a concept

that denotes a style of leadership to transform schools as organizations and extend the control of leadership beyond one person.

Óskarsdóttir et al. (2020) support the notion and further extend this definition of distributed leadership to a mechanism of facilitating the involvement of all members actively in the leadership practices and expanding leadership roles outside the formal confines of management positions. Distributed

leadership gathers people who possess expertise from a variety of areas of leadership skills for the success of an organization (Lei, Gui & Le, (2021); Óskarsdóttir et al., 2020). Literature indicates that distributed leadership contributes significantly to the school improvement as more people in a community have input and there is open participation by all (Youngs, 2020). Supporting this view is Printy and Liu (2021) who state that distributed leadership roles involve all stakeholders, using their strengths to serve the learners and, most of all, partaking in all the processes that are meant to meet the needs of the learners.

Parker (2015) argues that distributed leadership means sharing all the roles and responsibilities across multiple school community members. Thompson (2020) is of the view that distributed leadership is used interchangeably with democratic leadership and shared school leadership. Distributed leadership, according to Harris, Jones and Ismail (2022), focuses on collaboration, inclusivity and collective responsibility. This simply means partnership from all the stakeholders for the benefit of the school improvement. With the changing face of the education system in South Africa, since the days of apartheid, the notion of having multiple leadership system in schools is favourable for the transformation of education (Harris et al., 2022).

What characterizes distributed leadership, according to Brown, MacGregor and Flood (2020), is the loyalty between colleagues that features interchanges, interdependence and mutual skill development. Distributed leadership supports teacher leadership efforts in building the organizational learning capacity for the improvement of instructional practice (Liu, Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2021). According to Woulfin and Gabriel (2022), distributed school improvement systems enable teacher leaders to position their leadership for learning activities to improve their instructional practices within the classroom for the improvement of learning. This shared leadership focuses on the abilities to influence the school's organizational learning capacity for instructional improvement (Han, Tostein, Elcicek, 2022).

Similarly, in a study by Brown et al. (2020), they found that, in distributed leadership, teacher leadership roles are essential to influence instructional practices within the zone of the classroom. Liu et al. (2021) view distributed leadership as a system within an organization that associates itself with the processes that take place within, effectiveness of teachers and the school improvement. Distributed leadership recognizes the individual expertise and the area of specialization of everyone in the school community and looks at how each individual can contribute to the school's overall mission and vision (Azorín, Harris, and Jones 2020).

In a study by Bellibaş, Polatcan and Kılınc (2022), they concur that distributed leadership involves people with essential expertise and is a collective leadership practice. Han et al. (2022) argue that shared

leadership is a process that results from interactions among people in the organization. Woulfin and Gabriel (2022) sum up the distributed leadership phenomenon as “the power of one giving way to belief in the power of everyone.” Distributed leadership enhances instructional practices of teachers when they take up ownership of their teaching and the learners’ achievement (Menken & Sanchez, 2020). Similarly, in a study by Bellibaş et al. (2022), it is stated that there is a relationship between distributed leadership and instructional change, which highlights the positive student outcomes.

According to Cobanoglu (2021), shared leadership is performed in schools where there is an atmosphere of collegiality, cooperation and trust within the community. Distributed leadership, according to Liu, Bellibaş and Gümüş (2021), is a shared leadership and team performance among the school community members for the success of the school. This shared leadership has a positive influence on school improvement and student learning (Liu et al., 2021). Distributed leadership’s influence and effects on teachers’ organizational commitment are channelled by the quality and distribution of leadership and participative decision-making (Cobanoglu, 2021). Liu et al. (2021) agree that distributed leadership ensures that teachers are strongly committed to the notion of informal leadership and responsibilities are distributed or shared by patterns of expertise.

In concluding this theory, the researcher’s belief is that distributed leadership allows every member in an organization to have a voice and, therefore, leadership in schools needs to be shared, so that teachers will be able to practice teacher leadership roles. The question that comes to the fore is: ‘Is our school system ready to accept the distributed leadership form and are our principals ready to share their leadership roles with the teachers, as prescribed by the *Norms and Standards for Educators* (2008)?

2.3.2 Teacher Leadership

The researcher will round up the theories that underpin this study by engaging in Grant’s zones of teacher leadership (2012). Grant (2008) formulated four zones and models of teacher leadership to help in understanding in terms of where teachers can lead and what they can do in these spaces. According to Grant (2008), teacher leaders can be found in four zones as follows: Zone one is in the classroom itself, where the core focus remains in teachers being experts. Zone two focuses on the curricular and extra-curricular activities involving teachers and learners beyond the classroom. The third zone concerns itself with the area of the whole school development and, lastly, zone four deals with activities with neighbouring schools in the community.

The following table draws on Grant’s (2008) models of teacher leadership. The table illustrates the four models of school effectiveness that Grant (2008) speaks on.

Table 1.1

<p>Zone One</p> <p>Zone One takes place inside the classroom.</p>	<p>Teachers work with learners in the classroom by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching learners and improve their own teaching. • Drawing up schedules, marking their class registers and controlling class registers (to name a few tasks)
<p>Zone Two</p> <p>Teachers work with other teachers outside the classroom.</p>	<p>Teachers work with other teachers outside the classroom by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing curriculum development to novice and experienced teachers. • By assisting other teachers in leading in-service education. • Participating in the evaluation of teaching across the school.
<p>Zone Three</p> <p>Teachers participate in the whole school evaluation (WSE).</p>	<p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize peer reviews on school practices. • Participate in school decision-making processes.
<p>Zone Four</p> <p>Teachers participate in engaging with neighbouring schools.</p>	<p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide curriculum development knowledge by engaging in departmental workshops and in-service training. • Assist other teachers in curriculum delivery challenges.

In each of the four zones, teacher leaders have a significant contribution to make for the success of the school (Gordon, Jacobs, Croteau & Solis, 2021). This teacher leadership model will be used to explain the zones of teacher leadership with special focus on the zone of the classroom. The theoretical framework on teacher leadership explains how the enactment of teacher leadership in schools can be applied at schools, such as Freedom High School, which is the focus of this research.

2.3.2.1 Zone of the classroom

Pakarinen, Lerkkanen and von Suchodoletz (2020) define the term “classroom” as the actions teachers take to effect and create an environment that is supportive of teaching and learning and an environment that facilitates both curriculum and social emotional learning in learners to attain the desired results. Teachers should create an environment that is efficient for learning, develop supporting relationships with learners, organize their teaching in order to enhance learners learning process and monitor their activities for effective learning (Pakarinen et al., 2020). The interaction between the teacher and student is an essential part of classroom leadership (Pakarinen et al., 2020). Pakarinen et al. (2020) further suggest that in order for teachers to create an effective learning environment, they need to enhance the quality of the relationship that exists in relation to their students to prevent problematic unbecoming behaviours in the classroom. According to Hadar, Ergas, Alpert and Ariav (2020), a classroom is a small social organization in which a teacher is a leader and the students are followers. The zone of the classroom is where teacher leaders practice their teaching strategies to enhance learner performance in the school. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2011) argue that teachers who lead in the zone of the classroom contribute towards uplifting learner achievement and improving educational practices. Andrade and Brookhart (2020) argue that teachers should be involved in an effective classroom for effective teaching and learning. It is within the classroom that teacher leaders attempt to elevate their standard of work by interacting with the learners using all forms of improvement in their teaching (Andrade and Brookhart (2020). Waite (2020) argues that teacher leaders can only be effective in their teaching and learning in the zone of the classroom and that teacher leaders see the classroom as their sphere of influence and a point where they are in control of their practices. Waite (2020) further suggests that it is within the zone of the classroom that teacher leaders experience freedom to act and reach new heights of leadership.

Lai and Cheung (2015) identified several core facets of classroom teacher leadership as follows:

- Teacher leadership is transformational by changing teaching practices to improve learning and student achievement.
- Teacher leadership is supportive of development from within the classroom and beyond.
- Teacher leadership is collaborative by promoting the relationship of cooperation

between the teacher and the students in the zone of the classroom.

2.3.2.2 Teacher roles in the zone of the classroom

The focus of this study is on the roles that teacher leaders fulfil within the zone of the classroom, as espoused by Norma, Tarek and Najah (2023). The classroom is where teachers continue to teach and improve their own teaching practices (Grossman, 2021). Teacher leadership is to be grounded in the classroom in terms of teachers being leaders first within the classroom by doing relevant practices in their classrooms (Kamaruzaman et al, 2020). In a study by Norma et al. (2023), the classroom is observed as a place where teachers are able to lead and implement all the teaching strategies required. Norma et al. (2023) further argues that teachers, as leaders in the classroom, lead teaching, learning and assessment as classroom managers.

According to Grossman (2021), teacher leaders consistently strive to improve teaching and learning by emphasizing sound principles of teaching and learning. Bond (2022) points out that teacher leaders are expected to constantly improve their classroom teaching practices thereby maximizing learner achievement. A teacher leader in the classroom, as espoused by Grossman (2021), has a skill that seeks to promote discussions in the classroom among the learners and, in the process, guide them in their learning process. Bond (2022) summarizes this factor in the classroom by stating that students can only learn when teachers lead in their instructional practices. Where teacher leaders are involved, they become influential in establishing discipline strategies for learning to take place effectively (Bond (2022)). Bond (2022) argues that teacher leaders lead the curriculum instruction and implementation for the learner achievement. Teacher leaders reflect on their classroom practices and consistently take on initiatives without duties being assigned to them (Bond, 2022).

Research by Gordon et al. (2021) shows that teacher leaders should have expert knowledge in their field of study and expert practice that serve as key indicators within the zone of the classroom. Teacher leaders continually update their pedagogical developments in their learning areas to keep abreast with the needs of the ever-changing transformational curriculum (Grossman, 2021).

2.3.2.3 Indicators of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom

According to Bellibaş et al. (2020), effective teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom is dependent on healthy interpersonal relations between the teacher and the learners. When students feel closer to teachers, they are able to trust and value the teachers and their input towards them (Bellibaş et al., 2020). Similarly, a study by Bond (2022) agrees with Bellibaş et al. (2020) that, when teachers and learners form trust between them, there is collaboration that leads to the best practices in teaching

and learning in the classroom. Teacher leaders see the value of students and seek to help them to reach their potential in learning. Teacher leaders change the world one student at a time and they listen and act upon feedback from their students.

Margolis and Strom (2020) put emphasis on the effectiveness of teacher leaders in creating teacher student relationships as the most important aspect in the classroom environment, which ultimately leads to effective student learning. Supporting this view is the research done by Camas, Moya and Morancho (2021), who argue that teacher-student relationship in the zone of the classroom, enhanced through interactional and interpersonal actions, enhances students' cognitive skills, and improves the student learning.

Teacher leaders create exciting lessons for learners, as indicated by Bond (2022). Margolis and Strom (2020) further suggest that teacher leaders identify systems of student engagement and analyse engaging lessons for effective teaching and strategizing in their own classroom teaching practices. This further empowers teacher leaders to be in-charge of their own instructional practices to improve learning and the learning outcomes. According to Bellibaş et al. (2020), teacher leaders create differentiated activities and a variety of assessment strategies that are tailored for the diverse learning styles and achievement levels to maintain all the students and keep them engaged, based on their unique abilities and interests.

Teachers acknowledge that learners are diverse, and they have different learning abilities and capabilities, therefore, teacher leaders cater for diversity. Teacher leaders empower students to be part of the learning activities and they relinquish coping mechanisms for the anxiety of the underperforming students (Bond, 2022). Bellibaş et al. (2020) suggest that teacher leaders should push culturally diverse learners to learn and improve themselves. Teacher leaders are strategic in their abilities to embrace the diverse learners they encounter in the classrooms.

Schott, van Roekel and Tummers (2020) argue that teacher leaders empower students to strategize on how to take control of their classroom and its activities. Schott et al. (2020) further state that a classroom that enhances students' emotional intelligence and academic achievement builds routines and expectations that impact on students to choose positive behaviours for the teaching and learning to take place effectively. Teacher leaders create intervention strategies that are needed when discipline issues take place. As an experienced teacher who has been teaching for twenty-four years, one of the hindrances in the smooth teaching and learning in the classroom is the ill-discipline of the learners. Schott et al. (2020) suggest that instead of being frustrated by ill-discipline, a teacher leader needs to be innovative in creating ways to curb the rowdy behaviour of learners.

A study conducted by Koltz (2023) indicates that teacher leaders are mindful that learners may have successfully completed a set of tasks and that they consider the part where learners may be forgetful. Burmansah, Rugaiyah and Mukhtar (2020) state that teacher leaders motivate learners to demonstrate higher order thinking. Koltz (2023) is of the view that good teacher leaders stimulate learners' critical thinking and problem solving.

Teacher leaders engage in classroom-based discussions with learners to improve their teaching and the learners' learning and understanding (Shen, Wu, Reeves, Zheng, Ryan & Anderson, 2020). Teacher leaders find ways of improving and implementing their teaching practices by doing daily tasks and being innovative in the classroom (Shen et al., 2020). Nguyen (2020) further implores that teacher leaders should always be resourceful by constantly improving their practices guided by the need to transform in the classroom.

