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Factors Affecting Fluctuating Language Results at Matriculation Level: How Principals at Ten Schools in the Harry Gwala District of KwaZulu-Natal Explain the Phenomenon

A thesis submitted to the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

BY

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ABSTRACT

English has become the language of instruction in many South African schools despite most learners not being first-language English speakers. This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa. In the Harry Gwala district, KwaZulu-Natal, where this study was conducted, many schools, with predominantly IsiXhosa- or isiZulu-speaking learners are expected by the Department of Basic Education to achieve a 100% pass rate in English first additional language at the matriculation exit-level examination; however, this expectation has not always been realised. At the sampled schools, English is both a subject and the language of instruction for all subjects. Although using the same curriculum, several schools in the sample achieved the expected 100% pass rate in English first additional language for five or more consecutive years, while others did not. This thesis aimed to explore the factors affecting the results at matriculation level. To obtain answers, school principals at ten schools in the designated area were asked to explain the phenomenon. Using an interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach, and case-study design, and generating data through interviews, questionnaires, and schools' subject improvement plans (SIPs), the study engaged with the principals to explore their insights. The study revealed that numerous factors contribute either to the success or failure of schools' results, and their ability to achieve the set targets. The study found that principals explained results by considering the management of the education process, including class sizes, teacher qualifications, and the resources available. It became clear that principals understood the factors that shaped the results. Principals were influenced by their experiences and practices as principals, together with the contextual realities of their schools. While target-setting, rewarding academic performance, and pursuing outside partnerships were highlighted as measures to improve English results, many SIPs to improve

English results appeared to be cosmetic. Of concern was the choice of languages at various stages of learners' lives determined by schools' language policies, as well as the preferences of the communities for English as a subject and as the language of instruction. What became clear is that mother-tongue proficiency, a prerequisite for future linguistic development, was not enabled for learners in many of the sampled schools.

Keywords:

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

First Additional Language (FAL)

Principals (School Managers)

Transformational leadership (TL)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Matriculation exam (Matric)

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DEDICATION

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List of acronyms/abbreviations

BICS - Basic interpersonal communication skills

CALP - Cognitive academic language proficiency

CAPS – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CDT - Cognitive development theory

CHH – Child-headed households

CM - Classroom management

CRT - Classroom teaching

CSJ - Centre for Social Justice

CULP - Common underlying language proficiency

CUP - Common underlying proficiency

DBE – Department of Basic Education

DOE – Department of Education

EAL – English additional language

ECM - Effective classroom management

EFL – English first language

ELL – English language learners

ELRC – Education labour relation council

ELT - English language teaching

ESL – English second language

FAL – First additional language

FET – Further education and training (Grade 10-12)

FP – Foundation phase (Grade R-3)

HGD – Harry Gwala district

HL – Home language

IL – Instructional leadership

IP – Intermediate phase (Grade 4-6)

L1 – First language

L2 – Second language

LiEP – Language in education policy

LIH - Language interdependent hypothesis

LoLT – Language of learning and teaching

LTH - Language threshold hypothesis

MALL - Mobile assisted language learning

Matric – Matriculation or Grade 12 (exit phase)

MKO - More knowledgeable other

MOI – Medium of instruction

NNS - Non-native speaker/speaking

NS – Native speaker/speaking

NSC - National Senior Certificate (Grade 12 Exit Examination)

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PIRLS - Progress in international reading literacy study

SASA – South African Schools Act

SCT – Socio-cultural theory

SGB – School governing body

SI - Social Interaction

SLA – Second language acquisition

SLL - Second language learning

SM – Social media

SP – Senior phase (Grade 7-9)

StatsSA - Statistics South Africa

TIMSS – Trends in international mathematics and science study

TH – Threshold hypothesis

TL – Transformational leadership

TLS - Teaching and learning services

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund – formerly known as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

ZPD – Zone of proximal (or potential) development

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Chapter 1: Research Overview

1.1 Introduction

In schools around the world, the exit-level examination plays an important part in determining a learner's future life prospects. In South Africa, this is no different for learners who take the exit-level matriculation examination. South Africa, a country sporting (11) eleven official languages, does not reflect linguistic diversity in language choices at school. Sign language is set to become the twelfth official language in South Africa. Most learners tend to take English as a second language, in South Africa known as English First Additional Language (FAL). This study considers the factors affecting English results at matriculation level from the perspective of school principals.

This chapter provides the background and context of the current study, which focusses on the results obtained by certain schools in English first additional language (FAL). While all the selected schools offer English FAL as a subject, only a few schools in the sample have consistently between 2014 and 2018 obtained a matriculation result of 100%. During the mentioned five years under review, these schools have used the same curriculum, the same assessment, and have been supported by the same Education Department in promoting the English FAL as a subject. The goal of this study was to explore what these schools did that consistently produced a 100% pass rate, unlike the rest. The research objectives and questions that provide the motivation for this study are presented. This is followed by an overview of the conceptual frameworks underpinning the study. The research design for this project, which was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, is unpacked and explored. This introduction concludes by providing a framework of all the chapters, before citing a glossary of terms that are continually used in describing aspects pertinent to this study.

1.2 Motivation for the Research

The efficiency, effectiveness, or academic achievements of schools are gauged on the results that schools obtain in the National Senior Certificate (NSC). Thus, a school that has obtained a 100% pass rate in the NSC would be regarded as doing very well, while another, achieving 40%, would be regarded as having performed very poorly in the NSC. The district sets a benchmark of 65% for schools; those who do not reach this benchmark are classified T65. These T65 schools are closely monitored, subjected to accountability sessions, and required to provide a strategy or turn-around

plan to improve their performance. The classification of T65 thrusts these schools under the spotlight. The principals and staff of these identified schools experience much pressure to ensure that the school performs well in the future. These efforts to improve academic performance are not easy processes.

The academic performance in the T65 schools is often hampered by certain subjects that cause the entire school to underperform. In most cases in the Harry Gwala District, these subjects are: mathematics, physical sciences, life sciences and accounting. The situation is compounded by most learners being offered English first additional language (FAL) both as a subject, and as the language of instruction (LOI). English first additional language (FAL) has been advanced to enhance multilingualism, and to promote intercultural communication (DoE, 2002). English, however, has become the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in most schools, despite it being the first additional language. It thus becomes imperative that learners understand the language, having to be taught in English.

This study is motivated by the premise that language plays a critical role in content delivery. The language in education policy (LiEP) (DoE, 2002) guarantees the provision of mother-tongue education; however, effective implementation of this policy is questionable. Mother tongue is defined as the primary language used in the family, and the language is usually dominant in that society (Luckett, 1992). Mother tongue is often used synonymously with first language or home language. Langtang and Venter (2006) argue that this is the first language that the child has contact with, usually through the parents. Initial concept formation takes place in this mother tongue, as it is the first language interacted with by the children. For this reason, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) promotes the use of the mother tongue in schools (DoE, 2002). English is usually introduced as the FAL. The DoE (2002) describes the FAL as the language learned in addition to one's home language. This paper argues that English, although the FAL, has become the dominant language in schools, and in some cases even replaces the home language. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) seeks to promote the FAL to levels at which it can meet the requirement of serving as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The DoE (2002) states that the FAL level must include the abstract cognitive academic language skills essential for thinking and learning.

CAPS aims to do this by using several policies and regulations. While CAPS is not under review in this study, it is important to have a basic understanding of the curriculum document. The CAPS curriculum that has been used in South African public schools since 2014 is placed in perspective below:

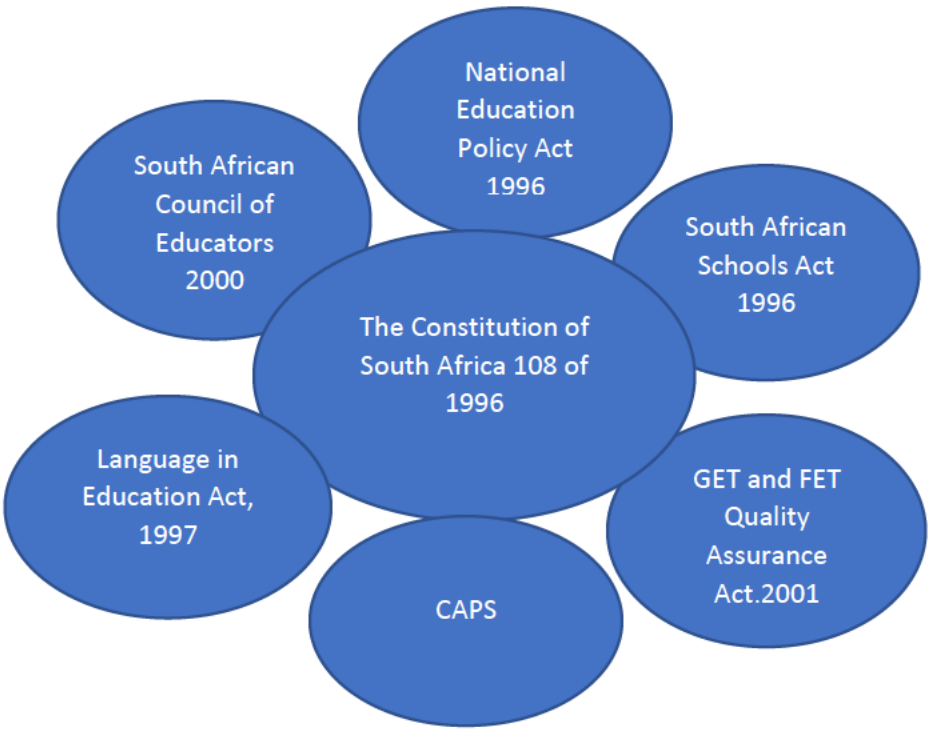

Figure 1.2 Aspects that inform and influence CAPS (adapted from DBE, 2017)

In 2014, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum was introduced in Grade 12. This is the curriculum currently used in all public schools. CAPS has been founded on the principles outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), the Employment of Educator's Act, the South African Council of Educators (SACE), the National Education Policy Act, the South African Schools Act (SASA) and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act of 2001. According to the Department of Education (2017), there is now a Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) available for each subject (Grade R to Grade 12) offered in South African public schools. In 2012, English first additional language (FAL) was also introduced in Grade 1, according to the Department of Education (2017). This forms the LoLT in most schools.

Please refer to page IX and X for a list of acronyms and their meaning as these would be used throughout this paper to define, unpack, and explain certain aspects or concepts that pertain to the topic under review.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This thesis aimed to explore the factors affecting the English First Additional Language (FAL) results at matriculation level. Contextual factors in the sampled schools, the management of these schools and the methods employed to improve the English First Additional Language (FAL) are highlighted and explored. The issue of mother tongue education has been promoted (LiEP, 1997) but has not translated into any practical implementation in South African schools. Instead, English is promoted as the LoLT, and also offered as a subject. One would expect that learners would struggle to adapt to using their second language (FAL) as the language of teaching and learning; however, the contrary was found. Most learners cope well with English, both as a subject and as the LoLT. The fact that most learners are taught in English and can produce a pass mark is significant. The data presented in this paper shows that some of the sampled schools have consistently achieved the set target of 100% in English FAL, over several consecutive years, while others could not reach this same level of achievement. This thesis aims to explore those factors could have contributed to this pattern seen in the data on academic performance in English FAL.

English FAL dominates the schooling system, while the home language, as promoted by the LiEP, is neglected. The home language is given only as a subject. It also dominates the interaction outside the classroom; however, it does not enjoy the same status as English. While some learners do not enjoy nor do well in their mother tongue as a subject, some take up a home language subject which might not necessarily be their mother tongue. Furthermore, although it appears as though most learners are coping with English as the LoLT and subject, the schools that teach these learners are not all equally successful in their English results. The schools in the sample have enjoyed varied levels of success in English as a subject.

The schools selected for this study sample were all using CAPS for the teaching and learning taking place in their schools. It is this common denominator that makes it fascinating that ten sampled schools all using the same curriculum, the same assessment standards, and the same content, achieve varied results in the exit examination (Grade 12 NSC) at the end of the academic year. The set target for passing English FAL as a subject is 100%. Three of the sampled schools (schools A, B and C) have consistently achieved a 100% pass result in the NSC for English FAL

during the assessment period from 2014 to 2018. This study aims to explore how these schools managed this run of 100% for five consecutive years. What did these schools do to achieve this, and can this behaviour be replicated in other schools to ensure the same level of success elsewhere?

Other schools in the sample have, on the odd occasion, achieved a 100% pass rate in English FAL. By contrast, Schools A, B and C have consistently produced a 100% pass rate in English FAL. This factor sets these schools apart from the rest of the sample. These schools are doing something that allows them to achieve success, as opposed to the rest of the sample. The factors shaping the results in these successful schools are explored and evaluated. The purpose of this study is to explore what these factors are; and whether they can be transposed elsewhere to achieve the same level of success as in the mentioned schools.

1.4 Background to the Study

English first additional language (FAL) is offered to most South African learners in the final, exit-level Matriculation Exam. The English FAL papers are written by a group of learners larger than those taking any other subject (School Subject Report, 2016; 2020). Figure 1.4 below illustrates the number of English FAL candidates compared with those taking Mathematics and History in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. English FAL has consistently produced the largest numbers.

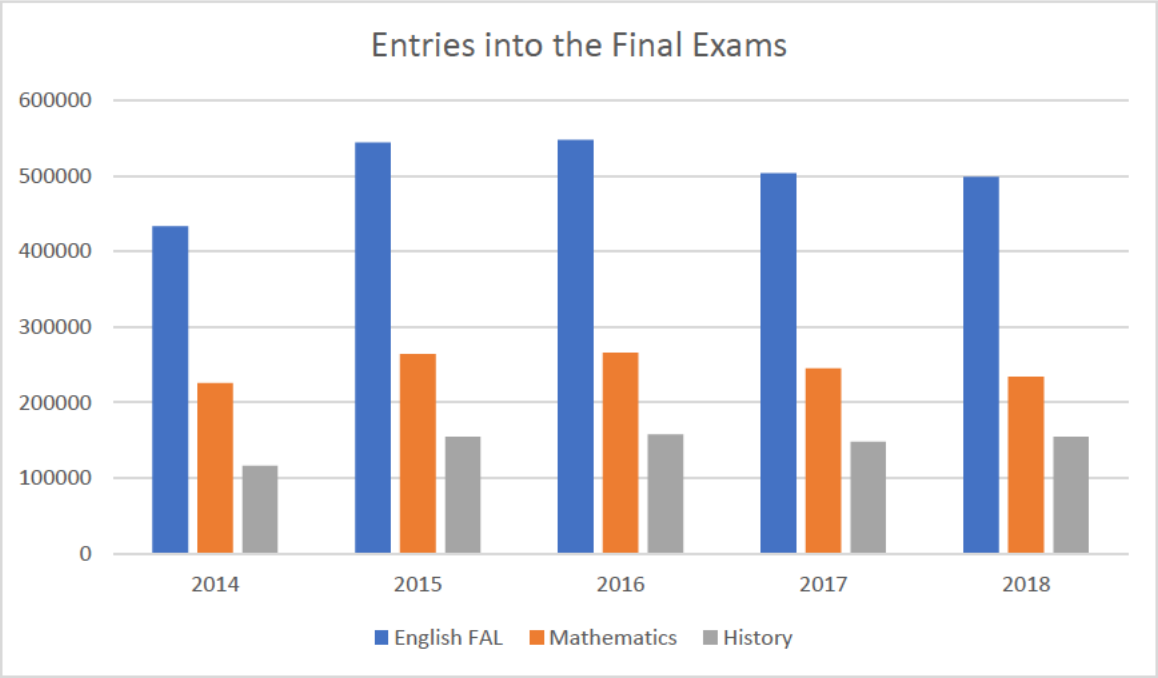

Figure 1.4 NSC Entries for 2014 to 2018 in English FAL, mathematics, and history (adapted from DBE, 2019)

Figure 1.4 indicates that the candidates writing the English FAL exit examination is almost double the number of those sitting for Mathematics, and almost three times the number of those candidates sitting for the History examination. This graph clearly shows that the large number of English FAL candidates are significant when compared with the two other subjects. This makes it vital to understand the reasons for achievement, or the lack thereof as so many candidates take part in this examination.

The term 'additional language' within the South African context is preferred to 'second language', because the additional language will exist alongside the first language and be of equal but not necessarily of greater importance to the learner. This clarification is important for its relevance to the South African Constitutional stipulations and to the language in education policy (LiEP) (DAC, 2003: p. 8). In South Africa, the second language is referred to as the first additional language, while the tendency elsewhere in the world is still to speak of second language (SL) or (L2). Research has proven that the academic performance of English learners improves significantly when linguistic support is fused appropriately in the classroom (Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2017). Additionally, the greater the language support given to second-language speakers, the smaller the achievement gaps between English first-language (L1) learners and their second language (L2) peers (Viesca, Strom, Hammer, Masterson, Linzell, Mitchell-McCollough & Flynn, 2019). Long-term exposure to English thus results in second-language speakers becoming suitably proficient in English usage.

The Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) describes a first additional language (FAL) as a language which is not a mother tongue, but which is used for certain communicative functions in society. The FAL is also called a second language. This assumes that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language when they begin at school (DBE, 2011a: 12). In South Africa there is a distinction between home language (HL), referred to as a first language, and the first additional language (FAL), i.e., the second language. This second language is learnt and taught in addition to one's HL and it may be taught formally in kindergarten, reception year, 'Grade R', and at school. The second language (FAL) may be introduced earlier by

parents at home, and/or as learners interact with others in their immediate environment (Mohlabi-Hlaka, 2016: p.11; Manyike, 2007: 14; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2006: 04). The evidence uncovered in a study of matric results in 2015 suggests that English is taken by almost every learner, either as a home language (HL) subject or an additional language (FAL) (Berkowitz, 2017). English is viewed as essential for educational and professional success. A poor command of English will result in poor academic achievement.

Berkowitz concludes that English enjoys a privileged position in basic education. He states that it is overwhelmingly the language of instruction (LOI) in basic and higher education. English is seen as a more practical and efficient choice of communication in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual country like South Africa. The rapid progress of globalisation and the increasingly growing role of English in trade and industry have resulted in English becoming the lingua franca for most economic and industrial discourses (Atamturk, Atamturk & Dimililer, 2018). Worldwide, English is therefore in great demand, and learners are encouraged to perform well in the subject. Schools, however, are not equally successful in teaching the language, and results in the NSC are often varied, differing from school to school. This study has explored some factors which may influence the English results.

1.5 Overview of Key Studies dealing with the Topic

The key concepts that drive this study include Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), First Additional Language (FAL), Principals (School Managers), Transformational leadership (TL), the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Matriculation exam (Matric). These concepts form the key conceptual framework that underpins this paper. While the key concepts listed are central to the topic under review, they are also supported by other relevant concepts as will be demonstrated in the later chapters.

This study draws from and builds on various other research studies. However, the following studies have been identified and examined as key studies that shape this study. Since this study deals with second language (FAL) and learners' proficiency and academic achievement therein, it draws on Cummins's BICS and CALP studies (1979). The various types of language use and the explanation provided by Cummins

form the backbone of this study. While other studies are used to explain the findings, the terms BICS and CALP from Cummins will be used throughout this thesis.

While the widely used acronym BICS refers to the basic interpersonal communicative skills in a language, CALP refers to cognitive academic language proficiency. These proficiencies are vital in the context of learning a second language, and become even more relevant when the second language is the vehicle used for teaching and learning. The DoE (2002) notes that abstract cognitive academic language skills are needed for thinking and learning. In short, CALP is needed for learning.

Cummins's BICS and CALP doctrine is complemented by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1986). In line with Cummins, Vygotsky (1986) argues that persons who lack the 'concepts' for learning will not be able to fully understand certain pieces of the information presented to them; this despite having knowledge of the individual words given. The correlation between BICS, CALP, and Vygotsky's concepts is outlined. The roles of social interaction (SI), the more knowledgeable other (MKO), and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) are used to make sense of the findings in this study. Both Cummins and Vygotsky explicitly believed that learning takes place over stages.

These stages, as well as the teaching and learning process, must be efficiently managed to achieve success. The sampled schools were also viewed in terms of how they managed this learning process. While many management theories are available and used in schools, the researcher decided on the use of McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y management approaches. This framework is based on the premise that managers communicate with, and motivate employees, based on their assumptions about human nature. Many more recent management theories also have their roots in McGregor's theory; however, this theory is also not devoid of resistance and criticism. Thus, the vital aspects of transformational leadership (TL) and instructional leadership (IL) are outlined, discussed, and put into perspective.

The researcher believed that the use of Cummins's, Vygotsky's and McGregor's studies would be relevant, understandable, and appropriate for describing the findings. While these studies are explored in detail in the literature review and theoretical framework chapters, the studies are mentioned at this point to contextualise the research related to the topic of this thesis.

1.6 Research Objectives and Questions

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore principals' understanding of the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level.
2. To understand the reasons behind principals' understanding of the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level.
3. To identify the measures principals have put in place to improve English FAL results at matriculation level.
4. To understand the importance of principals' explanations of English FAL results at matriculation level.

This thesis seeks to address the following questions:

1. How do principals understand the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level?
2. What shapes principals' understanding of the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level?
3. What measures have principals put in place to improve English FAL results at matriculation level?
4. Why do principals put in place or adopt the measures they adopt to improve the English FAL Results at Matriculation Level?

1.7 Overview of the Research Process

1.7.1 Research paradigm:

This study used an interpretive paradigm, perspective, or lens. Henning (2005) describes the interpretive paradigm as a means of deriving meaning from the social interaction in which people engage. The interpretive paradigm does not see definitions as cast in stone. Rather, it sees the context in which teaching takes place as fluid, changing, and unique.

Within the interpretive paradigm, knowledge is constructed by both the observed behaviour and the unseen intentions, beliefs, and values of the participants (Henning, 2005). This paradigm is ideal for interpreting principals' understanding of the factors affecting English results at matriculation level.

1.7.2 Research approach

This study follows a qualitative approach. Creswell (2008, p. 2) describes a qualitative research approach as “an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.” Thus, a qualitative research approach denotes the type of inquiry in which the qualities, characteristics, or properties of a phenomenon are examined to gain a better understanding or explanation thereof. The qualitative research approach is a sequence of interpretation activities that does not consider a single methodological approach superior to other approaches. Furthermore, it has no obvious theory or paradigm of its own. It has no distinctive method or practice of its own (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 6).

Qualitative research does not try to produce generalizable outcomes; generalization is not the most crucial criterion in determining the importance of qualitative research. When the qualitative method is used, it is often located in the interpretive paradigm (Henning, 2005). This study focuses on principals’ understanding of factors that influence the English results at matriculation level. The factors shaping such understanding, as well as the interventions to counter poor performance, were highlighted.

1.7.3 Research design: case study

This study uses a case-study research design, blueprint, or architectural design (Mouton, 2001). A case study is an in-depth study of one case; in this study, the case is the ten (10) schools in the Harry Gwala district with varying English results at matric level. Case studies aim to describe what it is like to be in a situation at a particular time. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state that this method aims to capture the participants’ lived experiences of, and thoughts about a situation. Capturing principals’ thoughts on the results can thus be ideally achieved using the case study design.

Case studies are described as “a systematic and in-depth study of a particular instance to generate knowledge” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 4). This is my preferred definition because I view schools as unique within their context, however, universal in the expectations placed on them. Examining the sampled schools for this study can generate knowledge and insight in explaining the results obtained for English FAL: these are schools with different contexts aiming to teach the same curriculum.

1.7.4 Research instruments, sample, and ethics

To generate suitable data for this study, the researcher utilised three data-generation instruments. These were a semi-structured questionnaire (SSQ), semi-structured interviews (SSI), and the selected school's subject improvement plan (SIP), which was used as a source for data analysis. The schools in the sample were purposively sampled based on the best results obtained in English FAL, and other criteria explained later.

The sample comprised ten purposefully selected schools in the Harry Gwala District of KwaZulu Natal. The study was approached with the utmost regard for ethics and professional courtesy. No aspect of the process infringed on the rights of others, including the participants. Every effort was made to ensure that this study was ethically sound in adding value to the existing body of knowledge. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail later in the methodology chapter.

1.8 Researcher's Stance

I am a senior educational specialist (SES) (also known as subject advisor) in Afrikaans, overseeing English home language in the Harry Gwala District of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. My initial view was that learners would perform much better academically should they be taught in their mother tongue. English, used as the LoLT, was prematurely perceived as an obstacle to learning, since learners are receiving academic instruction in their second language, while their home language is offered only as a subject in their respective schools.

Data generated has refuted the claim that learners are struggling due to being taught in the second language. Instead, the claims made by linguists such as Cummins have been confirmed. The strongly developed first language provides the proficiency to adapt with ease to a second language. The effects of the first language are positively felt in some of the sampled schools, but negatively in other sampled schools. This is discussed in detail later in the thesis.

The academic performance of schools was previously judged by me as either poor or good. This study, however, has highlighted the contextual factors that impact on the school's ability to be successful. These factors can also provide alternative responses and interventions to ensure that context does not derail the teaching process. The

study also provides a better-informed explanation of the academic performance of some schools. The obstacles that some of these schools face is glaring; however, the resilience of these schools is also commendable, and should not be overlooked.

1.9 Delimitations of this Study

The delimitations of this study are those characteristics that limit the scope, and define the boundaries of the study (Simon, 2011). Simon (2011) describes the delimitations as factors within the researcher's control. These factors include the objectives of the study, the research questions asked, variables of interest pertaining to the study, theoretical perspectives that the researcher has adopted (as opposed to what else could have been chosen), and the population chosen to be investigated.

The first delimitation was the choice of topic itself; implying there are other related aspects that could have been chosen but were rejected in favour of the selected one. English FAL was selected as the choice to be explored. Other languages used in the schools were excluded based on the interests of this study. English is the constant variable in the entire sample; the study scrutinises the achievement in this subject. A further delimitation in terms of the topic is the choice of principals as participants. In this study, the views and experiences of teachers and learners were not considered.

Literature reviewed for this study deals with second-language learning, social learning and the factors relating to these aspects. English is taken as a second language; however, it also dominates as both the language of learning and as a subject. This study limits itself to the academic performance in the subject of English.

Methodologically, I wanted to capture the real-life situation that prevails in the sample. The interpretive paradigm was thus the best choice, as opposed to the constructivist and positivist paradigms. The methods employed were aimed at capturing meaning, rather than measurement. The data-generation tools were focussed on gaining the participants' thick descriptions of the situation in their schools. Measurements and statistics would not have helped to explain factors affecting results.

1.10 Organisation of this Thesis

This thesis has been divided into seven chapters which will be presented as follows:

Chapter 1

This introductory chapter contains a description of the motivation, purpose, and background to this study. This section also outlines the research problem, research objectives, research approach, methods, and the structure of the research. The researcher's stance, the delimitations, and the organisation of this thesis are explained. Chapter One concludes with a list of appendices, and a glossary of the terms used in describing essential aspects of this study. This chapter aims to provide a bird's eye view of the research study and an orientation to the way in which the project was put together as a unit.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The various theories and how they relate to this study are unpacked and related to the research aims. BICS and CALP, as well as social learning theories, are discussed. The critique of these theories is highlighted, and the underlying theories to these concepts are outlined. As renowned theorists, Cummins and Vygotsky's theories are coupled with McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y management theories. The vital role of managing the teaching process, and the crucial role of the leadership in school in promoting academic performance is explored and outlined. The differences between leadership and management are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 a review of the research literature relating to English FAL is discussed. Factors influencing the results in English, including the role of language in the classroom and in school leadership, are highlighted. The way in which results are influenced by the school context and school leadership is outlined, and classroom management as a way of improving results is deliberated in this chapter. The employer's expectations from principals are discussed and outlined. Academic performance and how this is influenced by the school context is explored and highlighted. Classroom management (CM) and its role in contributing to the results obtained are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology used in conducting this study. The discussion focusses on the research paradigm, the research approach, and the research design.

The case study approach is interrogated, explained, and justified. This chapter also explains the recruitment of participants, data-generation tools used, and the data-generation process. Methods used to gain gatekeeper approval, and ethical concerns and obligations, are noted in this chapter. The advantages and disadvantages of the various data-generation tools are also discussed. Data analysis, feedback to the participants, together with storage and disposal of the data are also outlined in this section. Rigour, trustworthiness, and the limitations of the study were highlighted in Chapter 4. This process is explained and put into perspective for the reader.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 includes data presentation and analysis of the results. The data yielded by the interviews, questionnaires, and subject-improvement plans are outlined in this chapter. The focus here is on principals' understanding of the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level. Aspects such as class size, teacher qualifications, and resources available to improve English, are discussed. The aspects that shape principals' understanding of these factors were explored. It was noted that the time spent as a principal, the conversion of some primary schools to high schools, and the emergence of learners with no clear mother tongue influenced principals' understanding of the factors that shape the results in English FAL. The themes that emerged from the data were emphasised and discussed.

Chapter 6

The penultimate chapter, Chapter 6 outlined the measures that principals have put in place to improve English FAL results in their schools. These methods were explored, and school performance was placed under the spotlight. Methods, such as enforcing English as the medium of communication outside the classroom to improve exposure to the language of instruction, were noted. Target setting, and the recognition of academic performance through awards ceremonies were outlined and discussed. The value of the subject-improvement plans was discussed and evaluated. This chapter also explained why it was important to understand principals' explanations of English FAL results. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion on the obstacles that prevent academic success. These include a lack of parental involvement, aged guardians, and child-headed households. This chapter highlighted these aspects and outlined it in terms of the research questions.

Chapter 7

The final chapter, Chapter 7, summarised the research and the conclusions drawn, and made recommendations for further research, where applicable. This chapter opens with the focus on the main findings, and how these were viewed. The theoretical implications, policy implications, methodological implications, and the professional implications of these findings are outlined, and unpacked. The limitation of this study is also discussed, and the area for further study is suggested. Recommendations for the improvement of English FAL, based on the evidence apparent, are also made in this chapter. The chapter concludes with these recommendations.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, will outline and unpack the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The major theories and their bearing on the topic under review will be discussed, and the relevant literature will be under the spotlight.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framework that informs this study. It highlights the key theoretical frameworks employed in this study to explore the factors which influence the matriculation results in English first additional language (FAL). This study will be underpinned by Cummins's (2000) three hypotheses, namely, the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) dichotomy, the linguistic interdependence hypothesis (LIH) and the linguistic threshold hypothesis (LTH). Krashen (1981) and McGregor (1960) will also be used as management perspectives on school performance.

The theory of social constructivism proposed by Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978) is also used to complement Cummins's theory on language learning. To manage the learning process, the principal must employ a management theory. This study examines McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y styles of leadership. Thus Cummins's, Vygotsky's, and McGregor's work will form the backbone of this study, their theories being aligned with the subject matter under study.

2.2 Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert and Leap (2000) claim that there is a difference between the language that students use when in their social surroundings and when in their educational surroundings. There is one type of language used at school, and another that students use when in their home environment with friends and family. The various types of language compare well with the BICS and CALP explanation provided by Cummins (1979, 1981a). Johansson (2015) also refers to two types of English − one type used in everyday conversation, and another in the school or academic context. The distinction between conversational and academic language is important to note.

The widely used acronym BICS refers to the basic interpersonal communicative skills in a language. Basic communication relates to everyday conversation as a means of communication. Conversational fluency is often acquired to a functional level within about two years of initial exposure to the second language; whereas at least five years

is usually required to catch up to native speakers in academic aspects of the second language (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981a; Klesmer, 1994).

In Cummins's 1979 system, the interdependence hypothesis holds that transfer of proficiency across languages will occur if there is sufficient exposure and motivation. The threshold hypothesis deals with the cognitive and academic outcomes of various patterns of bilingual skills. This hypothesis, according to Cummins and Swain (1986), argues that the positive cognitive effects of bilingualism are dependent on the linguistic competence in both languages. This is based on Cummins's (1979) survey of the results of several studies on bilingualism. Another author, Bylund (2015), concurs with the positive effects of bilingualism.

Bylund refers to the findings of Thomas and Collier (2002) that confirm that primary language instruction for more than four years has a positive effect on academic achievement. This may mitigate the risks in learning faced by learners from a lower socio-economic status. Cummins (1981) argues that the best way to develop CALP in the second language is first to establish the CALP in the primary language. Once a minimum threshold is reached in the primary language, these achieved proficiencies can be transferred to the second language. This is what Cummins refers to as the common underlying proficiency (CUP). Proficiency in the primary language can be transferred to the second language (Cummins, 1981). BICS and CALP, however, have different developmental paths.

A failure to understand the distinction between these two types of language proficiencies may lead to inappropriate assumptions about a learner's language ability; for instance, second-language learners may be excluded from direct English instructional programmes because they appear to be fluent in conversational English; however, they may lack the necessary academic language, reading and writing skills essential for success in the content area (Cummins, 2000).