In a study conducted by Nguyen (2020), teacher leaders take additional loads, where colleagues become incapacitated due to ill health. Koty (2020) further supports the view by Nguyen (2020) that teacher leaders accept more responsibilities and engage to commit to an ongoing professional development to help shape the change in classroom practices that seek to improve learner achievement. In schools, duty loads are a bone of contention, and heads of departments often have challenges in balancing duties when they distribute among the staff members. Teacher leaders, according to Nguyen et al. (2020), have no problem in taking on additional loads for the benefit of the school.

Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, Dang, Singer and Lambrechts et al (2022) suggest that teacher leaders engage in dialogues as one of the strategies for effective teaching and these teacher dialogues enhance teacher reflection about teaching methods and the expected learner outcomes, as these inform classroom behaviour. These dialogues empower teachers to be able to strategize in the zone of the classroom where teamwork and consistent communication are crucial to make central student learning become the core responsibility.

Gordon, Jacobs, Croteau and Solis (2021), in their research, concluded that teacher leaders create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning by declaring that learners should take ownership of the classroom as their learning space and it is the most important aspect to develop rapport with students. Furthermore, Gordon et al. (2021) clarify this aspect of learners owning the classroom by declaring that teacher leaders ensure that teachers and learners are both leaders and learners in the space of the classroom. Working together is called collaboration and collegiality and they can be described as the best forms of teacher leadership for effective schooling. Gordon et al. (2021) reveal that teacher leaders support learners and give them the voice in teaching and learning. Learners should participate actively in the activities of the class and form part of successful learning

to achieve the desired outcome. Teacher leaders, in their quest to engage learners in learning, ask for feedback from learners and encourage questioning to enhance their understanding of the lessons in the classroom (Gordon et al., 2021).

The above section has outlined the two theories that I decided to utilize in exploring the leadership practices of post level one teachers in their interactions within the zone of the classroom. Distributed leadership and teacher leadership form a theoretical framework for this study. Post level one teachers are at the bottom of the professional structure of schools. These teachers are not regarded as leaders and are therefore viewed as having no authority to lead. Employing the theoretical framework outlined above conclusions were drawn with regards to the role of post level one teachers as teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter firstly explored the literature review on leadership and how it impacts on instructional practices in the classroom and then put into context teacher leadership as an objectively new phenomenon to education within the schools and the enactment of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. Secondly, the chapter presented associated studies on the factors that enhance teacher leadership and the barriers thereof within the classroom. Furthermore, the theoretical framework that underpins this study in the form of distributed leadership and teacher leadership was explored. Finally, the chapter discussed the zone of the classroom, the teachers' roles in the zone of the classroom and the indicators of teacher leadership.

Chapter three will discuss the research design and the methodology that was used when conducting this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with literature review relating to the experiences of teachers in the enactment of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. Furthermore, the chapter presented the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The aim of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodology that was used to conduct the study. The chapter begins with the research paradigm, followed by the research design and then methodology. Furthermore, sampling, selection of participants, and methods of collecting data, namely, focus group interview and observation are provided.

This chapter seeks to explore the enactment of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. The key research questions used in unpacking the enactment of teacher leadership in this study are as follows:

- What are the practices in the case study of schoolteacher leaders in the zone of the classroom?
- Why do teacher leaders in the case study enact such practices in the zone of the classroom?
- How can teacher leaders as agents of change enhance their practice in the zone of the classroom?

3.2 Research paradigm

Punch (2013) describes a paradigm as a set of norms about the world, what creates systems and what tools researchers use to assess and observe the world as it unfolds. Steenhuis and De Bruijn (2006) suggest the following types of paradigms, namely: Positivists, Interpretivists, Post-positivists and Criticalists. This study is located within the confines of interpretivism, where the researcher seeks to discover reality through the views of the participants, their background and their experiences. The researcher, as an interpretivist, chose this paradigm in order to understand the experiences of post level one educators who hold no formal leadership positions in the school (Neumann 2011). According to Babbie and Mouton (2005), the interpretivist approach seeks to understand people and it is rooted in the understanding of lived experiences, as espoused in the research by

Neumann (2011). Collis and Hussey (2014) agree with Babbie and Mouton (2005); Neumann (2011) that the interpretivist paradigm seeks to understand and interpret everyday happenings or events as well as experiences and values people attach to the phenomena. According to Cohen and Manion (1994); Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011), the interpretivist paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it presents itself from the subjective experiences of individuals.

Cohen and Manion (1994) state that Interpretivists use meaning as measurement-oriented methodologies, such as interviewing participants or participant observation, that rely solely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants. Interpretivist approach relies on naturalistic application of data collection, such as interviews and observations of the subjects. According to Cohen & Manion (1994), interpretivist researchers understand the world of human experience by engaging participants in order to understand their experiences from undertaking a certain phenomenon.

The study seeks to understand how teacher leaders understand their own practices in the zone of the classroom. The study also seeks to explore the experiences of post level one teachers who hold no formal leadership role in the school and those teachers are class teachers and subject teachers, respectively.

3.3 Research design

Research design is defined as a framework that is designed to distinguish and articulate a world of social experiences (Schensul, 2001). Myers (2002) further states that research design is defined as a scientific method of observation that is used to gather non-numerical data in the form of qualitative methods. According to Cohen and Manion (2011), research design refers to the meanings, definitions, concepts, characteristics, symbols and descriptions of things. The qualitative design was chosen for the study due to its focus, not being on numerical data, but rather on qualitative aspects.

3.3.1 Qualitative research design

According to Rubbin and Bellamy (2012), qualitative research describes behavioural patterns of teacher leaders in the enactment of their leadership roles in the zone of the classroom. Qualitative research aims to answer to why and how a phenomenon is happening and that it involves open-ended survey questions and highly descriptive activities (Rubbin & Bellamy,2012). The researcher found it appropriate to use the qualitative research method, as it explores data in the form of words than quantities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Using the qualitative research method will make the findings more useful in giving in-depth descriptions of how teacher leadership is enacted in schools, particularly in the zone of the classroom (Rubbin & Bellamy, 2012). Qualitative approach, as suggested by McMillan & Schumacher (2010), is a great way of collecting data that is more complex, as this approach explores the respondents' thoughts and their behavioural patterns. It is further said that there are no predetermined answers and that the respondents should formulate their own answers.

3.4 Methodology – Case study

Research methodology is, in essence, the specific procedures or techniques that are used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic (Sileyew, 2019). Stake (1995) refers to a case study as the methodology that the researcher uses to explore in-depth an event, programme, a process, an activity, or one or more individuals. Stake (1995) further adds that cases are bounded by time and the researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. Yin (1994) also refers to case study as a term referring to an event, an entity or an individual as a unit of analysis. A case study becomes useful when one seeks to understand some particular problem or situation in great depth.

The case study used for this research is a school called Freedom High School, a pseudonym is given for the purpose of this study, which is situated in the rural area of Pongola in Northern Kwazulu-Natal. The school is fully resourced but seems to have underperformed in the matric results throughout the years. The problem that seeks to be understood is how can a fully resourced school consistently underperform. The case study seeks to understand the means on how the school can perform and what practices are undertaken by post level one educators to explore their leadership skills in the zone of the classroom to improve and enhance the school performance. The case study is appropriate in this study, as it seeks to gain an understanding on the enactment of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom.

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) contend that a case study brings together the concepts and the practices that are drawn from the participants on the site. The study seeks to engage five participants drawn from post level one educators at Freedom High School. The five participants hold no formal leadership positions in the school, as per the department of education protocols.

The researcher wanted an understanding and an explanation on how teacher leadership occurs in the classroom. According to (Yin, 1994), a case study explores events and practices in real life occurrence. It is for this reason that a case study was selected, as it was seen as the most appropriate to this study.

3.5 Sampling - selection of schools and participants

Many scholars have emerged with different definitions of what sampling is. Scott and Morrison (2007) define sampling as a selection of subjects, persons or things from a larger population known as sampling frame, for the purposes of conducting a study on a small scale that the sample represents. In addition to what Scott and Morrison (2007) say, Bernard (2002) states that sampling is an act, technique, and a process of selecting a sample or samples from a specific representative of the population for the purposes of determining the features or characteristics of the population that it represents. Scott and Morrison (2007) further explain that the intention of sampling is to get representation of a particular population.

There are different types of sampling, according to Scott and Morrison (2007), and they are convenient sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, probability sampling, and random sampling. Purposive sampling was used in the qualitative study to determine how teachers lead in the classroom while performing their core business of teaching.

3.5.1 Purposive sampling – purposive sampling of a school and participants

Purposive sampling is when the researcher looks decisively for participants with particular aims and objectives that are critical to the study (Strydom & Delpont, 2010). Bernard (2002); Lewis and Sheppard (2006) concur by saying that purposive sampling is a deliberate choice of an informant or informants due to the qualities that the informant possesses and is a non-random exercise that does not require any underlying theories or a concluded set of participants.

The researcher, being a teacher in the same school where the participants were selected, benefits from easy access to them in terms of data collection. Freedom High School, a well-resourced but underperforming rural school, was purposively chosen for the study. This selection aims to understand the teacher leadership practices enacted to improve learner performance in the classroom.

The method of selecting participants for the focus group interview was in the form of purposive sampling, selecting five participants who would provide relevant data for the study being undertaken. In this case, five post-level one participants were chosen. Willis (2007) states that the main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on specific characteristics of the population that are of interest. Participants who do not occupy any leadership position in the school were selected to gather data on the enactment of teacher leadership in the classroom (Crossman, 2020). The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to seek people who will provide the data relevant to what seeks to be understood by virtue of being knowledgeable and experienced (Crossman, 2020). The strategy by the researcher is to identify individuals that are well informed and proficient with the phenomenon

that is being researched. Expert sampling is key, whereby participants are selected on being experts in that field, on their availability, willingness, relevance and the ability to communicate the experiences and opinions on the subject under investigation (Willis, 2007). Participants relevant to the research question exploring teacher leadership skills in the classroom zone were selected. This selection was based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, as it was conducted in the school where the researcher is employed. Due to the researcher's close proximity and familiarity with the population, there was an understanding of the strength and relevance of the participants at the site, eliminating the need for travel to different sites for data collection. Participants were purposively chosen for their relevance as post level one educators, deemed to have a wealth of knowledge and experience to respond to the research questions, despite not holding formal leadership positions in the school (Maree, 2007). Their experience in the field of teaching ranged between 18 and 27 years.

The selected school, according to the norms and standards for school funding by the Basic Department of Education, is categorised as a Quintile 3 school. This categorization is due to its location in one of the poorest communities of Pongola and its status as a no-fee paying institution. However, the Department of Education has provided resources to meet the needs of learners from this underprivileged community (Department of Education, 2007). Funding from the department ensures the school's operation without reliance on school fees. This particular school was chosen based on the analysis of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results over the past four years (2016 to 2019) from the Department of Education, Kwazulu-Natal. Nationally, the performance of secondary schools is gauged through NSC results.

Freedom High School's results have fluctuated between 35 and 50 percent. At times, the school has remained in the under T60 range, indicating close monitoring by the Department of Education. Despite various interventions over the years, such as assigning lead educators to teach during school holidays and designating the school as a centre for improving matric results for other schools, Freedom High School has consistently underperformed.

3.6 Methods used to generate data

An interview is described by Greeff (2011) as a social relationship that is designed to exchange information between the participants and the researcher. The interviews are deeply intertwined in creating meanings that reside with the participants. According to King (1994), the goal of any qualitative research interview is to ascertain the research topic from the perspective of the interviewees or participants and to understand why the participants have a specific perspective on the topic. To generate data, focus group interview and observation methods were used.

3.6.1 Focus group interview

According to Morgan (1988), a focus group interview is a form of interview where the researcher's reliance is placed on how the participants interact with one another within the group when they discuss the research topic. Morgan (1988) further enhances the point of interaction among the participants as that which will yield a collective rather than an individual point of view. Morgan's (1988) view in focus group interview is that the participants interact with one another, instead of the interviewer, so that the views of the participants can emerge and be dominant. Morgan (1988) further states that the data that emerges from the interaction and the dynamics of the group is crucial.

This study used the focus group interview as a method to collect data from the participants. The researcher chose the focus group interview as an appropriate form of collecting data for this study in order to gain the information that is required from participants in their understanding of the enactment of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. Lankshear and Knobel (2005) state that focus group interviews are a tool to generate detailed and desired information about an event, program or session that would not be possible to obtain in any other form. Cohen and Manion (2011) suggest that focus group interviews are a flexible tool for data collection because they enable verbal and non-verbal cues to be used.

Five participants were gathered at the same site, and they were presented with nine questions derived from the three research questions. Their responses were recorded with their permission. During the interview, it was observed that their experiences regarding teacher leadership skills in the classroom varied, and their challenges were of significant concern. Each participant was asked one question at a time, taking turns to answer, while their responses were recorded. Occasionally, a participant would interject to add to or expand upon another participant's point, leading to a richer exchange of ideas. This interaction sometimes pre-empted subsequent questions or provided answers to them.

The participants were engaged on the leadership roles they played in the classroom to enhance learner performance and the challenges they faced. The focus was also on how they made their lessons more interesting to learners, who tend to disengage with monotonous teaching methods. Duru (2011) highlights the drawbacks of a monotonous approach to lesson delivery, while Yero (2000) concurs that such an approach can hinder learner achievement. Hameed, Manzoor and Minhas (2020) suggest that teachers need to continually update their teaching and learning practices. Ansari and Malik (2013) recommend regular professional development for educators to enhance their current practices. The focus group interview aimed to uncover how teachers stay updated with current practices to improve their teaching in the classroom.

Given the history of underperformance in matric exams at Freedom Secondary School, teachers were encouraged to introspect on how to enact leadership practices in the classroom. Epstein, Schmidt, and Warfel (2008) emphasize the importance of creativity in the classroom, leading to questions about the reasons teachers engage in creative approaches to enhance lesson delivery. Bledow, Frere, Van de Bosch, and Volberda (2010) assert that creativity in the classroom should be sustained for long-term benefits, and teachers need strategies to maintain this creativity for the learners' advantage. Smith and Tushman (2005) argue that being innovative and creative is a crucial part of classroom management. Franklin D Roosevelt once said, "*We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build the youth for our future.*" In essence of what Franklin D Roosevelt said, is that innovation and creativity are skills that should be incorporated more into the life of a classroom.

3.6.2 Observation method

Observation, as defined by Christiansen and Betram (2010), is an activity where a researcher visits a site to observe ongoing processes. In the context of the study, observation involves five teachers being observed while teaching in the classroom. Simpson and Tuson (2003), as well as Creswell (2012), agree with Christiansen and Betram's (2010) definition. They describe observation as a process where the researcher visits a site or an institution and takes notes in the form of recordings or written documentation, without participating in the activities being observed.

Participant observation forms part of the field study and, according to De Vos (2011), this field research technique is effective because of the direct contact with the participants. Observation of participants ensures that the researcher observes the verbal and non-verbal conversations and communication from the subjects being observed. Niemann (2011) states that this interaction enables the researcher to understand the context in its fullest. Through the observation technique, the researcher engages in active collaboration with participants to address real life problems and, in this case, the teacher leadership phenomenon in the zone of the classroom (Blumberg, 2011). Transcripts of collecting data from the observation method were used for this study.

In this study, a visit was made to Freedom High School to conduct lesson observations on five participants. Maree (2012) states that lesson observation is a form of personal experience that enables the researcher to interact and relate with the situation. Additionally, Maree (2012) suggests that lesson observation can be beneficial for participants who may feel pressure or discomfort in discussing certain aspects during an interview. However, Creswell (2007) notes some disadvantages, such as the possibility of the researcher being a poor observer with inadequate observation skills, leading to

missed important aspects of a lesson in the classroom.

There is also the risk of the researcher not reporting some private information observed, which could jeopardize the observation exercise and result in the loss of important data. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) argue that observation has advantages, such as enabling the researcher to obtain current data from natural settings and situations. Through observation, the researcher can witness first-hand the actions of the participants as they enact teacher leadership in their natural contexts, in this case, the classrooms.

During this observation, the researcher sat at the back of the classroom to minimize intrusion on the teacher-learner interaction. From this vantage point, notes were taken and recordings made as the lessons progressed. All five participants were observed, with each participant being allocated a day for observation. The focus was on how teachers taught in the classroom and their interaction with learners, ranging from maintaining discipline throughout the lesson to changing teaching approaches to accommodate different learning needs. A structured observation schedule was used, focusing on the behavioural patterns of the participants and their learners, as well as the human activities occurring in the classroom (Schaumberg, Michael, and Egler, 2011). The observation included how teachers introduced lessons and how learners responded to these introductions. As the lesson developed, attention was given to the strategies employed by the teacher to enhance teaching and learning. The data collection tool observed how the lesson was concluded and how the teacher managed the classroom, including maintaining discipline. The study aimed to explore how teachers function in the teaching and learning phase and the measures they undertake to ensure effective teaching and learning as teacher leaders in the classroom.

3.7 Data analysis

According to Patton (2002,), data analysis involves a process where data is evaluated by using logical and analytical reasoning to examine every component of data that is collected and provided. Patton (2002) also defines data analysis as the data that has been generated and transformed into findings by generating raw data and lifting it so that the research remains with the most significant impact.

Rule and John (2011) state that there are three methods of analysing the interview transcripts and observation schedules. The following methods are used to analyse data and they are:

- Content analysis
- Thematic analysis
- Discourse analysis

Thematic analysis process was chosen to interpret data as the study sought to explain how teacher leaders enact their leadership roles in the zone of the classroom. Thematic analysis is used to illustrate generated data and categorizes data, as espoused by Ebrahim (2012). Thematic analysis, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a method that seeks to identify, analyse, organise, describe and report themes that are found within the data that has been formulated in the study. Boyatzis (1998) further expands this definition by stating that thematic analysis serves as a translator for the qualitative analysis sanctioning the researchers to interact using different methods of research in their communication. King (2004) opines that thematic analysis is convenient in summarizing the key features that are found to be common in the large data that is being produced from the participants. King (2004) further states that thematic analysis enables the researcher to use a well-structured approach on how to handle the data presented.

The researcher presented thematic analysis using the following six steps:

- The first step constituted familiarization with the data, as suggested by Thorne (2000), to engage extensively with the collected data. During the transcription process, the data was read, re-read, and annotated with notes to isolate the main ideas relevant to the research questions. This process, as Thorne (2000) points out, allows for the observation and analysis of significant aspects of the collected data. The goal was to identify common themes, ideas, patterns, and topics that frequently emerged in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that initial codes should be generated by doing peer debriefing and a use of coding frameworks. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend generating initial codes through peer debriefing and the use of coding frameworks. A code, essentially a label given to a notion, describes the content of the data. Interesting facts and features of the data collected from participants were processed systematically to combine relevant data under each code. Gibbs (2007) describes coding as the process of recording and identifying passages of text linked by a common idea. The texts from subjects were modified and categorized to establish a framework of thematic ideas, with the coding framework being expanded as a concept that aptly describes the content of the data.

- The second step involved searching for themes to understand the connections and common ideas within them (King, 2004). Codes were gathered to form potential themes, and all data relevant to each common idea among participants was assembled. The list of codes or key ideas and their correlated excerpts were then assembled into extensive themes that articulate interesting aspects of the data.
- Review themes and subthemes that were evaluated by team members (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes and subthemes were reviewed and evaluated by team members, as per Braun and Clarke (2006). This review involved checking if the themes functioned in relation to the coded extracts in the entire dataset, a process referred to as a “thematic map of analysis.”
- Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000) suggest that themes obtained from the generated data should be defined and named, with a consensus reached by the team members. This involved clarifying each theme into specifics, encompassing the overall narrative discerned from the analysis.
- Lastly, as per Tobin and Begley (2004), a report was compiled describing the process of coding and analysis. This final step of thematic analysis involved fine-tuning the analysis and selecting graphically captivating extracts from examples mentioned by participants. Selected extracts were then related back to the research question and existing literature written by scholars.

3.8 Trustworthiness

In a study, there has to be trustworthiness in the data that has been collected by the researcher from the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria that should be considered in testing the trustworthiness in qualitative research. They are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each criterion measures and tests the authenticity of the findings, resulting in the trustworthiness of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1995). The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to give support to the argument that the inquiry’s findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Expanding on these criteria, the first focus will be on credibility.

3.8.1 Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that trustworthiness is established when credibility is ensured, and that credibility is the most vital factor to ensure trustworthiness. Many scholars have come up with different definitions of credibility in qualitative research study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual

interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data. Credibility is the engagement with the data (transcripts and notes) that has been formulated in research (Merriam, 1998). Credibility is done to demonstrate a clear link between the data and the interpretation of data. Credibility takes the form of holding discussions regularly and adjusting, as per the recommendations of the study (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) argues that credibility deals with the question of how findings of the study will be consistent with the reality. Merriam (1998) is also of the view that when the research results represent the views of the participants about the study, credibility is revealed and the data that is collected reflects the confidence that it carries.

To ensure credibility in the study, as outlined by Rule and John (2011), it was ensured that the views of the participants were accurately understood, and the findings were convincing and believable. A revisit of the site where data was obtained from participants was conducted, involving playing the recorded interview back to them to confirm the accuracy of the data. This process, known as "member checking", and mentioned by Barbour (2001) and Lincoln & Guba (1985), is a method of quality control where validity, credibility, and accuracy of the recordings from the participants' viewpoint are improved. Member checking also involves participants in the sharing of findings, allowing them to critically examine the results and add remarks (Creswell, 2007).

A focus group interview method was adopted for collecting data on post level one educators to explore the enactment of teacher leadership in the classroom. Additionally, the information collected was used to ascertain whether the enactment of teacher leadership accurately reflected what occurred in the sites, potentially serving as a basis for future case studies similar to the current research.

3.8.2 Transferability

According to Merriam (1998), transferability refers to the findings of the qualitative study that can be applied to other situations. Lincoln and Guba (1995) present a similar argument to Merriam (1998) that transferability ensures that the findings of the research can be transferred to a broader situation. Lincoln and Guba (1995) also argue that transferability is the degree to which the findings of an inquiry can apply or transform beyond the bounds of the project. Transferability implies that the results of the research can be applicable to another similar situation, if the same study can be conducted again, and that transferability provides the evidence that the findings could be applicable to another study (Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

An in-depth description of the sites for conducting the study was provided, focusing on Freedom High School. Located in rural Pongola, this school serves as one of the poorest communities in the area, yet it is fully resourced, aimed at uplifting the local community. Shenton (2004)

discusses the concept of transferability, referring to the ability to apply the findings of the research to other situations or sites with similar case studies. This research allows for the understanding that other sites may be experiencing similar situations, as indicated by John and Rule (2011).

3.8.3 Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a framework of using and testing trustworthiness in a study is dependability. Schwandt (2007) defines dependability as an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection. According to Riege (2003), dependability tests are done to show indications of any form of stability and consistency in the process of enquiry. The dependability process takes place to ensure that the process is traceable, logical and clearly documented to give a detailed account of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Schwandt (2007) concurs with Lincoln and Guba (1985) that dependability is often used in providing for traceable, logical and documented aspects of the research that is conducted. Rule and John (2011) state that dependability emphasizes generating of the findings from diligence on methodology. Schwandt (2007) states that dependability is often used in providing for traceable, logical and documented aspects of the research that is conducted.

Cohen and Manion (2011) highlight that dependability in research emphasizes being rational and analytical, where the researcher acknowledges the findings as a true reflection and ensures the traceability of collected data. In the data collection process of this study, five post level one educators from different departments within the school were interviewed to ensure representativeness. The focus was not limited to a single department; instead, participants were gathered from the departments of languages, sciences, technical, commerce, and services. The rationale for this approach was the recognition that low performance of learners impacts all departments in the school, necessitating diverse perspectives on the enactment of teacher leadership in the classroom.

3.8.4 Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability establishes whether conclusions of the study can be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability, according to Tobin and Begley (2007), is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected during the research. Bowen (2009) also confirms that confirmability is the degree to which the outcomes of the study can be corroborated and confirmed by other people regarding the objectivity of the findings.

Confirmability is the last criterion of testing trustworthiness that a qualitative approach should establish (Rolfe 2006). Baxter and Eyles (1997) argue that confirmability has to do with the level of

confidence that the research study's findings are based on the participants' word of mouth and their narratives rather than the biasness of the researcher. The potential bias of the research could be influenced by the fact that the research was conducted in the same school where the participants, who were also teachers, were employed.

Confirmability in this context is used to ensure that the findings are primarily shaped by the participants rather than by the researcher conducting the qualitative study. During data collection and transcription, care was taken to use the words directly from the participants (verbatim). Efforts were also made to ensure that the examples and quotes provided by the participants were accurately reflected in the study. Cope (2014) emphasizes the importance of using direct words from participants as a means to determine the authenticity of the collected data.

3.9 Ethical considerations of the study

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of research when the study involves human participants (Black and Haines, 2018). Participants in this study were teachers and it was imperative that I consider ethical issues that might have a bearing on participants in the study. According to Pietilä, Nurmi, Halkoaho, Kyngäs, (2020) ethical consideration is concerned about the protection of participants in the research.

Before commencing the study, permission was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. An application for ethical clearance was made to KwaZulu-Natal University, Edgewood College (Ethical Clearance Committee), for a study on how teacher leaders enact their leadership in the classroom. Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) notes that applying for ethical clearance is a step towards gaining university endorsement for a study. The University of KwaZulu-Natal granted the ethical clearance. Additionally, permission was requested from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct the study in schools under the department's jurisdiction. This permission was necessary because the research involved the department's employees and premises as part of the observation tool. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) emphasize that ethical clearance should be obtained from all institutions involved in the research. The principal of the selected school was presented with the necessary letters endorsing the study, and participants were issued with consent letters detailing the research topic, methods, and tools. This process aimed to make participants aware of the study's nature, ensuring their participation was voluntary and that the collected data would remain confidential.

Consent from participants was obtained to ensure they were not harmed or compromised in their careers by participating in the study. In addition, participants were informed of the study and its objectives. In the invitation letters to participate in the study, participants were informed of their right not to participate and that they can withdraw from participating in the study any time, should they choose not

to continue. Consent was also obtained with regards to the recoding of the classroom observations.

Finally, learners' assent forms were sent to parents as teachers were going to be observed while interacting with learners in the classrooms. Parents were asked to sign if they did not object to their children participating in the study.