BICS and CALP can be viewed as largely descriptive. They do not explain the cognitive processes that are underlying in second-language development (Bylund, 2015). Vygotsky (1986) provides some insight into the cognitive development of language. In his book *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky describes the role of language. When reviewing the English results obtained at matriculation level, it would

be a serious omission if the influence of BICS and CALP were ignored. The fact that most learners in South Africa write their final exam in English, which is neither their mother tongue (MT) nor first language (L1), places a strong focus on the BICS versus CALP argument. The role of language and the social interaction that takes place in the school, classroom, and playground are also contributing factors to language learning and acquisition. The purpose of language is essentially to serve as a psychological tool for analysing and solving complex problems in the world in which we find ourselves. BICS is the first step in this process.

Baker (2001) concurs with Cummins's descriptions of BICS and CALP by noting that BICS occurs where there is contextual support for language delivery. This contextual support occurs in the form of face-to-face situations, which provide non-verbal support to ensure understanding. Actions such as the use of eye contact, hand gestures, instant feedback, cues, body language, and clues, strongly support verbal communication. CALP, on the other hand, supports academically oriented contexts. This involves higher-order thinking skills that are required by the curriculum in use. Visual cues, body language, clues, and hand gestures are absent in this domain; and cannot be counted on to reinforce meaning and understanding in a language.

Teachers need to understand the difference between social language, used for conversation (BICS) and academic language acquisition (CALP) (Haynes, 2018). English language learners (ELLs) employ BICS when they are on the playground, in the lunchroom, on the school bus, at parties, playing sports and talking on the telephone (Cummins, 1981; Haynes, 2018). Furthermore, social interactions are usually context embedded, and they occur in a meaningful social context. These are not cognitively very demanding. The language required in BICS is not specialised. These language skills usually develop within six months to two years (Cummins, 1981). Cummins further believes that this stage of language development is characterised by the meanings of words that depend heavily on "situational and paralinguistic clues". Figure 2.2.1 below provides an outline of the BICS/CALP contextual framework (Cummins, 2000).

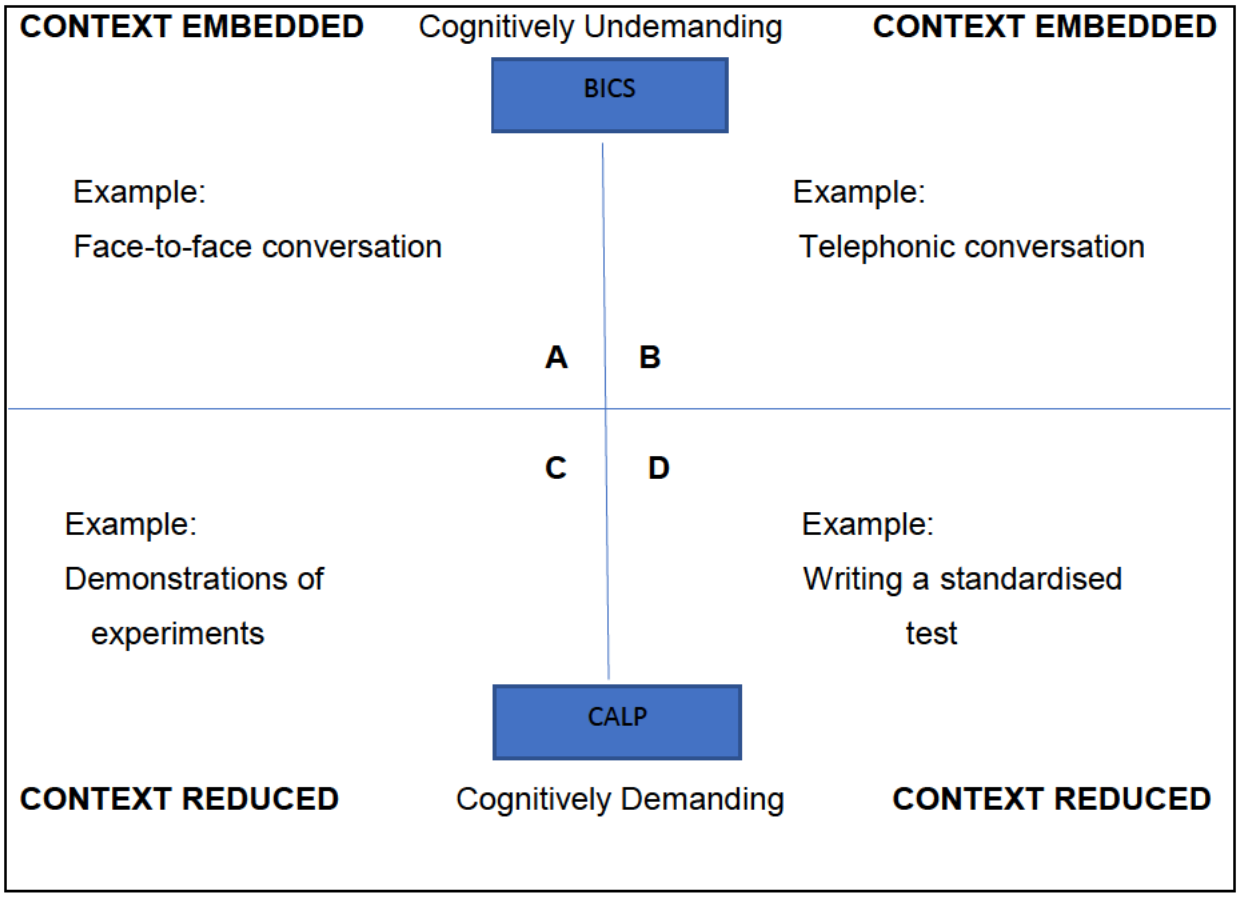

Figure 2.2.1 BICS/CALP outlined with related examples – adapted from Cummins (2000)

In the above framework the horizontal continuum ranged from context-embedded (A and B) to context-reduced (C and D), and the vertical continuum ranged from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding (Cummins, 2013). The four quadrants result in various degrees of contextual support and cognitive demand for various language activities. Cummins strongly believes that this framework has provided pedagogical implications for a BICS/CALP distinction. Context-embedded implies that the language is supported by contextual clues in the environment. These clues can include objects such as pictures, props, manipulatives, charts, graphs, and the like, which help the second-language learner make meaning from the spoken or written word (Cummins, 1981). Context-embedded language is also a direct result of students interacting with one another to gain interpersonal clues on further constructing meaning. According to Cummins, a "here and now" context is a necessary ingredient if the input is to be comprehensible (Cummins, 2000). In quadrants C and D the context is much reduced, and the cognitive demand is higher. This means that the context here presents fewer cues and clues to support the spoken or written words

which would help make the language comprehensible for learners (Cummins, 2013). Context-reduced language is abstract; usually the context is known only to the author, teacher, or presenter, i.e., textbooks, a teacher, a lecture. Cummins's framework depicts quadrants C and D as context reduced. The framework requires CALP to make sense of the learning process.

Haynes (2018) believes that problems arise when teachers and administrators think that a learner is proficient in a language when they demonstrate good social, conversational English. A good command of BICS is often mistaken for an equally good grasp of CALP. This is not always the case, as BICS and CALP have very different characteristics, as outlined above. Contact with academic language (CALP) in the school is experienced as new and unfamiliar; this language is sometimes learned with great difficulty and under tension.

Research, such as that of Cummins, drew attention to the unequal achievements of migrant children in terms of their conversational fluency and their academic language proficiency. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) brought attention to the fact that Finnish immigrant children in Sweden appeared to educators to be fluent in both Finnish and Swedish. However, the immigrants still showed levels of verbal academic performance in both languages considerably below grade/age expectations. The relevance of the BICS/CALP distinction for bilingual students' academic development was reinforced by similar research studies (Cummins, 1980, 1981b). These studies showed that educators and policymakers often combined conversational and academic dimensions of English language proficiency. This contributed significantly to the creation of academic difficulties for students who were learning English as an additional language (EAL).

It should thus be noted that a clear distinction exists between conversational ability and cognitive ability in the classroom set-up. In this study, the focus on academic results is concerned with the learner's CALP abilities. Oral skills are very limited in the final mark that the learner achieves. BICS, however, is acquired more rapidly than CALP, and is seen as a prerequisite to CALP development. While BICS develops rapidly (within two years), CALP takes longer for someone to acquire. CALP requires on average a period of five-to-seven years to develop (Cummins, 2008).

People belonging to certain groups will use a language with words and sounds that are suitable and acceptable to the group (Johansson, 2015). Members of that social group will effectively communicate with one another because they all understand the concepts used in the group's language. When this language is closely aligned with the language used in the school, the members of these groups make significantly better progress than those whose language of interaction is more distant from the school language. This is of interest to this study, as the learners being considered in this study are assessed in their second language (L2). Different groups will describe things differently in conversation depending on their social class, and on the way in which they construe reality through the perspective of their social class (Johansson, 2015). Such constructions of reality from various perspectives will result in language usage that may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for some groups. Thus, the language that people use is an essential part of a person's social class and identity (Ellis, 2008; Mozayan, 2015; El-Omari, 2016).

CALP involves skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject-area-content material. This level of language learning is essential for learners to succeed in school. Learners need time and support to become proficient in academic areas. Research (Helm, 2007; Kang, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 1995; Woo, 2009) has shown that if a child has no prior schooling or has no support in home language development (L1), it may take longer for English second-language learners to catch up to their peers. Support is required for success. Furthermore, CALP acquisition is not simply the understanding of content area vocabulary. CALP includes skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesising, evaluating, and inferring (Haynes, 2018).

CALP is not merely a developmental extension of BICS − it is the qualitatively different use of language (Bylund, 2015). CALP is not merely language use − it constitutes the combination of language and thought. Academic language tasks are often context reduced and require a measure of cognitive development and language development. Information is read from a textbook or presented by the teacher. As a learner grows older the context of academic tasks becomes more and more reduced. As learners progress in grades, the language also becomes more cognitively demanding. New ideas, concepts, and language are presented to learners at the same time during their academic progression. CALP development, therefore, is vital for academic progress. Table 2.2 below outlines the basic functions of BICS and CALP.

Language Proficiency	Function
Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)	– The surface skills of listening and speaking acquired quickly by language-learning individuals during the language-learning process.
Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)	– The language learner's ability to cope with the academic demands placed upon their various subjects during the language-learning process.

Table 2.2.2 Language Proficiencies for Second-language Acquisition. Adapted from Cummins (2000)

Bernstein (1971) described the academic-language and related skills as an elaborate set of codes. The learners from those social groupings unfamiliar with these codes struggle to perform well in school. Johansson (2015) argues that, assuming that Bernstein was correct in his theory of a restricted and elaborated code, there are ways of incorporating these perspectives into the classroom. One perspective is that language is a social convention and therefore the school and society demand knowing the elaborate code from all learners. Thus, not being able to understand these codes (academic language), these learners perform poorly in their schooling at not only matriculation, but at all levels of the education system.

Kubota (2016) also refers to this elaborate set of codes and its friction with conventional English usage. This author states that it is necessary to understand these ideological tensions and the contradiction between fixed conventions (standard, acceptable English) and pluralistic approaches. The media is referenced as perpetuating linguistic norms by the insistence on using this standard English in their reporting of daily events. Kubota (2014) states that, despite coming from vast linguistic diversities, news anchors on television tend to speak a standardised variety of English, rather than a locally dominant variety. This reinforces the idea of so-called legitimate English that requires understanding and correct use by knowing these elaborate sets of codes used as the standard in reporting events on television. Learners familiar with these sets of codes will perform well academically, while those who do not know these conventions are bound to struggle academically and perform poorly due to this factor.

This study examines academic achievement of Grade 12 learners in English FAL. The questions inevitably arise: Has BICS been sufficiently efficiently achieved to pave the

way for CALP? Has enough linguistic and cognitive development occurred for learners to use language, even if it is not their mother tongue (MT), as a psychological tool to successfully employ it for analysing, understanding, and problem-solving?

The value of CALP cannot be underscored. Anderson (2011) states that CALP is crucial for participation in the global economy. This author states:

> A vital aspect of preparing learners for the globalised "knowledge society" is the development of (cognitive) academic language proficiency (CALP) in an L2 for use in postgraduate and/or professional environments (Anderson, 2011, p. 12).

Baker (2001) uses the iceberg analogy to demonstrate the relationship between BICS and CALP. In the illustration, language skills such as comprehension, pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar lie above the surface, and these are used in conversation (BICS). The CALP skills lie below the surface and include skills such as analysis, synthesis, and semantic meaning, as illustrated.

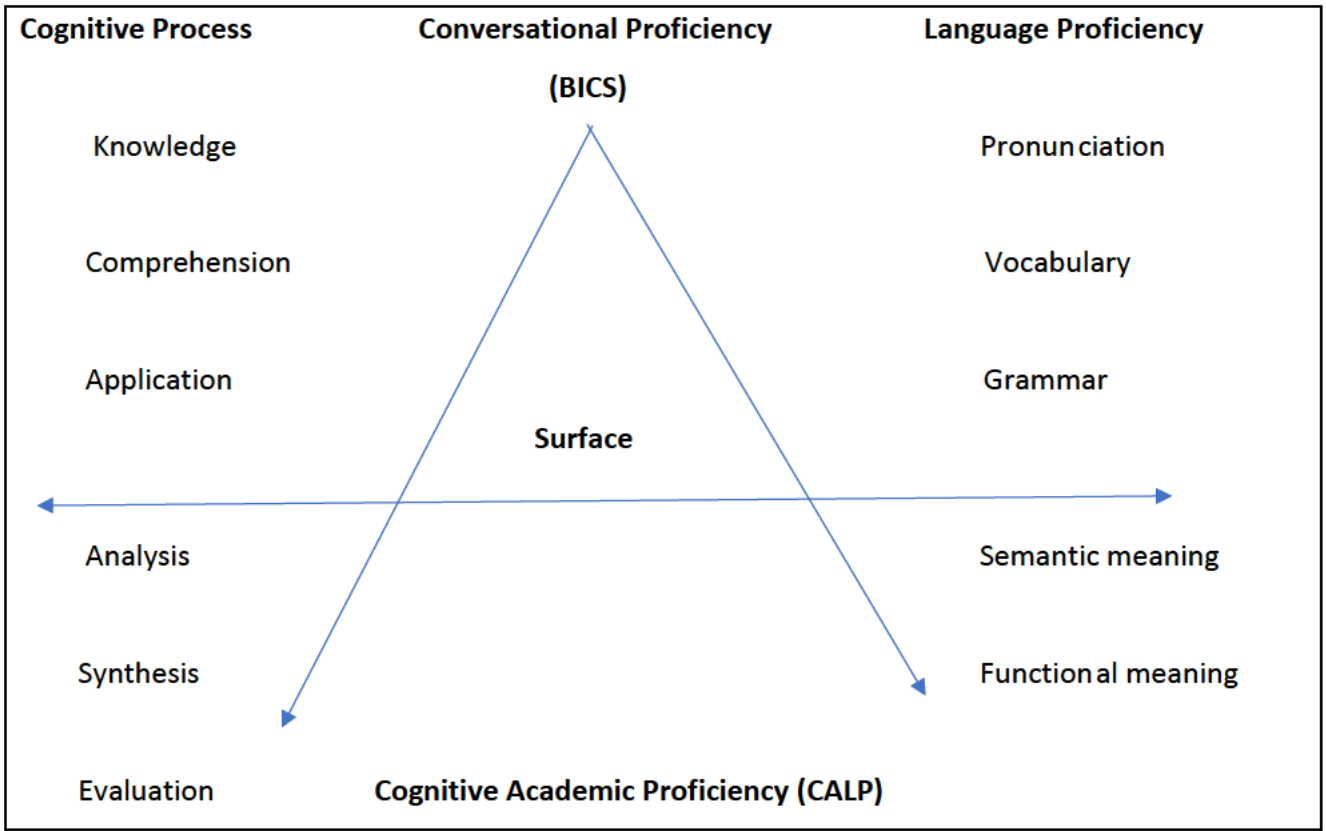

Figure 2.2.3: The BICS – CALP iceberg. Adapted from Baker (2001: 170)

Overall, Cummins (2000) purports that BICS and CALP are language registers that encompass both oral and written modes of communication during the language

development and learning process. Westby (1994) concurs that an individual first learns to speak in their early school life and later speaks to learn academic language. The language development process shows progression from the basic (BICS) to more complex (CALP) use and understanding of the language. The best way to develop CALP in the second language (L2), according to Cummins (1981), is to first develop CALP in the primary language (L1). In accordance with Cummins (1981), Thomas and Collier (2002) found that the strongest predictor of second language (L2) achievement is the length of primary language schooling received by a learner. Language theorist Chomsky (1975) also contends that language acquisition is a gradual and creative build-up of knowledge systems about the language, resulting in improved general competence and not merely performance of habits in isolated instances. Chomsky also echoes the progression required to move from the basic (BICS) to a more complex understanding (CALP). CALP, therefore, is not merely the intersection of thought and language (Bylund, 2011), but the level of language acquired beyond mere conversation.

2.3 Critique of BICS and CALP

As with any hypothesis, the BICS and CALP dichotomy is not without criticism. The most notable criticism came from Edelsky et al. (1983). These authors believed that Cummins's BICS/CALP dichotomy ignored power relations and social practices (Edelsky et al., 1983; Wiley, 1996). Edelsky et al. (1983) also referred to CALP or academic language proficiency as little more than "test-wiseness". Edelsky et al. viewed this as an artefact of the inappropriate way in which it has been measured (Edelsky et al., 1983). Edelsky et al. further contended that the notion of CALP promotes a "deficit theory" insofar as it attributes the academic failure of bilingual/minority students to low cognitive/academic proficiency rather than to inappropriate schooling (Edelsky, 1990; Edelsky et al., 1983; Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986).

In response to the above critiques, Cummins and Swain (1983) point out the elaborated socio-political framework within which the BICS/CALP distinction was placed (Cummins, 1986; Cummins, 1996), in which underachievement among subordinated learners was accredited to coercive relations of power operating in the society at large and reflected in schooling practices. Cummins (1996) also summoned

the work of Biber (1986) and Corson (1995) as evidence of the linguistic reality of the BICS/CALP distinction. Corson (1995) highlighted the massive lexical differences between typical conversational interactions in English, compared with academic or literacy-related uses of English. The BICS/CALP distinction was explained through this comparison.

Correspondingly, Biber's analysis of more than one million words of English speech and written text revealed underlying dimensions unswervingly with the distinction between conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency. Cummins further pointed out that the construct of academic language proficiency (CALP) does not in any way depend on test scores as support for either its construct validity or relevance to education, as clarified by the studies of Corson and Biber. The researcher in this study finds enormous value and substance in Cummins's BICS/CALP theories, while acknowledging potential shortcomings.

2.4 Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH)

The LIH argues that first-language reading ability transfers to second-language reading, as learners make a cross-linguistic transfer of their abilities from the first language to the second language. There is an interplay between the first language and the second language in the learning of new concepts (Cummins, 1979). The LIH holds that language proficiency in first-language readers would allow such learners to be equally proficient second-language readers. The second language is thus dependent on a learner's first-language abilities. Baker and Jones (1998) concur and claim that a more developed or proficient L1 makes it easier to develop an L2. According to Cummins (1979), the LIH suggests that a transfer of proficiency across languages will occur, given that the learner has enough exposure and motivation (Khatib & Taie, 2016). The school learners whose results are considered in this study, are mostly second-language learners of English. It is thus important to keep in mind that the LIH could be a factor in the results achieved at L2 level.

The complementary nature of the first language to the second language is expressed in the observation that "the mother tongue is the launch pad for the second language" (Morgan & Rinvolucri, 2004, p.8), and that the best way to learn the meaning of a word is by translation into the first language (Nation, 2003). The degree to which the L1 would positively impact on L2 learning is dependent on the level of learner proficiency

in the first language. The more proficient, the more L1 eases the acquisition of the L2 concepts and precepts, as illustrated below.

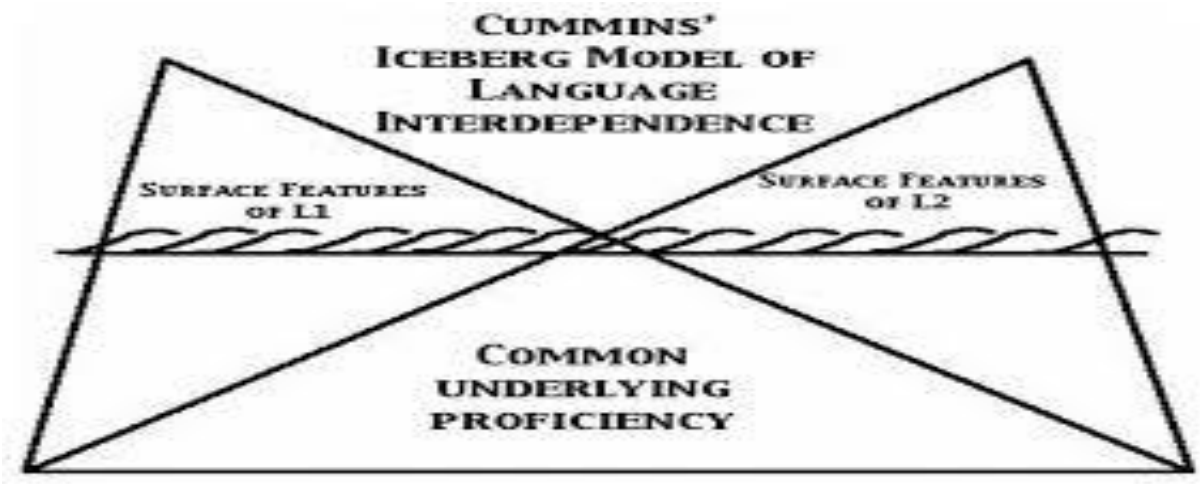

Figure 2.4.1 The Language interdependent hypothesis (LIH) - adapted from Cummins (2005)

Figure 2.5 illustrates that language proficiency lies below the surface of both HL and FAL. The same proficiency is used to make meaning of L1 and L2, thus the interdependence. The idea that proficiencies across languages have a positive correlation, has led Cummins to develop the view of a common underlying proficiency (CUP) model (Khatib and Taie, 2016). Cummins ascribes the transfer of CALP in L1 (MT) to CALP in L2 (FAL) to this common underlying proficiency (CUP). The essence of what transfers from L1 to L2 must be related (Bylund, 2015). Cummins et al. (1984) suggest that a correlation between quite dissimilar languages such as Japanese and English were attributed to CUP (Khatib & Taie, 2016). Therefore, CUP should be seen both as linguistic proficiency and as a conceptual term (Cummins, 2005). CUP is illustrated below:

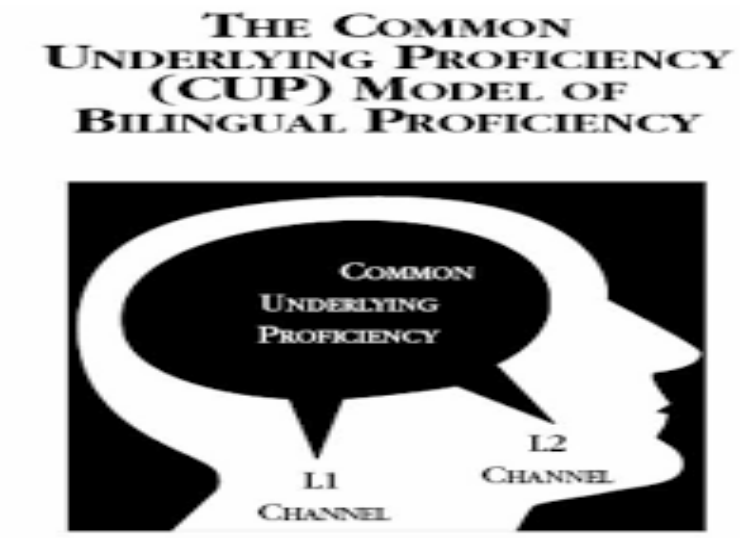

Figure 2.4.2 The Common underlying proficiency (CUP) Model – adapted from Khatib and Taie (2016).

Cummins believes that during language learning, students acquire a set of skills as well as implicit metalinguistic knowledge that can lend itself to working in another language (Mozayan, 2015). This is what Cummins calls "common underlying (language) proficiency" (CUP/CULP) (Cummins, 1986, p.67; Cummins, 1999, p.5). By introducing CUP, Cummins (1986) has tried to show the promotion of cognitive academic skills (CALP) through cross-lingual proficiencies. "CUP refers to the interdependence of concepts, skills and linguistic knowledge found in a central processing system" (Cummins, 1986, p. 67).

Through this model, Cummins (2005) underscored the significance of developing L1 (MT) in minority students for high-level competence achievement of their L2 (SL), particularly in terms of their literacy-related abilities. Cummins believed in the existence of language commonalities or interdependency of the bilinguals' literacy-related proficiency across languages as providing the foundation for the development of both home and second language. In other words, any expansion of CUP transpiring in one language will also have a beneficial effect on other languages being learned. Learners who have a strong linguistic proficiency in their MT will be able to apply the same proficiency in learning another language. Home language will support the learning of the second language.

When parents are seeking the best ways to help their child at home, the language teacher can suggest that they provide opportunities for learners to read extensively in

the mother tongue (Cummins, 2000). In the South African context, should the LIH theory be valid, the strengthening of the mother tongue could thus assist in the overall performance of English results (the second language) at matriculation level. If the mother tongue is not strengthened, this could explain why learning a second language is more difficult for some learners than others.

Baker (2001, p. 165 – 166) summarises the CUP model of bilingualism under the following six points:

• Irrespective of the language in which a person is operating, there is one integrated source of thought used for linguistic processes.

• Bilingualism and multilingualism are possible because people have the capacity to store two or more languages. People can also function in two or more languages with relative ease.

• Information-processing skills and educational attainment may be developed through two languages as well as through one language. Both channels feed the same central processor.

• The language the learner is using in the classroom needs to be sufficiently well developed to be able to process the cognitive challenges presented in the classroom.

• Speaking, listening, reading, or writing in the first or the second language helps the whole cognitive system to develop. However, if learners are made to operate in an insufficiently developed second language in a subtractive bilingual environment (as occurs for many bilingual learners in English-language-only classes), the system will not function at its best. If learners are made to operate in these classroom contexts, the quality and quantity of what they learn from complex curriculum materials, producing such in both oral and written form, may be relatively weak and impoverished.

• When one language is not fully functioning, or when both are not (e.g., because of an unfavourable attitude to learning through the second language, or pressure to replace the home language with the majority language), cognitive functioning and academic performance may be negatively affected. Therefore, given that both languages are interdependent, this must be considered when studying bilinguals and their learning of and understanding of English SL.

2.5 Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis

The third aspect of the theoretical framework referred to is Cummins's linguistic threshold hypothesis (LTH). Cummins (2000) indicates that a certain threshold level of second language is necessary for the home-language reading skills and knowledge to transfer to second-language reading. According to Pretorius and Mampuru (2007), a lack of second-language knowledge 'short circuits' the use of the home-language linguistic skills. Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) concur on this point. This hypothesis assumes that language proficiency is the key factor in reading activities; and therefore, for one to be able to read a language, one must know the language at a certain level of proficiency (the threshold). The LTH suggests that such ability transfers are only possible among learners who have attained a certain level of second-language proficiency. The LTH holds that the extent of learners' proficiency in the first additional language (FAL) is the direct result of their home language (HL) proficiency or threshold (how much the learners know).

The assumption underlying the LTH is that, to take advantage of the merits of bilingualism, a child must achieve a certain level of competence or proficiency in either L1 or L2 (Mozayan, 2015). The LTH holds that if there are to be any benefits from bilingualism, learners must achieve a minimum threshold of the language they acquire or learn. In the same way, maintaining a low level of language competence may have negative consequences. This has been referred to as semi-lingualism. It follows that seemingly, a minimum level of linguistic and conceptual knowledge or BICS is needed in the home language to help develop a bilingual learner who is also successful in academic subjects representing CALP (Francis, 2005).

Figure 2.5.1 below illustrates the LTH.

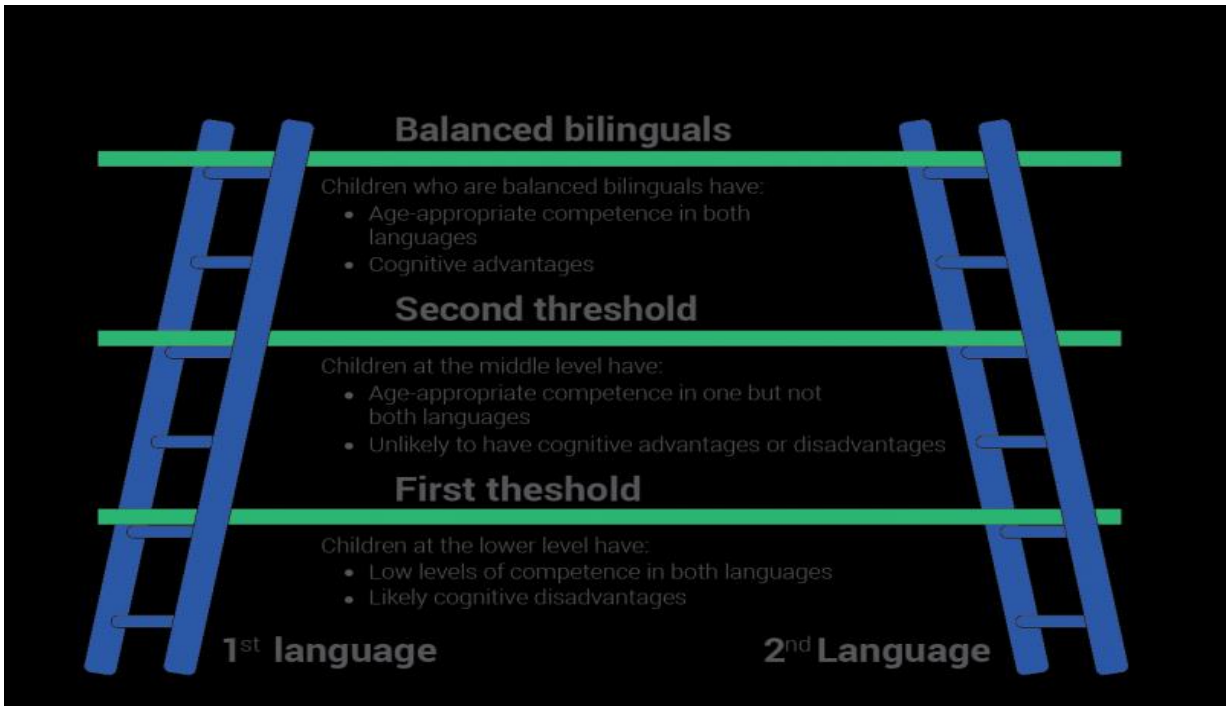

Figure 2.5.1 The Linguistic Threshold Model - adapted from Baker (1996)

If a learner has a low level of language proficiency at the first level of this hypothesis, there will be negative cognitive effects on the learner's learning (Baker, 2001). At the middle level, the bilingual learner will have age-appropriate proficiency in one of their languages (comparable to a monolingual learner), but not in both. This dominance in one of the languages is unlikely to influence cognition in any significant positive or negative way (Baker, 2001). The third or top level of this hypothesis encompasses well-developed bilingual learners who have age-appropriate proficiency in both languages and are likely to demonstrate cognitive advantages over monolingual or weaker bilingual learners (Baker, 2001). Therefore, this implies that learners who have learnt through the medium of isiXhosa but have not developed their language to proficient levels will experience difficulties when transferring to learning through the medium of English. English results will be poor due to the threshold deficiency.

The LTH states that the level of mother-tongue proficiency already reached by a learner determines whether they will experience either cognitive deficits or benefits from learning in a second language (Cummins, 1976). This 'threshold' must be reached in their first language before the benefits of studying in a second language can develop. For those who begin studying in a second language before achieving this

level (threshold), there will be serious learning difficulties and repercussions (Cummins, 1976). Cummins further developed his theory, claiming that there is also a threshold for the second language which must be achieved, to allow the potentially beneficial aspects of second-language learning to influence a learner's cognitive and academic functioning (Cummins, 1976, p. 222). To avoid the negative consequences of bilingualism it is necessary to reach the initial threshold. In reaching the second threshold, a bilingual learner should experience positive benefits from learning in a second language (Baker, 1996). An important inference of Cummins's threshold hypothesis is that learners who are not sufficiently fluent in either of the two languages that they use tend to have difficulties in other subjects as well (Minami & Ovando, 2001).