3.10 Limitations of the study

The study faced several constraints and shortcomings, which may have impacted the research. These limitations, as outlined by De Vos (2005), help the reader understand the constraints encountered during the research. Creswell (2007) defines limitations as hidden difficulties experienced by researchers during a study.

The first observed limitation was the researcher's positionality within the school. Being a teacher at the school presented challenges, including potential bias in interpreting participants' responses. Familiarity with participants both personally and professionally raised concerns about possibly misconstruing their messages and influencing findings. Regular checks were necessary to maintain detachment from research findings and to rely on the collected data, thereby preserving the integrity of the research process.

The second limitation involved using a tape recorder as a data collection tool. While effective in capturing information that might be missed while taking notes, participants exhibited nervousness and discomfort upon realizing they were being recorded. This raised questions about the authenticity of their responses. Revisiting ethical clearance and consent forms, which highlighted confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms, was necessary to reassure participants.

The third limitation concerned participants' responses to research questions. Some offered only yes or no answers without further elaboration. Despite their extensive teaching experience, including during the apartheid era, when corporal punishment was common for classroom discipline, they had not previously been asked about enforcing teacher leadership skills in the classroom. To accommodate participants and extend the study's focus, some questions were rephrased, resulting in longer focus group interview than initially expected.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter concludes with a summary of its key discussions. The research paradigm, design, and methodology adopted for the study were presented. A qualitative approach of an interpretivist nature was employed in the case study. The focus was on a school that has consistently underperformed despite being well-equipped with resources like science laboratories and computer application

technology, serviced biannually by the department of education. The study aimed to explore how teacher leadership in the classroom is enacted.

Data was collected using focus group interview with five participants, whose responses were recorded. Additionally, an observation method was utilized in the classroom with two teachers to examine their interaction with learners. Thematic analysis was the chosen method for analysing the data collected. Ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness were also addressed within the study. The chapter concluded by outlining the limitations of the study. The subsequent chapter will delve into data analysis and its interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology to generate data for this study. In particular, the chapter covered the research design and indicated that the type of data to be collected will be qualitative. The chapter further outlined the approach the study adopted in data collection and analysis, including sampling.

This chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis of the data. Data was produced through focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and observation. Five interviews were conducted with five participants at one high school in the area, which is the case study school. The three research questions were used as an organizing framework to present, analyse and discuss the data. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom?
2. Why do teacher leaders in the case study school enact such practices in the zone of the classroom?
3. How can teacher leaders in the case study school sustain creativity in the zone of the classroom as agents of change?

4.2 Data presentation, analysis and discussion

The chapter begins by presenting the research question, followed by the themes that emerged from the collected qualitative data. Each emerging theme is then defined and explained in detail. This is followed by the data obtained from the five participants during the data collection phase. Inferences are then made from the presented data. Lastly, the data is discussed in the context of existing literature and theoretical framework.

The following themes emerged from data analysis:

- a. Initiating new and appropriate roles in teaching, learning and assessment techniques
- b. Employing innovative processes in record keeping
- c. Maintaining good rapport with learners
- d. Maintaining good discipline in the classroom
- e. Improving the use of educational resources
- f. Engaging in decision-making to make changes happen in the classroom

4.2.1 What are the practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom?

4.2.1.1 Initiating new and appropriate roles in teaching, learning and assessment techniques

Teachers need to develop innovative ways of teaching and learning. They teach learners with different cognitive levels and, therefore, they need to be proactive in their approach when learners fail to grasp what is taught. Grant (2006) developed a model that demonstrates that

teacher leadership begins in the classroom. In the classroom, teacher leaders demonstrate their leadership skills by producing different initiatives in teaching methods. Pakarinen, Lerkannen and Von Suchodoletz (2020) agree with Grant (2006) that the actions taken by teachers to effect and create an environment of teaching and learning are what makes a conducive classroom for teaching and learning. Gordon, Jacobs, Croteau and Solis (2021) could not have said it better by stating that teacher leaders create an environment where learners are provided with creativity to avoid being bored, and the participants of my study reaffirmed this.

The researcher observed that, in the classroom, some initiatives included inspiring, and motivating learners to be creative and excel in their achievements. Some teachers brought to the zone of the classroom materials and artefacts that their learners enjoyed. This allowed them to design learning tasks that inspired learners. Teacher Zandora demonstrated her classroom leadership by way of distributing tasks with the aim of involving everyone to be role players in the classroom. In the observed classroom, topics on the Life Sciences subject were distributed to learners by the teacher. In the focus group interview, there were five participants and Zandora had this to say:

“My role is to be a delegator whereby I give learners ownership when learning through group or practical activities and classroom discussions. I also let one learner be in charge of each group and the groups have different questions. In doing so, I observe that even though they start from being chaotic, they end up listening and doing the work that they are supposed to do.”

The above indicates the “delegation”, which is one quality of leadership as advanced by Morake, Monobe and Mbulawa (2012). Teacher leaders delegate certain tasks to those that they work with. Sunday indicated that she delegates responsibilities to certain learners to lead a group of learners during a group task.

In addition, Sunday stated that:

“I bring into the classroom materials that will enhance creativity amongst the learners. This I feel will entice them to enjoy my lessons and thereby be encouraged to learn and pass”

The teacher here is demonstrating innovation. The teacher is looking at each context differently from others. There is no “one-size-fits-all”. The teacher examines the milieu of each classroom in terms of learners’ capabilities and then designs assessment strategies that are fit-for-purpose in that classroom. This is a form of learner engagement, as observed by authors like Obaki (2017); Bellibas, Polatcan, and Kilinc, (2022). The classroom is the context/milieu in which teachers interact with their learners. Designing context-specific assessments that stimulate learners to engage in learning through assessment enhances learning. Shen, Wu, Reeves, Ryan and Anderson (2020) agree that teacher leaders find ways of improving and implementing new strategies in their teaching practices by doing daily tasks and being innovative as well as creative in the classroom. Shen et al. (2020) further expands their argument by asserting that teacher leaders should be resourceful in improving their teaching practices and be driven by the need to transform in the classroom, so that learners benefit from their teaching. Teacher leaders engage in dialogues as one of their strategies to effect learning (Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, Dang & Lambrechts, 2022). Nguyen et al. (2022) elaborate further on the use of dialogue as an initiative by stating that dialogues enhance teamwork and collaboration in the classroom, which further results in learner achievement.

Monday added:

“I am guided by the following steps such as to help set the classroom rules where everybody abides by them. I guide them on how my classroom must be and that the learners must follow the rules.”

Data collected from the participant prioritizes that setting up rules makes up for a structured classroom and making learners follow them is the first thing that teachers should do.

This is indicated in Miss Pero, a Mathematics teacher who stated that:

“Since Mathematics is a practical subject, I do one or two examples in a certain concept and I let them apply the same method to solve the problem. In most question papers, I change names of people used in a question paper and I put names and surnames of those learners who are not concentrating in the classroom just to own their attention and also to make it an interesting learning”.

The above participants agreed that teacher leaders need to initiate novel teaching and learning strategies in-order to attract learners' interest in the subject. Scholars (Kraft, Papay, Johnson, Charner-Laird, Ng & Reinhorn, 2015; Lor, 2017; Huggins, Lesseig & Rhodes, 2017) have weighed in with literature on what participants are stating with regards to this theme. The researcher deduced from the participants' responses that teachers are able to improvise in their classrooms to promote learner performance. Hardar, Ergas, Alpert and Ariav (2020) suggest that a teacher leader improvises as a leader and learners follow in order to affect their achievement.

The above data is firstly in line with Botha (2016) with regard to the effectiveness of distributed leadership to increase success in the classroom. This point is emphasized by scholars like Bush (2018) and Harris (2010) when they argue that shared or distributed leadership transforms the classroom and is effective in teaching and learning. In addition, this is associated with the work of Allison, Haniford and Ramirez (2021) that postulate that bringing in new material and strategies enhances both teaching and learning.

Soderstrom and Bjork state that teacher leaders stimulate learners' critical thinking and problem solving for the improvement in the understanding of the lesson and emphasize that teacher leaders motivate and encourage learners to demonstrate work in groups so that they learn to interact with one another productively. Soderstrom & Bjork (2015) agree that teacher leaders need to recognize learners' cognitive abilities and initiate ways to supplement and enhance their own teaching ways and assist those slow learners. Some learners are forgetful and others are slow learners and therefore teacher leaders should initiate some strategies for learner improvement in their performance. Sunday stated,

“In terms of assessment, I set tests and tasks for my learners following the formal assessment program and annual teaching plan (ATP) as mandated by the department of education (DoE, 1996). At times I assess them informally by using classwork and homework models but it sometimes proves difficult because I have large classes and when I mark their tasks, I prefer a one-on-one interaction because it is mathematics.”

Grant (2008,2009) argues that assessment forms part of a teacher's responsibility to determine whether to progress learners to the next grades or not. Grant (2010) further argues that teachers develop appropriate skills to assess the performance of learners and give feedback of their assessment to determine progress. In order to assess effectively, teachers should be experts in their subject matter, according to (Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Lieberman and Miller further expand their argument by saying that, if teachers are experts in their subject matter, that gives them the legitimacy of being best

assessors and best teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom.

4.2.1.2 Employing innovative processes in record keeping

Record keeping is an important process that has been determined by the department of education (DoE, 1996) to organize paperwork systems in place. It is possible to get lost or lose mounds of paperwork because the paperwork serves as evidence on whether teaching, learning and assessment actually took place. According to Grant (2010), for record keeping, a teacher leader should set up a master calendar that will serve as a reminder for dates for assessment. Record keeping entails lesson plans, learners' marks, continuous assessment files and resource files, to name a few (DoE, 1996). The department of education requires record keeping as a form of compliance, protection of information and accountability, to name a few, argues Touray (2021).

Participants felt that performing tasks of record keeping seems to be a tedious job. Although record keeping is part of the responsibilities of teachers, participants felt like they do lot of work on record keeping than teaching.

Miss Pero had this to say:

“When I do my record keeping it becomes difficult for me especially because I have large classes. My filing takes time to be perfect because of the large numbers and I am not computer literate. My record keeping keeps only core curriculum aspects. The Department of education believes in paperwork in order to show that there is teaching and learning in the classroom.”

Monday agreed that:

“I sometimes lag behind in my filing and record keeping. There is no time especially when syllabus is still a lot to cover. Moreover, the department of education demands submission of analysis suddenly every time they need marks so it becomes difficult to be organized. Despite the need to assess the department of education demands evidence that learners are taught and assessed before they are progressed to the next grade. I find myself spending time more on being the administrator because I must have resource files, continuous assessment files.”

Furthermore, Zandora intimated:

“I am not only a teacher; I am an administrator. I do record keeping, and it takes my teaching time a lot. At my school, we do not have assistant teachers, and the head of department expects to see records of continuous assessment, resource files,

learners' exercise books and learners' files. The curriculum of this new dispensation requires more paperwork that serves as evidence that learners were indeed taught and this is frustrating to us as teachers because our core task is to teach."

Khumo complained,

"Doing record keeping effectively requires more time. I always have little time to complete my tasks and I struggle to manage my time accordingly and this affects my daily lessons and I cannot cover syllabus on time".

In addition, classroom observation revealed that not much work is done in keeping or updating records. Participants felt that tasks like updating records, roll call, and recording learners' marks were a waste of teaching and learning time. The lesson delivery was delayed because the teacher as a class teacher had to do roll call of those present and absent, as they were needed to be captured by the school administrator. Participants complained that the administration is time-consuming and it takes away instructional time and one participant indicated that she had fifty-eight learners in her classroom.

Tasks that participants highlighted as non-academic relate more to administration work of teachers. Whilst participants do not view administration as important, Grant (2008) states that teacher leaders should engage in the administration of work in their classrooms. Barth (1988) concurs with Grant (2008) in stating that teacher leaders should be the administrators of their own work by keeping records of their assessment and record keeping of books given to learners. Dunn (2018) agrees that keeping records is part of the tasks of teachers for accountability purposes.

To mitigate the tedious administration, some participants indicated that they resorted to innovative strategies. For instance, Sunday indicated that:

"I capture my class lists on my laptop and create a spreadsheet that I can quickly fill in without wasting teaching time."

Furthermore, Zandora emphasized that:

"Record keeping in our schools require a teacher who is innovative, otherwise, teachers find themselves frustrated when the office need the records to be submitted."

Teachers deal with large numbers in their classrooms, and they have to keep records of each of their learners. Participants agreed that record keeping is a necessary teacher activity, as it promotes accountability and, therefore, an innovative way of doing this is a requirement (Amanchukwu, & Ololube, 2015).

4.2.1.3 Maintaining good rapport with learners

It is important to have a good teacher-learner relationship. This means developing a reciprocally good relationship with the learners based on an understanding of sharing of knowledge that will pedagogically empower learners. Establishing and maintaining a good rapport with learners is one essential responsibility of teachers in the classroom. Haydon and Kennedy (2022) indicate that the quality of the relationships between teachers and the learner in schools is also connected to a diversity of learners' outcomes, including behavioural, academic, and interpersonal. Quality learner-teacher relationships are associated with increases in classroom engagement (Cook, Coco, Zhang, Fiat, Duong, Renshaw, Long, & Frank, 2018), improved peer relationships (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Lucas- Molina et al., 2015) and improved academic outcomes (Ansari et al., 2020; Hamre & Pianta, 2005) for high school learners. There should be a healthy student-teacher relationship because, when learners feel close to a teacher, the closeness increases the positive feedback that the teacher receives from the learners (Margolis and Strom, 2020). Garrido, Moya and Morancho (2021) support this view by saying that the closeness between the teacher and the learner enhances student cognitive skills and abilities and improves the learning effectively.

In her response to the interview question, Miss Pero stated,

” To me building a good relationship between me and my learners during the learning process is of utmost importance. I enjoy spending time with my learners, personally engaging with them and interacting with them to create the connection. This involves my giving them their space to improve their skills in being able to be independent and develop confidence. Learners tend to be shy when it comes to speaking in class in the presence of a teacher or other learners. I look for the good in learners to motivate them to develop interest in learning.”

Sunday added:

” I am of the view that a teacher must first establish best relations with the learners. The bond that the teacher and learners build determines the performance of the learners. If learners do not like a teacher, the learners' performance in that teacher's subject is affected negatively. I build rapport by having some 'pep' talks with my learners about life's experiences. I mentor them and mould them into being better future adults and for them to be encouraged that education will improve their lives.”

According to Grant (2008) teacher leaders should create productive relationships with learners in order to have a better-run classroom. Gunter (2005) concurs that teachers who create a space for interpersonal relations to grow, have a better chance of getting the best results from their learners. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) further echo the same sentiments that teachers who coach, train, mentor and become role models are the ones who find classrooms enjoyable and also their work easier. Muijs and Harris (2008) are of the view that mutual trust that is created between the teacher and the learner is a key to successful performance.

It is the view of Mashau (2000) that teachers have a responsibility to promote effective learning by creating a conducive and supportive learning environment within which learners feel appreciated. This environment assists even learners who come from very needy families. This view was expressed by one respondent. Gordon, Jacobs, Croteau, and Solis (2021) expressed that there is a need for teacher leaders to support learners and give them a voice in teaching and learning. Gordon et al. (2021) further state that teacher leaders create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning by enabling learners to actively participate in the activities of the classroom and form part of a successful learning in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Zandora added:

“I engage in a pastoral role with my learners as most learners are needy and are coming from broken families. My idea is that a broken learner will not be able to concentrate in the classroom, so my duty starts with pastoral care before the lesson starts and that it is a way to bring learners closer with and build good relations with them. “

Participants agree that a relationship that is created between teachers and learners solidifies the way learning is received by the learners when they have a good relationship with the teacher. Learners are faced with different social needs and, where there is an ear that is willing to listen and a kind heart, it makes it easy for learning to be received and learners to benefit positively from it. A good and healthy teacher-learner relationship enhances academic performance of learners, according to Paschal and Mkulu (2020).

4.2.1.4. Maintaining good discipline in the classroom

Maintaining classroom discipline means being in control of activities without being authoritarian and dictatorial, but also without a dereliction of duty in responding to conflict situations using emotional intelligence. A classroom that is conducive to learning is a start for successful teacher leaders to

undertake their duties. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 1996), there shall be no corporal punishment meted to learners in all the schools in South Africa. This rule is maintained and, if a teacher is found to have broken this rule, there are consequences (DoE, 1996). The school children know this rule and have taken advantage of the situation over the years, hence corporal punishment has been banned in schools, with teachers ending up having limited tools to enforce discipline to the learners. Different schools use different approaches to learner discipline. There are, however, schools that still use corporal punishment with dire consequences.

In the process of observing of participant Zandora, she did not struggle to maintain discipline in her classroom. Somehow, the learners seemed to understand her, and even with her petite built, she seemed to exert authority. In Monday's classroom, there was a bit of chaos in the observation because he deviated from a lesson and made jokes, which ended in learners laughing endlessly. For effective learning to take place, a teacher should affect rules.

Zandora said:

'When I started teaching, I struggled to maintain discipline and I learnt to observe my colleagues' classrooms and over time I managed to be in control of my class. I am guided by following the steps, such as helping set the classroom rules to guide how my classroom must be and ensuring that my learners follow those rules consistently.'

Monday stated:

" When I first started teaching years ago, I did not know how to discipline my learners. Often, I would teach with so much noise because I had a small stature and learners thought I was their same age. I got advised by my head of department that I had to draft class rules where all would adhere to. This tactic helped as I got a grip of managing my class and the learners' behaviours but I soon realized that the school itself had no discipline and I changed schools and I am now in a well-disciplined school."

Miss Pero stated that

" Learners are disciplined so that they cooperate for teaching and learning to be effective. Learners deserve to be treated with respect so that when they are disciplined it is meant to correct their behaviour not from the point of hatred. Over

the years I have realized that learners need to be loved and appreciated so that when you discipline them it is only to improve their performance in the classroom. You discipline for learners to benefit.”

Participants are of the same view that they no longer struggle to discipline learners like they did at the beginning of their teaching careers. As they got experienced, their way of handling and maintaining discipline improved.

Grant (2008, 2010), in indicators six and seven in zone one, argues that teacher leaders are accountable for creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) orders that teachers should account for ill-discipline and that creation of a conducive learning environment lies in their hands. Dunn (2018) emphasizes that a teacher leader should affect discipline for effective teaching and a conducive learning environment. A noisy classroom is a hindrance to effective learning and ill-disciplined learners can never produce great performance in their results (Farrell, 2015).

4.2.1.5 Improving the use of educational resources

Improvement in terms of resources entails using creative ways of adapting resources available for the task at hand in a situation marred by the unavailability of the ideal or the most appropriate resources. In other words, this means making do with whatever resources are at your disposal in the absence of the supposedly required ones.

During the interviews conducted at the school, participants indicated that their school is well-resourced, featuring newly built state-of-the-art computer rooms. However, despite these resources, the school does not perform well academically.

Khumo had this to say:

” My school is well resourced. As a tourism teacher in a rural school, I do not have much to use for my subject except using computers and connecting Wi-Fi for my learners to see the world. Tourism evolves on a daily basis. Tourism sector, which was affected world-wide by covid-19 restrictions has now come up with new inventions to attract tourists. As a rural school far from civilization, my learners can only see these developments or new innovations on a computer. The nearest town, Richards Bay is five hundred kilometres away which is impossible for learners to travel to. New mines have been created there but I can only tell my learners not show them.”

Sunday argued differently as a Computer Applications Technologist (CAT) by saying:

“The moment they built new computer laboratories, I knew that my dream had come true, the learners flocked into these classes and I got more learners who overflowed in my classrooms. I felt that CAT became the subject that they longed for. The more the learners flocked to my classrooms, the more the pressure exerted on computers. There must be a person nearby who must consistently come and fix them, which takes away the cash that the school does not have. I see myself having to improvise and use overhead projectors to simulate what is done by the computers and it has proven to be a challenge but I enjoy my job.”

Miss Pero added her voice,

” A monotonous predictable teaching approach is boring. For a lesson to be interesting it need creativity to capture the attention of the learners and that includes involving them. Being creative in the classroom helps learners to always be innovative and also it encourages them to learn new things. When the lesson includes creativity, learners become absorbed in their learning, they become driven to acquire skills.”

Monday said,

‘No two learners learn in the exact same way. If you don’t become creative and be resourceful you exclude some. It is important that I become diverse in my teaching to include the slow learners. I am able to captivate learners especially those who tend to wander around and be blank in the classroom. Creativity and being resourceful in teachers inspire creativity in learners. I do charts as my teaching aids. The charts help me to elaborate more on the lesson at hand. My classroom is full of charts displayed on the wall because my belief is that what they see will remain embedded in their minds than what they are told.’

Zandora concluded this question by saying,

” Attention span in some learners is short, so I involve them especially those with low concentration span. There are those with special needs and that we worry too much about different ways of teaching and we forget about different ways of learning. Being resourceful ensures that all learners are involved in learning to improve their performance.”

When I observed the participants' classrooms, I saw charts on the walls displayed with information on their subjects as well as timetables and class rules displayed. Desks had labels and textbooks were covered. Teachers should devise their own teaching aids as part of being creative. This view is supported by Ordu (2021) who indicates that teaching aids are one of the critical input factors in the teaching and learning environment and teachers should be able to be creative in securing and using them in the classroom. Participants agree on the importance of having and using resources in order to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. When I observed Khumo, a tourism teacher, the teacher demonstrated the third indicator of improvising and using appropriate resources by employing a globe of the world to show learners time zones, effectively improvising the lesson.

Rule and John (2015) argue that teacher leaders should be resourceful when they undertake their classroom duties in order to improve their practices. Dunn (2018) agrees that learners are diversified and there is always a need of supplementing their teaching with resources and that a school that is resourceful results in learners performing well. Freedom high school is well- resourced, according to the version of the participants. Grant (2010) in indicator three states that teacher leaders should be creative and improvise by using appropriate resources in trying to improve teaching and benefit learners' achievement.

4.2.1.6 Engaging in decision-making to make change happen in the classroom

As a teacher leader in the classroom, one is at times required to help to resolve a stalemate by offering a pragmatic solution to iron out existing differences. The teacher leads ways to make necessary interventions in the classroom when conflicts arise for a way forward to arise.

Monday stated:

" Someone must lead effectively and make rational decisions in the classroom for effective teaching and learning. To help learners feel comfortable to express themselves and be able to put their trust in me as a teacher, I must guide them, lead them, make rational decisions, be consistent in my decisions and once they are comfortable, they can perform at their best."

Miss Pero added:

" My belief is that someone must lead and someone must be led. We groom them into being the next leaders and be role models in the classroom as we slowly are becoming a society that has few or no role models. I teach them to be decisive

decision-makers in whatever they believe in by being decisive myself in the classroom. I cannot chop and change decisions on a daily basis because they suit a certain agenda I might have. Rules are rules and they must be adhered to by all. I have no favourites in the classroom and that makes me to be decisive in handling situations.”

Zandora supported her colleagues by saying,

” Someone must lead effectively and make decisions but at times the interference hinders that decisive stance. I, however, not only teach learners to learn only but also to ensure that I play my role as the head of the classroom effectively.”

The responses showed that the participants understand their roles as teacher leaders in the classroom despite the challenges. They know that an effective teaching and learning classroom requires decisive leadership from the teacher. They also understand that, for the learners to achieve, a teacher has to use their own discretion, according to what they face in the classroom for the benefit of learners.

Grant (2010) in indicator six states that teacher leaders engage in initiating autonomous decision making for effective teaching and learning. Teacher leaders should be free to use their initiatives in designing learning activities and improvising as they deem fit without prior consultation with the head of department, Grant (2010) argues in indicator seven.

4.2.2 Why do teacher leaders in the case study school enact such practices in the zone of the classroom?

The following themes emerged:

- a. Promoting quality teaching and improved academic achievement
- b. Creation of a positive school culture and a compassionate, accepting environment
- c. Effective implementation of the curriculum

4.2.2.1 Promoting quality teaching and improved student academic achievement

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) (DoE, 1996) examinations is a yardstick for schools’ performance in South African schools. The Department of Education (DoE, 1996) rates a successful school by the way a school produces results, in secondary schools, in the Senior Certificate examination. The number of Bachelor passes at Grade 12 level is an indicator that a school is doing well in promoting and providing quality teaching. During the observation in the participants’ classrooms, it emerged that, despite challenges of huge numbers, teachers were able to teach to enable learners to achieve, but the school keeps producing average results and

underperforms.

When asked about how quality is promoted in their classes, participants expressed different views. In this regard,

Zandora expressed herself by saying that,

“Every time I go to class, I must remember that these children are here to learn, to improve their lives and to be good citizens in the near future. I also remember that I must teach them quality because what I tell them, will be embedded in their lives forever. If I were to be asked, what do we do wrong, I would not be able to say because what I see around me are dedicated teachers”

However, views of participants are that the school is underperforming, as indicated by the words of Sunday:

“No teacher intends teaching a student to fail. I sometimes feel pressured by the department of education officials, as a school that does not perform well, our school is always on the agenda because they do not understand how a well-resourced school such as ours can under-perform. It is tiring to have to wait for them from time to time as they demand that our school must should pass these children and if they do not pass, it is our fault as teachers. At times I am scared of introducing new things in my class without consulting my head of department and in turn she always says she will pass the idea to the principal and she never comes back. It is frustrating.”

In their responses, respondents confirmed that their school is not doing well, despite their efforts and one participant blamed the management, as indicated by the response of Sunday above. School management seems not to believe in shared leadership and feels that his words are final. That case study school lacks distributed leadership framework because the school management team is scared of the principal. Leadership in schools should be distributed and shared, however as indicated by Lindahl (2008), school managers are adamant in their unwillingness to share leadership responsibilities with teachers. Nonetheless, teachers remain leaders in the classrooms. In addition, Poekert (2016) states that teacher leaders are there for the betterment of student learning, and to provide quality education in the classroom. Lai and Cheung (2015) argue that classrooms are the space and sphere of teachers where they need to lead. Therefore, collaboration between teachers and school management is key and, where there is lack of collaboration among the stakeholders, teaching

and learning gets affected (Torrance & Humes, 2015). Torrance and Humes (2015) further state that collective and shared leadership require the engagement of teacher leaders. Schools generally pursue a culture that supports hard work and high student achievement, as espoused by Brown (2004).