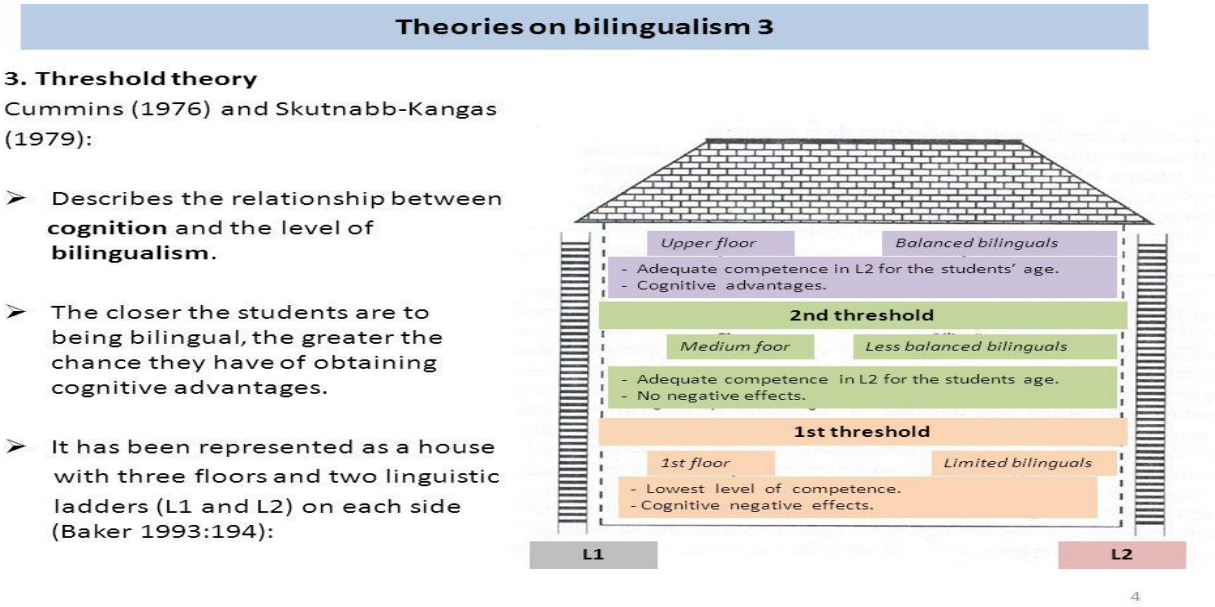

Figure 2.5.2 Baker's Triple Storey House Analogy (1996).

Baker's (1996) Triple Storey House Analogy indicates that learners who have an appropriate level of proficiency in their mother tongue but not in English may not experience any cognitive advantages when learning other subjects through the medium of English. A more positive aspect is that those who have reached the 'threshold' in both mother tongue and English should experience positive cognitive benefits in their learning (Baker, 2001). Ideally, the bilingual learner needs to progress beyond the second level to attain cognitive benefits from learning in an additional language.

Cummins's LTH theory has not been without criticism because it cannot be supported experimentally, there being no clear definition of the "threshold level necessary" (Ahmed, Marriot & Pollitt, 2000, p. 21). A prominent criticism relates to some of the terms used to describe the various bilingual proficiency levels within this theory. These include 'semi-lingualism', 'dominant' and 'balanced' bilingualism. The term 'semi-lingualism' has been criticised because it implies a deficit (MacSwan, 2000). It has also been argued that the use of these terms reflects a narrow view of language competence (Romaine, 1995), and thus a perception of language as being stagnant.

2.6 Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory

Vygotsky's (1986) socio-cultural theory (SCT) brought into play a new perspective of the relationship between cognitive development and language learning (Mirzaee & Maftoon, 2016). However, the most outstanding studies in this domain were limited to the child's cognitive development; and fewer were related to adults. This might be viewed as a shortcoming in this theory; however, it is suited to this study because the focus is on learners' performance, rather than adults. In fact, Vygotsky (1986) upholds that the SCT is regarded as a theory of human cognitive development and higher intellectual functions (Mirzaee & Maftoon, 2016). Vygotsky states that cognitive development and higher mental functions develop from social communications; while people partake in social activities, they are engaged in mental and communicative functions (Vygotsky, 1986).

Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-cultural Theory of Cognitive Development is also referred to as the Social Constructivist Theory of Learning (Jones & Araje, 2002), the Socio-cultural Theory of Human Learning (Briner, 1999), the Sociocultural Theory (Modesto & Tau, 2017), and the Socio-Cultural Learning Theory (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). It is important to note that all these different terms still draw on the ideas and works of Vygotsky. Socio-cultural theory regards mental functioning as a mediated process in which there should be some artefacts to mediate between the human's psychological and social worlds. Social interaction precedes development (Vygotsky, 1978). This socio-cultural theory is widely prominent for its thoughtful understanding of learning and teaching as entrenched in the cultural context of children's everyday lives, and inseparably linked to the way in which children interact with other people. Vygotsky argued that consciousness and cognition are the product of socialisation and social

behaviour (Vygotsky, 1978). The value of social contact and interaction with other people were central to this view. The researcher articulated that the human mind is constructed through a subject's interactions with the world and is an attribute of the relationship between subject and object (Vygotsky, 1978). The relationship between the teacher and learner, as well as the relationship between learners, is social in nature. This interaction and engagement between these parties lead to cognitive and linguistic development.

Vygotsky (1986) also sees language development in stages. The process begins with the unorganised assignment of symbols (words) and then gradually progresses to the next stage. The final stage is mature conceptual thinking (Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky (1986) refers to a stage in language development that is identified using mature "concepts" as part of the individual's "verbal thought". This is when concepts are used as cognitive tools to create meaning out of one's experiences. Just as Johansson (2015) points out the difficulty in the understanding of a language from a different culture, Vygotsky (1986) argues that persons who lack the "concepts" will not be able to fully understand certain pieces of the information presented to them, this despite having knowledge of the individual words given. An example is learners at matriculation level who might know various words but may lack the ability to use them in the correct context.

El-Omari (2016) believes that this process is assisted if the learner is exposed to people who use these concepts correctly. Role-modelling is an effective way of reinforcement of correct English speaking by proficient English-speaking parents. Vygotsky (1986) was a firm supporter of constructive learning through social interaction. Bylund (2015) further contends that Vygotsky's work suggests that the aspects that transfer are evident in the use of mature "concepts" as part of the individual's "verbal thought". Vygotsky (1934) claimed that language development is a dynamic, rather than a static process. He believed that generating ideas and solving problems were influenced by a thinking process that was constantly widening as more and more words were learned by the individual.

Learners who lack the required concepts will be unable to fully comprehend certain pieces of information, even though these learners might have some knowledge of the individual words (Vygotsky, 1986). ''Verbal thought'' facilitates complex thought

processes through selecting, organising, and imprinting essential pieces of information (Vygotsky, 1986).

2.6.1 Vygotsky and BICS/CALP

When a person initiates speech at about 3 years of age, this is primary socialised speech, which steadily divides into two functionally particular types (Vygotsky, 1978). These types develop into speech applied for communication with others, and speech only directed at the self. Stanley (2011, p16) concurs and states: “since private speech branches off from social speech, it becomes thought spoken out loud”; and Bivens and Berk (1990, p.444) note that speech becomes “an externalized self-monitoring system, that plans, directs and controls behaviour”. Vygotsky’s ideas about the private speech role as a mediational tool in child development were not extended to second language (L2) acquisition until the 1980s. Cummins (1986) called the language used for interpersonal communication BICS. Both Vygotsky and Cummins value this language.

Cummins’s (1981) findings that five to seven years is needed for CALP development concurs with Vygotsky’s (1986) stages of development. Vygotsky stated that language development and cognitive development collide at five to seven years of formal schooling. Both researchers concur that this would place the individual at about eleven to thirteen years of age. Language and thought are inextricably linked (Vygotsky, 1986). The relationship between thought and language is defined as developing along separate paths that eventually become intertwined with one another. Vygotsky (1986) notes that these aspects correlate in that development in one, in turn, promotes development in the other. Cummins’s BICS can be viewed as this initial development stage of Vygotsky’s thought and language, in which both language and thought are still in the “prelinguistic” and the “pre-intellectual” stages. Vygotsky argues that these concepts develop over stages that culminate in the qualitative change in the way one uses language to think about information; hence, the step from BICS to CALP. Vygotsky and Cummins concur on the role of social interaction and constructivism, when BICS is discussed. CALP, on the other hand, requires the development of both language and thought to a certain level of proficiency. Cummins (1989) contends that phonological skills in our native language and our basic fluency reach a plateau in the first six or so years (in stages). Vygotsky (1986) acknowledges the role of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) in this stage. This concept is to be discussed later.

Lantolf and Frawley (1984) were among the first researchers who started working on private speech in the domain of adults' second-language acquisition (SLA). The studies conducted by these researchers showed that picture narration tasks in these studies explored probable parallels between Vygotsky's conclusions for children and the private speech used by L2 learners. Regarding the construction of private speech, Frawley and Lantolf (1984) found that adult English second-language (ESL) learners and native English-speaking (NES) children showed similar behaviours. These participants were engaged in a picture narration task, and they produced a significant amount of private speech either to regain or maintain self-regulation in the task; however, both groups had trouble completing these tasks. In an interrelated study, the possibility of some parallels between mastery of the communicative L2 (FAL) use and a reduction in the use of private speech were investigated by Lantolf and Frawley (1984). However, since private speech is enormously internally situated, these researchers specified that this issue did not indicate that the learner with native-like proficiency would be self-regulated all the time, and not require generating any private speech. Similarly, the relationship between the L2 proficiency and the use of private speech, which was a similar picture narration study, was carried out by McCafferty (1994). His discoveries seem to "support the hypothesis that with increased proficiency, learners' use of private speech diminishes" (McCafferty, 1994, p.131). This finding correlates strongly with the earlier-mentioned common underlying proficiency (CUP) model. The strongly developed proficiencies in L1 (MT) are used to make sense of the L2 (FAL).

In the above-mentioned study, McCafferty concludes that "a number of other factors have been shown to influence private speech production" (McCafferty, 1994, p.133). Aspects such as the type of task, the task difficulty, the aim of the task, the total number of participants involved, task modality, the performance mode of the given task, the amount of concern a participant feels about the consequence of the task, and the cultural experience of the participants, were all factors that influenced private speech production (McCafferty, 1992). Salmon (2008) believes that private speech engages our critical thinking, aids us to consider alternatives and consequences, and then to make reasonable decisions. Private speech is applied to control impulses and to think before acting. Reading skills simplify the progress of private speech. Similarly, Centeno-Cortes et al. (2004) have reviewed the works on private speech and

formulated a category solely for the function of reasoning during problem-solving tasks, which they termed private verbal thinking (PVT).

The second aspect of their enquiry focussed on discovering how PVT happens for three different groups of Spanish speakers. These were native speakers (MT) with a high degree of language proficiency in English, and two groups of American university students, one at advanced language proficiency level, and the other at intermediate language proficiency level. The participants had to answer several challenging questions of a general nature in Spanish. The findings showed numerous forms of self-regulatory PVT. Furthermore, PVT was found to follow specific patterns during reasoning. In addition, the language of thought for PVT proved to be entirely Spanish for all. In both groups, the advanced and intermediate L2 (FAL) speakers of Spanish and English were utilized when solving the problems, but the advanced speakers tried unequivocally to maintain Spanish for thinking. Overall, the researchers suggest that it is unlikely that PVT changes completely from the L1 (MT) to the L2 (FAL) even at advanced levels of language proficiency. Also, the authors make a plea for teachers to respect the need for learners to use their L1 (MT) to think through problems. This makes for a strong argument on the earlier mentioned common underlying proficiency (CUP) model of language usage. Cummins's CUP hypothesis and Vygotsky's use of "concepts" are seen in these research findings. Vygotsky's "semantic map" that develops over time with one's experiences and development have a strong correlation with the CUP illustrated in these findings.

Constructivism has a focus of education as a process and not just content, so teachers need to know their learners to effectively organise this process (Mattar, 2018). Anderson (2016, p.38) states that all forms of constructivist theories "share the understanding that individuals' construction of knowledge is dependent upon individual and collective understandings, backgrounds, and proclivities". The idea of constructing knowledge while engaging with other people is prominent in both Cummins's and Vygotsky's works.

Both these theorists have illustrated the benefits of working with others, but it should be noted that this traditional view has changed in modern times. The Web 2.0 movement and new innovations such as blogs and microblogs, podcasting, wikis, social bookmarking, and social networking have contributed to replacing passive

(traditional) teaching practices by those more active, including student-centred learning, peer-review assessment strategies, and the co-creation of knowledge (Mattar, 2018). Siemens (2008) points out that technological advancements and social software expressively alter the way learners gain access to information and knowledge and interact with their instructors and peers.

While this move from passive to active engagement with learning content and methods is noted, this thesis will primarily focus on the more traditional approaches to language development. It is worth mentioning some of the major pedagogical contributions provided by modern technology. Dron and Anderson (2014) list some of the major advantages provided by social software. These authors claim that it helps to build communities and create knowledge; it engages, motivates and is enjoyable. They further state that social software is cost-effective, accountable, and transparent. The modern social software closes the gap between formal and informal learning; it addresses both individual and social needs. It builds expertise, identity, and social capital, while it is easy to use. Dron and Anderson (2014) further contend that it is accessible, while it protects and advances current models of ownership and identity. Furthermore, it is persistent and findable; it supports multiple media formats and encourages debate, cognitive conflict, and discussion. It leads to emergence; is soft; supports creativity; and expands the role of the MKO (Dron & Anderson, 2014).

The applications certainly look appealing and cannot be ignored. It is, however, questionable whether the contextual factors prevailing in the schools in the Harry Gwala District will allow for the effective use of modern social media in the teaching and learning process. The researcher is noting this in the light of some schools not having access to basic necessities such as electricity and water, not to mention libraries or internet access. Several schools (although the minority) in this district do not even have stable cellular phone coverage and power supply, making access to the internet a challenge.

While traditional views of the socio-cultural theory (SCT) associated with the works of main authors such as Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget, form the basis of so many other theories, constructivism can be considered a major theory of learning, and in a wider sense a philosophy of education, used as a universal title to classify several other theories (Mattar, 2018). The need arises to define what we mean by constructivism in

education. There is consensus that there are two major types of constructivism in the classroom: (1) cognitive or individual constructivism depending on Piaget's theory, and (2) social constructivism depending on Vygotsky's theory (Powell & Kalina, 2009). In cognitive constructivism, ideas are constructed in individuals through a personal process, as opposed to social constructivism in which ideas are constructed through interaction with the teacher and other students. Cognitive constructivism was a direct outflow from Piaget's work.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that people cannot be presented with information which they immediately understand and use; instead, humans must construct their own knowledge (Piaget, 1953). The given knowledge must be internalised before it can be acted upon. This process takes place over various stages identified by Piaget. Piaget's stages are recognised and are acknowledged as the basis for representing the growth of logical thinking in children (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Social constructivism is a seen as a highly effective method of teaching that all learners can benefit from since association and social interaction are integrated. Social constructivism was founded after Piaget had already described his theories involving individual or cognitive constructivism. Lev Vygotsky is considered the father of social constructivism. He believed in social interaction and that it was a fundamental part of learning. This theory is based on the social interactions a learner has in the classroom, along with a personal critical thinking process (Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky's research and theories are involved in social constructivism and language development such as cognitive dialogue, the zone of proximal development, social interaction, culture, and inner speech (Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky believed that internalisation occurs more effectively when there is social engagement and interaction with other people.

2.6.2 Understanding Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory

Vygotsky's social constructivism theory was based on various principles. The most important for this study is the focus on social interaction (SI), the more knowledgeable other (MKO), which includes the concepts of scaffolding, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The role of the learner's cultural background is also seen as an important aspect in the learning process. These aspects are discussed in more detail in this section. The aspects of Vygotsky's theory are illustrated below.

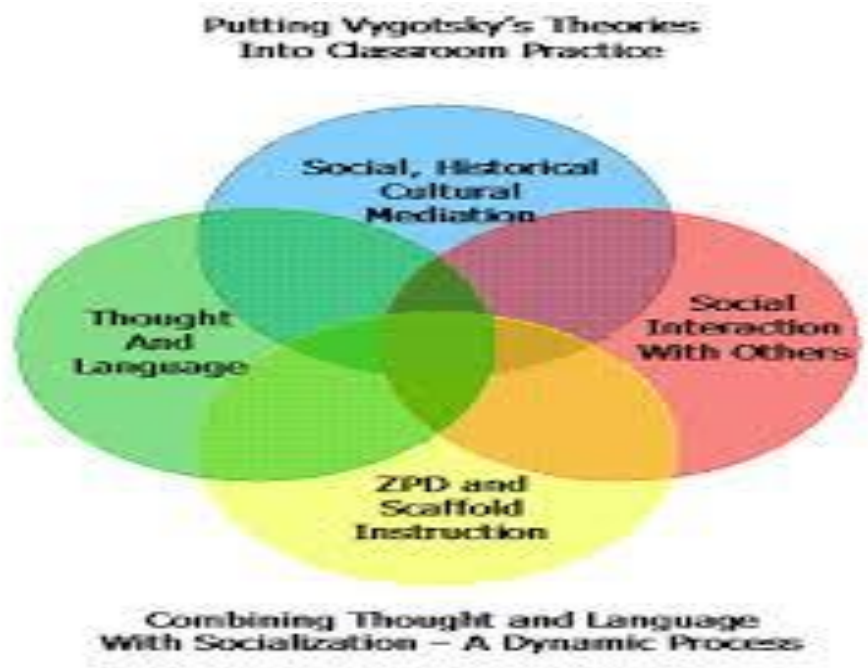

Figure 2.6.2 The aspects of Vygotsky's theory - adapted from Vygotsky (1978)

2.6.2.1 Social Interaction

Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. Vygotsky unwaveringly believed that social learning precedes development. He states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). The social level is between people (social interaction), and known as the interpsychological level; and the individual level which is inside the child – is called the intrapsychological level. Within the interpsychological level, the child gains knowledge through contacts and interactions with people. Later the child assimilates and internalises this knowledge, adding own personal value to it in the intrapsychological level. Vygotsky's theory was built upon the Piagetian idea of the child as being an active learner (Piaget, 1959) but with the emphasis on the role of social interaction in learning and development (Verenikina, 2010). In my study, learners are considered as interacting and engaging on a social basis in the classroom and the school setting. Extra classes, groupwork, and interactive study groups are all forms of the social interaction that Vygotsky was promoting.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that cooperative learning was an integral part of creating a deeper understanding in learners. Cooperative learning is a dynamic part of creating a social constructivist classroom. This implies that learners should not only be working

with teachers one on one, but they should also be working with other learners. Because learners come from a variety of backgrounds and have such varied personalities, learners have much to offer one another. When learners master the completion of projects or activities in a group, the internalisation of knowledge occurs for everyone at a different rate, according to their own experience and abilities (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Furthermore, Vygotsky strongly believed that internalisation occurs more effectively when there is social collaboration and engagement with others.

The shared social interactions when peers work on tasks cooperatively serve as an instructional function, which emphasises the role played by social interaction in learning and development. This method is often used in the learning of mathematics, science, and language arts, which confirms the recognised impact of the social environment during learning (Verenikina, 2010). In the teaching process, this means that both the teacher and student are active agents in children's learning and cognitive development. The teacher's intervention in the child's learning is necessary; however, it is ultimately the quality of the teacher-learner interaction which is seen as crucial to the learning process.

Vygotsky was a firm believer that the way in which a learner learns is greatly influenced by their social interaction with others, and by their cultural influences (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Teachers should strive to recognise the diversity of the class and embrace their differences. Such could serve as a tool for teaching and learning. Diversity is often described as comprising different ethnic backgrounds, but in the classroom, it becomes a combination of identity, ethnicity, and biological differences that give varied experiences and understanding to everyone (Woolfolk, 2004). Vygotsky argued that learners must understand themselves and others around them before they can effectively start learning the curriculum. The teacher who embraces this variety of cultures can allow learners to discuss their differing backgrounds. In the same way that different cultures are discussed, learners should also talk about the material and content being taught. Many teachers are under the impression that talking during lessons is detrimental to learning; however, Vygotsky embraces this interaction as an important learning activity (Vygotsky, 1986). This does not imply that fruitless conversation should be encouraged; nevertheless, teachers can and should use the verbal energy that learners have, to their advantage. Teachers should promote

dialogue of the learning material so that learners can develop critical thinking skills about what they are learning (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

If learners think critically, they will walk away with a personal meaning that is self-constructed. The student-centred approach to teaching and learning is also often referred to as the constructivist approach to teaching and learning. This approach "holds that knowledge, instead of being objective and fixed, is somewhat personal, social and cultural. Meaning is constructed by the learner" (Arends, 2012, p. 355). The idea of discussion and engagement is echoed throughout social constructivism and is enriched by diversity (Vygotsky, 1986). Learners must interact socially to embrace their diversity; and communication is key. Language usage in the classroom is the most important process in a social constructivist setting. Vygotsky believed that language enhances learning and that it goes before knowledge or thinking.

This Vygotskian theory is ideal for use in this study − learning is a social activity not confined to the classroom but given meaning through contact with other people (Vygotsky, 1978). It was therefore important to find out whether principals identify social interaction as a factor to explain the English FAL matriculation results.

2.6.2.2 The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

The more knowledgeable other (MKO) refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a task, process, or concept under discussion (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The MKO is normally thought of as being a teacher, coach, or older adult. However, the MKO could also be a peer, a younger person, or even a computer. In the school, these roles would be occupied by the teachers of various subjects. Vygotsky emphasised that children and adults are both active agents in the process of a child's development and learning (Vygotsky, 1986). The role of the more knowledgeable other (MKO) can be played by various role-players. Some of these are illustrated in Figure 2.9.2 below.

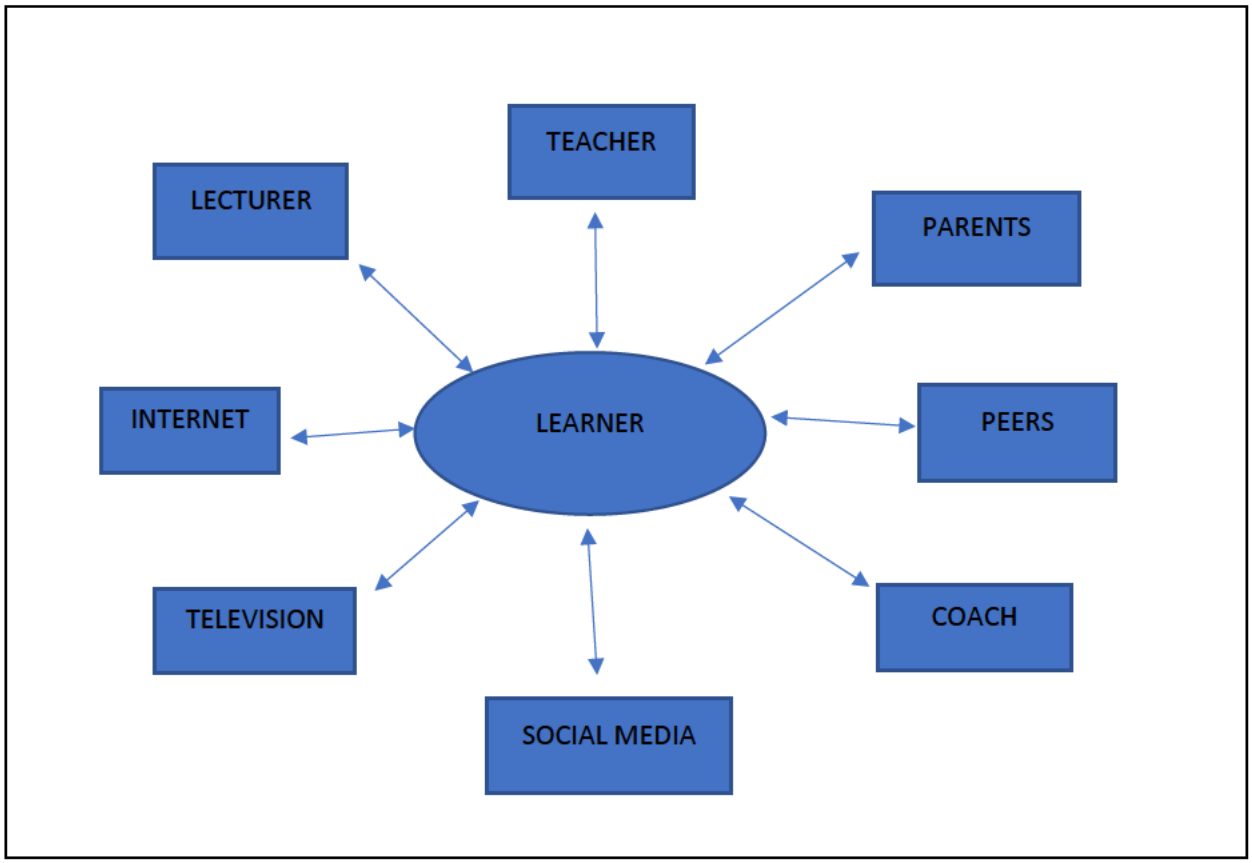

Figure 2.6.2.2 Some role players as MKOs – adapted from Jones and Araje (2002)

Social constructivism requires a guided form of teaching or facilitation. The person who guides or teaches is called the more knowledgeable other (MKO). This teacher or facilitator is seen as knowing more on the topic under discussion than the learners to be taught. This greater knowledge could arise from more engagement on the topic, more exposure to the topic, or even intense studying of the topic (Jones & Araje, 2002). Modern technology has expanded the pool of MKOs dramatically. Social media has given learners exposure to the internet, which in turn is an invaluable expansion of Vygotsky's MKO. It is the role of the MKO to guide learners on constructing their own concepts and understanding of what is being taught.

Siemens (2008) argues that technological advancements and social software have significantly altered the way learners access information and knowledge and interact with their instructors and peers. This means that the pool of MKOs is growing larger and larger. It should be ensured that the sources of information are credible and reliable to serve as effective MKOs in the learning process. It is the role of the MKO to bring learners to an understanding of the content taught. Johansson (2015) alludes to a standardised variety of English rather than a locally dominant variety that is favoured

and tested in academics. This would imply that the MKO in the English class should be someone who has a complete grasp of such varieties. Not just a grasp is required, but so is the ability to help learners to understand and effectively use English within the varieties acceptable under assessment conditions. Not alerting learners to these dynamics could prove detrimental to them when writing examinations, especially exit-level examinations.

It becomes clear that both the teacher and the learner are active agents in learning. The teacher's intervention in children's learning is necessary; however, it is the quality of the teacher-learner interaction which is seen as crucial to that learning process. For this study, the principals were asked to explain the role played by the English FAL teacher in this regard.

2.6.2.3 The zone of proximal development (ZPD)

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). In applying the ZPD, a teacher and a learner work together on a task that the learner could not perform independently because of the difficulty level.

Figure 2.9.3 below illustrates the ZPD and scaffolding.

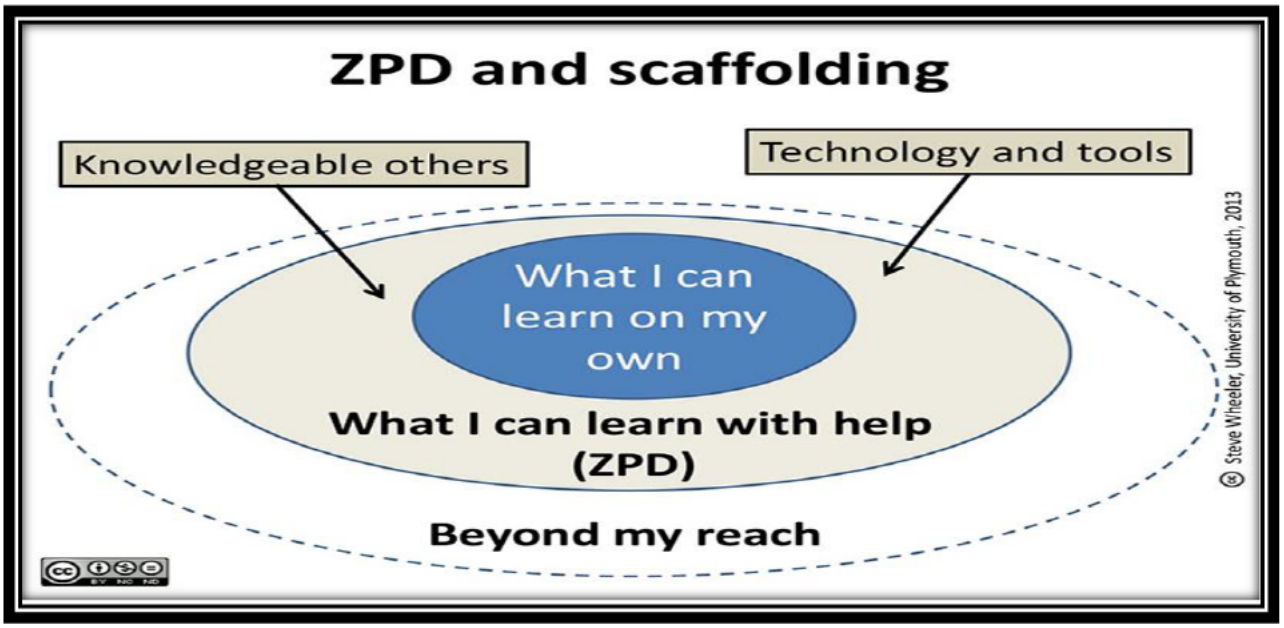

Figure 2.6.2.3.1 An illustration of the ZPD – adapted from Wheeler (2013)

Guided participation is required when working in the ZPD; and learners bring their own understandings to social interactions. Learners construct meanings by integrating those understandings with their experiences in the context. During a reading comprehension, learners should learn to ask questions. To determine their level of understanding, teachers can then include a question-asking strategy in the instructional sequence. Since learners gradually develop skills, this type of teaching comprises the principle of social interaction (SI) and ZPD of the Vygotskian perspective. The gap between understanding English and not performing well in the subject must somehow be bridged by the teacher. According to Jones and Araje (2002), the ZPD is characterised by the teacher and learners working together on a task that the learners could not perform independently due to the difficulty level. This reflects the idea of collective activity, in which those who know more or are more skilled (MKO) share that knowledge and skill to accomplish a task with those who know less on that specific topic.

Likewise, language allows for the storing and recovery of information known as cognition, as well as reasoning about what an individual does or does not know, or metacognition (Winsler et al., 2007). Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD is expanded by Mattar (2018), who suggests a more flexible and stretched variation that includes learning that lies outside the learner, in social networks and technological tools.

When Vygotsky (1986) refers to scaffolding, this implies allowing the reasoning skills to be used to create new understanding. Vygotsky (1986) proposes that a teacher or more experienced peer (MKO) can provide the learner with "scaffolding" to support the student's evolving understanding of knowledge domains or development of complex skills. It is the step-by-step guidance that allows the learner to come to understanding, even to finding the answers independently. The teacher does not provide the solution to the problem but guides the learner to discover the answer or solution independently (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Figure 2.9.2.1 below illustrates the concept of scaffolding with an example of teaching the learners an approach using story and drama.

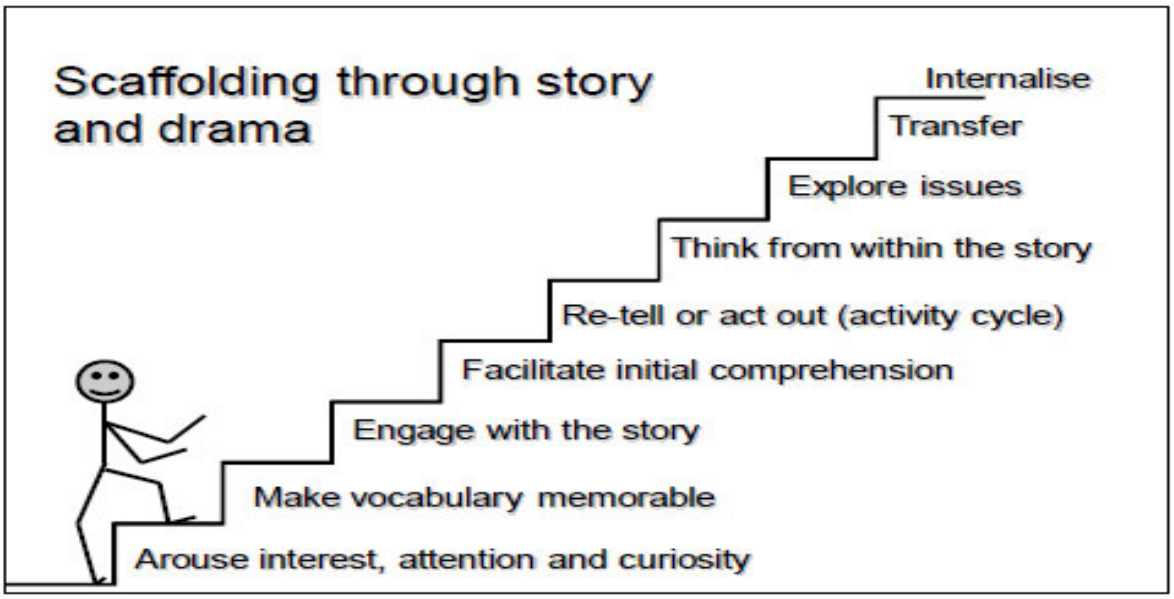

Figure 2.6.2.3.2 The scaffolding illustration - adapted from Read (2008)

Scaffolding allows a unique type of internalisation or "getting it" to occur for each learner. Internalization embodies "What a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.81). In the above definition, all three themes of Vygotsky's writings are apparent. There is a social aspect (social interaction) consisting of someone with expertise (MKO) to provide guidance (ZPD).

Cummins's theory and Vygotsky's social development theory are used to complement the aspects directly studied in this study. Both theories involve the interaction that learners must have to create meaning and learning. While Cummins deals with language acquisition, Vygotsky deals with the learning process through interaction with other role-players. The use of both theories will strengthen the study by grounding it in proven, accepted, and respected theories of learning. The table below highlights the correlation between the selected theories.

Cummins's Theory	**Vygotsky's Theory**
Language develops over time	Language develops over time
Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)	Social contact with others and verbal thought
Common underlying proficiency (CUP)	Semantic map
Phonological skills in our native language	Acknowledges the role of the MKO

Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)	Mature concepts
Constructivism, creating own knowledge	Construct own knowledge by interaction

Table 2.6.2.3.3 Similarities between Cummins and Vygotsky

2.7 Managing the Learning Process

While Cummins's theory provides an understanding of the language acquisition, and Vygotsky's the understanding of the learning process, the processes still need to be managed and guided to be successful. This study examines how principals manage their schools, scrutinising their interventions to help learners to perform well in English. A principal is placed in a school to manage, lead, and guide the teachers, staff, and learners. The principal, as manager, must apply certain theories of management to guide any decisions and actions in the school environment. Sebastian et al. (2018) view skilful and supportive leadership as a significant requirement for improving pedagogical practice. Principals using the transformational leadership style positively influence teachers' outcomes through their vision, temperament patterns, and performance characteristics, to effectively manage performance through reality management (DePree, 2011). Effective leadership involves vision and accountability. It is more and more frequently realised that productive leadership is required in South African schools. Principals also influence the instructional quality and appeal of schools through the recruitment, development, and retention of highly effective teachers (Harris et al., 2010). This means that principals also need to be invitational managers. The work of school principals has become increasingly complex. Principals must spread their time over many responsibilities and deal with a wide range of stakeholders (Sebastian et al., 2018). By focussing more on the dynamics of work and laying less emphasis on individual (employee) characteristics, positive change is endorsed (Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). Leadership frames of reference embody an ideology—a coherent set of ideas—forming a prism or lens that enables one to see and identify what occurs from day to day in schools (Bolman & Deal 2017). This section will focus on these aspects.

2.7.1 Leadership vs management

Effective leadership is vital in the successful running of any organisation (Northouse, 2016; Sebastian et al., 2018). Leadership, however, is manifested in many different ways. Sethuraman and Suresh (2014) define a leader as a person with the responsibility of influencing one or more followers, directing them to achieve a set objective using a range of approaches. These leadership definitions are not common to all leaders in all situations. Another perennial debate is the difference between leadership and management. The differences are outlined below.

Category	**Leadership**	**Management**
Thinking process	• Focuses on people • Looks outward	• Focuses on things • Looks inward
Goal setting	• Articulates a vision • Creates the future • Sees the forest	• Executes plans • Improves the present • Sees the trees
Employee relations	• Empowers • Colleagues • Trusts & develops	• Controls • Subordinates • Directs & coordinates
Operation	• Does the right things • Creates change • Serves subordinates	• Does things right • Manages change • Serves superordinates
Governance	• Uses influence • Uses conflict • Acts decisively	• Uses authority • Avoids conflict • Acts responsibly

Table 2.7.1 Comparisons between Leadership and Management – Adapted from Lunenburg (2013).

The terms leadership and management are often used synonymously. However, as Table 2.7.1 above shows, the two designations have different approaches. It is the researcher's opinion that principals need to exercise a combination of both leadership and management characteristics in their positions. While it is important to focus on the teacher, it is equally important to focus on such aspects as the rules and procedures (management) of the school. While it is vital to focus on the vision (leadership) of the school, executing the implementation (management) thereof might be even more essential. The dynamic school context demands leadership and management at different times; and the effective school principal must strike this balance to ensure the

success of the school in executing the core duty. McGregor (1960) believes that leadership can essentially be viewed in two ways. He conceptualised these views on leadership as Theory X and Theory Y. Theories on leadership are many; however, for this study, the researcher favoured the Theory X and Theory Y, which is discussed next.

2.7.2 Theory X and Theory Y

McGregor (1960) conceptualized the Theory X and Theory Y management approach. This theory is accepting that managers communicate with and motivate employees based on their assumptions about human nature. McGregor anticipated that managers have two sets of assumptions about their juniors, which he termed Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X subscribers assume that subordinates hold unfavourable opinions about work (McGregor, 1960; McGregor, 1966). Conversely, Theory Y managers assume that workers characteristically like to work, and are committed to performance (Şahin et al., 2017). Principals who manage schools can be placed in either the Theory X or the Theory Y framework.

2.7.2.1 Theory X outlined

The Theory X manager subscribes to certain assumptions about human behaviour. The first assumption is that the average individual has an integral dislike of work and will avoid it if possible. When applied to schools, the principal will believe that teachers are inherently lazy, and will only do the absolute minimum in executing their duties. This type of principal believes that teachers have a negative outlook on the school and the supervisors (heads of departments) to whom they are assigned (McGregor, 1960; Russ, 2011; Şahin et al., 2017). This perception motivates Theory X managers to believe that workers need to be controlled, directed, and even threatened with punishment, to compel them to produce adequate effort toward the achievement of organisational objectives (McGregor, 1960). The principal needs to exercise strict control over teachers to ensure that they comply with the work assigned to them.

Another assumption within this orientation is that the average person prefers to be directed, avoids responsibility, lacks ambition, and wants security above all. Principals subscribing to this form of management will rigidly control their teachers and give strict rules to be followed. Theory X management style therefore requires close, firm supervision with clearly specified tasks and the threat of punishment or the promise of

greater pay as motivating factors (McGregor, 1960; Steen & Van der Veen, 2004; Russ, 2011; Şahin et al., 2017). Larsson and Vinberg (2010) found that managers within this orientation are considered less effective leaders by their subordinates, who experience more well-being issues (e.g., absent more often due to sickness). A principal working under these assumptions will employ autocratic control, which can lead to mistrust and resentment from those they manage. Teachers experiencing this control could find it stifling their creativity to deal with the situation in the classroom. The limitation would also extend to classroom management, as teachers' autonomy will be limited by this type of principal in their school. McGregor (1966) acknowledges that the 'carrot and stick' approach can have a place; however, this will not work when the needs of people are predominantly social and egoistic.

2.7.2.2 Theory Y outlined

In contrast with Theory X, the Theory Y manager has a more optimistic view about subordinates (McGregor, 1960). Firstly, the average person does not inherently dislike work. Secondly, workers are not primarily influenced by the threat of punishment for bringing effort to bear on organisational objectives (Russ, 2011). Teachers in a school will exercise self-direction and self-control in demonstrating their commitment to the school. Relative autonomy is allowed under the Theory Y type of principal. Thirdly, commitment to the school and its objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement. The most significant of such rewards, for example, the satisfaction of ego and self-actualisation needs, can be direct products of effort directed towards organisational objectives (McGregor, 1966). The success achieved in the school will motivate teachers and learners to greater success.

Fourthly, the average person learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility (Arslana & Staub, 2013). Organisations can flourish under the influence of shared values, trust, and organisational commitment. Principals will give responsibility and learning opportunities to teachers under this orientation. Fifthly, workers are afforded the utilisation of a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in finding solutions for organisational problems (Şahin, 2012). Teachers are thus encouraged to produce creative ideas for solving problems and challenges in the school under the Type Y principal. The teachers in such a school will have more freedom and be subjected to less intense supervision and scrutiny.

Finally, more cooperative relationships between managers and workers are favoured. A Theory Y orientation will seek to establish a working environment in which the personal needs and objectives of individuals can relate to and harmonise with the objectives of the organisation (McGregor, 1960; Russ, 2011). Teachers within this group will strive to maintain healthy work relations with colleagues and supervisors. They will align their school success to their own success and will always strive to do their best for both the school and the learners in their care. Principals subscribing to theory Y will be more invitational, democratic, and participative in their managing of the school. Participative decision-making is part of the Theory Y approach (Russ, 2011). These principals also display more consultative and participatory styles of management. These theories are not without criticism, as discussed next.

2.7.2.3 Critique of Theory X and Theory Y

As with any theory, the Theory X and Theory Y is not without criticism. McGregor (1966) himself was quick to point out that Theory Y was not intended as a panacea for all ills. Instead, he highlighted the limiting assumptions of Theory X, in the hope that managers would avoid the pitfalls therein. McGregor suggested using the Theory Y techniques. Maslow (1968), however, found that an organisation driven exclusively by Theory Y could not succeed, as some sense of direction and structure was required. Some organisations require a more flexible approach at times; but also, a firm, direct approach in other instances (Bobic & Davis, 2003).

One could question whether McGregor's theories are still valid in modern times. '*The Human Side of Enterprise*' (McGregor's book) was published almost six decades ago. The value of this literature is realised in that it is still discussed today. These theories have contributed to management and leadership thinking and practice for many years (Heil et al., 2000; Russ, 2011). Researchers have continued to discuss and debate Theory X and Theory Y since their introduction in 1960 (Bobic & Davis, 2003). At the time of McGregor's writings, these ideas were criticised for being simple and undeveloped (Reddin, 1969). The assumptions were described as too general, needing to be more specific (e.g., Bobic & Davis, 2003; Morse & Lorsch, 1970).

The researcher believes that the biggest criticism that can be levelled against Theory X and Theory Y is that it did not take the impact and role of environmental factors into consideration (Thomas & Bennis, 1972; Şahin, 2012). Three fundamental elements of

McGregor's theory have undergone substantial erosion over the years. Firstly, many workers today find themselves in an environment that inspires neither satisfaction nor job loyalty. Secondly, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory has become unpopular, and has more critics than supporters. Thirdly, investigations on human motivation no longer define "creativity" simply as "innovation" (Bobic & Davis, 2003). The difficulty in measuring the criteria proposed in these theories is also noted as a concern by these authors. The researcher has concluded that the effective manager must utilise a combination of Theory X and Theory Y elements.

Cunningham (2011) concludes that McGregor's ideas in '*The Human Side* of *Enterprise*' (THSE) recognise that one cannot motivate people; however, one does have to acknowledge the opposing forces at play. Principals can attempt to create the right climate, environment, or working conditions for motivation to be enabled in the school to achieve success. The leadership styles of principals were perused to gauge whether this aspect had an influence on the results obtained by the schools in the sample.

2.8 Conclusion

The theoretical framework that informs this study is outlined in this chapter. The researcher used the work of Cummins focussing on the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) dichotomy, the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, and the linguistic threshold hypothesis. Critiques levelled against Cummins's theory were also discussed in line with the present study.

The second theory that was discussed is Vygotsky's social cultural theory (SCT). Various definitions and interpretations of this theory were provided. The Vygotskian view on learning and cognition was described in this chapter. Since the social interaction that takes place in the school, classroom, and playground is also a contributing factor to language learning and acquisition, Vygotsky's theory is highly favoured. The main components of SCT, namely, social interaction (SI), the more knowledgeable other (MKO) and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) were outlined, with illustrations. The links between the two theories formulated by Cummins and Vygotsky were also discussed and illustrated.

Because the study focusses on school principals, there was a recognition that school principals need to manage the learning process and the context that influences teaching and learning. The differences between leadership and management were pointed out and considered. Principals were discussed in their role as the school manager, their duties, expectations from the employer, and their management style. McGregor's theories of managements were then outlined. Both components of Theory X and Theory Y were explained; and examples of the type of leadership that accompany each theory were given. This section concluded by examining the critique of Theory X and Theory Y. The conclusion drawn was that effective managers need a combination of both Theory X and Theory Y attributes to handle the various situations and contexts that may arise in the school. The ideal principal will strike a careful balance between these approaches.

In this study, Cummins's hypothesis is complemented by Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. These theories are further strengthened by using McGregor's management theories. These theories will be used to explore, explain, and rationalise the findings of this study. Finally, the theories employed will complement one another and will allow this study to draw rational conclusions based on proven and trusted theories. The next chapter will discuss the literature on the topic of the current study, which focuses on English FAL matriculation results, and the factors influencing the results.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focusses on the literature related to the topic of the current study. This literature review aims to provide an overview on previously published works, journal articles, books, and related literature to the topic under discussion. Studies on language acquisition, linguistic attainment, and language performance, such as the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS) has shown the importance of language in the learning process. PIRLS has indicated that South African learners shows low levels of reading literacy (Maila & Ross, 2018). The fact that my study focusses on the achievement in the English FAL matriculation examination, makes it essential to look at other studies, research, and all related literature pertaining to this matter. This section of this paper aims to highlight, review, and unpack some of the available literature related to language, how it is experienced elsewhere in the world, and how it impacts on the results obtained by the learners who are assessed in English. The topics related to English First Additional Language (FAL) and matriculation results and the factors influencing them is explored in this section.

In '*Planning Language, Planning Inequality'*, James Tollefson (1991, p. 2) wrote:

> … (Language) is built into the economic and social structure of society so deeply that its fundamental importance seems only natural. For this reason, language policies are often seen as expressions of natural, common-sense assumptions about language in society.

Tollefson (1991) argues that language is such an integral part of the economy that it seems to be a natural part of a society. Alexander (2005), however, believes that languages do not simply develop "naturally". Alexander argues that languages are formed and manipulated within definite limits to suit the interests of different groups of people. This author sees language as the main instrument of communication at the disposal of human beings; consequently, the specific language (or languages) in which the production processes take place becomes (become) the language (languages) of power. English seems to fit this assumption and will be explored to some extent.

This chapter considers the role of language in the school classroom, the factors influencing language results in schools, the factors influencing second-language

acquisition, and the role of technology as a factor in teaching and learning. The chapter then moves on to a consideration of the principal as a role player in leadership and in a school's academic performance, the employer's expectations of a principal, and the school context as a factor in academic achievement.

3.2 The Role of Language in the School Classroom

The role that language plays in learning is vital. If the learner lacks competence in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), learning may not take place at all, the teacher and the learner not communicating effectively. According to Van Staden and Bosker (2014), the poor performance of South African learners as shown in international comparative studies stems from, among other things, poor communication between learners and teachers in the LoLT. This factor is compounded by the fact that South Africa shows low levels of reading literacy (Maila & Ross, 2018). Howie, Combrinck, Tshele, Roux, McLeod Palane and Mokoena (2016), as well as Reddy, Winnaar, Juan, Arends, Harvey, Hannan, Namome, Sekhejane and Zulu (2019) confirm South African learners' poor performance when participating in international assessment programmes, such as the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

According to Tshabalala (2012, p.22), "the majority of teachers and learners in South African schools are not first language speakers of English, and …many learners and teachers are not fluent in English". This could certainly be a contributing factor to the results obtained by schools. It also highlights the need for strategies to improve the language competency in schools.

Countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) have seen a steady growth in the number of learners who take English as an additional language (Demie, 2013). The UK has continued to show growth in numbers over the last two decades (Dixon, Thomas & Fricke, 2020). Dixon and O'Gorman (2019) have confirmed the findings of this continual growth, as indicated by Demie (2013). These researchers further contend that English additional language (EAL) develops gradually over time, and in various stages. The language of instruction (LoLT) in all state-maintained schools in the UK is English (Dixon, et al., 2020). This means that all learners in these schools need to have sufficient English proficiency to perform well academically (Demie, 2013). The

schools in the sample for this study also utilise English as the LoLT. It therefore stands to reason that these South African learners also need a high level of proficiency in English to be able to fully access the curriculum and to excel therein (Demie, 2013). Teachers in English, therefore, need to bring learners to a certain level of English proficiency to enable academic progress in the curriculum offered in English.

Richards (2017), however, believes that limitations in the English teachers' command of the language have been a concern for some time. As far back as 2003, Malekela noted that learning may not take place in schools at all if the teacher and the learner do not communicate effectively. Teachers must be well equipped in the subject matter to be successful in teaching it to learners. Research analysing initial teacher education across five South African Universities reveals that the situation with respect to the LoLT, predominantly English, was of concern (Taylor, 2015). One of the negative effects of poor mastery of the English language by both learners and teachers is that teaching and learning, as well as assessment, are severely compromised. It should be noted that most of the world's English-language teachers are not English home language speakers (Richards 2017). Atamturk, Atamturk and Dimililer (2018) state that native-speaking English teachers constitute a minority of the pool of English teachers; and therefore, cannot meet the growing demand for English foreign language (EFL) and English as second language (ESL) teachers.

Many non-native speaking (NNS) English teachers are employed to teach English in the absence of native-speaking teachers. For many of these teachers, their level of English proficiency may not reach the benchmarks established by their employers, raising the issue of what kind of proficiency in English is necessary to be an effective teacher of English. Nel and Müller (2010) contend that teachers who teach English second language (ESL) learners whose own language proficiency might be doubtful, negatively influence the learners' English language acquisition and academic progress. Van der Berg et al. (2021) point out high levels of inefficiency within the education system. They note that aspects that should take learners one year to acquire the skills and knowledge required to progress to the next grade, often take two years or longer. Grade repetition is thus a regular occurrence in the South African educational context. Van der Berg et al. (2021) state that the enrolment patterns seen in Grade Four and Grade Ten indicate that learners are repeating grades in large numbers. The large number of over-aged learners in the system is also indicative of

grade repetition. Most learners start their schooling career at age seven, but seldom exit the system at the correct age due to grade repetition. And yet, English is recognised as important for academic and other progress.

With the rapid pace of globalisation, there are more opportunities for cooperation between countries and communication between people all over the world; and many students are eager to master a second language. English is often the language of choice (Hann, 2019). Both Demie (2013) and Dixon et al. (2020) have demonstrated this growth in the number of EAL learners in the United Kingdom (UK). This ever-growing importance of English has also been observed in South Africa. South Africa is a multilingual country in which English is the lingua franca (Atamturk, Atamturk & Dimililer, 2018) even though the home-language speakers of English constitute only about 10 per cent of the population (Bamgbose, 2011). Parmegiani (2014) acknowledges that, although isiZulu is important in terms of identity construction, English is greatly valued, especially in the educational context; and parents have expressed a preference for English.

Furthermore, isiXhosa speakers have also stated their language-based social preference for English, which can be attributed to the high status of English in their society (Kinzler, Shutts & Spelke, 2012). For these reasons, English is the preferred language of instruction (LOI), and it is also foremost in both trade and industry (De Wet, 2002). Evans and Cleghorn (2014) have found that, due to the increasing role of English in the industry, economy, and globalisation, parents prefer schools with English as the medium of instruction (MOI), despite the distance from the schools to their homes, or how exorbitant the school fees are. English enjoys a privileged position in basic education (Berkowitz, 2017). There is an argument that English is a more practical and efficient choice in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual society like South Africa. English is promoted by the Department of Education's endeavour to deliver lifelong learners and flexible and capable citizens who can effectively compete in the extremely competitive global economy (ELRC, Resolution 8 of 1998).

The progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS) is a global study of reading literacy which is conducted every five years. Forty (40) countries, including South Africa have taken part in this study from 2006 (Nel & Müller, 2010). In 2006, approximately 30,000 Grades 4 and 5 learners were assessed, and the reported

findings were alarming; namely, that South Africa's Grades 4 and 5 learners achieved the lowest mean scores of all other participating countries (PIRLS, 2006). Ten years later, when the international benchmarks for each language are compared for the South African 2016 PIRLS participation, there is a clear divide between isiZulu (69% do not reach the lowest benchmark) and those who wrote in Afrikaans or English (37% do not reach the lowest benchmark). KwaZulu-Natal had the highest percentage of learners not reaching the low benchmark (62%) (Howie et al., 2016). Furthermore, there is a large, noteworthy difference in achievement between participants from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those from more affluent backgrounds. This is significant as schools in the sample for my study represent mostly disadvantaged, indigent and under-resourced schools. Principals participating in the study reported that as many as 76% of learners in the PIRLS study were estimated to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. A World Bank report from 2018 identified South Africa as one of the most unequal countries in the world, with poverty levels highest amongst Black South Africans (Hall et al., 2019). Poverty levels have an impact on education. Meiring et al. (2018) also pointed out the high levels of inequality between the rich and poor in South Africa. This unequal distribution of resources and wealth creates challenges in education that cannot be easily addressed, and eradicated. Van der Berg et al. (2021) argue that the Western Cape has a higher number of affluent schools. The other provinces still have a high proportion of state-funded schools, often lacking resources, and completely dependent on state funding. Shava and Heystek (2018) state that more than 60% of South African schools are no-fee schools, with parents not expected to make any financial contribution to these schools. Reche et al. (2012) aver that a lack of resources can impact on the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons. Epri (2016) emphasises that learners are disadvantaged if the schools which they attend have insufficient learning materials. This seems to be the norm in the sampled schools. Academic performance is enhanced by the availability of adequate resources (Jacobsohn, 2017). It has been noted that schools which are well-resourced generally maintain a high academic performance (Nyandwi, 2014).

Hall et al. (2019) further state that at least 78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language. Vukosi, Smith, Rautenbach and Collins (2021) also conducted a small-scale study that revealed that English second-language learners struggle with reading comprehension, unprepared speeches, and literature. Fleisch

(2008, p. 105-112; 130) states that moving from mother-tongue instruction in reading, writing, and numeracy in the first two to three years of schooling to a second language (L2) in Grade 4 is problematic. This is because the learner is expected to be proficient in reading across the curriculum. These learners have a limited vocabulary of about 500 words and can read only simple 3-7-word sentences in the present tense (Fleisch, 2008, p. 130). Pretorius (2002, p. 191) states that these learners have barely mastered reading comprehension skills at this stage in the mother tongue, let alone in the L2. Van der Berg et al. (2021) illustrate that learners from impoverished schools in South Africa are unlikely to master basic numeracy and literacy skills in the assigned time. These learners require another year to master basic numeracy skills, causing them to repeat grades. Van der Berg et al. (2021) assert that one in four learners (one quarter) in South Africa will repeat Grade Ten. In the United Kingdom (UK), Demie (2013) has conceded that English additional learners (EAL) tend to underperform in comparison with the English first-language classmates during this early stage of their development. These findings were also confirmed by Dixon et al. (2020). As EAL learners gain more exposure to English, and develop more language proficiencies, the gap between EAL learners and English learners is narrowed (Dixon et al. 2020; Demie, 2013). The UK government has promoted the use of English to assist the acquisition of English in policy (DfE, 2012, 1). South Africa has also relied on the use of certain policies, such as the language in education policy (LiEP) to ensure linguistic ideals are reached. The success of these policies is not under discussion; however, their existence should not be dismissed.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), (DBE, 2011) acknowledges that only the learners' home languages are sufficiently reinforced both in and out of school. However, Setati (2001), Struben (2004), and Vukosi et al. (2021) suggest that the LoLT, which is English, is hardly used outside the classroom. Equally, the learner's home language is seldom taught in another context, other than as a subject. Cummins (2001) contends that the learner's home language provides the basis for second-language development. Reading difficulties could be the result of the lack of reinforcement of home-language proficiency. PIRLS (2016) contends that learners who cannot read for meaning or retrieve basic information from the text to answer simple questions, do not reach the lowest-set benchmarks. Furthermore, learners in English schools, those who mainly spoke English at home had a

significantly higher score than those who spoke a different language at home. Setati and Adler (2000, p.243) confirm that “English as target language and LoLT is only heard, spoken and written in the formal school context”. This is despite the language in education policy (LiEP) making provision for an additional language (or additional languages) in the foundation phase (FP) which, in most cases, assumes the status and role of LoLT in Grade Four. The lack of an English language infrastructure outside the classroom accentuates learners’ linguistic deprivation in the language, assuming LoLT status in Grade Four (Setati, 2004). The Intermediate Phase (IP), when the LoLT of English is introduced, is severely neglected, as no visible, explicit intervention or measure is present here. This critical “change-over phase” is neglected in South African schools. Such a critical phase in education must receive more attention. This is also flagged as an area in which seriously high levels of inefficiency are noted by Van der Berg et al. (2021). These researchers highlight that it takes some learners between two and four years to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for their promotion to the next grade. This translates to several learners being over-aged in the higher grades and dropping out of school before reaching Grade 12.

Sibanda (2017) describes the shift from the foundation phase (Grade R-Grade Three) to the intermediate phase (Grade Four-Grade Six) as a critical schooling transitional landmark that either disorients or empowers learners in the South African context. Sibanda believes that to achieve academic success, there should be a seamless transition between Grade Three (the exit grade for foundation phase) and Grade Four (the initial grade into the intermediate phase). Van der Berg et al. (2021) state that enrolment bulges in Grade Four indicate high repetition levels at this stage of schooling in South Africa. Lesnick et al. (2010) remind that there is general acknowledgement of the significant impact to future learning of the Third to Fourth Grade transition, internationally. The transition involves encounters which impose competence needs on the learners, whose satisfaction determines the extent to which later learning, and attainment is either constrained or advanced. Where this transition is too complex for learners, they hardly recover. Poor literacy and numeracy levels impact on future learning. Van der Berg et al. (2021) posit that such learners fail to acquire the knowledge and skills required in later grades, eventually repeating grades before dropping out of the schooling system long before they reach matriculation level. Moreover, learners who struggle to understand English will not perform well

academically (Mosha, 2014; Arshad et al., 2014). Since most schools use English as the LoLT, a lack of English proficiency will result in poor academic performance in all subjects taught in English.

Mosha (2014) regards mastery of writing, reading, listening, and speaking in English as a prerequisite for performing academically well. Literacy founded on an unstable platform has negative foundational and lasting effects on later literacy and all future learning. Jacobsohn (2017) believes that poorly developed subject content by the end of the foundation phase (Grade Three) diminishes the chances of such a learner passing the matric examination. Bruner (2010) refers to reading proficiency by the end of Grade Three as a key milestone in a child's educational development; and sees it as an indicator of future educational success. By using multilevel regression models, Bruner suggests a correlation between third grade and eighth grade reading levels. Competence in the language of communication and LoLT is a prerequisite for engagement in the learning process (Tshuma, 2017). In South Africa, the English language plays a significant role in the transition from mother tongue to English-medium instruction. Wright (2012) recognises scarce vocabulary repertoire by fourth grade as a forerunner to challenges in reading comprehension. This correlates with Witt (2003, p.2), who states that "… difficulties with reading literacy, if not addressed, then permeate all future educational undertaking as the gap between their reading literacy skills and the demand of the curriculum widens." This highlights the importance of language proficiency within this transition from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase, with the accompanying change in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Dixon et al. (2020), together with Demie (2013), acknowledge this difficult stage in English additional language (EAL) learners' academic journey. The above-mentioned researchers contend that this initial stage places the EAL learners at a clear disadvantage compared with their English-speaking (first language) peers. Continual exposure to English, and growing English proficiency, is noted in later stages of this EAL group (Demie, 2013).

3.3 Factors influencing Language Results at Schools

Understanding of the role of language in the school classroom, this section considers the factors that explain language results at schools. There are many factors that affect the results learners receive when studying a language such as English, whether as a

home language (HL), or as a first additional language (FAL). Resources, both material and human, play a significant role. Nyoni et al. (2017) point out that academic performance is influenced by several factors. Some of these include the type of leadership enforced by the principal, the teacher-learner ratio, academic qualifications, and dedication of teachers, as well as the availability of resources, such as classrooms. Improving academic performance is complex and multi-layered.

A diagnostic report compiled by chief examiners and markers of matric examination papers (DBE, 2018) identifies various factors as responsible for low matriculation scores across the curriculum. These include a clear lack of subject terminology, poor language usage, and a lack of vocabulary. The misunderstanding of questions and instructions was also flagged, as well as difficulty in expressing oneself. The misspelling of words; and poor reading and comprehension skills were noted. Vukosi et al. (2021) also found poor reading comprehension in their study. Nyandwi (2014) argues that learners who develop a solid grip on English at an early age have an increased chance of academic success as they progress through the education system. All these factors listed are essential to language literacy; they are associated with performance as well as the ability to communicate in various school contexts. The lack of English proficiency hampers academic progress (Nkadi, 2015).

Although these literacy-related factors are diagnosed at matric level, they are almost always carried over from lower grades. Learners carry such factors right across the curriculum if they do not receive adequate corrective measures from their teachers. Van der Berg et al. (2021) contend that learners from indigent schools are unlikely to master basic numeracy and literacy skills. Such could lead to learning deficits, grade repetition, and even dropping out of school. Epri (2016) contend that teachers rush through the syllabus to meet the timelines imposed on them, and in the process, struggling learners are neglected, and continue to fall behind. Academically struggling learners, who experience learning problems in the early grades, carry these to the next grade and continue struggling to perform well (Sundai & Sheriff, 2015). Furthermore, when teachers neglect early writing skills, this severely limits learners' opportunities to learn, contributing thus to slower progress; moreover, when most teachers respond to learners' inability to understand English, they resort to code switching. Such code-switching, while useful at times is merely used to compensate for their own incompetence in oral language, as well as low confidence levels in using English as

the LoLT (Clay, 2001; Nathanson, 2008). In addition to this, English teachers' competencies have come under the spotlight (Consoli & Aoyama, 2020; Bradbury & Miller, 2011). Teachers' efforts in the classroom shape the education given to learners (Babbage, 2013). Teachers should come to class well prepared, make lessons interesting, keep learners motivated and eager to learn, and practice excellent classroom-management skills to be effective (Mola, 2016).

Schools in South Africa have access to various resources. El-Omari (2016) notes large variations in the availability of resources in South African schools. Meiring et al. (2018) have also described the depth of this variation, and access to resources between the rich and the poor communities in South Africa. Jacobsohn (2017) argues that rural schools usually have fewer resources than urban schools. Reche et al. (2012) note that the absence of resources can negatively impact on the effectiveness of a teacher's teaching. The Western Cape has been identified as the province with fewer impoverished schools, compared with the other eight provinces (Van der Berg, et al., 2021). This illustrates that resources are unevenly distributed, not just from school to school, but also from province to province. The English proficiency of schoolteachers has also been under the spotlight for some time (Howie, Venter & van Staden, 2008; Probyn, 2009; Bradbury & Miller, 2011; Posel & Casale, 2011). In studies conducted by El-Omari (2016), learners in 14 Southern African schools showed low levels of achievement in reading. This may be explained by several factors, including the access that learners have to competent, linguistically knowledgeable teachers (Richards, 2017). Academic performance, to a large extent, depends on the number of teachers, their quality of teaching, their devotion to duty, and their effectiveness on the job (Ahmad, 2016). Ineffective teachers will result in poor academic performance, due to the quality of curriculum delivery.

Since the end of Apartheid in 1994, the school system has been desegregated. With South Africa becoming a democracy in 1994, a complete restructuring of the education system was considered crucial to accommodating all racial groupings in the country (Green & Collett, 2021; Christie, 2020). Before this, Black learners were the most neglected under the Apartheid government. Black learners have now started to attend former Whites-only schools, resulting in (sub) urban mixed-ethnicity schools. However, most Black learners still attend township and rural schools. Black learners, in this regard, are learners of African descent, and exclude Indian and Coloured

learners. Schools attended mostly by Black learners also have minimal access to services such as career counselling and remedial education. The subject choices made in these schools may thus be ill-informed and not career- or study-driven. Maree (2012) argues that the quality of education in these schools remains poor in their deprived socio-economic contexts, struggling with poor facilities (Kriek & Grayson, 2009; Ndimande, 2012).

Many primary school teachers often complain about the current school curriculum (CAPS), and how it limits their autonomy and ability to use their discretion (Christie, 2020). Du Plessis and Marais (2015) have also noted that the CAPS curriculum is very dense. These researchers consider the periods (time allocated for lessons) as too short for the pace of the learners, which results in a high failure rate. Sundai and Sheriff (2015) concur, and state that the CAPS syllabus is overloaded; it is often problematic to complete the syllabus in the set time. More concerning is the observation that teachers generally also do not make much effort to assist slow learners because they know that such learners will be progressed as a matter of course (Mola, 2016). It is important to understand the difference between progression and promotion in the South African school context.