4.2.2.2 Creation of a positive school culture and a compassionate, accepting environment The culture of a school plays an important role in the overall academic performance of learners. A positive school culture yields positive academic performance and a negative school culture creates a negative school environment, which impacts negatively on the performance of learners (Ali, Sharma & Zaman, 2017; Peterson, & Deal, 1998). There is no uniformity in school culture as it differs from school to school. An acceptable school climate enables smooth teaching and learning and that is why teacher leaders should always be at the forefront in building an environment that is acceptable to all stakeholders. School culture means the guidelines in values and beliefs in the direction that the school takes. Each school has its own culture that it subscribes to.

Monday explained

” When I got to Freedom that is where I found order but the principal makes sure that we feel his presence and everything is run by him and even in the classroom I feel his presence. At times, he introduces his rules and deviates from the policies of the department. You cannot have new ideas of your own, if you try to introduce something workable, he easily refers you back to the policy book. It is hard.”

Pero had this to say,

’In all his top-down decision approach, I get annoyed most by the fact that he always tells us in briefings that he has a right to barge into the classrooms from time to time to observe how we teach. There was a time where he interrupted my lesson by making jokes with learners, that made me feel undermined. The principal has a negative influence in the transformation of our classrooms as teachers and his management has no say.’”

Participants are indicating that the school culture at the site of investigation is toxic. This is in line with the conclusion of a study by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990), which states that school culture is shared and, if one party is dominating then a toxic culture prevails at the expense of the school and in particular learners. The revelation during classroom observations is the interruptive behaviour of the school manager. According to Peterson and Deal (1998), it is the responsibility of School leaders; principals, teachers, and parents to create a positive school culture.

Any school culture that subscribes to overly or loosely rigid climate can hinder programmes and policies of the department of education (DoE, 1996). Wenner and Campbell (2016) allude to the fact that a top-down decision approach disturbs a school climate and effective teaching and learning. Kutsyuruba, Klinger and Hussain (2015) concur that an overly rigid school climate restricts teacher leaders from leading in the zone of the classroom for learner improvement. Wilson (2016); Coleman, (2012) and Johnson (2010) tap on the loosely implemented practices by saying that, when no structure is followed, teaching and learning get affected. Hallinger, Heck and Murphy (2014) argue that principals together with the management have a task to transform, support and influence teachers in enacting their leadership roles in the classroom for the benefit of learners and the school.

4.2.2.3 Effective Implementation of the curriculum

According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document, the effective implementation of curriculum is the core business of every school. Teachers are at the front of this function (DoE, 1996). All teachers are expected to implement the curriculum effectively in the classroom. This means teaching the aims and objectives of the lesson and implementing it by using high quality resources to support the instructional practice for the learners to achieve. In this regard, one of the participants, Sunday, stated:

” Despite the challenges in the education system, I am always obliged to teach effectively and improve the lives of these learners so that they have a better future.”

Zandora added,

” When I get into the classroom, I remember why I am placed in front of these learners and the fact that they travel long distances to listen to me and my colleagues, and I cannot play games with their lives. I must be an example and change their lives in some way even though sometimes it is not easy.”

Participants that were interviewed expressed the same sentiments when they said that with the ever-changing curriculum since democracy, it is challenging to grasp what exactly to teach but, because they have an obligation to teach, they try their best.

Teachers engage in effective curriculum to deliver quality education to learners (Alsubaie, 2016). The teachers' involvement in the effective curriculum implementation is important to meet the needs of society (Ramparsad, 2001). Teacher leaders continuously improve their teaching practices and becoming relevant in order to effectively teach curriculum for learner achievement (Grossman, 2021; Bond, 2022; Kamaruzaman, Musa and Hashim, 2020). The school is in the rural areas and these learners want a better life when they are educated, therefore, it is essential for teacher leaders to teach

to improve the conditions of living of these learners. Handler, Petty and Good (2021) emphasize that a teacher is a curriculum leader and it is imperative that they are seen as appropriate for that role in effecting learner achievement.

4.2.3 How can teacher leaders in the case study school sustain creativity in the zone of the classroom as agents of change?

The following themes emerged from the data:

- a. Engaging in reflective practices and action research self-study
- b. Keeping abreast of new developments
- c. Acknowledging diversity in the classroom

4.2.3.1. Engaging in reflective practices and action research self-study

Reflective teaching is a professional development which begins in the classroom through student feedback and peer observation (Msimanga, Woolway & Lelliot, 2019). As a teacher leader, there are instances where one needs to reflect whether one is still on track in this profession. Reflective teaching speaks of dedicating time by teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices, examine their curricular choices and evaluate their student feedback (Naicker & van Rensburg, 2018). Teachers need to be self-critical when they engage in self-study to make the experience of them being educators a resource for outstanding research in teaching and learning.

Authors such as Feldman and Denti (2004) argue that teacher leaders need to analyse their roles as teachers and researchers in their own journey to self-study and teaching practices. According to Hargreaves (2015), teacher leaders engage in reflective practices with other teachers in the same field of teaching to enhance their instructional practices.

Zandora weighed in on this aspect by saying,

” I’m currently involved in a Community of Practice. There I get to assess myself in comparison with colleagues from others schools in terms of my teaching knowledge.”

Zandora continued in this line by stating:

” Sometimes I get challenged by these learners when they begin to be creative and this gives me the opportunity to go out and research. It is embarrassing not to be able to respond to learners’ questions or comments in class. This forces me to weigh in on my current knowledge and want to develop myself educationally.”

Participants argued that reflection by teacher leaders on their own practices is meant to improve their instructional practices and also to find solutions to their challenges in the classroom and that it is important to have a self-check from time to time. Feedback is also essential. Trying new teaching and assessment strategies encourages teachers and is the result of teachers reflecting on what works and what does not work for them.

This is in line with the assertion of Didau (2015) who states that the view that teachers should, from time to time, reflect on their own teaching practices and understand what is good for learners in their learning is imperative. Didau (2015) further suggests that it is important to reflect to assess how learners receive instructions. Harion and Goh (2015) shares the same views that teacher leaders should be comfortable in reviewing their teaching practices to be in line with curriculum changes and development. Grant (2012) emphasizes that teachers reflect on their practices to improve their own teaching and to influence positively towards learners. Taylor (1998) encourages critical reflections to examine current assumptions about their teaching in the zone of the classroom. Cranton (2002) refers to this task as fostering intellectual openness where a challenging environment can be fostered so that transformation learning takes effect. Fieldman, (1980) argues that teacher leaders need to analyse their roles as teachers and researchers in their own journey to self-study and teaching practices. According to Hargreaves (2015), teacher leaders engage in reflective practices with other teachers in the same field of teaching to enhance their instructional practices. Nguyen et al. (2022) argue that teacher leaders reflect on their teaching practices and teaching methods. These reflections empower teachers to be able to identify their weaknesses and strengths and enable teachers to make student learning central in their teaching (Nguyen et al., 2022).

4.2.3.2 Keeping abreast of new developments

Teachers are regarded as lifelong learners and the Department of Education encourages teachers to study further by giving them bursaries, especially Mathematics teachers. Lifelong learning is a fundamental principle that teachers need to embrace if they want to remain relevant. From time to time, there are changes and teachers should master these changes to continue to embrace the change and improve in their classroom practices (DoE, 1996).

Zandora argued that:

” There are circulars that the department of education sends to school to update teachers of new developments. Also, content workshops do assist a lot with updated lesson plans and lesson approaches that are currently used to improve the learning process.”

Monday concurred,

" I believe in personal development. I attend workshops hosted by the district. I attend cluster coordinated workshops. As a teacher I understand that I must ensure I get to appraise myself with new pieces of legislation that are amended in the curriculum."

Sunday added:

'One needs to be teachable in keeping abreast with the current practices. As Computer Applications Technology (CAT) teacher, I interact and liaise with other teachers because technology keeps improving on a daily basis and it is important for me to collaborate with other peers and seek their help, I need to enhance my teaching.'

Khumo adds another strategy for development professionally in his tourism field to better his teaching skills and methods.

He stated,

" Current practices are not even a choice. We are teaching different kinds of learners who are socialized differently. We need to cater for them for their different development. Teaching involves everyday learning. As teachers teach, we learn and as we learn we develop ourselves to keep ahead of the new developments. In the aftermath of apartheid and its Bantu

education, the education system had to undergo an overhaul. From time to time there are changes and we must master these changes to continue to embrace the change and improve in our classroom teaching."

Miss Pero agreed,

" I share the same sentiments as the above participants as we teach a different kind of generation that is exposed to technology and all the artificial gadgets where they are often ahead with information so for me, they are proactive. Also keeping with current practices is important as it helps in enhancing the content knowledge, improving teaching strategies which accommodate different cognitive abilities. Also, it helps to improve teacher's confidence in implementing new approaches in the classroom."

In the participants' responses, it emerged that all of them had a keen interest in learning new strategies and techniques as they develop themselves and keeping ahead of the day-to-day developments of the department of education.

Scholars are weighing in on the professional development of teacher leaders in order to keep abreast of their teaching skills and sustain such creativity in the zone of the classroom. Gordon et al. (2021) states that, as teacher leaders, we are all learners in the space of the classroom and that teacher development ensures that they sustain these leadership practices. Rule and John (2015) concur with the participants that teacher leaders should always be resourceful by improving and sustaining their practices and transforming their classroom.

According to Katzenmeyer & Moller (2008); Gordon, Jacobs, Croteau & Solis (2021), teachers have workshops to attend to, where ideas are shared with other colleagues from other schools. Boyd, Robert, and Myers (1988) add that teachers should keep up with new education trends to offer what is best for learners. The Department of Education (DoE, 1996) consistently creates new ways of delivering content in the midst of its constantly changing curriculum. In addition, Naicker, and van Rensburg (2018) indicate that teachers who keep abreast of developments in the subject area are more effective and competent.

4.2.3.3 Acknowledging diversity in the classroom

The classroom is full of learners with diverse backgrounds through religion, ethnicity, social standing, economically challenged different learning capabilities and academically diverse, just to name a few.

Learners are diverse in nature and teachers encounter learners that are defined by their different backgrounds, as mentioned above.

Khumo spelled this diversity by stating:

” As a teacher, I am a parental figure and a role model. I look after the learners in terms of their needs at school. I attend to their personal issues, social issues, home issues and health issues so that when they are in the classroom their mental state and their well-being is stable.”

Monday added his view,

” I bring pastoral care to support learners who are heading their homes as parents have died or have abandoned them to ensure I assist learners who are coming from poor families. I give food and provide counselling to my learners whom some are affected and infected with HIV and Aids and other illnesses.”

Since these learners are staying in this rural area in Pongola, this is an area that is neglected by the government. This is in line with Jibiliza and Rashe's (2018) assertion that learners in rural communities in South Africa children have not benefitted from government initiatives as much as learners from urban areas. In addition, Jibiliza and Rashe (2018) have established that poverty is a common feature in distant rural areas due to the lack of development. This is an area where people are ravaged by HIV and Aids and parents have succumbed to this illness. Participants feel that it is their duty to embrace these learners by parenting and mentoring them, so that they see the value of studying further despite their personal hardships.

Biddle (2014) emphasizes the acknowledgement of diversity in learners by the teacher leaders. A teacher should identify focus points of strengths and weaknesses in learners to their instructional needs (Sebastian, Allensworth and Huang, 2016). Rogers and Brown (2023) agree that teacher leaders should engage in diverse instructional practices from time to time to effect performance.

A study conducted by Koltz (2023) indicates that teachers are aware of the diversity of the learners and, therefore, teachers are mindful and consider these diversities where learners do not grasp the lessons the same way and some are also forgetful and it is upon teacher leaders to ensure that learning is effectively grasped by all the learners that they teach.

Teacher leaders may agitate learning by asking higher order questions so that the learners demonstrate higher order thinking and understanding (Burmansah, Rugaiya, and Mukhtar (2020).

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed data that was collected through interviews and observation at a school that was the case under investigation. Data was presented around themes that emerged during analysis. The conclusion of this chapter will also deal with how the themes answered the research questions. The themes are tabulated as follows:

- Initiating new and appropriate roles on teaching, learning and assessment techniques.
- Employing innovative processes in record keeping.
- Maintaining good rapport with learners.
- Maintaining good discipline in the classroom.
- Improving and using resources appropriately.
- Engaging in decision-making to make changes in the classroom.
- Promoting quality teaching and improved student achievement.
- Creation of a school culture and a compassionate accepting environment.
- Effective implementation of the curriculum.

- Engaging in reflective practices and action research self-study.
- Keeping abreast of the new developments.
- Acknowledging diversity in the classroom.

The above themes linked with the exploration of the enactment of teacher leadership in that they showed how teachers devise means to improve learning in the classroom. Based on the study by Grant's (2012) model one of teacher leadership enactment, participants on research question one stated that they initiated means and ways to formulate techniques that would make them teach and assess effectively in the classroom. The responses from participants proved that teacher leaders should be innovative when they do record keeping of the learners' marks on continuous assessment. Learners and teacher relationship that is kept cordial enables effective teaching and learning and teacher leaders are key in maintaining discipline in the classroom. Participants alluded to the fact that teacher leaders should promote and maintain quality teaching to ensure that learners achieve.