The DBE (2011) defines progression as the movement of a learner from one grade to the next grade. Progressed learners have not met the minimum requirements to pass to the next grade but are exempted from the set promotion requirements for various reasons (DBE, 2011; Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). These learners are identified as most likely to repeat the new grade as well; and therefore, should receive additional academic support to navigate the new grade successfully. Inclusive Education South Africa (2017) believes that many progressed learners function below their grade level, and almost certainly have a much lower level of learning potential than their peers. This is unambiguously the case with progressed learners who face cognitive barriers to learning. Promotion, however, is very different.

Promoted learners have been promoted to the next grade as they have complied with the minimum required level of achievement set for that grade (DBE, 2011). When a direct comparison is made, progressed learners are significantly more challenged academically than promoted learners. Progression has been linked with higher levels of dropping out. Mola (2016) argues that progression contributes to a high number of

dropouts because schools pursue positive pass rates; and little effort is made to help struggling learners. When classes are large, the problem is compounded.

Rural schools typically consist of large numbers per class (50 or more learners in one classroom), and are poorly resourced (Magopeni & Tshiwula, 2010). This situation prevails even today (Christie, 2020). Shah and Inamullah (2012) confirmed that overcrowded classrooms have a negative impact on teaching and learning. Overcrowded classrooms negatively affect learners' academic performance; and additionally place enormous stress on teachers (Shah & Inamullah, 2012). Despite the findings by Shah and Inamullah (2012), the situation had not changed much by 2018. Ramnarain and Hlatswayo (2018) found large class sizes, the haste to complete the curriculum, and the absence of resources as major problems posing barriers to academic success. Epri (2016) contends that teachers pursue the timelines to complete the curriculum vigorously, neglecting slow learners in the process. A class typically consists of slow, average, and fast learners. Epri (2016) believes that the time allocated to complete the syllabus does not cater for slow learners, who are prone to fail or exit the education system.

Coupled with the curriculum demands, the LoLT in most schools is English. The English class is taken by all learners and classes are always very full, making individual attention and learner motivation extremely difficult. Motivation is a fundamental recipe for achieving success in school (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017). Learners' levels of motivation have been linked to their level of achievement (Mosha, 2014). Most learners in South Africa write the matric examination in their second language. In 1998, a governmental research team reached the conclusion that language (usually English) was a major contributing factor to the poor performance of learners who were not able to write matric in their mother-tongue, according to Umalusi (2004). Consequently, a compensatory mechanism was introduced and was employed for learners who wrote matric in their second language (English). Their non-language marks were adjusted upwards by 5% (Foxcroft & Stumpf, 2005). This compensated for the lack of language competencies brought about by the second language examinations conducted. This was a temporary measure that was to fall away as learners became more competent and proficient in the use of English.

3.4 Factors which can influence Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

There are numerous factors which can influence second language acquisition (SLA), including both internal and external factors. Internal factors, also known as individual difference factors, are composed of the learner's age, personality, attitude, motivation, and first-language proficiency, and the like (Sun, 2019). The external factors, so-called social factors, usually refer to the political, economic, cultural, and technological environment that prevails at the time. Factors such as large classes and lack of teacher competence in English appear to determine how teaching and learning occur in schools, and can affect language acquisition. Howie (2013) states that English proficiency in learners is viewed as a strong predictor of academic performance. The teaching and learning process involves two active participants in the classroom – the teacher and the learner. For example, Vuzo (2010, p.5) states that "through interactions with each other, those teachers and students work together to create intellectual and practical activities that shape both the form and the content of the target subject." This is echoed by Vygotsky (1978), who promoted the interaction between people, but also the construction of knowledge, to be discussed later. Vuzo (2010), however, comments that such situations are not commonly found in secondary schools in many subjects, including English. This is because the lecture method dominates the teaching and learning process, which leads to passive learning. Cummins (1986) has long propagated the approach in which learners are active participants in the construction of knowledge, as more effective.

Ramnarain and Moosa (2017) confirm Vuzo's sentiments. These researchers argue that, despite strong empirical and theoretical support for learners to have independence in conducting scientific enquiry, this remains a vague curriculum goal in South African schools: learning is largely controlled by the teacher. Learners are not actively engaged in creating new knowledge, nor in active engagement with the language, and thus remain passive participants in the learning process.

Cummings (2002, p.111) noted that learning in which students are interactive produces far more effective participation in a class. Effectiveness of language learning and teaching in the classrooms will depend on the educational rapport teachers have with learners. Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) explicitly believes that social interaction is a key factor in the learning process, including language learning. Vygotsky (1978) adds that the more knowledgeable other (MKO) must guide the learner to new knowledge. Teachers, however, may be handicapped by their own language competence, or by

having an inadequate range of vocabulary when their own language is not English, given that the medium of instruction is usually English (Richards, 2017).

3.5 Technology as a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

Over the last two decades, the role of the MKO (Vygotsky, 1978) has expanded dramatically. The advancement of technology has made it possible for learners to learn on various platforms previously not available (Mattar, 2018). Learning is no longer restricted to the classroom. Mattar purports that the Web 2.0 movement and new gadgets such as blogs and microblogs, podcasting, wikis, social bookmarking, and social networking have contributed to replacing passive teaching methods by more active ones. Such includes student-centered learning, the co-creation of knowledge, and peer-review assessment strategies. Siemens (2008) argues that technological development and social software have characteristically altered the way in which learners access information and knowledge and relate to both their instructors and peers.

This emergence of social software has brought about multiple uses of cellular phones and electronic media. A recent concept, dubbed mobile assisted language learning (MALL), is receiving much attention (Akkara, Seshagiri & Sastry, 2019). These authors state that MALL provides access to authentic learning resources. MALL facilitates second language (FAL) learning anywhere and anytime; but it also offers scope for informal learning beyond the classroom. Learning in which learners are interactive produces far more effective participation in a class (Cummings, 2002). Social media provides the platform on which learners can effectively participate in the creation of knowledge. The nature of communication- and information-sharing platforms provided by social media facilitates interaction with peers, and collaborative learning (Akkara et al., 2019). MALL not only provides access to authentic learning resources and facilitates second language (FAL) learning anytime and anywhere; MALL also offers the opportunity for learning beyond the classroom. Users of this form of technology can access learning materials and resources from anywhere, and at any time. Access to this platform has expanded the learning space dramatically.

Learning is not merely restricted to the classroom; and MALL expands the learning environment even further (Akkara et al., 2019). Social media allows for instant messaging; and multi-modal communication and information sharing provide

platforms for interaction with peers and collaborative learning to hone their L2 (FAL) skills. While this form of learning makes second language learning (SLL) accessible from beyond the classroom, this is not the focus of this study. It would, however, be a serious omission not to mention this form of learning as a significant resource in helping learners to learn.

This form of online access to information is also seen as valuable by Green and Collett (2021). Such an online resource can be used to promote professional growth and development of teachers and learners, when online professional learning communities (PLC) are created. PLCs and their relevance and importance are discussed later in this chapter. Technology can be utilised in this way to promote and improve access on another level to both learners and teachers in online professional learning communities. This access is restricted by the resources available to communities and schools. Vukosi et al. (2021) have reported that learners in the private schools have often made use of tablets for reading. The unequal access to resources in schools within South Africa (Christie, 2020; Meiring, et al., 2018; El-Omari, 2016) might result in some schools having access to such online resources, while others cannot access these. The gap between those schools who have access and those who cannot access this platform results from the lack of resources. This aspect should be kept in mind, as it has the potential to widen the gap between the haves and have-not. Learners are all assessed identically, regardless of the presence or absence of resources in their schools.

Technology has ensured that education and teaching are no longer bound to the classroom but have evolved to being accessible to learners in so many places other than the classroom. Giannikas (2019) notes that education has endured a considerable amount of growth and is now in the digital age. E-learning programmes in higher education are cited as examples of using technology outside the classroom to attain educational goals. The rapid expansion of social media (SM) has become a key factor in the teaching and learning strategy of the digital age. SM is dramatically transforming the way in which teachers teach their students and in how students learn (Alyoussef, 2020). Vygotsky's (1978) MKO has expanded dramatically and exponentially. Technology has made it possible to learn from so many previously unknown sources other than the teacher. It is important to acknowledge this additional way of accessing resources.

3.6 School Leadership as a Factor in Academic Performance

Another factor that could influence academic performance is school leadership. The concept of leadership dates to over 5000 years ago. Bass (1990) alleges that words on leadership were found on ancient hieroglyphics in Egypt dating back to many centuries before. Leadership thus is not a recent concept, but dates back many centuries. Leadership is an essential aspect in the success or failure of a school. The leadership role assumed by the leader in a school can either assist the school in performing well academically or lead to failing in this regard. Studies have proven that the leadership style utilised by principals can powerfully influence numerous aspects of school improvement. These can include teacher and staff attitudes, as well as student learning and academic attainment (Shava & Heystek, 2015; Bogler, 2005; Waters et al., 2003). The role of the leadership in schools cannot be overemphasised.

Einola and Alvesson (2021) argue that leadership is a challenging task, both as a practice and as a field of study. Leadership has different dimensions, assumptions, and outlooks. Dinh et al. (2014) concur on this point, arguing that there are several perspectives, definitions, and theories on leadership. These authors further articulate that leadership theories and outlooks are often difficult to explain, or to falsify, and are even problematic to describe. Bush (2013) points out that leadership and management must be given equal importance for schools to achieve a reasonable level of academic success. Both these competencies fall into the domain and role of the school principal, who should apply them in executing the mandate of the school. Hallinger and Heck (2010) observe that two models of principal leadership, namely instructional leadership (IL) and transformational leadership (TL) have been prominent in the effort to improve learning outcomes. These two leadership models purport to explain how principals seek to improve teaching and learning conditions in their schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Southworth, 2002). These models were extremely popular when leadership was discussed and have continued to gain traction in the 2000s (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). Bush (2007, p.401) describes IL as “the leadership role that focusses on teaching and learning, and on the behaviour of teachers in working with students”. The quality of teaching and learning is thus of extreme importance in IL (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

By the mid-1990s IL had become the most dominant perspective adopted by researchers engaged in the study of school leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger, 2005). The principal instructional management scale (PIMRS) conceptual framework was coined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). PIMRS suggests three dimensions, which include the definition of the school's mission, managing the school's instructional programme, and promoting a positive learning climate within the school. A visual representation of the principal instructional management scale (PIMRS) conceptual framework is set out below in Figure 3.6.1:

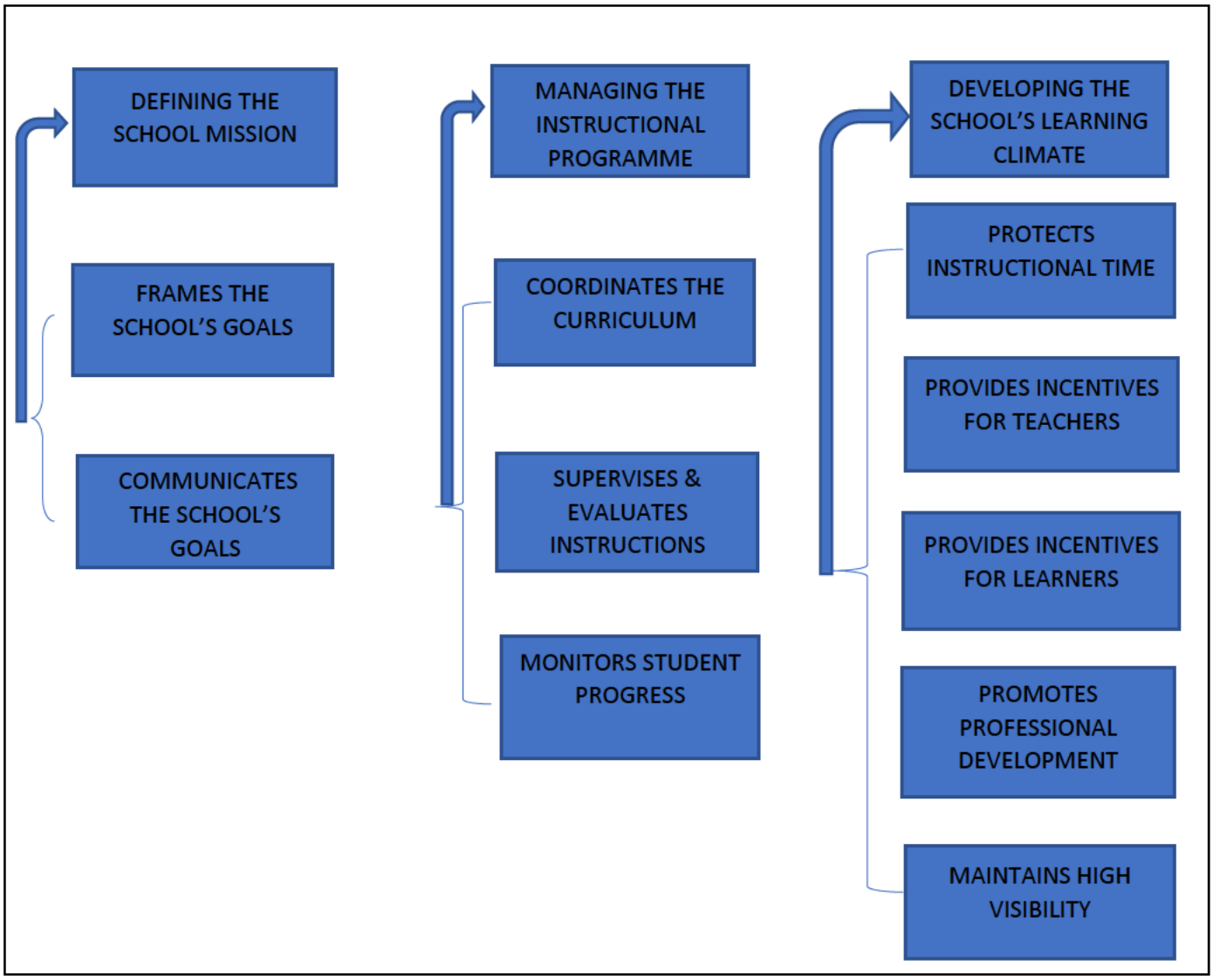

Figure 3.6.1 PIMRS conceptual framework – adapted from Hallinger and Murphy (1985)

The three scopes are demarcated into ten instructional leadership roles. Two focus areas define the school's mission, namely, framing the school's goals, and communicating the school's goals. Three focus areas on managing the instructional

programme are coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluation of instruction, and monitoring the learners' progress. Finally, four focus areas aim to develop the school learning-climate programme. These are protecting the instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learners, promoting professional development, and maintaining a high visibility (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It should be noted that several models representing IL exist, such as Hallinger and Murphy's (1985), Murphy's (1990) and Weber's (1996). These models all share some common aspects, while bringing a different dimension to the leadership outlook. While IL has been so widely accepted, another approach termed transformational leadership (TL) has also received wide acclaim in improving school leadership. Both IL and TL focus explicitly on the way in which leadership exercised by principals improves academic performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

Transformational leadership (TL) is described as the ability to reorganise, develop a collective vision and distributed leadership, while building a school culture and climate that promotes positive academic change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Bass (1985) outlines TL as increasing the interest of the staff (teachers) to accomplish higher performance through raising their commitment and their belief in the organisation. TL involves motivating people to a shared vision by the construction of conviction and empowerment (Carlson, 1996). TL thus involves the heightened awareness of the importance and values of a specified outcome. Vermeuler et al. (2015) communicate that TL is explicitly focussed on the developmental capacity and particular commitment of personnel within an organisation (school) as well as its objective of growing productivity.

This approach calls on employees to rise beyond their self-interest by positively stimulating their drive, interests, ideas, and values, and in this way motivating them to accomplish better results than originally expected. The transforming of teachers is brought about by higher motivational levels, which in turn leads to higher output (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). TL holds that highly motivated teachers should produce better academic results than those with lower levels of motivation. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), as well as Salins and Mulford (2002), describe TL as a model based on seven components.

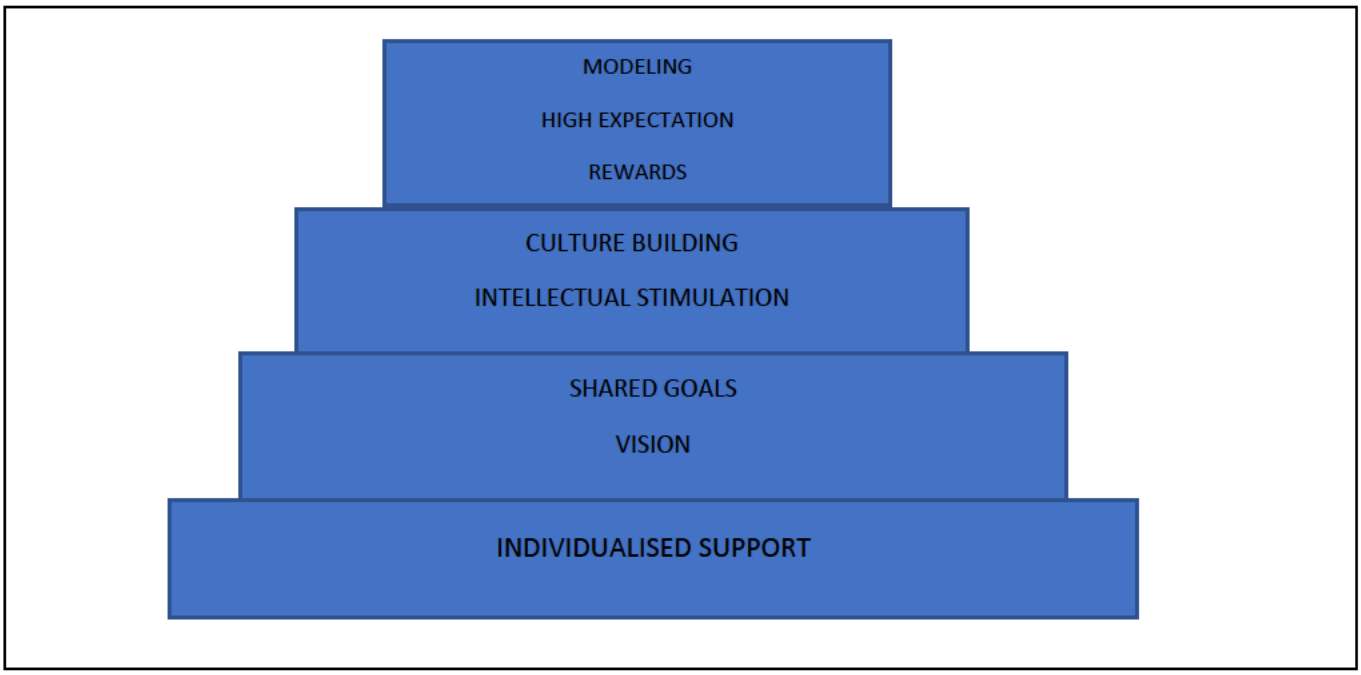

Figure 3.6.2 The TL model – adapted from Leithwood et al. (1998)

These are (1) individualised support, (2) shared goals and vision, (3) intellectual stimulation, (4) culture building, (5) rewards, (6) high expectations, and (7) modelling.

These seven components of the TL, as described above, correlate well with the key characteristics of professional learning communities (PLC) (Carpenter, 2017). While this is just one model of TL, others do exist. Figure 3.6.2 below shows the TL model proposed by Leithwood et al. (1998).

Transformational leadership has its origins in McGregor (1960), according to Burns (1978). McGregor has been described as a significant management theorist, and even a management giant, by Steen and Van der Veen (2004). A significant aspect in McGregor's theory was the identification of what he termed Theory X and Theory Y (discussed in the previous chapter). While Theory X is more leader-centred, Theory Y is geared towards consultation, involvement, and cooperative goal-setting and collaborative achievement. Russ (2011) argues that Theory Y assumptions and attributes contribute positively toward more participative decision-making, and in this way eventually benefit the organisation. Schools who subscribe to this approach can benefit from the collective involvement of their staff and teachers. Bobic and Davis (2003) articulate that school leaders need to find ways of capitalising on their own strengths and good qualities, while at the same time relying on the input of others to achieve desired outcomes. This implies that leaders need a combination of both Theory X and Theory Y attributes to be successful in their work. Principals thus should

not only lead the school but should also develop and capacitate their teachers in various skills that could empower them to assist in leading the school.

There is a positive correlation between the views expressed by Russ (2011) and Bobic and Davis (2003) on Theory X and the transformational principal. Teacher support, shared vision and goals are Theory Y traits that promote positive outcomes. Educational leadership cannot be isolated or excluded from leadership in the corporate world. Carpenter, (2017), Leithwood et al. (1998) and McGregor (1960) regard shared responsibility in the running of an organisation as a key aspect to achieve the outcomes envisioned by the organisation. Burns (1978) also strongly believe that transformational leadership has its origins in McGregor (1960), leadership theories, making understanding these essential for a holistic view on how principals (school managers) manage their schools to achieve academic success.

Teacher development should be in the hands of a school principal or some other supervising professional acting as counsellor or broker (Steyn, 1999; Tickle, 1994). It has also been argued that one shortcoming in teacher-education programmes centres on discipline, regarded by teachers themselves as very important (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000; Steyn & Van Wyk, 1999). What is clear is that principals (together with other stakeholders) must put some measures in place to ensure effective teaching and learning in the schools that they manage. Berkowitz, Johnston, and Pelster (2012) comment that the leader (principal) of a school has the greatest influence on the school climate. Einola and Alvesson (2021) assert that leadership is not an easy task or role. There should be a move away from leader-centred views on management, acknowledging the role also played by teachers. The traditional view that leaders (principals) act, with their followers (teachers) responding, is slowly losing ground. The value that teachers bring to the school is more and more recognised. Principals, however, are still called to account for the results produced in their schools.

Bottery (2016, p.98) argues that principals find themselves working extra hours, “not just on weekday evenings but also at weekends and during school holidays, …where the job becomes unsustainable if they do not”. This is an attempt to ensure that learners are well equipped to tackle the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exam and achieve it successfully. While such facts indicate principals trying to improve results at their schools, this study will aim to study how these principals explain the factors that

affect and influence the English FAL results at their schools. Such explanations may provide insights into strategies and practices that work, and contextual factors that hinder progress once the learners obtain their matriculation results.

Berkowitz et al. (2012) acknowledge the expanded responsibilities and duties of the principal. Leadership is only one of the roles that the school principal must fulfil. In the same way, Senge et al. (2000) have noted that schools depend on leadership to be productive and to be able to self-renew. The value of leadership in schools cannot be overemphasised. Green and Collett (2021) argue that it is the role of the principal to create an environment supportive to learning, one that is collaborative and promoting cognitive growth. Principals are thus required to advance their schools into learning organisations (DBE, RSA, 2015). Carpenter (2017) states that professional learning communities (PLC) are one way of developing schools as learning organisations. The diagram below outlines the major characteristics of PLCs.

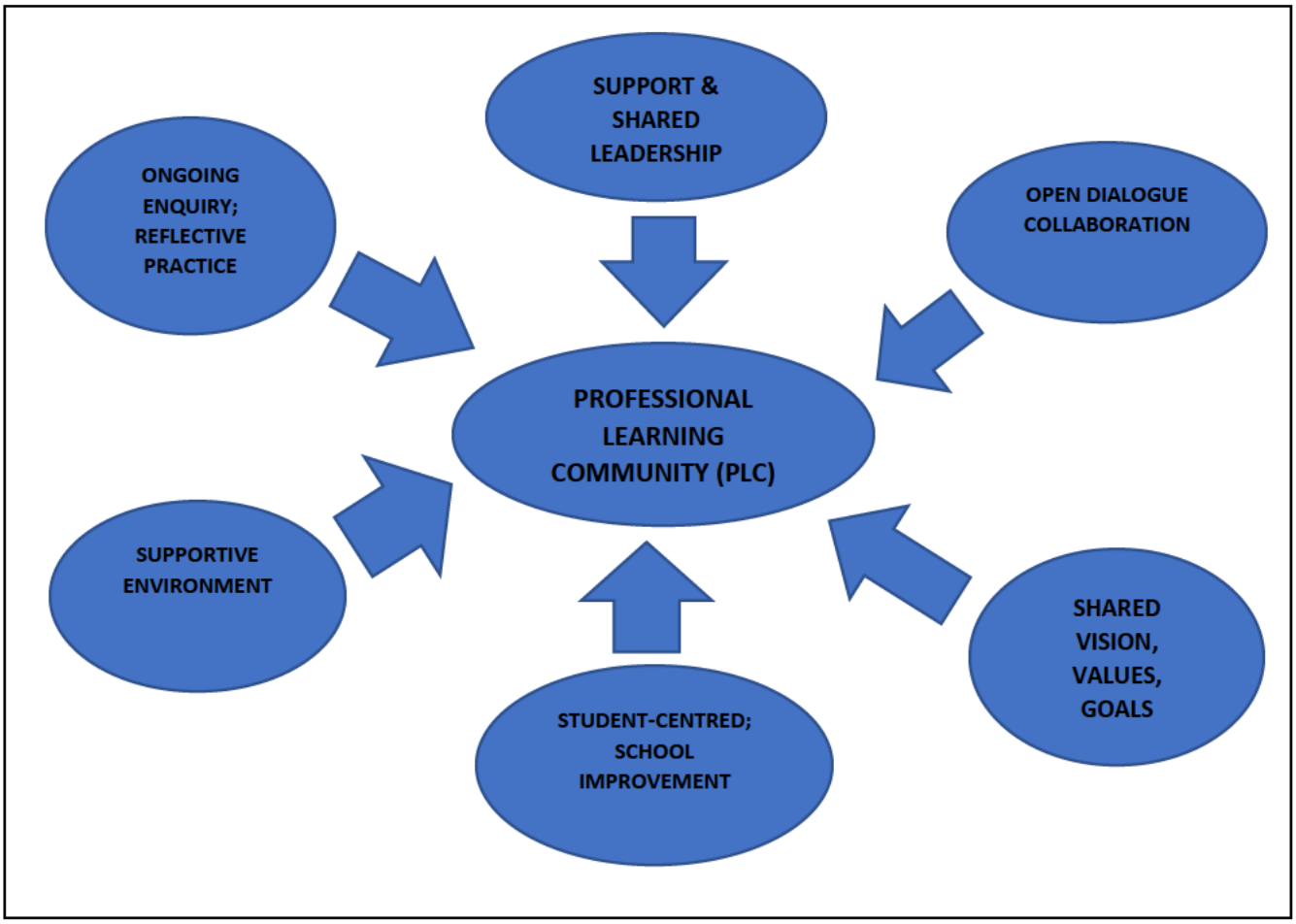

Figure 3.6.3 The major characteristics of a PLC – adapted from Blanton and Perez (2011)

Figure 3.6.3 illustrates that PLCs comprise many different elements. These are aspects that promote the ideals of collaboration, engagement, and continual efforts to improve teaching and learning. The PLC aims to create an environment that stimulates reflective practice, with the objective of improving teaching and learning practices. The learners are at the centre of the PLC, while the competence and professional growth of educators are prioritised to deliver the best practice; this ensures that a high quality of teaching and learning is delivered. The entire PLC network aims to generate and maintain positive outcomes. Growth and positive engagement are central to PLCs.

PLCs are described as communities "with the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing student learning" (Bolam et al., 2005, p.145). Carpenter (2017) avers that the principal should play a central role in creating the climate in which the PLC can flourish. Furthermore, Baumfield (2017) contends that teachers working as part of a PLC are more effective and collegial. PLCs thus promote collegiality and have a positive outcome on learners' academic performance. The positive correlation between PLCs and enhanced learner performance, as well as collegial relationships between teachers (and other professionals), are confirmed by Blanton and Perez (2011), and by Tam (2015). This evidence points out that principals should play a key role in the establishing and maintaining of PLCs to ensure that their schools are promoted as learning organisations enhancing academic achievement. Green and Collett (2021) concede that sustaining and even simply establishing PLCs is not an easy task. The above-mentioned authors also acknowledge the value and positive impact of PLCs. Caskey and Carpenter (2014) have demonstrated that many teachers work in isolation, and this diminishes their efficacy and professional growth. In response to this, Battersby and Verdi (2015) argue that PLCs have the potential to address both the isolation and professional growth of teachers who belong to such professional bodies. Likewise, the South African Standard for Principalship (DBE, RSA, 2015) requires school principals to be actively involved in the formation and running of PLCs.

While PLCs are clearly a great vehicle for promoting collegial relations and professional growth, the relationship between principals and staff also plays a pivotal role in the school's effective functioning. Einola and Alvesson (2021) highlight the leader-follower relationship (LFR). This concept underlines the equal importance of

the teacher and the principal in the successful functioning of the school. Furthermore, the interaction between these parties is described as the leader-member exchange (LMX). Einola and Alvesson (2021) maintain that positive relations between the leader (principal) and the follower (teachers) leads to positive outcomes. This was confirmed by the findings of Anand et al. (2011), and Thomas and Lankau (2009). However, teachers can have a vastly different outlook from the principal on some aspects. This could lead to tension and potential conflict, which in turn could hamper the school/organisation in reaching the set outcomes. LMX should thus include dialogue, discussion, and collaboration for the success of the school. Principals who disregard the opinions of their teachers might be ignoring some valid solutions to problems that exist in the school. This should be avoided, as Einola and Alvesson (2021) contend.

In line with the summary of many outlooks on leadership provided by Dinh, Lord, Garnder, Meuser, Liden and Hu (2014), Saleem, Aslam, Yin and Rao (2020) discuss yet another management outlook. Saleem et al. (2020) refer to the path-goal theory (PGT). This theory has several outcomes. One of the practical outcomes of this theory requires school leaders and principals to offer directions, assistance, and guidance in clarifying job goals for teachers. Such will eradicate obstacles that hinder teachers from accomplishing their goal of performing as well as expected. PGT differentiates between four leadership styles. These are the directive, the participative, the supportive, and the achievement-orientated styles. Furthermore, PGT holds that teachers are motivated when their efforts and performance are contributing positively to the school's academic achievement.

Northouse (2018) provides an overview of these leadership styles. Directive leaders provide task instructions and directions to their subordinates. These include their expectations, how to follow the instructions given, and time frames for the completion of tasks. Principals in this study are limited in having to take a completely directive approach in their schools. This is because principals are held solely responsible for their school's academic performance. Supportive leadership is described as approachable and sociable leadership. It accentuates teachers' well-being, human needs, and recognition of teachers' efforts. Supportive leadership includes teachers giving their suggestions and ideas to principals to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Teachers may also participate in major decision-making and implementation processes within the school. Northouse (2018) adds that participative

leadership encourages shared decision-making, in which teachers' opinions and input are valued and actively encouraged. For participative leadership to be successful, principals need to encourage teachers' continuous improvement in their assigned duties. Additionally, principals need to have confidence in the proficiencies of teachers so that teachers can accomplish the established challenging goals. Achievement-oriented principals ensure that their teachers know exactly what is expected of them. The schools in this study are expected to set certain targets and to work hard towards achieving those targets. Teachers are made aware of these targets, and they are expected to achieve them within a set time frame. Principals adhering to this school of thought trust the capabilities of their teachers and continue to encourage improved academic performance. The table below gives the key characteristics of each leadership style under the path-goal theory (PGT).

Type of Leadership Style	**Key Characteristics**
Directive principals	Gives directives, rules, and guidelines
Supportive principals	Creates a pleasant work environment
Participative principals	Invites inputs and ideas from staff
Achievement-oriented principals	Focus on achieving the set goals with the team

Figure 3.6.4 Key characteristics of leadership types – own summary

In summary, directive principals generally give task directions and do not necessarily involve teachers in major decision-making in the schools. Supportive leadership, in contrast, informs and strengthens directive leadership (Northouse, 2018). Supportive leadership creates constructive work environments that result in high morale and a happy and productive workforce. Within the participative leadership style, principals utilise teachers' expertise and creativity to reach solutions to problems. The teachers' input, ideas, and suggestions are valued and taken as part of the answer to solving problems in the school. The achievement-oriented principal sets goals and objectives, which make teachers spirited, active, and motivated to achieve the set goals. The ideal principal will demonstrate a combination of these leadership approaches to gain the best from the teachers, and to achieve the set targets or goal to be achieved.

Shared instructional leadership correlates strongly with the PGT and involves the active collaboration of principal and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Within this model, the principal seeks out the ideas, insights, and

expertise of teachers in these areas, and works with teachers for school improvement. The principal and teachers share responsibility for staff development, curricular development, and supervision of instructional tasks. Thus, the principal is not the sole instructional leader but the “leader of instructional leaders” (Glickman, 1989, p. 6). As the school leader, the principal is expected to fulfil certain duties, achieve certain goals or outcomes. These are discussed in the next section.

3.7 Employer Expectations from Principals

The Department of Education has certain expectations from the principals that they employ. These expectations are outlined in Resolution 8 of 1998 in the ELRC’s roles and responsibilities for educators. The principal is expected to maintain an oversight role in the administration of the school, personnel matters, teaching aspects, communication, engaging with all stakeholders, as well as managing and coordinating extra- and co-curricular matters. While all these roles have their associated value and merit, the focus of this project is primarily related to the first five aspects, to a greater or lesser extent. The researcher sees these roles as pertinent to the results achieved.

Administration within the school requires the principal to be in oversight on the timetable, admission of learners, and the placement of these learners. It is the principal’s responsibility to professionally manage the school (ELRC, 1996). This involves the best use of monetary funds available to the school to give maximum benefit to the learners at the school. This should be in consultation with the relevant stakeholders and appropriate structures, such as the school governing body (SGB). The principal should also ensure that a school journal is kept. This journal should be a record of all the important events concerning the school for the year. The school normally refers to this document as the year plan. It is also the principal’s duty to inspect the school premises to ensure that equipment used is safe and maintained, and that the school is a safe place for both teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and learners.

Regarding personnel, the principal should ensure that teachers are up to date with departmental circulars and any information that affects them (ELRC, 1996). Newly appointed teachers must be guided, supervised, and provided with professional advice on teaching-related matters. The principal must train these teachers by introducing staff-training programmes to assist teachers to conduct their work optimally. An

appropriate workload should be assigned to each teacher. The staff should also be appraised, reviewed, and guided to improve their capacity. It is the duty of the principal to ensure that these evaluations are planned, organised, and effectively conducted.

Communication is vital to the success of any organisation. Van der Molen and Gramsbergen-Hoogland (2019) reiterate that organisations are networks of people. People need to communicate with one another to drive and achieve the goals of the organisation; also, to work in union while sharing the same resources (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland, 2019). In any school, the teachers and staff should be aware of the values and norms of the school. It is the role of the principal to communicate these effectively and to ensure that teachers and learners uphold and contribute to these standards. The time allocation patterns of principals have been linked to important school outcomes, including learners' academic achievements (Grissom, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2015; Grissom, Loeb & Master, 2013; Horng, Klasik & Loeb, 2010). Besides school outcomes, principals' time allocation can influence other personal and organisational variables such as lower job stress, improved school climate, and better parent perceptions of the school (Grissom et al., 2015; Horng et al., 2010). Since time is a scarce resource for principals, understanding how they spend their time and with whom can be beneficial to understanding the school's level of academic achievement.

Teaching staff should be aware of all communication that affects the curriculum. As such, the principal should have a file that contains all circulars from the Department of Education. The principal should provide professional leadership by supervising, guiding, and offering professional advice on performance- and work-related matters (ELRC, 1996). Staff-training programmes, induction of new teachers, appraising of teachers, and teacher development are aspects that fall under the principal's domain. The teachers in a school should also have a balanced workload to manage the teaching content efficiently. This workload allocation should also be managed well.

The value of communication cannot be overstated. One of the key duties of the principal is to communicate with the SGB on the smooth and efficient running of the school (S.A. Schools Act, 1996). Liaising with the district/circuit or regional offices of the Education Department is crucial. This involves engagement with areas such as chain supply, personnel section, and finance section, to ensure that aspects such as

staffing, administration, and the purchasing of equipment are conducted in the correct manner. The curriculum delivery process also requires communication with teaching and learning services (TLS) and with parents, on the progress and educational aspects concerning learners. Research on school principals' work and time allocation reflects that principals interact with multiple stakeholders (Camburn, Spillane & Sebastian, 2010; Grissom, Loeb & Master, 2013; Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2016).

This is further illustrated by the vital need for communication with government departments such as the Department of Health, Public Works, etc. The principal should also facilitate cooperation with universities, colleges, and other agencies to promote the networking of learners, thus expanding their working and studying opportunities. Apart from advertising the school to higher institutions, such also promotes access to these institutions for its learners. This could serve as a form of motivation for learners to perform well to enter these higher institutions and pursue career paths that are in demand and financially rewarding.

3.8 School Context as a Contributor to Academic Achievement

The school context is a result of the influence and background of the school staff, the school community, the learners, and so many other contributions from socio-economic, socio-environmental, and historical factors (Pestana, Duarte & Coutinho, 2016). The school context is important in the teaching and learning process. It can allow this interaction to stimulate English proficiency and academic improvement. Since all subjects are taught in English, improved English language proficiency will benefit all subjects. School context, however, is not simple to define, and is not the only determinant of academic success. Deakin Crick et al. (2016) note that there can be no single blueprint for school improvement, because each school operates in a unique school context – what works in one school may not work in another; and what works in one school at one time may not be repeatable at another time. Principals therefore need to be able to respond appropriately to ensure that academic performance can flourish in their school context.

The school context in South Africa has undergone dramatic changes over the past few decades. This has placed added demands on principals to address multiple and varied responsibilities, resulting in significant constraints on how principals spend their workdays (Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015). Creating a school context that promotes

teaching and learning is one of those demands that principals must attend to. Research into school context has revealed differences between schools in interactions among school-level factors such as principal and teacher leadership, human and material resources, classroom practices, professional teaching conditions, and teacher community (Bascia, 1994, 1996; Bascia & Rottmann, 2011). The figure below provides an illustration of the role players that can shape the school context.

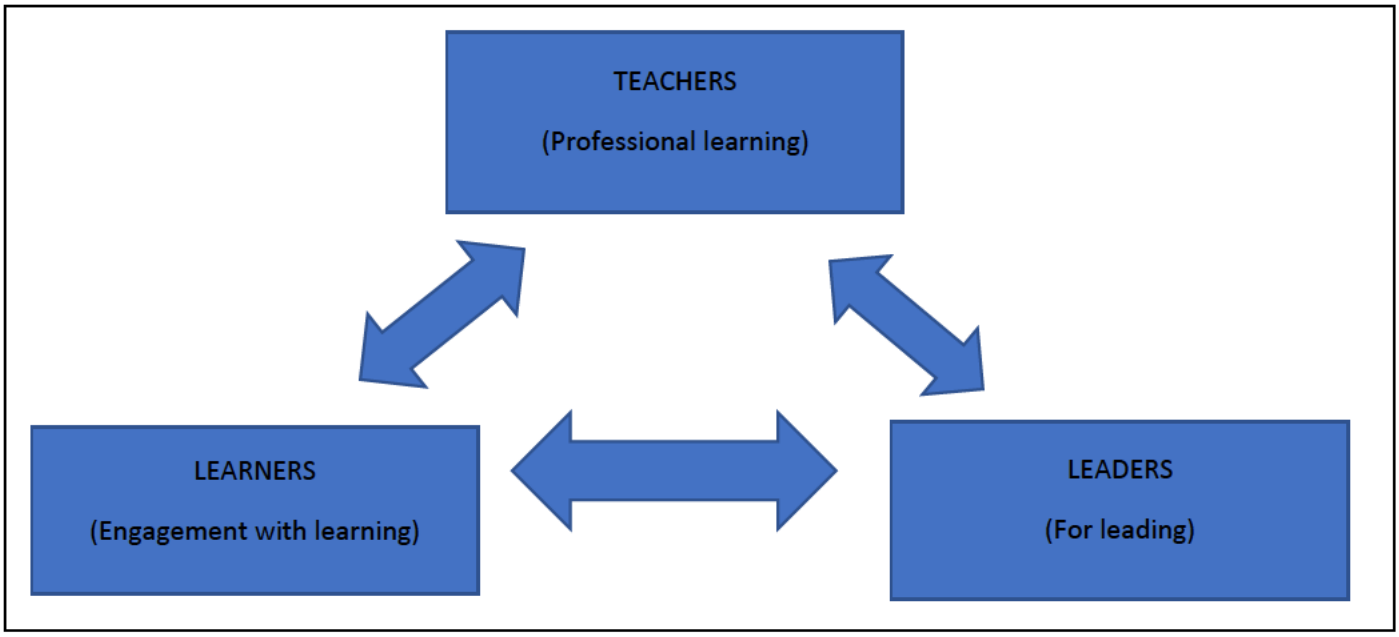

Figure 3.8 Role players shaping the school context - adapted from Deakin Crick et al., 2013.

The school is a complex, dynamic system that can have an influence on students' academic, affective, social, and behavioural learning (Deakin Crick, Green, Barr, Shafi & Peng, 2013). Figure 3.8 above indicates that this complex, dynamic system that Deakin Crick, et al, (2013) refers to, is made up of multiple role players. The involvement of so many role players can make the school context complex and varied. To understand the complexity of the school context further, one can examine four other, but equally important aspects that constitute the school climate in this system (Bascia, 2014). The first is school safety. This includes learners feeling physically safe; socio-emotional safety; tolerance of others; and discipline policies, to ensure that rules are followed which ensure a sheltered environment for teaching and learning.

School safety is linked to the second aspect – interpersonal relationships. This includes respect for diversity, social support for others, meaningful engagement, school connectedness, administrative support, shared decision-making (consultation),

and community involvement in school activities. The third aspect relates to teaching and learning practices. This refers to the opportunities for teachers to experiment and learn; support for professional collaboration (collegiality); instruction and assessment policies required for academic achievement; as well as opportunities for students' social, ethical, emotional, intellectual, and civic learning (Bascia, 2014). The last aspect that shapes the school climate is the organisational structures. This refers not only to the physical infrastructure (buildings) and resources such as sports fields, but also to the rules and norms implemented, the supplies provided to the school, and the scheduling of events pertaining to the school and its efficient running.

These aspects are interlinked and cannot efficiently function independently. For example, it would be pointless to have a safe, well-kept school in which the teaching and learning practices fall short of the expected norms for learners to pass their grades. Similarly, it would be counterproductive to have the best teaching practices in an unstable, unsafe school structure. The safety aspect must be complemented by the other mentioned aspects, allowing for a greater chance of effective teaching and learning to take place within the system. The principal, as the head of the school, must ensure that these aspects are in place, ensuring a conducive environment that allows learners to be taught in a secure and stable school. The school becomes a type of society that strives to promote the mandate given to them. Societies must evolve, adapt, and change to flourish; but most of all, they need to be cohesive, and have strong collaboration to survive.

The schools should also be cohesive in preserving positive values. Schools, however, are not managed by only the principal but each teacher is also a manager. Each teacher is expected to manage their classroom efficiently. The school principal must create the environment for the cohesion in the school to promote academic success. Classroom management is one approach that can allow the teachers to use this cohesion to benefit the school and the learners' academic growth.

3.8.1 Classroom management (CM)

The teacher must open unknown or hidden areas of skills and knowledge in the learners. This is one of the key principles of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), (DBE, 2011). Furthermore, the teacher must be able to consider and understand learners' motivation for whatever they do in class. For teachers to be

effective in the classroom, they must manage the learning environment to achieve their objectives. Classroom management (CM) is the term often used to describe this activity. CM is a generic term that involves a range of aspects; and CM is a critical practice that includes several components that may improve the chances of achieving long-term learning outcomes (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2017).

Classroom management (CM) refers to all the processes that contribute to the classroom being free from obstacles to learning (Robison, 2019). CM may include the physical design of the classroom, classroom routines, and positively stated expectations from learners (Simonsen, Freeman, Kooken, Dooley, Gambino, Wilkinson, VanLone, Walters, Byun, Xu, Lupo & Kern, 2020). Well-prepared lessons, increased supervision and a set routine provide clear structure and predictability for students, while making CM practical (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Abry, 2013). CM includes an immense number of constructs involving interplay between learners, teachers, learning spaces, curricula, and other role players in teaching and learning (Robison, 2020). According to Collier-Meek et al. (2019), classroom routines, as part of CM, can be sketched in advance and explicitly explained to learners to prepare them to suitably engage in activities taking place regularly (e.g., arrival time, independent work), draw teacher support, or manage difficult times (e.g., when the teacher is working with a small group). CM also includes active supervision by the teacher. This can be achieved by moving throughout the classroom, monitoring learners' behaviour, and interacting with learners throughout the lesson (Collier-Meek, Johnson, & Farrell, 2018).

Increased active supervision by teachers has been associated with improved learner behaviour in classrooms and other settings (Collier-Meek et al., 2019). Robison (2019) concurs, and even suggests that the learner's family support structure be involved in their educational growth. This author argues that having the parent on the teacher's side makes dealing with the learner easier. Parents should not only hear from the teacher when the learner has done something wrong but should also be told when learners are commended for positive behaviour or achievement at school. Robison (2019) proposes that teachers make positive phone calls to guardians or parents when learners have achieved anything positive, commendable, or good at school. Robison (2019) states that this positive communication with parents conveys the message that the teacher and the school also want the learner to progress and excel in education.

Robison believes that family serves as the support structure and can help learners to gain the most from their time at school. Carrascal and Rotela (2009) contend that the family is the first educational institution; it has the capacity to interfere (positively or negatively) with the development and learning of its members. Learners with better study habits also present better school results, being enhanced by the study and support received at home (Carvalho, 2012).

CM should involve the learner as the key role player in education. Providing learners with frequent and varied opportunities to respond is associated with increased academic engagement, decreased problem behaviour, and improved academic performance (MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015). Broad academic engagement on the part of both learners and teachers was positively associated with regular references to routine and structure. The school and academic context, however, is not isolated from other influences that impact on learning (Pestana et al., 2016). Not all influences are positive; and a diverse society contributes to a diverse student population. Students, in turn, transform the school into a setting of diverse personalities − CM is therefore essential to controlling, guiding and directing these personalities so that they achieve success.

3.8.2 Factors counteracting CM Classroom management

The ideal family situation would be supportive of the learning process and the progress of the family members. This, however, is not always the case. Kannemeyer and Potgieter (2018) highlight the wide gap in wealth between South Africa's rich and poor. Income differences are usually linked to several factors, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, employment type, and the rural-urban divide. These authors highlight the impact of economic inequality on health, and specifically on mental health. Economical inequity has been linked to psychiatric diseases including depression (Tanaka, Yamamoto & Haruno, 2017). Pandey, Corbett, Mohan, Reagu, Kumar, Farrell, and Lindow, (2020) attest that depression could result in behavioural changes, and a lack in concentration in people. These are aspects that could potentially negatively affect classroom management, and academic progress in learners.

Economic inequity has a critical effect on human mood states. Learners from such households will not be receptive to teaching and learning. Coupled with this, El-Omari (2016) reminds that schools in South Africa display large variations in the resources

available at schools. Freeks (2019) also highlights the invaluable role played by the father of a learner in the household, noting that many households are fatherless.

The issue of absent fathers in South Africa is becoming a serious local problem (Freeks, 2019). Increasingly, South African children are growing up without a father figure, and as a result are becoming vulnerable in society. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) published an insightful report in June 2013, which identified how the life chances of children with 'absent fathers' are negatively affected (CSJ, 2013). The father's absence has negative consequences for children's behaviour and social and emotional development (Flouri, Narayanan, & Midouhas, 2015). This is a factor that the school cannot control but must face. Some learners will inevitably come from broken homes, which could pose some behavioural, social, and learning problems.

The phenomenon of child-headed households (CHHs) has become a major feature of the social landscape of South Africa, and also of various other African countries (Ngconjana, Kwizera & Umejesi, 2017). UNICEF estimates that some 150,000 children were believed to have lived in CHHs in South Africa in 2015, with orphaned children constituting almost 3.7 million of the country's population (UNICEF, 2015). The practice of children taking care of other children, and even adults, is a challenge to the universal models of childhood as a protected life phase devoid of adult responsibilities (Evans, 2011). CHHs present yet another challenge for academic progress and schooling success. These adverse circumstances that learners are exposed to have the potential to harm children's future livelihoods and life chances (Ngconjana, Kwizera & Umejesi, 2017). Schooling is further negatively affected by the living conditions that prevail in CHHs. Despite these unfavourable conditions for learners, learners are still expected to attend school and perform well academically. The background and conditions that come about through the prevalence of CHHs create additional challenges for schooling and effective classroom management.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on some of the key literature on the topic under discussion. The factors that could potentially influence academic performance, as well as hinder academic success, were highlighted. These were discussed under various topics.

The role of language in the classroom was scrutinised. English as the LoLT was considered, understanding that the PIRLS has indicated that South African learners

show low levels of reading literacy compared with other countries. The rapid rate of globalisation has sparked the need for people to be conversant in English. South African learners have also shown a preference for English, despite the poor reading levels in evidence.

Various factors influence language results in schools, including poor subject terminology, and poor vocabulary. Results were also negatively influenced by the large variations of resources available in schools within South Africa. The situation was compounded by most learners, irrespective of their first language, taking English as a subject, and as the language of instruction in their schools.

Second-language acquisition is also influenced by various factors. These include both internal and external factors. Learner capacity, teachers' ability, and parental support, and the lack of this component in learners' education were explored. The role of the MKO was also highlighted.

New technology or recent technological advances were displayed to show their potential in improving academic results. Fears were noted that those schools that do not have resources to access these platforms might be left behind. This could widen the gap between those who have, and those who do not have access to these resources.

A strong focus was placed on school leadership as a means of improving academic performance. Leadership was explored; both instructional leadership and transformational leadership were unpacked. Other leadership theories such as the path-goal theory (PGT) and professional learning communities (PLC) were referred to; and it was understood that various leadership theories exist, and are employed to various degrees in schools. Leadership was highlighted as a vital aspect in the efforts to promote the academic success of a school.

The employer places certain expectations on principals, the leaders of schools. These expectations were explored and discussed. Academic performance was also viewed as something that is strongly influenced, not only by the principal, but also by the school context. The value of classroom management (CM) was accepted as a factor shaping academic success.

Academic success is determined by several internal and external factors that have an influence on the school and the learning environment. Some of these are within the school's control, but others are not. In trying to explain the results that learners achieve in their English FAL class, it is important to review all the variables that could ultimately influence the learners' academics. Isolating the positives for working on could help to improve results. The negatives, however, should also be noted and addressed. The next chapter unpacks the methodology that underpins this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct this study. It gives an outline of the research paradigm, the research approach, and its limitations. The research design and ethical aspects are also outlined in this section. Gatekeeper approval, recruitment of participants, and sampling are discussed. The latter part of the chapter focuses on data generation, data analysis, and the rigour and trustworthiness of the study. The final section of the chapter is focussed on the limitations of the methodology used in the study.

I regarded the selected methodology as fit for purpose as it allowed me to gather the required data, analyse it, and to draw informed conclusions from it. This study is based on qualitative research to ensure the generation of in-depth, contextually rich evidence. This is precisely what I wanted as the researcher. Employing the case study further ensured generating data based on an in-depth study of one case. In this instance, the varying academic achievement in the English FAL exit examination. I deliberately employed methods to ensure that the study was ethically sound to add value to its content. Employing the chosen methodology ensured that the best possible data is generated under ethical conditions to ensure a valid, reliable study, based on authentic data that truly reflect the status, condition, and circumstances that prevail in the sampled schools during the lifetime of this study.

4.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm can be described as the perspective or lens used in the study. Henning (2005) avers that research cannot be conducted in a vacuum. It must be based on one or another paradigm. This study was based on the interpretive paradigm. Henning describes the interpretive paradigm as a way of deriving meaning from the social interaction which people engage in. The interpretive paradigm does not see definitions as cast in stone. Rather, the context in which teaching takes place is seen as fluid, changing, and unique. Gilliland (2011) believes that various realities are acknowledged when different groups or cultures are studied using this paradigm. The researcher is seen as part of the research in this paradigm, taking on an ‘insider’ role while making meaning through the observation of social interaction within the school or research setting. Gadamer (1975) agrees with this point and adds that the

interpretive paradigm is always used against a set of beliefs and practices, presuppositions, and assumptions. One person's understanding or interpretation of a situation might be very different from another person's point of view on the same situation. The factors viewed as significant in one school might not be seen as of significance in another school.

The interpretive paradigm acknowledges and embraces this form of "fluid', unfixed sense-making; and Gadamer (1975) refers to this as a "fusion of horizons". The horizons refer to the various standpoints people take. It is precisely this unique way that this paradigm causes it to be either favoured or avoided by researchers. The interpretive research paradigm is used in research that tries to make sense of phenomena through exploration or explanation of people's language, perceptions, shared values, and meanings in a dynamic societal context (Gilliland, 2011). A focus on human interaction and understanding, while making meaning of events in everyday social activities, characterises this paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuman, 2006). This paradigm is thus ideal to employ in exploring principals' experiences and understandings of the people in, and contexts of their schools. In the views of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011). and Flick et al. (2004), the interpretive paradigm presents itself in three separate traditions or ways in unveiling meaning-making and directing human interaction.

The transformation process of human experiences into consciousness and language in creating multiple realities forms the first tradition of the interpretive paradigm. A person's thinking is referred to as human consciousness. This is converted into the mental thought processes, which in turn are transformed into mental acts or intentional thoughts facilitated in everyday social-life experiences (Cohen et al., 2011; Vygotsky, 1962). This tradition explores how people transform their everyday life experiences into consciousness and language, and again create and recreate daily life experiences in a situation (Creswell, 2007; Hitzler & Eberle, 2004). Realities are socially constructed through interaction with other people. This interaction makes life meaningful and creates a reality in two ways (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first is constructed reality, and the second is created reality. Socially constructed reality refers to the multiple realities that are constructed in the minds of people; and this relates to thought processes and consciousness. Created realities, on the other hand, refer to multiple realities created from the observation of actions of other people. This means

that constructed reality deals with the internal thought processes of people, while created reality deals with the actual behaviours and actions of people (Cohan et al., 2007; Neuman, 2006; Flick et al., 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This reasoning holds that people are constantly creating and recreating, constructing, and reconstructing varying realities in their daily interaction with other human beings. The schools in this study are in their own specific contexts with their own realities. This requires that the principals and the staff members face various situations, conditions, and realities on a day-to-day basis. These conditions then determine the action between people.

The second tradition of the interpretive paradigm deals with deriving meaning from written or printed documents. This primarily contemplates human actions and is termed hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation through literary texts. Cohen et al. (2011) and Creswell (2007) describe hermeneutics as a discipline making sense of the social world using both linguistic and non-linguistic human social activity. Bryman (2008) describes linguistic social activity as recorded language, both spoken as well as written in text. Non-linguistic social activities refer to recorded actions such as movements and bodily expressions. These could include facial expressions, hand gestures, a particular way of dressing, and other forms of body language. These cues allow for the creation and organisation of the environment to illustrate underlying meanings, relationships, or categories (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, the dress code of the principals interviewed indicated a meaning or hidden message that is not verbalised but sends a clear message that is open to interpretation. The non-linguistic cues should not be underestimated or dismissed. The researcher in this tradition of the interpretive paradigm aims to enter the recorded text of the participants' social lives. Researchers strive to understand the underlying meanings, relationship constructs, categories and concepts created by the interaction between people (Cohen et al., 2011; Neuman, 2006). While people interact with the spoken word and written text, there are underlying meanings that are not always immediately obvious to the outside observer. The researcher aims to understand these meanings, relating them to the social setting to gain a holistic picture of the engagement that takes place and the events that shape it. For example, the subject improvement plan (SIP) of one school indicated that extra classes would only be conducted from January to April. These would re-commence after the June school recess. On closer investigation, it was noticed that the winter

months were too extreme to conduct morning and evening classes. The school infrastructure and the extreme cold weather did not allow for learners to attend extra classes during these cold months. This was not the case in other sampled schools.

Thirdly, is the interpretive tradition that concerns itself with the constructing of social symbolic meaning and how these meanings are constructed and interpreted. Cohen et al. (2007) believe that people draw on semiotics to gain insight into meanings. Flick et al. (2004) and Denzin (2004) concur and describe semiotics as the use of signs and symbols in language to communicate meaning. Semiotics is the use of language as a tool in a particular social setting to create subjective and objective meanings. This occurs through deliberate social interaction (Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin, 2004). Semiotics is an investigation of how meaning is created and how meaning is communicated. Viewing and interpreting the signs enables the researcher to make meaning of the landscape that they are studying or researching. Figure 3.1 below outlines the basic underlying assumptions of the interpretive paradigm.

PARADIGM	ONTOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY	METHODOLOGY	AXIOLOGY
Interpretive	• Multiple realities • Socially constructed	• Empathetic • Observer subjectivity	• Qualitative • Interactional • Interpretation	• Contextual understanding

Figure 4.2 The interpretive paradigm – adapted from Vaishnavi et al., 2013

Ontology refers to the nature of reality and being (Ponterotto, 2005). Ontology addresses the following question: What is the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about that reality? Creswell (2003) refers to ontology as knowledge; epistemology as how we know it; and axiology as the values that accompany the research. Ponterotto describes epistemology as the relationship between the “knower” (the research participant) and the “would-be knower” (the researcher). This author states that axiology deals with the role of researcher values in the scientific process. In summary, Creswell (2003) believes that researchers make claims about what ontology (knowledge) is, as also epistemology (how we know it), axiology (what values go with it), rhetoric (how we write about it), and methodology (process for studying it).

In my study, ontology refers to the knowledge of the sampled schools and the realities of their contexts, as well as the actions and experiences of the principals. The epistemology of the schools was also noted, as a working relationship already existed

between me and the informants (principals). The methodology used involved interviewing the informants, having them complete a questionnaire, and studying the SIP for each school. These processes were conducted while upholding strict ethical boundaries, and with the utmost respect for the integrity and unanimity of the informants. This axiology, the values that accompany the research process, was of the utmost importance in this study.

Within the interpretive paradigm, knowledge is constructed by both the observed behaviour and the unseen intentions, beliefs, and values of the participants (Henning, 2005). The social interaction that people engage in, as well as the written documents and texts created through engaging with others, are of significant value to the researcher who favours this paradigm. This paradigm was ideal for interpreting principals' understandings of the factors affecting English results at matriculation level.

4.3 Research Approach

'Qualitative research' is a generic term for a range of research approaches applied in social science. These differ in their theoretical assumptions, their understanding of their object of study, and in their methodological approach (Flick et al., 2004). Qualitative research approaches are employed across numerous academic disciplines, focussing particularly on the human elements of the social and natural sciences. Whilst quantitative research can produce large-scale evidence on a specific issue, qualitative research is a viable approach that provides in-depth, contextually rich evidence and analysis across a much smaller sample. Qualitative research addresses complex empirical questions and situations not captured by quantitative methods (Broadbent & Unerman, 2011).

Qualitative research is a scientific method of observation for gathering non-numerical data, while focussing on meaning-making, as required by the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research claims to describe the world 'from the inside out', from the point of view of the people who participate in the focussed activity. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of social realities and to attract attention to processes, patterns of meanings, and structural features (Flick et al., 2004). A qualitative approach will allow for the differing views of the focus of this study. Aspects that might help to improve matric results in one school might not be useful in another school, and vice versa. Thus, qualitative research denotes the type of inquiry in which

the qualities, the characteristics, or the properties of a phenomenon are examined to gain a better understanding or explanation thereof. A qualitative approach is a sequence of interpretation activities that does not consider a single methodological approach superior to other approaches. This makes it difficult to define qualitative research as a domain of discussion or discourse. Furthermore, it has no obvious theory or paradigm of its own. It has no distinctive method or practice of its own (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

According to Maxwell (2005, p. 22), qualitative data is data conveyed through words and text. The focus is not numerical, but relates to text and meaning (Rogers et al., 2011, p. 270). Kekeya (2019) concurs with these authors, and states that hermeneutics and semiotics are used to gather information. Data collection is focussed on people in situations, and is inductive, interactive, and flexible. Qualitative research is used to study social and cultural phenomena in depth (Myers, 2009, p. 260). The goals, research questions, the conceptual framework of the study, research methods used, and the validity of the research, are components of a qualitative study that researchers attend to interactively throughout the research. Silverman (2017) suggest that its focus is to study people in their natural environments; and to report on feelings, social situations, and experiences in a real-world setting through the analysis of people's words, actions, and motivations. The choice of paradigm is supported by Henning (2005) who notes that the qualitative approach is often located in the interpretive paradigm.

Qualitative research does not try to produce generalisable outcomes, generalisations not being an important criterion in determining the importance and validity of qualitative research. However, qualitative research is significant in terms of revealing several experiences. Such research could therefore provide insight into individuals working in a particular field or setting (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Thus, qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. The use of qualitative research is thus ideal for exploring the factors which result in inconsistent performance in English First Additional Language (FAL). The deployment of qualitative research provides insights into the problem and may uncover trends in thought and opinions. This is achieved through generating data, such as pictures, and verbal or textual data that cannot be counted. In qualitative research, one focusses on and name themes in texts, one tells

stories as they are experienced, one explains how themes are related to one another, and how speakers' characteristics account for the existence of certain themes and the absence of others (Bernard, 2006).

In this study, the focus was on principals' understanding of factors that influence the English results at matriculation level. The factors shaping such understanding, as well as the interventions to counter poor performance, were highlighted. Information was gathered by using questionnaires and conducting interviews with the principals of ten selected schools. The thick, rich descriptions were then analysed and interpreted.

4.4 Research Design: Case Study

The research design is described as a blueprint or architectural design of a research project; and the execution of the design, the research process or methodology, as the construction process using several methods and tools (Mouton, 2001, p.56). The focus of the research design is to guide the type of study planned to reach specific outcomes or to answer the research questions. The process to follow and the methodology of the research is chosen to support the outcome and the significance of the results. In this study, I employed the case study (CS) research design. Yin (2009) argues that CS is complex, and that the process entails six interdependent stages (Figure 4.4).

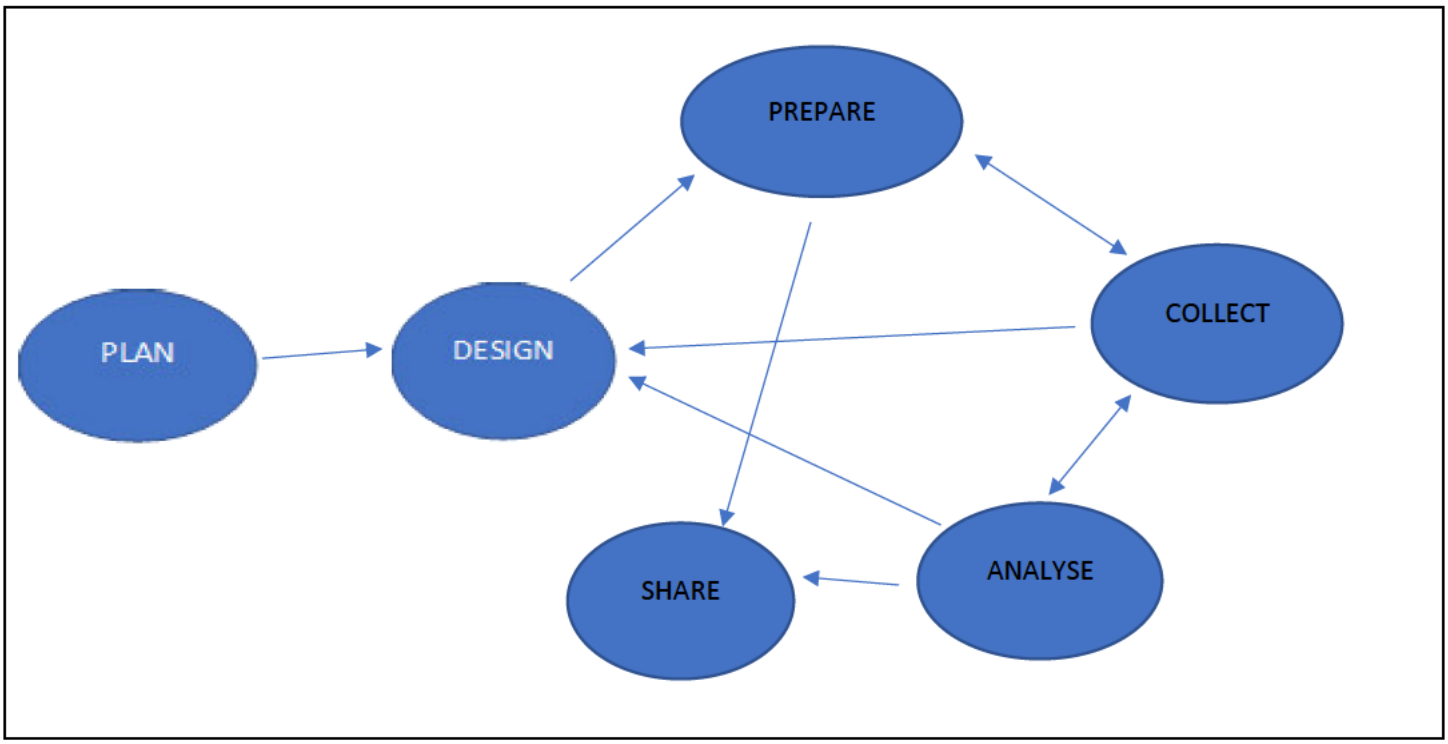

Figure 4.4 The case-study design - adapted from Yin (2009)

Yin (2009) proposes that case studies follow this six-step plan in their execution. The planning stage deals with identifying the research questions and rationale for conducting the study. Stage Two defines the case to be studied and the theory that will be employed. Skills development and training for the selected case is accomplished in Stage Three. Preparedness includes identifying any potential threat to the study and ways of overcoming it (Baškarada, 2013). The collecting stage requires following the case-study protocol in collecting data. In analysing the data, the researcher relies on the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Yin (2009) encourages analysing data in parallel with data collection to allow for quick adjustments to the study design, if required. The final stage of sharing involves defining the audience and using the appropriate genre to present evidence. The audience should be allowed to reach their own conclusions, based on the evidence presented in the case study.