In research question two, participants stated the reasons behind the enactment of teacher leadership in the classroom by stating that they want to create a school culture that is conducive to effective implementation of the curriculum and facilitate an embracing and compassionate learning environment. The duty of a teacher is to promote quality teaching for learner achievement.

The response to the research question that asks how the teacher leaders will maintain the momentum of ensuring learners achieve is by attending workshops to improve their teaching skills and learning new curriculum to expand on their knowledge of the subject. Due to many challenges brought by curriculum changes stemming from the democratic dispensation, participants deemed it fit for them to network with other teachers from other schools to share new and effective ways to keep abreast of the developments brought by the constant changes of the curriculum and ways to implement it.

The next chapter is the concluding chapter that focuses on a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, I discussed and analysed the data that was presented by five post level one participants who were coming from Freedom High School, who narrated their experiences on the enactment of teacher leadership and the findings thereof in the zone of the classroom. Chapter five presents the summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations per research question.

5.2 Summary of the findings

Chapter 1 laid out both the introduction to the study and the background thereof. I presented the background on the transformation and restructuring of South African schools' education system since the dawn of democracy (DoE, 1996). This transformation brought along many curriculum changes that left teachers frustrated because there was not much training provided for them, yet there is pressure to perform for learners to achieve. Often, society attributes the inability of a school to maintain good results to lack of resources, so I wanted to dispel that myth by using a resourced school that was underperforming in a rural area of Pongola on the outskirts of KwaZulu-Natal. I discussed the purpose of this study, which is to unravel and explore teacher practices of teacher leadership to improve the learners' performance, in the zone of the classroom. I used the rationale and motivation in the study by putting forward the fact that the teacher leadership concept as a new phenomenon back in 2008 did not take centre stage in South African schools, resulting in the schools not adopting this form of leadership (Ntuzela, 2008). I stated my personal, professional, and theoretical motivation of the study, which justified the need for conducting this study, stemming from the fact that the case study school is resourced but still underachieves. The aim of the study was to understand the enactment of teacher leadership practices in the zone of the classroom. The research questions that guided my study were as follows:

1. What are the practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom?
2. Why do leaders in the case study school enact such practices in the zone of the classroom?
3. How can teacher leaders, as agents of change, sustain creativity in the zone of the classroom?

In chapter two, I engaged with what the scholars nationally and internationally say about the enactment of teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom. Scholars agreed on the importance of teachers engaging in teacher leadership as a form of improving the learner performance (Grant, 2006). I discussed in-depth the concept of teacher leadership by stating how scholars define the concept and how this concept has been embraced globally for effective teaching, as espoused by scholars such as Cheng and Szeto (2016); Supovitz, (2017). The enactment of teacher leadership was unravelled by many scholars including Soderstrom and Bjork (2015); Wang and Ho (2020), to name but a few. Scholars elaborated on the engagements that teachers should adhere to, such as engaging in reflective practices from time to time, improving on record keeping as a necessity, making sound classroom decisions to maintain classroom discipline, and initiating new teaching, learning and assessment methods. I stated the factors that enhance teaching and the barriers that may hinder effective teacher leadership practices in the zone of the classroom. I also discussed leadership, teacher leadership and the zone of the classroom as key concepts of the study. I concluded chapter two by discussing the theoretical framework known as distributed leadership and Gronn (2016); Torrance and Humes (2016); Liu and Hallinger (2018) briefly defined this theory.

In chapter three I clarified the research paradigm and research design to conduct my study (Punch, 2009). I located my study in the confines of interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative approach to drive my study (Rubbin & Babbie, 2012). I used focus group interviews and observation research methods to generate data from five post-level one participants whom I purposively selected in a case study school called Freedom High School. The participants were selected because they had experience in the classroom that would support the study in answering the research question. I chose thematic analysis process to interpret data as the study sought to explain how teacher leaders enact their leadership roles in the zone of the classroom (Ebrahim, 2012). I discussed the four criteria of trustworthiness that (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) propose for a study to be credible. Ethical considerations were considered by obtaining ethical clearance from the Edgewood Campus of the University, which was approved by the ethics committee. I concluded chapter three by indicating the limitations of the study, as espoused by Creswell (2007); De Vos; (2005).

In chapter four I presented data analysis, interpretation and findings of my study based on the data that I generated according to the research questions as follows:

5.2.1 What are the practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom?

With regards to practices of teacher leaders in the case study school, the study found that teacher leaders should initiate teaching, learning and assessment strategies. In addition, teacher leaders should

produce different initiatives in order to improve their teaching methods. They further need to inspire and motivate learners to be creative and excel in their achievement. Respondents indicated that there is a need to design assessment strategies that are fit for purpose. The respondents demonstrated the need to and emphasized on the practice of being innovative in the classroom where a teacher should look at each context differently from others.

- The study also revealed that teacher leaders should embrace the distributed leadership theory to enhance curriculum implementation and student outcomes in the classroom, as espoused by Gronn (2000). One teacher indicated that she delegates responsibilities to certain learners to lead a group of learners during a group task.
- In addition, the study found that resources that should be used should be the ones that stimulate the learners to grasp the lesson. Participants agreed on the importance of using resources in- order to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. Rule and John (2015) argue that teacher leaders should be resourceful when they undertake their classroom duties in order to improve their practices. Dunn, Moor, Odom, Bailey and Briers (2019) agree that learners are diversified and there is always a need of supplementing their teaching with resources and that a school that is resourceful results in learners performing well.
- With regards to effective record keeping for the teacher leader, the study established that indeed there is a need for effective record keeping. However, it was established by respondents that record keeping is a tedious job and teacher leaders spend considerable time performing record keeping and upgrading records, which take up considerable time of teaching and learning. This finding is in line with the work of Grant (2008), who states that teacher leaders should engage in the administration of work in the classrooms.
- Teacher leaders who share knowledge that will pedagogically empower learners create a space for learners to attain best outcomes. Respondents agreed that teachers who engage in pastoral care of learners, who at times lack home care and parental guidance, pave the way for greater achievement in learners. According to Grant (2008), teacher leaders should create a better relationship with learners to have a better run classroom. Gunter (2005) concurs that teachers who create space for interpersonal relationships with learners to grow have a better chance of getting best results. A classroom should have a good teacher-learner relationship. Maintaining classroom discipline means being in control of activities without being authoritarian and dictatorial but also without a dereliction of duties in responding to conflict situations using emotional intelligence.

- Regarding classroom discipline, new younger teachers struggle to discipline learners in class. However, it was established that with accumulation of teaching experience, classroom discipline improves. Their way of handling conflicts and maintaining discipline in the classroom improved through experience in the field of teaching. Farrell (2015) established that classrooms without classroom discipline, hinder effective teaching and learning and ill-disciplined learners can never produce greater outcomes.

5.2.2 Why do teacher leaders in the case study school enact such practices in the zone of the classroom?

The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document speaks of effective implementation of curriculum, which is the core business of every school. Teacher leaders enact these practices to promote teaching and improve student achievement. The case study school that is under investigation is not doing well despite the teachers' efforts. The school management seems not to believe in shared leadership. Poekert (2016) states that teacher leaders are there for the betterment of student learning. Teacher leaders are there to provide quality education in the classroom, therefore, effective teaching is important for learners to achieve. Handler et al. (2021) emphasizes that teachers are curriculum leaders and it is imperative that they are seen as appropriate for that role in effecting learner achievement. Respondents concurred with the scholars that teacher leaders have an obligation to teach, they should try their best, even when they are challenged to grasp what exactly to teach. Ali, Sharma, and Zaman (2017); Peterson and Deal (1998) argue that the culture of a school plays an important role in the overall academic performance of learners.

A positive school culture yields positive academic performance and a negative school climate has a negative impact on the performance of learners. Respondents indicated that culture at the site of investigation is very low and that contributes to the low pass rate in the school. They indicated that there is a top-down approach that disturbs a school climate and destroys effective teaching and learning.

5.2.3 How can teacher leaders, as agents of change, in the case study school sustain creativity in the zone of the classroom?

Theme: teacher leaders as agents of change in the zone of the classroom

Under this theme the following key findings emerged:

- Teachers have a responsibility of sustaining creativity in the classroom to maintain and enhance best practices and improve best learning outcomes.

- Teacher leaders should engage in reflective practices and action research self-study. A reflective practice is professional development which begins in the classroom through student feedback and peer observation, as espoused by Msimanga, Woolway and Lelliot (2019). Naicker and van Rensburg (2018) agree that reflective practices speak of dedicating time by teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices, examine their own curricular choices (when they design and teach lessons) and evaluate their student feedback. Respondents argued that reflection by teacher leaders on their own practices is meant to improve their instructional practices and also to find solutions to their ongoing challenges in the classroom. According to Didau (2015), teacher leaders reflect on what is good for their learners and plan educational interactions in accordance with their learners' capabilities.
- Teachers were found to be life-long learners. From time to time, there are changes and teacher leaders should master these changes (Kemp, 2015). Teachers are life-long learners in the space of the classroom. Respondents stated that teacher leaders are expected to attend district and provincial workshops to develop, grow and enhance their subject knowledge. Kemp (2015) states that teacher leaders should project keen interest in learning new strategies and techniques as they develop themselves and keeping ahead of the day-to-day developments. Teacher leadership development ensures that they sustain these leadership practices. Naicker and Van Rensburg (2019) indicate that teachers who keep abreast of the new developments in the subject are more likely to be effective and competent in their classes.
- Another key finding was 'learners' diversity'. Learners' background is defined by diversity in religion, ethnicity, social and economic status and sometimes learners are challenged in different learning capabilities and are academically diverse. Pastoral care was found to be essential in addressing the challenge of teaching a diverse group of learners in diverse classroom, (Sebastian et al. 2016).

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 Practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom.

First and foremost, teacher leaders create a conducive classroom for teaching and learning to run smooth. In research question one, the conclusion is that teacher leaders need to initiate teaching, learning and assessment strategies in order to attract learners' interest in the subject. It is in the best interest of learners that teacher leaders are innovative for continuous improvement in the classroom. In view of the fact that learners do not perform well in the school, it becomes imperative for teachers to take initiatives and become innovative by always thinking of new ideas for continuous improvement of learners' outcomes. Teacher leaders find ways of doing different tasks daily to be innovative in the classroom. In record keeping, teacher leaders employ innovative processes that are

in line with assessment guidelines. Teacher leaders initiate new and appropriate teaching and learning assessment strategies within the classroom for the benefit of learning. Teacher leaders should always be resourceful by constantly improving their practices, guided by the need to transform in the classroom. A classroom today cannot remain the same as yesterday or tomorrow. A teacher leader identifies shortcomings for the greatest outcomes. A teacher leader in the classroom is a decision-maker. Teacher leaders employ all their innovative strategies to make a difference by making decisions without consulting the head of the department. Teacher leaders make rational decisions for effective teaching and learning by enabling learners to express themselves openly without a teacher feeling offended. Learners trust a teacher that listens to their plight and, when they are comfortable with the teacher, they are able to perform. This brings me to the theme of forming rapport with learners as the teacher leader. A good relationship between a learner and a teacher result in effective learning attainment. There are, however, learners who abuse the friendship that teachers create with them and vice versa. It is important to set boundaries as a teacher leader, even though the learners that these teachers teach in this case study school are in rural areas, poor and are from disadvantaged homes. The teacher-learner relationship has to be professionally created. Rationale of teacher leaders in the case study school in enacting such practices in the zone of the classroom.

Teacher leadership as an enactment serves as an influence by teachers in a collective form or as an individual on all the school stakeholders for the improvement of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning involve curriculum implementation as the core business of schooling. It is prudent that teacher leaders effectively implement the curriculum. Teacher leaders are obliged to teach despite challenges in the ever-changing curriculum and curriculum implementation in the education system. Teacher leadership practices are meant to improve academic achievement of learners. Teachers lead in their classrooms, carrying the mandate that children are in the classroom to learn and to improve their lives to be good citizens in the near future. Therefore, in respondents' opinions, what teachers teach in the classroom shall remain embedded in the lives of the learners. No teacher teaches with the intention of failing learners; therefore, teacher leaders have no option but to teach for better outcomes. In the school under investigation, teachers have no answer as to why their school keeps producing poor results.

5.3.2 Strategies teacher leaders use in the case study school to sustain creativity in the zone of the classroom.

The following were findings with regards to sustaining creativity in the zone of the classroom:

- Sustained classroom creativity involves strategies lead teachers use to innovate curricula interventions informed by learners' needs. Self-reflection was found to be an enabler for teacher leaders to be responsive to the classroom setting.

- Feedback from learners should be used to enhance teaching and learning. This study found that learners' feedback provides the teacher leader with opportunities to develop strategies that address learners' needs to enhance their academic success.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of the conclusion on practices in the case study school of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation One

Teacher leaders have an obligation of leading in the zone of the classroom to improve the learner outcomes, therefore, the teacher leadership practices should be enforced by the Department of Education (DoE, 1996) in all South African schools. The department should make it a policy that should be adopted by schools, hence other schools may make it an option. In the wake of so many schools that attain below the required pass rate and the effects of high failure

rate in learners, the department should gazette the teacher leadership practice to prevent principals from making teacher leadership practice about themselves. The department should also mandate principals to register for the teacher leadership course as a requirement to lead schools, so that more schools, including the school under investigation, attain the desired pass rate without teachers having to put extra hours to teach.