In the present study, the first step involved the planning of the study which dealt with formulating the research questions and rationale for conducting the study. Setting up the interview schedule and relevant questions to drive the study also formed part of the planning stage. The second stage involved the case to be studied and the theory that was employed. The case was identified as principals' understanding of the factors that influence the English results at matriculation level in their schools. The case was restricted to one geographical area within one designated time frame. This step involved studying all the schools and viewing their English FAL results for the selected period. The next part was to examine the geographical location of the schools. The sample had to be easily reachable, and within the set target of results obtained in English FAL, based on extensive reading; theoretical underpinnings were identified.

During Step Three, the principals from each school were visited and requested to participate in this study. The aims of the study and the information required from each principal were explained; and both verbal and written consent was obtained from all the selected principals in the sample. A potential threat to this study was that the researcher is a subject advisor to these schools, often inspecting them for developmental purposes. The informants in this study were assured that the role the researcher played in the study was not that of a subject advisor, but merely that of a researcher. In addition, the researcher had read widely on how to build rapport and ensure trustworthy data.

The collecting stage (4) requires following the case study protocol in generating data. Yin (2009) states that the researcher relies on the theoretical underpinnings of the study during this step. The data generation was planned so that the selected informants were visited during times convenient to them. The interviews were recorded electronically, to ensure accuracy and validity. These were conducted with the consent of the informants. Stage Five, the data analysis, was completed using thematic analysis. Themes identified from the data were scrutinised and interpreted. The data was then presented in written form, along the lines of the themes which emerged. The findings were also made available to the informants as a means of achieving transparency. Yin (2009) asserts that the audience should be allowed to reach their own conclusions, based on the evidence presented in the case study.

Researchers distinguish between various types of case studies. Yin (1984) identifies three types of case studies. These are exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. Merriam (1988) also identifies descriptive, interpretative, and evaluative case studies. Yin describes exploratory case studies as a pilot for other studies or research questions to be examined again at a later stage. Descriptive case studies are seen as providing narrative accounts of a situation, while explanatory case studies have a focus on the testing of theories by the researcher. Merriam (1988) concurs, and views descriptive case studies as narrative accounts. Interpretative case studies are seen as developing conceptual categories inductively to examine initial assumption, while evaluative case studies attempt to explain and judge the case. This present study is explorative in nature, as it aimed to explore the various factors principals ascribed to playing a role in shaping English FAL results.

Understanding how case studies work and the types of case studies available, it is important to be aware of some definitions of case studies. A case study has been described as “a study of the singular, the particular, the unique” (Simons, 2009, p. 3). Another description calls it “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

The researcher’s preferred definition comes from Rule and John (2011). A case study is described as “a systematic and in-depth study of a particular instance in order to generate knowledge” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 4). This definition recognises schools as

unique in their context but universal in the expectations placed on them. Considering the sampled schools for this study, knowledge and insight are generated in explaining the results obtained for English FAL. Schools with different contexts aimed to teach the same curriculum with varied resources and in varied school contexts.

Case studies aim to portray what it is like to be in a situation, to catch the close reality and thick description (Geertz, 1973b) of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about, and feelings for a situation. Case studies involve studying a case or phenomenon in its real-life context, usually employing many types of data (Robson, 2002). Case studies are descriptive and detailed, with a narrow focus, combining subjective and objective data (Dyer, 1995). In case studies, it is important for events and situations to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be interpreted, evaluated, or judged by the researcher. The school situation should thus be taken as the research dictates.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) further suggest that the case-study design is particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over events. In conducting the research during this study, the researcher had almost no control over the events taking place in the sampled schools. Sturman (1999) argues that a distinguishing feature of case studies is that human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them, rather than being a loose connection of traits, necessitating in-depth investigation. Furthermore, contexts are unique and dynamic, hence case studies explore and report the complex, dynamic, and unfolding interactions of events and human relationships.

In this respect, this case study focussed on the activities, circumstances and events that could influence the English FAL matriculation results in the sampled schools. Some aspects clearly have an impact on the results achieved, and this study has focussed on and highlighted those factors. The researcher was thus called upon to work with the situation that presented itself in each case, making meaning of it (Yin, 1994). The case study provided fine-grained details that can be used to complement other, more coarsely grained – often large-scale – kinds of research. Case-study material, in this sense, can provide powerful human-scale data on macro-political decision-making, fusing theory and practice (Ball, 1990).

The case study must always have boundaries (Stake, 1995). The process of selecting cases must be conducted to maximise what can be learned in the period available for

the study. The unit of analysis is a critical factor in the CS. A case is always bound by time and activity, and researchers must collect detailed information using a variety of data-generation tools and procedures over a constant period (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009; Yin, 2012). The selected sample was carefully selected to gain the most information on the factors that could have an influence on the English FAL results. The case study was bound by the time frame of five years (2014 – 2018), and the activities leading to the results obtained in the National Senior Certificate Examination (NSC) for English First Additional Language (FAL).

4.5 The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Case-study Design

4.5.1 The strengths of the case-study design

As with any design in research, case studies (CS) have certain strengths and weaknesses. Nisbet and Watt (1984) believe that the results obtained in CS are more easily understood by a widespread range of audiences as they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional, understandable language. Rule and John (2011) insist that case studies are good for gaining insight into the complexities of a specific situation. Case studies also provide insight and highlights, meaning that expands the readers' experiences and understanding (Merriam, 2009). The insights produced by case studies can immediately be used for a diversity of purposes (Nunan, 1992). The ways of achieving good performance in some schools could be applied in other schools to help improve performance there.

Choosing a small-scale and manageable project related to one's own context and/or interests holds merit, according to Rule and John (2011). Nisbet and Watt (1984) agree on the value of the small-scale nature of this approach; and state that they catch unique features that may otherwise be lost in large-scale data collection. It is precisely these unique features that might hold the key to understanding the situation under study. Qi (2009) believes that case studies are invaluable, concurring with Nisbet and Watt. These researchers argue that case studies provide insights into other comparable situations and cases, thus assisting interpretation of other similar cases (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). CS present true reality, as the researcher is not intrusive, but views the natural occurrence of events. CS can also lend themselves to qualitative as well as quantitative usage (Yin, 1984). Solberg et al. (2006) contend that CS can be used for both descriptive and empirical research. CS can embrace and build in

unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables (Nisbet & Watt, 1984). This makes it a versatile approach that can be adapted and changed.

The advantage of using CS is multiple and varied. It would be incorrect to promote CS as an ideal form of inquiry, without any drawbacks. The reality is that CS has some weak points, and the conscientious researcher must be aware of these to conduct a credible study. The most salient weaknesses of CS are discussed next.

4.5.2 The weaknesses of the case-study design

As indicated, case studies present some weak points. The first concern in case studies is bias. Rule and John (2011) caution that, particularly when the researcher is 'part' of the case, the findings could be skewed because of researcher bias. Yin (1984, p. 21) notes that "too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, and has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions". Case studies require careful investigation to avoid misrepresentation, and to maximise the investigator's access to the evidence (Yin, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Maximising access to the evidence could be a counter to researcher bias, helping to present viable findings. To overcome bias in the present study, informants were assured of the researcher's role. The researcher made all the recordings and transcriptions available for informants to verify. The informants were also allowed to give any comments (even if not on the interview schedule) that they felt were important or pertinent to the English FAL results. These comments were often given out of trust that the confidentiality promised would be kept; and that the comments would be highlighted for correction.

Some authors also warn that the findings from one case cannot always be generalised to others. Generalisability is thus not always possible, as the truth is multiperspectival. Stake (1994), Tellis (1997), and Flyvbjerg (2006) also express reservations about the comparison of results across cases. Another negative of CS is the manageability of the data. Baškarada (2018) insists that it is easy to gather too much data using this method. CS are often labelled as being too long, difficult to conduct, and producing an enormous amount of documentation (Yin, 1984). Flyvbjerg (2006) adds that it is often problematic to summarise specific case studies. The researcher must be aware of the huge volumes of data collected, and which data will be most useful in the study. In this study, the data was driven by the research question being asked. While CS is not

without weaknesses, it holds great value, and continues to be accepted by many schools of thought in research.

4.6 Ethics and Gatekeeper Approval

Conducting a study should not infringe on the rights of others, including the participants. A study must be ethically sound to add value to its content. Ethical review of all research, including social and behavioural research, has been mandatory in South Africa for a long time (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). Ethical review aims to protect the rights and privacy of the people involved in the study; and follows a strict process in which research ethics committees (RECs) must establish that the proposal adheres to applicable ethical guidance. This study was evaluated on these strict ethical grounds. Application was made to the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) HSSREC before the study was initiated. Only after ethical clearance had been obtained, was the collection of data commenced. The ethical approval for this study (Ref No. HSSREC/00000675/2019) is valid; it has complied with the guidelines set out by UKZN's Research Ethics Committee. The ethical clearance was valid for up to a year. See Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Approval.

Ethics include a wide range of aspects as noted in the illustration below.

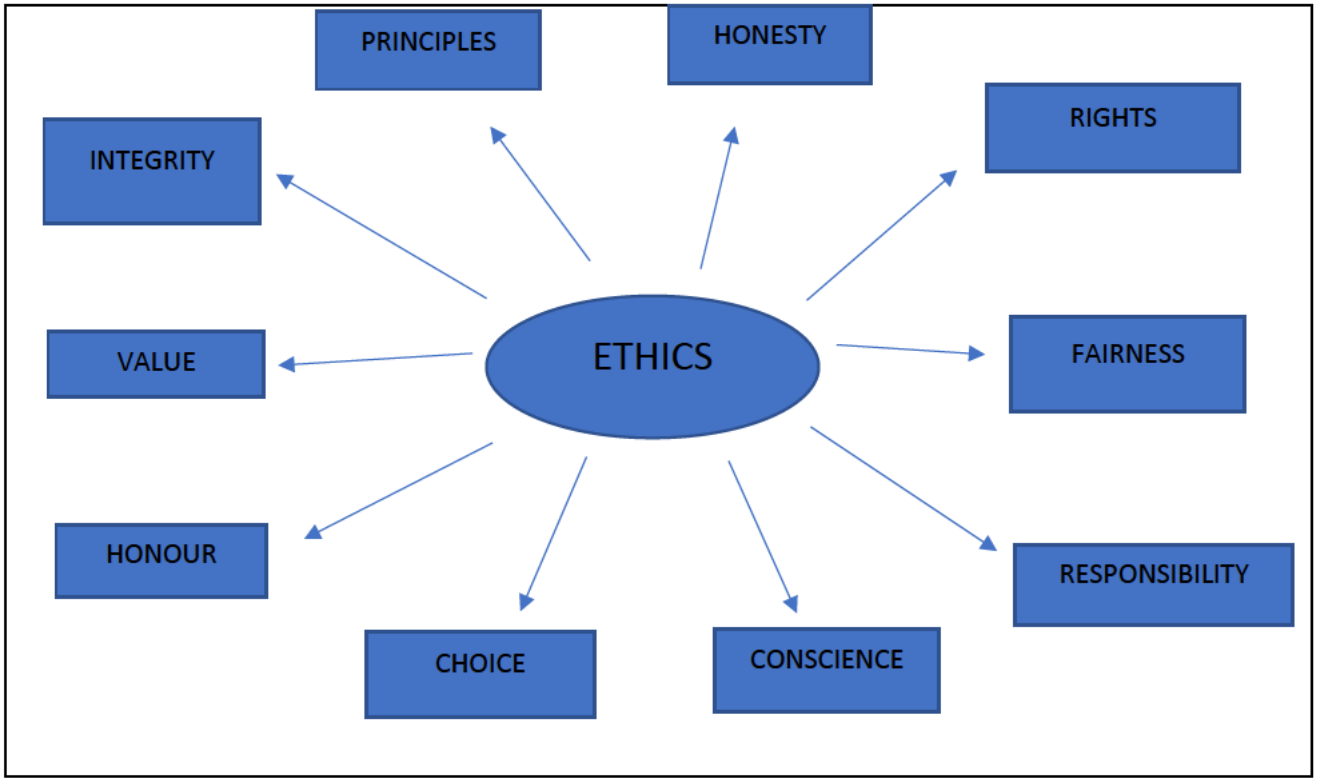

Figure 4.6 Ethics, briefly (adapted from SCU.EDU, 2020)

This study was conducted within the practice of strict ethical considerations. No persons under the legal age were involved; and consent was acquired from all relevant parties before they were engaged in any way.

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from all the relevant stakeholders. The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the Department of Education (DOE), and the relevant school principals were all consulted. Principals were given letters to ensure that their participation was voluntary and that they had given informed consent. (See Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter). On the informed consent, the participants were provided with detailed explanations of what the research entailed. Participants were also informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative implications for them. Furthermore, the identities of the participants were protected by assigning a pseudonym to each respondent. A letter seeking permission to conduct the study was sent to the district director of the Harry Gwala District after consulting with her. The district director responded positively, and the letter of approval was attached as an appendix to this thesis.

In all the data-generation methods, the permission of all respondents was also gained before using electronic recording devices. (See Appendices D and E, Interview Schedule, and Questionnaire). The researcher also ensured that each respondent always knew exactly what was taking place, to avoid suspicion, anxiety, and confusion. Participants were made comfortable by not taking them out of their comfort zones for interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality in every step of the research. Interviews were also scheduled at convenient times for participants.

The researcher ensured that the study was conducted in an ethical, fair, and transparent manner. This was achieved through being honest, upfront, and courteous with all participants. All participants recognised the value of the study and were keen to participate in the study. All the rules were followed for an ethically sound study.

4.7 Recruitment of Participants, and Sampling

In every type of research, it would be ideal to use the whole population; however, in most cases this is not possible, some populations being simply too large (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Cohen et al., 2008; Marshall, 1996). Purposive sampling was used. Ten schools in the Harry Gwala District were selected; and principals were asked to complete a questionnaire. This was to gain an idea of the methods used in schools,

and the factors that shaped the English FAL results at these schools. The return rate of questionnaires was a notable drawback; therefore the selected principals were asked to submit these during the interviews. The selected schools took part in the interviews and provided the subject improvement plan (SIP) for English FAL drafted and used in their schools.

The ten selected schools were visited. The study was explained to the principals, who were asked to participate in the study. Principals were assured that participation in the study was voluntary and that they would not be judged on the findings. Confidentiality was assured to all participants. The selected schools were identified to provide the most important information required to answer the research questions.

These ten schools were purposively sampled based on their matriculation results in English FAL over five years. Within the interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach, statistical accuracy is not a major concern, unlike detail and in-depth analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). These selected schools represented the detail required to make this study viable and productive. Purposive sampling implies that the researcher will make specific choices about which people to include in the sample (Cohen et al., 2011). The optimal sample size depends upon the parameters of the phenomenon under study, in this case, the factors that shape the final results achievement in English FAL.

The researcher employed purposive sampling to ensure a selection of consistently well-performing and sporadically well-performing schools in English FAL as part of the sample. Convenience sampling was also employed for this study. Convenience sampling, also known as haphazard sampling or accidental sampling, is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling in which members of the target population meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, easy accessibility, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate; and are included for the purpose of the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2011). To ensure that the sample was well represented, stratified sampling was also deployed. This type of sampling is used when the population consists of sub-groups that perform differently. The selected sample included several schools that performed consistently well in English FAL, and several schools that always produce fluctuating results in the same subject. This is illustrated in the table below:

No.	School Name	Average Gr. 12 enrolment 2018	Quintile of school	NSC English 2014	NSC English 2015	NSC English 2016	NSC English 2017	NSC English 2018
1.	School A	5	5	100	100	100	100	100
2.	School B	56	4	100	100	100	100	100
3.	School C	120	2	100	100	100	100	100
4.	School D	129	3	95	89	86	92	91
5.	School E	35	2	89	85	95	100	90
6.	School F	9	1	76	85	75	100	100
7.	School G	135	2	97	87	82	93	91
8.	School H	118	2	97	86	71	95	100
9.	School I	229	2	90	91	99	93	96
10.	School J	110	2	94	94	97	92	90

Table 4.7 Details of Schools included in the Sample

Adapted from NSC Examinations (2014 – 2018): Schools Subject Report

The table above illustrates several aspects related to the sample. The terms used are explained in this section. All schools in South Africa are categorised into five groups, known as quintiles. This is for purposes of the allocation of financial resources. Quintile 1 is the most poverty-stricken quintile, while Quintile 5 is the most affluent, according to the quintile scale. The national norms and standards for school funding (NNSSF) (Republic of South Africa, 2012, p. 3) aimed to improve equity in the funding of education by categorising each school into one of these five quintiles. A school's ranking is based on the unemployment and the literacy rate of the community in which that school is located. Thus, a Quintile 1 ranking indicates an impoverished school, while a Quintile 5 ranking indicates a wealthy or more affluent school. The reasoning behind this is that schools serving indigent communities (Quintiles 1 and 2) should receive more state funding than schools serving wealthier communities. The schools in the poorest areas are categorised as Quintile 1 schools, and those in the wealthiest areas as Quintile 5 (Hall & Giese, 2008). The sample used for this study comprised seven (7) schools in the Quintiles 1 and 2 (poor schools) categories, while three (3)

schools were in Quintiles 3, 4, and 5, respectively. The sample thus represents schools from all spectrums of the economic status levels.

While all these schools have their own school context, level of funding and quintile, they all write the same exit examination. A Quintile 1 school must write the same English FAL paper as the Quintile 5 school. This exit examination is commonly referred to as the National Senior Certificate examination (NSC). The table above refers to the NSC 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The results were obtained in English FAL during this exit exam in the year indicated; thus NSC 2014 is a reference to the results obtained in the 2014 exit examination in the selected sample. School A, for example, had achieved a 100% in English FAL in the 2014 National Senior Certificate examination, while School J obtained 94%.

Schools A, B, and C have consistently performed at 100% in English FAL at matriculation level. Schools D, E, F, G, H, I and J have not been able to maintain the same levels of results in the subject over the same period over time. This is precisely the reason for the inclusion of these schools in this sample. The variation in the marks obtained for English FAL is most clearly visible from 2016 to 2018. This is illustrated and depicted graphically in the graph below:

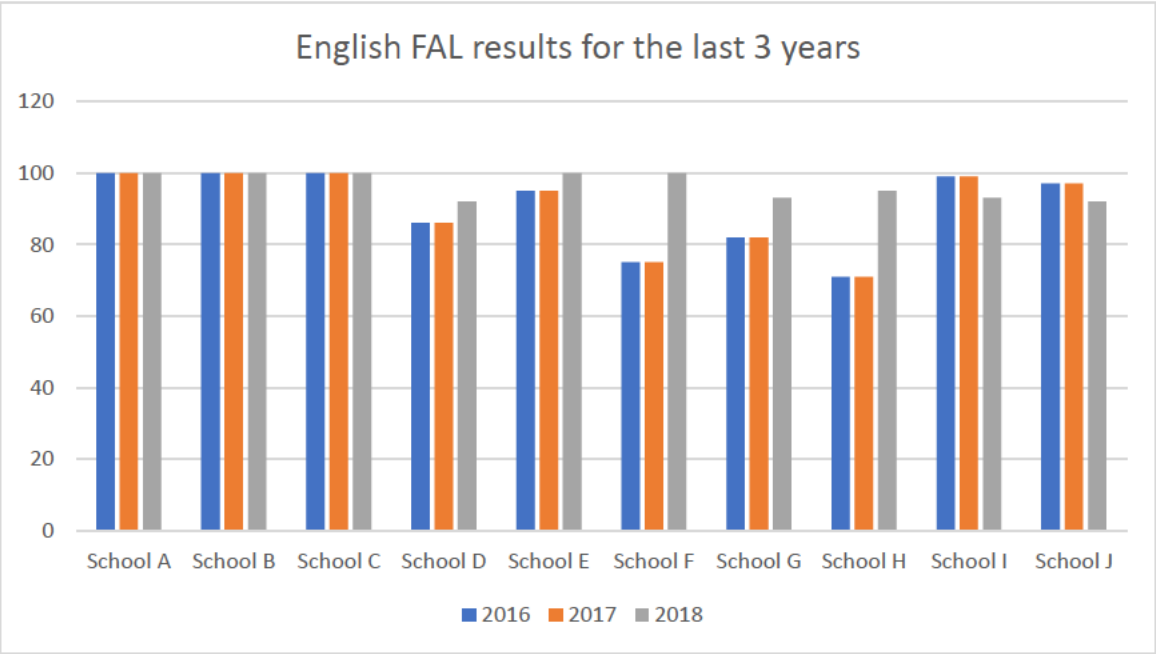

Figure 4.7.1 English FAL results for 2016 to 2018 (DBE, 2019)

This study aimed to comprehend what enables this group of schools to perform at the academic levels reflected. The sample thus had to be inclusive of these schools, and the school contexts had to be explored to answer the research questions effectively.

4.8 Data-generation Strategies

Data was generated by means of a semi-structured questionnaire given to 10 purposively sampled principals in the district, interviews with principals from these schools, and by reviewing at the school's subject improvement plans (SIPs). The SIP was used for document analysis. The researcher also viewed the data of results for English FAL over the past 5 years as an initial source to drive the research questions.

4.8.1 Semi-structured questionnaires

4.8.1.1 The characteristics of a semi-structured questionnaire

Semi-structured questionnaires (SSQ) comprise a list of questions to be completed by the respondent. Typically, an SSQ employs a blend of open- and closed-ended questions (Patten, 2016). Cohen et al. (2007) claim that open-ended questions are useful if the possible answers are unknown, or if the questionnaire is exploratory. This prompted the researcher to use a blend of open- and closed-ended questions to gather the required data. (See Appendix E: Semi-structured Questionnaire).

4.8.1.2 Advantages of a semi-structured questionnaire

The questionnaire, as a data-generating tool, presents several benefits. It can be administered at minimal cost in time and money. The greatest advantage is that one can reach a large audience in a short time. This means that a large volume of information can be obtained from many people very quickly. Furthermore, the respondents can complete the questionnaire in the comfort of their own space (Cohen et al., 2007). The questionnaire can also be conducted at a convenient time for the respondents. There is less pressure for an immediate response, such as in an interview. The respondents are also assured of anonymity on the questionnaire, as no names are mentioned.

Copeland (2017) notes that the analysis of the closed-ended questions is straightforward. Closed questions are easy to compare and take less time to answer than open-ended questions (Copeland, 2017). The use of closed questions also leads

to fewer unclear or irrelevant answers. These types of questions also allow respondents to give answers more readily on sensitive topics.

The lack of interviewer bias is yet another aspect that makes questionnaires a good data-collection tool (Gillham, 2007). Much data can be collected without the direct involvement of the researcher. The questions discussed lead to a rich, thick description from the respondents, which in turn helps to answer the research questions. Simply by asking the question, an extensive response is obtained.

4.8.1.3 Disadvantages of a semi-structured questionnaire

Since questionnaires are completed in the absence of the researcher, a distinct disadvantage might be data quality. This can arise if questionnaires are incomplete or inaccurately completed. There is typically a very low response rate to questionnaires. The problem with not motivating the respondents sufficiently poses the risk of a low return rate of this tool. There is a need for brevity and simple questions when using a questionnaire (Singer & Couper, 2017). To adhere to this, questions were brief and concise.

Open-ended questions lend themselves to various degrees of detail when answered. The answer could thus be lost amongst insignificant details provided by respondents (Copeland, 2017). This type of questioning can also lead to much irrelevant detail being given (Cohen et al., 2011). A greater amount of response time, effort, and thought is required when answering open-ended questions (Singer and Couper, 2017). Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec and Vehovar (2003) also note that extensive coding is required for open-ended questions, responses varying greatly. Cohen et al. (2007) echo the difficulties in analysis of open-ended questions.

A major disadvantage of using a questionnaire is that this tool seeks information by simply asking questions (Gillham, 2007). There is no interviewer present to clear up confusing questions, or to ask follow-up questions on a certain topic. The questionnaire thus assumes that the respondent has all the answers readily available in an organised fashion. Furthermore, the researcher has no control over the context of answering the questions. Singer and Couper (2017) suggest that closed-ended questions be followed up by open-ended questions, giving the respondents the opportunity of providing clarity on their responses. The researcher aimed to follow this advice to gain accurate and authentic responses from the participants. In addition,

interviews were used to gain greater insight into responses provided in the questionnaires. This allowed for triangulation, and to clearly identify themes, patterns and trends in the different schools.

Another drawback of questionnaires is that the wording of the questions can influence the answers provided by the respondents. Variables such as the literacy levels of the respondents can influence the responses given. The questions thus must be carefully constructed and logically phrased to avoid confusion. It was therefore important to state the questions as clearly and comprehensibly as possible.

People typically talk more easily than they write. The fact that the questionnaire must be given a written response might deter prospective respondents in completing it accurately and truthfully. It is thus impossible to check the honesty of the answers provided in many cases. Some respondents might be hesitant to answer specific questions, not being certain of what happens to the data. The motives for the questions should thus be clear; and respondents should be reassured to complete the questionnaire as accurately and efficiently as possible.

The questionnaire was personally given to each informant. Participants were asked to contact the researcher for collection once the questionnaire had been completed. This was to allow the informants time to complete these as accurately as possible, without being under pressure to return them. This data source was used to provide answers to all four research questions formulated for this study.

4.8.2 Semi-structured interviews

4.8.2.1 The characteristics of semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews (SSI) allow the interviewer and respondents to engage in a formal interview. The interviewer develops and uses an interview guide. The guide is a list of questions and topics to be covered during the conversation, usually in a certain order. (See Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview). Typically, an SSI employs a blend of open- and closed-ended questions (Adams 2015, Cohen et al., 2011). These are often accompanied by follow-up ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions.

The interviewer adheres to the guide but can follow topical trajectories in the conversation that may stray from the guide when appropriate. Such deviation should be controlled. Deviation can contribute to a rich description, but also has the potential

to stray too far from the topic at hand. Henning (2005) notes that these deviations from the interview schedule sometimes yield more valuable information that could contribute positively to the study. The mix of open- and closed-ended questions also allows for variation and gathering of information that had not been anticipated or had been overlooked (Flick et al., 2004).

4.8.2.2 When to use a semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviewing, according to Bernard (1988), is best used when a researcher will not have more than one chance to interview someone. The area covered in this study did not allow for multiple interview opportunities. It was thus wise to gain as much information as possible from the respondents at the first face-to-face contact. Singer and Couper (2017) report that open-ended questions have been successfully used in face-to-face, telephonic, and online surveys; and as such, semi-structured interviews can be employed in like manner to collect valuable data for the research study. Wilson (2013) also believes that semi-structured interviews can be employed to gather data on topics on which the interviewer is certain that the relevant issues have been identified; while still providing the participants with the opportunity of providing more information to strengthen or refute these assumptions.

4.8.2.3 Recording semi-structured interviews

The interviewer will typically have a paper-based interview guide to follow. Because semi-structured interviews often contain open-ended questions, and discussions may diverge from the interview guide, it is generally best to record interviews, later transcribing them for analysis. Semi-structured interviews can be captured on audio or video recorders, so that a complete record of the interview is available (Wilson, 2013). The researcher used a digital camera during the interview process, to capture the process accurately. Permission was requested to use this device. This was to ensure the validity, accuracy, and transparency of the interview process and to have a point of reference for both interviewer and interviewee.

While it is possible to take notes to capture respondents' answers, it is difficult to focus on conducting an interview while concurrently writing notes. This approach will result in poor notes, detracting from the attention given to the process. Development of rapport and dialogue is essential in successful interviews (Cohen et al., 2011).

Recording an interview is vital to ensure the accuracy of the conversation when transcribing.

4.8.2.4 Advantages of semi-structured interviews (SSIs)

A major benefit of semi-structured interviews is that the researcher can prepare the questions ahead of time (Cohen et al., 2011). This allows the interviewer to be prepared and to appear competent during the interview (Paine, 2015). Information/data is acquired first hand as face-to-face contact takes place between the interviewer and the interviewee. No third parties are relaying information pertaining to the study. This face-to-face contact provides the opportunity for the interviewer to redirect conversations that digress too far from the main topic.

Furthermore, the interviewee has the luxury of asking questions for clarity and can then answer a specific question more accurately during the interview. This ensures that points are covered with each participant; both interviewees and interviewers may also raise additional concerns and issues (Wilson, 2013). The process also allows for social interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Aspects such as facial expression, body language and hesitation or excitement can be observed during the interview process (Paine, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are well suited to several valuable tasks, particularly when more than a few of the open-ended questions require follow-up queries (Adams, 2015). Paine (2015) and Wilson (2013) further articulate that the personal contact provided through SSIs provides some flexibility for interviewers to make a broad comparison across interviews.

A semi-structured interview allows informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. In this way, semi-structure interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data; and they may uncover previously unknown issues (Wilson, 2015). Adams (2015) concurs, and states that complex topics can be addressed through probes and clarification on the part of the interviewer. The principals interviewed thus gave a first-hand account of their perceptions of the factors that influence the English results. At the same time, the factors that shape these perceptions were explored and discussed. The interview also provided the platform for principals to outline the measures that they have put in place to ensure that learners perform well in the NSC English exam. These objectives were derived from the

research questions. This data source was to be used to answer all four research questions to a greater or lesser extent.

4.8.2.5 Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

SSIs do have some disadvantages. Firstly, they are labour-intensive and time-consuming, and require interviewer sophistication (Adams, 2015). Secondly, the interviewer must come across as intelligent, poised, sensitive, and informed, as well as knowledgeable about the relevant substantive issues. Thirdly, the process of preparing for the interviews, such as setting up the interviews, conducting the interviews, and analysing the interviews is a complex and time-consuming process. The time and effort required to manage all aspects effectively is considerable.

“Interviewer effect” is a distinct possibility − the background, the gender, the age, and other demographics influence how much information people are willing to reveal in an interview (Denscombe, 2010). Interviewer effect is the distortion of the response to an interview, which results from varied reactions to the social style and personality of the interviewer (Cohen et al., 2011). The fact that the researcher works at the District Office was of concern; and the interviewer effect was noted. Power dynamics play a role in the interview process. The researcher had to be aware of how his position in the district (Senior Education Specialist) could influence the interviews. The interviewees were assured that the researcher was there strictly as a researcher, and not as a departmental official. Participants were assured that information provided by them would be used for research purposes only.

While the interview is a social interaction, it was primarily guided and steered by the interviewer (Cohen et al., 2011). The interviewee should not be intimidated, led, or prompted to say what the researcher wants to hear. Some experience and training are required so that interviewers do not put words into the participant’s mouth (Wilson, 2013). The interviewer might give cues that could guide the participants towards a specific answer. This should be guarded against to ensure authentic responses. Adams (2015) notes that consistency among interviewers is required. The interviewer should practise the same amount of flexibility towards all interviewees, as a variation herein might make comparisons difficult. This requires some balance; as the interviewers should be given reasonable time to articulate their answer, but not in excess, to deviate too far off topic.

SSIs usually lead to huge volumes of notes to be analysed and transcribed (Adams, 2015, Paine, 2015, Cohen et al, 2011). Despite the disadvantages and costs of SSIs, this type of data-gathering tool offers benefits to research.

Each interview took about twenty-five minutes to half an hour. Interviews were conducted in the informants' offices at their respective schools. This was to allow the informants to experience as little discomfort as possible (not having to travel to set venues); and to allow them to be as comfortable as possible in their own space. The interviews were conducted a week after collecting the questionnaires from the informants.

4.8.3 Subject improvement plans

4.8.3.1 Characteristics of the subject improvement plan (SIP)

In the Harry Gwala district, each teacher is expected to construct a subject improvement plan (SIP). The SIP is purportedly a framework that will result in improving teaching and learning for every teacher and learner in the district. The Harry Gwala District has embarked on a project dubbed data-driven districts (DDD). The SIP was to be informed by data on where learners were falling short, and how the shortfall was to be addressed by the teacher and learners involved. Teacher and learner activities were to be clearly illustrated on this plan, coupled with time frames and naming of the persons responsible for the tasks.

4.8.3.2 Document analysis of SIPs

For this study, the SIP of each school for English FAL was scrutinised. Documents refer to resources such as records that can be used as supplementary information in case studies where other sources of information are used (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003). Document analysis, as a non-interactive data collection method Runhare (2010), can include an artefacts collection such as personal diaries, photos, video clips, minutes of meetings or other organisational records. Cardno (2018) describes document analysis as a research tool used for investigating the nature of a document, to discover both what lies behind it and within it. Bowen (2009) concurs with this view, adding that document analysis lends itself particularly well to being employed as a method in qualitative research projects.