Recommendation Two

In the later years, the Department of Education seems obsessed with a lot of paperwork that the teacher leaders should do. Record keeping is part of what the department of education requires as proof that learners have been taught, they have learnt and have achieved. According to respondents, this measure of record keeping takes away instructional time and with overcrowded classrooms, teacher leaders are struggling. The department of education should employ more teachers to overcome overcrowding in the classrooms where one teacher has to make a roll call, record learners' marks and do filing for each learner in a classroom that has learners who are above fifty in number. Teacher assistants can be of much help in doing paperwork, therefore, the department of education should introduce teacher assistants in government schools as former model C schools.

Recommendation Three

The study concluded that teacher leaders enact such practices in the zone of the classroom. Learners are different and they do not grasp learning at the same time, for this reason, the duty lies with the

teacher leaders to initiate innovative measures to teach, learn and assess as well as promote quality teaching by practicing leadership practices in the classroom.

Teacher leaders are the champions of implementation of curriculum; therefore, it is important that curriculum implementation should be effectively practiced. In the light of many challenges that teacher leaders encounter in the classroom, teachers should teach, and learners should learn beyond those challenges. A school classroom is about curriculum coverage and learners' academic achievement and that is a basis of schooling. It is recommended that teachers should be creative in their classroom to mitigate learners' abilities and meet them halfway.

Recommendation Four

In- order for a school to be successful, a positive school culture that allows teaching and learning should be created. The teacher leaders should create a positive classroom culture to enable teaching and learning to take place. A school may have a toxic culture because of the school management that is not effective, and teachers might be helpless, but in a classroom, it is where a teacher has power and teacher leaders can be able to create the positive culture in their own space. Learners tend to have teachers they respect; they fear and those that they undermine or classify as unworthy of their respect because of many reasons such as the teachers' personality or their behaviour. It is important that a teacher leader creates the space where their classroom is respected as a place of teaching and learning and that requires consistency in order and maintenance of discipline in learners.

Recommendation Five

It is important that teacher leaders engage in processes of reflective practices all the time. Teacher leaders should reflect on their own teaching practices to see what is workable and what is not. Teacher leaders should identify their own strengths and weaknesses in their teaching by engaging in reflective practices. Teacher leaders should assess how learners receive instructions and the response the learners give serves as a guide on how they are improving in their outcomes. This study recommends that teacher leaders should continuously engage in self- reflection to assess the relevance of their teaching strategies. Teacher leaders should teach to gain positive feedback from their own practices.

Recommendation Six

This study recommends that teacher leaders should continuously develop themselves by attending teacher development programs and studying further. Teachers are regarded as life- long learners, as they engage in curriculum implementation. Teacher development does not only benefit the teacher but is has ripple effects in the teaching and learning environment. Keeping abreast of the new developments enables learners to be catered for in their own development.

5.5 Conclusion

The study “Enacting teacher leadership: a case of teachers working in the zone of the classroom” was conceived because of the observations and experiences of the researcher who is currently working as a teacher at a high school. Challenges presented by the frequent curriculum changes in South Africa have created the need for teachers in the zone of the classroom not only to assume their teaching responsibilities as outlined in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (DoE, 2022), but also to assume leadership at the level where they are.

The problem that this study sought to address was ‘how can teachers in the zone of the classroom take on the responsibility of leadership in enhancing teaching and learning in the face of the traditional leadership in schools? A qualitative research design was used to explore the leadership practices of post level one teachers in their interactions within the zone of the classroom. Literature review revealed that Distributive leadership is a phenomenon that can be used school wide to tackle curriculum changes and enhance teaching and learning. Distributive leadership gives every member of the staff, particularly teachers in the zone of the classroom to participate in decision making. When Distributive leadership is applied at a school level, literature points out that this is referred to as teacher leadership.

This study has revealed that devolving power from the principal to the classroom has the potential to improve the performance of the school, more particularly the performance of the teachers and learners in the zone of the classroom. However, the study was limited to its scope as if it was only a case study. It is recommended that other researchers extend the study and investigate the effects of teacher leadership on teacher development in the zone of the classroom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate



17 June 2020

Mrs Siphokazi Mkhize (209541085)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Mkhize,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001456/2020
Project title: Enacting teacher leadership: a case study of teachers in the zone of the classroom
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 08 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 17 June 2021.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8360 / 4567 / 3687
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix B: Permission from the Department of Education



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

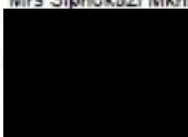
Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 3921062 / 033-3921051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

Ref.:2/4/8/7008

Mrs Siphokazi Mkhize



PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "ENACTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS WORKING IN THE ZONE OF THE CLASSROOM, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 21 September 2020 to 10 March 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.



Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 21 September 2020

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix C: Letter to the Principal



05 March 2020.

The Principal

[Redacted]
Manda Newtown Comprehensive School

[Redacted]
Wamashu Hill

4001

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I, Mrs S Mkhize (student number 209541085) currently a student at the University of Kwazulu-Natal request permission to conduct research at your school. As part of my professional development, I am presently enrolled for a Masters in Education at Ukzn. This programme is a two-year degree which involves coursework and dissertation. The dissertation entails undertaking research in the area of leadership and management.

I therefore seek permission from you to conduct the research in your school. My topic is: Enacting teacher leadership: a case study of teachers working in the zone of the classroom. A study of a high school in the Pinetown district of Kwazulu-Natal. My dissertation will focus on how teachers lead in the zone of the classroom. In-order to understand this practice, I seek to interview five pcst level one educators in your school to understand their teaching practices in the zone of the classroom. Teachers are the direct link to teaching and their instructional ways give birth to learner achievement in the classroom. These participants I seek to interview will give me a clue as to how their practices impact on the learner achievement or learner failure. I will interview them in a focus group interview. Interviews will be recorded through any means including recording and hand-written.

There will be no financial benefit to the school and to the participants. Participants identities will be hidden and their information will be treated as confidential. I will use pseudonyms and the participation will be voluntary. There will be no negative forces nor any life-threatening bodies that will put the participants' lives nor their well being at risk. The interviews will be voice recorded with some few notes written.

If you have any concerns regarding this study or my request, please do consult my supervisor whose details appear below. I hope that you will consider my request favorable and grant me written consent to conduct my study at your school.

My Supervisor is Prof I Naicker
University of Kwazulu-Natal (Edgewood campus)
College of Humanities in School of Education
Email: NaickerI@ukzn.ac.za
Tel: 031 260 3461

The UKZN Human Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) can be contacted
at:

Tel: 27 31- 260 4557
Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this study.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Mkhize



Email: jaymkhize@gmail.com

Appendix D: Participants Letter

05 March 2020

Dear Participant

My name is S Mkhize, I am a Master of Education candidate studying at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.

I am interested in learning about how teachers practice teacher leadership in the zone of the classroom in South African schools. I am studying cases in this school. To gather the information, I will be doing focus group interview to ask questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on your preference
- Any information given by you may not be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after five years.
- You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such action.
- The research aims at knowing the challenges of your community relating to teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:
 1. Audio equipment- permission granted/ not granted
 2. Video equipment- permission granted/ not granted

I can be contacted at:

Email: jaymkhize@gmail.com

My supervisor is Professor I Naicker who is located in the school of Education at University of Kwazulu-Natal (Edgewood campus)

College of Humanities in School of Education

Email: Naickeril@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3461

Prof I Naicker

Faculty of Education

Edgewood campus, University of Kwazulu-Natal

School of education

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Yours faithfully

S Mkhize

Appendix E: Letter from the Principal



ENQ: [REDACTED]
CELL: [REDACTED]

INANDA NEWTOWN
COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL

P. O. Box [REDACTED], 4310



TEL: [REDACTED]

E-MAIL: [REDACTED]

12 March 2020

University of KwaZulu – Natal

College of Humanities

Dear Sir/ Madam

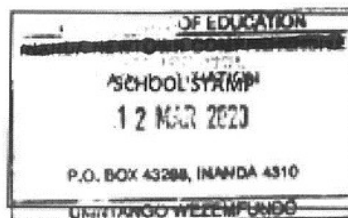
I hereby give permission to Siphokazi Mkhize to do a study on the practices of teacher leaders in the zone of the classroom within the FET phase of Inanda Newtown Comprehensive High School

We hope she will benefit and gain experience and expertise in meeting the requirements towards achieving her Masters Degree

Yours Faithfully

[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

PRINCIPAL



"First Things First"
Established in 1990

Appendix F: Turnitin Report

11/30/23, 11:23 AM

Turnitin Originality Report

Turnitin Originality Report
 Ms by Sphokazi Mkhize
 From Thesis Dissertation (MEd and PhD Thesis)
 Processed on 30-Nov-2023 9:35 AM
 CAT
 ID: 2242877330
 Word Count: 33217

Similarity Index		Similarity by Source	
10%		Internet Sources:	8%
		Publications:	3%
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sources:

- 1 < 1% match ()
[Noyobe, Siphiso Anon-Mary. "The enactment of teacher leadership: a case study of three schools in the Pinetown District", 2019.](#)
- 2 < 1% match (Internet from 10-Oct-2022)
https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/20475/CaLuza_Prinrose_Nomatsiwa_2022.pdf?eAllowedBySequence=1
- 3 < 1% match ()
[Ndengele, Mduduzi Innocent. "Participatory decision-making and power at three secondary schools in the Umhlang District: a case study.", 2019.](#)
- 4 < 1% match ()
[Shamase, Nomusa Princess. "The role of school managers in leadership and professional development of educators: perspectives of six secondary school principals.", 2022.](#)
- 5 < 1% match (Internet from 11-Nov-2022)
https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/9398/Sandul_Shaqina_2012.pdf?eAllowedBySequence=1
- 6 < 1% match (Internet from 30-Sep-2021)
https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/7455/Hachikuzwa_Saima_Ndabholetwa_2011_Hash.pdf?sessionid=2FC4E36E50ED355372C0A1083EC2419C
- 7 < 1% match (Internet from 15-Oct-2023)
https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/22361/Zanda_Dumisoan_Bean_2022.pdf?eAllowedBySequence=1
- 8 < 1% match ()
[Shabalala, Sandile Carigas. "Education's leadership and management experiences in supporting learners' transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase in primary schools in the uMhlang district: a multiple case study.", 2022.](#)
- 9 < 1% match ()
[Gogoi, Diamond Mondia. "Successful leadership practices of School Management Team members: a multiple case study of selected rural secondary schools.", 2022.](#)

https://www.turnitin.com/newreport_printview.asp?eq=1&eb=1&esm=0&oid=2242877330&sid=0&n=0&m=0&svr=6&r=57.33926049637357&lang=en_us

1/61

Appendix G: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Focus group interview

Proposed time: 1hour

Title: Enacting teacher leadership: a case study of teachers working in the zone of the classroom

1. Biographical information.
 - 1.1 Age: _____
 - 1.2 Gender: _____
 - 1.3 Qualifications: _____
 - 1.4 Work experience: _____
2. Practices of teacher leaders in the classroom.
 - 2.1. What leadership role do you play in the classroom?
 - 2.2. What do you do in-order to make your lesson more interesting for your learners?
 - 2.3. How do you ensure that you keep abreast of the current practices in terms of teaching and learning in the classroom?
3. Reasons for enacting such practices.
 - 3.1. Why do you think it is important for you to play the leadership role in the classroom?
 - 3.2. Why do you think it is important for you to be a very creative teacher in the classroom?
 - 3.3. Why do you think it is important that you keep up to date in terms of the current practices in teaching and learning?
4. How can teacher leaders sustain this creativity in the classroom?
 - 4.1. What do you think teachers can do in-order to be more creative in the classroom?
 - 4.2. What do you do to be innovative and creative in the classroom?
 - 4.3. Is there anything that you would like to add about being a leader in the classroom?

Appendix H: Language Editor's Report

25 Maple Crescent
Circle Park
KLOOF
3610

Phone 031 – 7075912
0823757722
Fax: 031 - 7110458
E-mail:
dr.sathsgovender@telkomsa.net
sathsgovender@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

16 DECEMBER 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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

ENACTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS WORKING IN THE ZONE OF THE CLASSROOM, by SIPHOKAZI MKHIZE, student number: 209541085. |

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

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER

B ~~Ed~~ (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers
MPA, D. Admin (2003)

Appendix I: Language Editor's Second Report



25 Maple Crescent
Circle Park
KLOOF
3610

Phone 031 – 7075912
0823757722
Fax 031 - 7110458
E-mail:
dr@govender@telkomza.net
saths@govender@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

30 APRIL 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

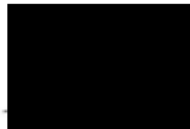
LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This serves to inform that after the student made the changes requested by the examiners, I read the final version of the dissertation titled:

ENACTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHERS WORKING IN THE ZONE OF THE CLASSROOM, by SIPHOKAZI MKHIZE, student number: 209541085.

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

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER

B ~~Ed~~ (Art), ~~B.A.~~ (Hons), B Ed.
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers
MPA, D. ~~Ed~~ (2003)