Bowen (2009) states that document analysis is valuable in its role in methodological and data triangulation and is seldom used in isolation. In this study, document analysis was used to triangulate the data generated through the questionnaires and interviews.

4.8.3.3 Using the subject improvement plan (SIP)

The SIP was assessed after interviewing principals who understand the factors that explain the English FAL matric results. As a catalyst, the SIP led to discussions based on the 4 research questions. However, together with principals' interviews, the SIP focused more specifically on Research Question Number 4. Analysis of the SIP documents was a source of information about the activities taking place in the school which promote the drive for good matriculation results in English FAL in the NSC.

4.8.3.4 Advantages of document analysis

Document analysis is usually straightforward, cost-effective, efficient, and manageable (Cardno, 2018). This was one of the reasons prompting the use of the SIP. Analysing the SIP was to establish a sense of triangulation; but also, to establish any link between the results obtained and the effective implementation of this programme. Bryman (2012) considers a major advantage of document analysis that these documents are readily available and usually at minimal or no cost to the researcher. Bowen (2009) stresses that document analysis is still bound by good ethical practices. The researcher had to obtain the school's permission to use the documents for expressed and ethical research purposes.

A further advantage is the inconspicuous nature of document analysis, making it non-reactive (Bowen, 2009; Bryman, 2012). A document as the data source does not draw attention to the researcher's presence. The researcher can silently work behind the scenes perusing the SIP as an additional source of data when this is both relevant and feasible (Forster, 1994). Bryman (2012) concurs with this view, believing that a rationale for choosing document analysis is its appropriateness as a second research technique to make the data more authentic and richer in its contribution to the study.

Documents from universities, schools, and various other organisations can provide an insight into the culture and context of these establishments (Fitzgerald, 2012). The school context is of significance in this study, therefore document analysis provided that perspective to the researcher. Fitzgerald (2012) surmises that having documents

is having an insight into the history of the organisation. This preserved past can be significant in understanding why certain practices either endure or disappear. Fitzgerald (2012, p.297) calls this a “voice on past events”, that could give an understanding of prevailing practices within an organisation.

Moreover, records can be utilised to check up on the activity or efficiency of the staff (Wolff in Flick et al., 2004). The SIP gave an indication of its implementation in the school and, more importantly, its effectiveness in the subject. Document analysis holds many advantages; however, this data-collection technique also presents some disadvantages in its application.

4.8.3.5 Disadvantages of document analysis

Cardo (2018) posits that it might not always be possible to retrieve a document. Some documents are protected in the sense that access is deliberately blocked or restricted. The use of such documents for document analysis will prove difficult and frustrating. To overcome this problem, the researcher requested documents (SIP) that were easily accessible, nevertheless still informative, from the participants in this study.

Another disadvantage with some kinds of documents is that such could be difficult to understand. This is because documents are not produced specifically for research purposes. Some documents may be inaccurate, produced merely to reflect views on a particular event, activity, or individual (Fitzgerald, 2012). Some records that aim to be objective and accurate may contain built-in biases that a researcher may not be aware of. Such documents are then subjective and will influence the analysis negatively. To overcome this problem, the researcher asked the principals about interventions to improve results in the interviews. These responses needed to correlate with the interventions noted in the SIPs.

Furthermore, some documents may contain insufficient detail to be of use in the study; but may have taken up valuable time in their analysis (Cardo, 2018). Some documents require methodical analysis, which is time-consuming and demanding (Fitzgerald, 2012). It could also happen that some documents are incomplete. The findings may be compromised if incomplete records are used. Yin (1994) highlights a limitation known as “biased selectivity”, said of a record which is incomplete. The researcher could be drawn to select only those documents that would represent the past in a certain way. This would result in the findings being compromised and invalid. Biased

selectivity could be overcome by becoming aware of both what is available and what is not available and why certain records are not available (Cardo, 2018). In my study, this was overcome by allowing informants to refer to all aspects that pertained to their specific schools; and how these aspects influenced the results obtained.

Documents such as the SIP hold value and made a meaningful contribution to this study. Analysing these documents gave clear insight into how each school manages or aims to manage teaching and learning in the Grade 12 English FAL classroom. The aspects noted in the SIP also guided the interventions to improve results in English.

4.9 Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis when working with the data from the three data methods. The aim of a thematic analysis is to identify themes and patterns in the generated data that are important, significant, or interesting; and then to use these themes to address the research or to say something about the case (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Furthermore, in thematic data analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, p.84) distinguish between two levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic examines what was said, while the latent level looks beyond this and looks to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations. Thus, analysis could be either on a surface (explicit) level or on a deeper (implicit) level of data generated during the study.

A six-phase guide to thematic analysis is proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This includes firstly becoming familiar with the data. The data generated through the interview process, the questionnaire, and the subject improvement plan (SIP), was studied in detail. Secondly, initial codes were generated by the data provided. Coding also helps to reduce the data into smaller chunks of meaning. The third step involves looking for themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe themes as patterns that capture something interesting or significant about the data. Step Four involves the reviewing of these themes, while Step Five requires the definition of the perceived themes. The final step deals with the writing up of the findings. This step often concludes with an article, dissertation, or literary piece of work.

One of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Within this study flexibility was used to highlight activities, actions, or events to explain matriculation results in English FAL. The absence or presence of themes highlighted

through data analysis could explain the results obtained by some schools in the selected sample. Qualitative data generation is generally dependent on interpretation and iterative explanations to make sense of it. This is because enormous amounts of qualitative evidence are often accumulated (Alhojailan, 2012). Furthermore, in qualitative research, there is an overlap of analysis and interpretation to reach a viable and rational conclusion (Cohen et al., 2011).

Denscombe (2010) identifies principles that prove useful for qualitative data analysis. This author claims that credible outcomes are probable when following these principles. Firstly, the researcher should condense extensive and diverse raw data into a concise structure. Charts and tables are suggested to summarise these. This process allows for the opportunity to identify, compare, and determine the data upon which to focus. Secondly, the researcher makes the relationship between the research objectives and the summary clear. Denscombe cautions that this only works well when the objectives of the qualitative study are considered the clear drivers responsible for its research and analytical methodologies. Thirdly, the researcher must conclude by creating a model and/or improving the conceptual basis of the research.

Analysing the acquired data will allow for drawing informed conclusions. Analysis should thus be approached with extreme accuracy to ensure credible findings. Themes that emerge from the research indicate some explanation for the results achieved in English FAL. Miles and Huberman (1994) propose an effective model for the thematic analysis process. Such comprises three link stages or 'streams', i.e., data reduction, data display, and data conclusion-drawing/verifying. The model to be used is illustrated below.

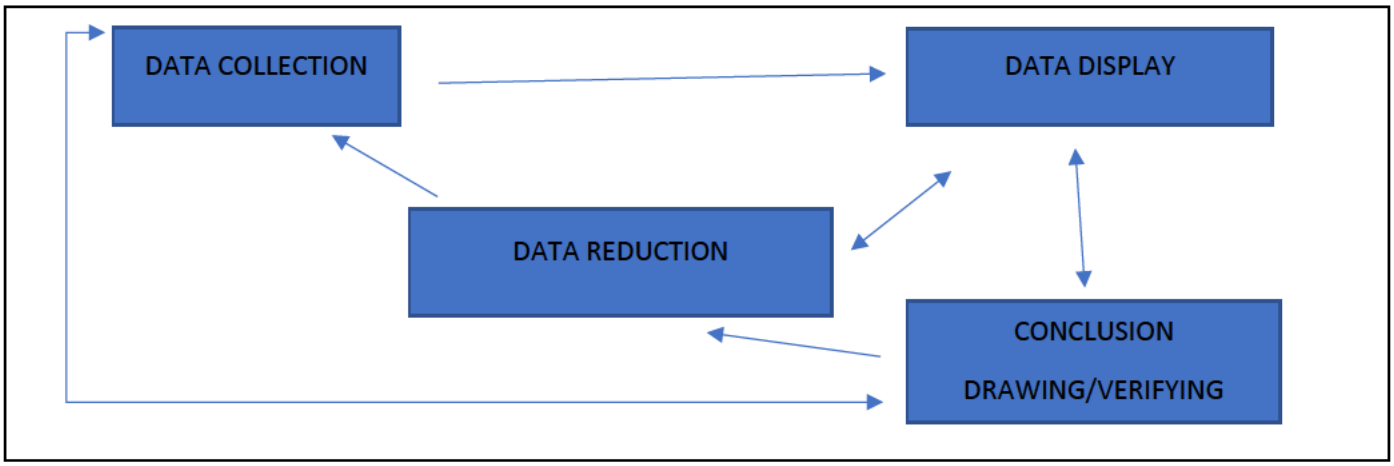

Figure 4.9 The Miles & Huberman (1994) thematic analysis model

In the analysis of the interviews, the process followed was based on the above model to ensure accuracy, credibility, and transparency. Data collection was conducted by electronically recording the interviews. Each participant granted consent for this process to take place. The researcher took the digital audio recordings and transcribed these verbatim. All personal identifiers, such as the names of the participants, their school names, and identifying words were removed from the transcripts. The interviewees were given these transcripts to verify their accuracy, and for additional comments (Sandelowski, 2008).

The transcription of the audio recordings to words was the data-reduction part which made the data easier to handle. These transcripts were labelled and arranged accordingly from School A to School J. With the data now visually available, each transcript was read numerous times to allow the researcher to become immersed in and acquainted with the data (Morrow, 2005). The transcripts also allowed for the visual display of each participant's response to the interview. This approach made it easier to identify patterns, note differences, and to compare responses from the various participants. Each participant was allowed to tell a personal story on the questions asked; and these responses were used to understand preliminary patterns (Miles et al., 2014), and to formulate themes and patterns. Conclusions were drawn from the patterns and themes noted on the interview transcripts. These conclusions were also verified with reference to the field notes and follow-up phone calls to the relevant participants.

Responses from the questionnaire were tabulated on a chart and visually displayed to gain sense from them. Responses were then summarised, coded, and reduced. The questionnaire had numbers assigned to each response to help with this process. Once data reduction had been completed, similarities, contrasts and patterns in the responses were noted. The similarities were used to draw conclusions and to make relevant interpretations. The responses from the questionnaire were not used in isolation: responses were compared with the other data sources used to generate information on each school.

In analysing the SSIs, the data was firstly visualised. This was achieved by tabulating the transcribed responses on a chart. Yin (2010) believes that visualising the data in some way can highlight the similarities and differences in the received responses. The

participants' responses were thus categorised through this visual representation. Tabulating the responses made the data easier to handle and to separate into more manageable pieces. Gibbs (2000) states that this approach is aimed at providing evidence that could support and validate the interpretations made. Patton (1990) concurs and believes that such interpretations are based on evidence that clearly inform them. The reliability of the interpretations is thus captured in writing and can be verified by other stakeholders in the study.

Step Two involved reducing the responses to codes or key words to make them easier to work with. The codes were used to compare responses from participants. This step was vital in reducing the data while retaining the core response, to make a meaningful comparison with both other respondents and other data sources.

The meaning of the similarities and contrasts in the responses from participants also had to be clarified (Creswell, 2007). The researcher perused the reasons given for the responses that were similar, making meaning of these in relation to the research questions. The same approach was taken with contrasting responses. The interpretations were noted and written in text to compare these with the responses from the other data-generation instruments. Responses were checked for correlation against each source before final conclusions or interpretations were made.

Analysis of the SIPs involved finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data contained in the documents (Bowen, 2009). Content analysis of each SIP indicated whether it was actively used in the school, and to what extent it was successful (Labuschagne, 2003). This document was also used in conjunction with the other source documents. Responses to the questionnaire and interviews pertaining to the SIP were tabulated and checked for any correlation.

4.9.1 Feedback to participants

Oral feedback was given to participants in this study. Participants were also given access to the interview transcriptions for verification of accuracy. Transparency, honesty, and integrity were always observed throughout the study.

4.9.2 Storage of data and disposal of data

All data, as with the recordings of interviews, transcripts of interviews, questionnaires, SIPs, and school results, were stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office

to be kept there for a period of 5 years. This is in accordance with the university's guidelines. The data will be destroyed by shredding the documents and wiping off the data on electronic storage devices thereafter.

4.10 Rigour and Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers do not use instruments with established metrics about validity and reliability. It is therefore pertinent to address how qualitative researchers establish that the research study's findings are compliant with aspects of rigour and trustworthiness. Rigour can be defined as the quality or state of being accurate or upholding strict precision. Rigour implies the qualities of thoroughness, care, and accuracy (Cypress, 2017). Rigour and truth are always of concern within qualitative research. Rigour has been used to express attributes related to the qualitative research process. Rigour is further defined as the strength of the research design, and the appropriateness of the method used to answer the research questions (Morse, Barrett, Olson & Spiers, 2002).

Qualitative studies are expected to be conducted with extreme rigour because of the potential of subjectivity inherent in this type of research. To achieve rigour in this study, the interviews were electronically recorded for accuracy and transparency. The transcribed interviews were also made available to the participants to verify interview accuracy and correctness. Transparency is also enhanced by this method. Accuracy, as in the exact interaction between the informants and the interviewer was captured as authentically as possible; the interviews were transcribed soon after conducting the interviews. Transcriptions were also given to informants very soon after the interviews, while the interaction was still fresh in their minds.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that trustworthiness of a study is central to evaluating its worth. While Yin (1994) describes trustworthiness as an important criterion in testing the quality of research design, Guba and Lincoln (1989) see this aspect as the goal of the research. Trustworthiness includes the establishment of four critical aspects. These aspects are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. The authenticity of the findings makes it credible, unaltered, and acceptable. Credibility was ensured by recording every interview and making notes on all the interactions with informants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest prolonged engagement with

informants to obtain credible feedback from them. Prolonged engagement can build up trust between interviewee and interviewer, which in turn can lead to the provision of sensitive information that could benefit the study. I had been engaging with the informants on this study for a long time before commencing the study, and this has led them to trust me with the information provided. Credibility was enhanced by using several data-generation tools. Triangulation was ensured by using interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. By triangulating data through using three data-generating tools, I attempted to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility (Eisner, 1991). Credibility was further ensured by using a tracking document that indicates the time and date of each school visit to the informants. (See Appendix G: Record of monthly trips).

Transferability entails showing that the findings have applicability to other contexts. The findings can be transferred or applied to other similar contexts without losing their value. To ensure transferability, this study focussed on English FAL. This subject is studied in most schools in this district and other similar districts across South Africa. English Second Language is studied across the world. In South Africa, candidates are all subjected to the same content and assessment standards in this subject. Transferability is ensured by using a common subject (English FAL) that is assessed and handled in the same way in all the schools. Transferability is enhanced by providing an adequate database to allow for judgements to be made by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The sample used covers more than ten per cent (10%) of schools in the area. This database is large enough to allow other researchers to draw conclusions or to make comparisons.

Guba (1981) argues that the dependability criterion relates to the consistency of the findings. Krefting (1991) states that dependability can be enhanced through triangulation. There are four forms of triangulation, according to Creswell (2012). These include data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In this study, a data-triangulation method was applied to ensure trustworthiness and credibility. Questionnaires, interviews, the SIPs, and the previous results were used to ensure trustworthiness together with dependability in this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that stability can be enhanced by repeated observation of the same event, and by re-questioning the informants on major issues in the study. In addition, continual review and revisiting of

the posed research questions ensures that a focus is maintained (Yin, 2011). These aspects enhance not only credibility, but also dependability in this study.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results or findings could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Confirmation can be achieved through the careful study of documents, records, or evidence. A researcher should be able to provide documentation for every single claim or interpretation made (Guba, 1981). These should come from at least two sources, and the data generated should support the claims, analysis, and the interpretations made by the researcher. In this study, the questionnaires reflect the views of the informants as much as the interviews conducted reflect these. The documents were meticulously scripted and transcribed, precisely as given by the informants. Informants were also given copies of the transcriptions shortly after transcription and given time to read these to confirm their accuracy and their authenticity. These transcriptions were given to informants very soon after the interviews were conducted, so that the events that had unfolded were still fresh in their minds. The informants were made explicitly aware of the contents and the transcriptions, the aspects being studied, and the broad objectives of the study. Confirmability in this study was thus also enhanced though triangulation. Notes and charts drawn up during data analysis were another attempt to make the confirmability process accessible to other researchers in verifying the findings and conclusions drawn.

4.11 Limitations of the Study

This study certainly had limitations, and these are discussed and articulated in this section of the thesis.

Firstly, some participants were not eager to participate in the study. Secondly, the time factor in data generation and data interpretation were of concern, as these activities needed to take place within a reasonable space. Thirdly, the researcher's own opinion could have been a factor in making final interpretations.

In this study, participants did not want to reveal the perceived shortcomings in their schools. Mouton (2001) highlights the subjectivity of certain forms of research. The researcher being part of the study is seen as a potential weakness in research. The personal involvement of a researcher might distort the research process and the findings. Participants can furthermore influence or manipulate the research process

to suit their own interests. As mentioned, case studies are considered prone to observer bias; the researcher had to guard against this during data generation. The focus had to be dictated by the data. The researcher thus had to build up a trust relationship with participants, verifying and double-checking information given, to ensure accuracy and validity.

Some participants were reluctant to become involved in the study because of time constraints. The researcher had to convince these parties that their input could be a potential for growth and development, and in that way, improve their lives. The participants were advised that the researcher was not there as a subject advisor but as a researcher. Informants' participation, data generated, and their conduct would not bind them to the scrutiny of the subject advisor. The key aim of the researcher was to conduct the required research and make findings based on the data generated, analysed, and interpreted. The researcher also reminded informants that his subject specialisation was English home language and Afrikaans; however, the study focused on English FAL.

Some gatekeepers had a concern about revealing information that could be seen as referring to poor management. The researcher had to emphasize the value of the study to illustrate the potential of helping the entire district to produce better results in the matriculation exams. The participants were encouraged to be as honest and truthful as possible in giving information, and in their conduct. The research needed to be as authentic as possible without favouring any possible outcome or result.

In terms of time and travel, the area used for the study, the Harry Gwala District is large and mostly rural. The distances to and from the sampled schools were long and dangerous to travel (particularly when wet). The researcher had to synchronize school visits in such a way that he could cover his work commitments and generate the required data at the same time.

4.12 Conclusion

Any study must be based on one or another paradigm. The interpretive paradigm was viewed as the best paradigm for this study as it explores how people transform their everyday life experiences into consciousness and language; and again create and recreate daily life experiences in a situation. Principals do this in their daily work, and the researcher had to do the same in the study. This study follows a qualitative

research approach. Describing the school contextually is suited to this research approach. The rich context and the unique situation of each school can be adequately described to make sense of the results produced in English FAL. This makes the qualitative approach most apposite to this study.

In this study the researcher employed the case-study research design. This case study aims to describe what it is like to be in a situation at a particular time. The design attempts to capture the participants' lived experiences of, and thoughts about a situation. Capturing principals' thoughts on the results can thus be ideally accomplished using the case-study design.

Three data-generation tools were employed. These were semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and the school's subject improvement plans (SIPs). The researcher also studied the data on results for English FAL over the past 5 years. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which aimed to identify themes that are important or interesting, and then use these themes to address the research or say something about the case. These themes gave an indication of how schools approach various topics under discussion. This chapter also explained how issues of rigour and trustworthiness were ensured, how limitations were overcome, and how ethical considerations were safeguarded.

The next chapter deals with the discussion of findings in this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings: Principals' Understandings of the Factors Influencing EFAL Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the data generated by the interviews, subject improvement plan, and the questionnaires. The ten sampled schools were visited, and interviews were conducted with the school principals. School A or Principal A refers to the informant from School A. The questionnaires were given to the participants after the interviews, and it was agreed that I would collect these the following week. The subject improvement plan was also collected with the completed questionnaires during the school visits to the sampled schools. This chapter focusses on the sampled principals' understanding of the factors influencing English FAL matriculation results. The aspects that shape principals' understanding of the factors that influence the English FAL results at matriculation are explored and unpacked. The focus in this chapter is on the findings related to all the research questions to some extent but mainly on research question one (1) and two (2) of this study. (Research questions are outlined on page nine (9) of this paper.)

5.2 How do Principals understand the Factors influencing English FAL Results at Matriculation Level?

In trying to ascertain how principals understood the factors influencing the EFAL results, at the interviews, principals were asked about their preferred management styles in their respective schools. The education process must be managed; and studying the way in which principals describe their management style, approach and beliefs may result in a better understanding of how principals influence the results achieved.

5.2.1 Management of schools

The sample comprised well experienced principals as well as novices. The 10 principals had occupied their positions from between 13 months to 30 years. In other words, some were new to the position, and some had occupied it for a long time. This allowed for a variety of experience levels to be presented. In the interviews, three out of ten principals described their preferred management style as a mixture of democratic and autocratic styles. The other seven participants described their

preferred management style as democratic. Furthermore, nine out of ten participants listed communication as the key to effective management. The fact that so many (90%) of the participants value communication, suggests that these individuals want to interact and communicate with colleagues on school-management issues. Teamwork was also highly rated by nine out of ten participants in the interviews. These findings are illustrated below. The preferred management style in the sample is illustrated in Figure 5.2.1.1, the management approach in Figure 5.2.1.2, and the beliefs in information transfer in Figure 5.2.1.3.

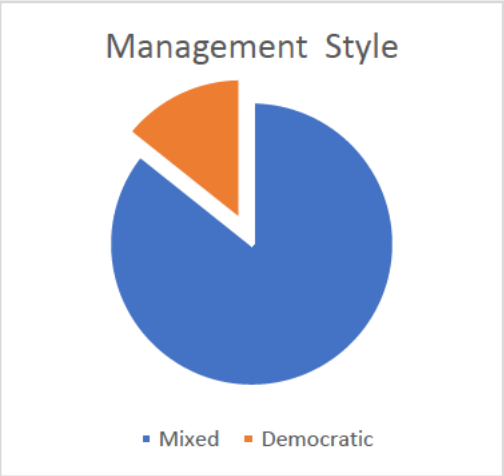

Figure 5.2.1.1 Management Style

Figure 5.2.1.2 Management Approach

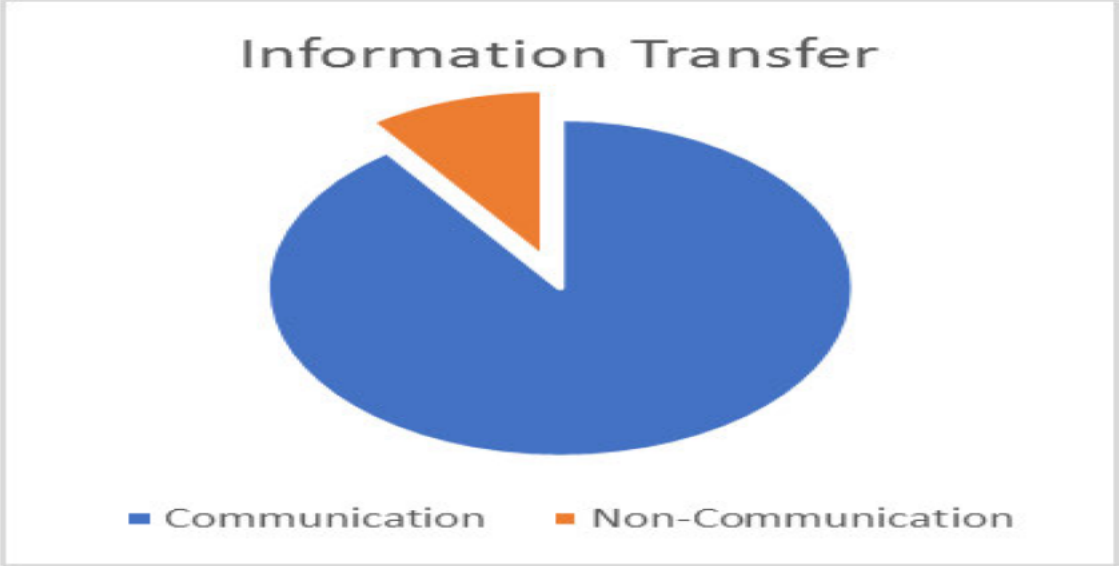

Figure 5.2.1.3 Information Transfer

The above tables indicate the management style, approach and information transfer of the sampled principals. The figures indicate that a mixture of democratic and autocratic management style was favoured by most of the sample. The larger

proportion of principals also subscribed to teamwork, as opposed to individual efforts to improve the academic performance of their schools. A strong focus on communication was also evident as most principals named this as a key factor in improving academic performance. Green and Collett (2021) have pointed out teamwork, collaboration, and communication as essential aspects for academic progress. These attributes or outlooks can also be explained by means of McGregor's (1960) theory of management.

McGregor (1960) argues that Theory Y managers maintain positive views of employees and display more participative leadership styles. Under this leadership theory, workers are fundamentally enjoying work; they display self-direction on the job and produce creative solutions to organisational problems, (McGregor, 1960, 1966). Participative decision-making is part of the Theory Y approach. Ninety per cent of the principals interviewed noted teamwork and participation in decision-making in the running of the school as important for success. These principals could thus be described as Theory Y subscribers. McGregor (1960), however, posits that the ideal manager should have a combination of Theory X and Theory Y attributes. Maslow (1968) also attributes limited success to an organisation driven exclusively by Theory Y, as some sense of direction and structure is required in all institutions. These attributes were present amongst the sample, as these individuals also rated discipline highly as an important aspect of effective management: seven out of ten informants viewed this factor as important. The South African Schools' Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996a:8) describes discipline in the classroom as the absence of distractions, and the correct climate/environment to enhance learning and teaching. Distractions will cause learners to be less receptive, teachers to be spending more time on corrective measures, and less time on teaching. This emphasises the importance of discipline as a strategy to ensure effective teaching and learning. Seven out of ten participants had different views on the importance of discipline and expressed their views on this vital aspect as indicated below.

The participant from School A noted the importance of discipline in the classroom, articulating it as follows:

> *I think discipline is the most important thing because when discipline is there, starting from yourself, working it down towards the lowest person*

> *in the chain which will be our cleaners, our ground staff. Everybody needs to be disciplined so there needs to be systems in place so that everyone knows exactly what is expected…*

This principal believes that discipline is essential for the school to function well. She also notes that self-discipline is important, and that discipline creates order, with people knowing what the expectations are, and what to do. Dempster (2012) stipulates that it is the task of the school leader to enhance the conditions for learning. This principal seems to adhere to this notion. She seems to be trying to create a disciplined environment in which teaching, and learning can flourish. Watson, (1996) and DiGiulio (2000) assert that learners learn more efficiently in smooth-running classrooms. Discipline is a means of ensuring that classes run smoothly for effective teaching and learning to occur. This is one of the steps in this school's attempt to improve their results achieved in the matriculation examination.

The participant from School B articulates her ideas a little differently. She states:

> *Know your teachers. Know their strengths and weaknesses, as far as possible. Use those strengths and weaknesses in the best way for the school, so if you know someone has a particular strength give them that job; if you know someone has a particular passion, give them that job.*

This participant believes that having the best person in the correct position can help the school to achieve its objectives. Şahin (2012) observed that Theory Y managerial assumptions are positively related to workers' commitment to the organisation, and the quality of leader-member exchange relationship. Khan (2011) believes that appropriately equipped teachers may successfully minimise learning complications for learners. Principal B subscribes to this notion and believes that teachers will be sufficiently disciplined to perform at their best when they are placed and used in the correct positions in the school.

The participant from School C also valued discipline. He reiterated that both teachers and learners must be disciplined. Teachers, however, must ensure that they do not leave loopholes for ill-discipline to creep in. He articulates this as follows:

> *There must be discipline in the classroom. Without good discipline, teaching and learning can't take place. So, the learners must know that*

> *they have rights, but they also have responsibilities. The teachers must be prepared for every lesson that they are going to teach in the classroom, because if a teacher is not prepared, that is what creates a loophole for the learners to get up to mischief and to do wrong things in the classroom*.

By insisting that teachers be well prepared, and that learners know their rights and responsibilities, this participant aims to create a learning environment that is conducive to academic success. Curby et al. (2013) contend that well prepared lessons, increased supervision, and clear routine provide clear structure and predictability for learners. This enhances the learning environment and creates a climate conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The curriculum can only be effectively delivered if all stakeholders are working together in a disciplined manner. The effective principal should enhance the learning ecosystem and ensure conditions that are constructive to improved curriculum management and delivery (Kiat et al., 2017). Principal C seems poised to achieve the goal of the learners performing well and reaching their academic potential. Effective teaching and learning in a disciplined environment may lead to the school achieving favourable results, not only in the exit exam, but also in other grades in the school. This domino effect may well benefit all grades in this school.

This principal from School D notes:

> *I think for my class to be effective the first thing to do is to exercise discipline. We must respect each other, they must listen attentively. At the same time, they must also listen for their own sense. It must be a well organised class…*

Discipline is once again noted as ensuring effective curriculum delivery. The principal must ensure that processes are put in place that contribute to the classroom being free from obstacles to learning (Robison, 2019). In ensuring that discipline is maintained, and that learners attend well organised classes, this aim is obvious. Curby et al. (2013) favour routine, and organisation. An organised class creates stability for learners and sets the routine for teaching and learning. According to this principal, when these aspects are in place, it becomes easier to teach effectively, and to

disseminate the lesson to learners efficiently. Results may be positively influenced by ensuring that these aspects are given attention and priority.

This principal from School E referred to the English teacher as disciplined and adds:

> *She is a disciplinarian as well…*

The concept of discipline involves several role players, activities and constructs in teaching and learning (Robison, 2020). In referring to the English teacher as a disciplinarian, this participant is excluding all the other role players in the educational set-up. The principal has a vital role to play in ensuring that discipline and other measures are put in place for effective teaching and learning to take place (Bascia, 2014; Green & Collette, 2021). If all the role players are actively involved in the education process, it becomes easier, more efficient, and more effective to teach the learners (Ige, 2016). The responsibility for discipline should be everyone's concern not just that of the English teacher, or of any individual. The principal should drive this aspect for it to work.

This principal from School F did not mention discipline. Instead, he focussed on collaboration and consultation before making decisions. He stated the following:

> *To manage the school effectively, I think it is important that you are a good listener to the ideas of the other people that you are working with. In other words, you ensure that for all the decisions that you have taken, you have involved the stakeholders. I think with that, you will go far.*

Consultation seems to be the key consideration for this participant. The involvement of stakeholders is seen as a vital aspect for academic progress for Principal F. Van der Molen and Gramsbergen-Hoogland (2019) reiterate that organisations such as schools are networks of people. By involving the people who have interests vested in the working of the school, this principal ensures that the interests of all parties are attended to. This may imply that he believes that all parties will play their part in ensuring the smooth running of the school.

The principal from School G also did not mention discipline, but rather noted consultation, and firm decision-making as vital. He expressed such as follows:

> *… a manager must take a stand; a manager must take a stand. If you are a teacher and you are in a class of learners … it's true, for harmony, you must listen to your learners …*

Green and Collette (2021) comment that school leaders are essential to the success of any intervention applied in the school. It is thus crucial for principals to drive plans and initiatives to improve educational practices in their schools. This principal note that taking a stance and involving learners will ensure harmony in his school. The South African Standard for Principalship (DBE, RSA, 2015) prescribes that a principal should develop the schools into a learning organisation. This principal may be trying to achieve such through firm decision-making and consultation with the learners. This consultation, however, should involve all stakeholders, and not just learners. McGregor (1960) describes the Theory Y-aligned manager as geared towards consultation, involvement, and cooperative measures (Russ, 2011). This participant favours the idea of participation and displays Theory Y tendencies in this regard.

The principal from School H described his idea on the matter as follows:

> *… a classroom that is disciplined, a classroom where there is order, a classroom where the learners listen, a classroom where you can be given a chance to talk and to teach the learners …*

Discipline, order, and communication (learners listen, while the teacher teaches) are key aspects for this participant. Bascia (2014) notes that a conducive learning environment teaching and learning practices and organisational structure are essential aspects. This participant is stating that discipline and order allows for the teacher to conduct teaching work with ease. These aspects relate directly to the learning practice and organisational structure in the class, and in the school. Principal H believes that these aspects should be in place in his school. Collier-Meek et al. (2019) note that classroom routines create order and routine that reinforces the discipline and orderly flow of events in the classroom. These seem to be important aspects to this participant in assisting the learners to make proper progress, achieving learning goals.

The principal from School I also focussed on consultation as an essential aspect allowing the school to function effectively. He articulated his views as follows:

… to avoid any mishaps and to avoid a lot of strikes and misunderstanding, if you do proper consultation, the result is an effective school management …

Communication with educational stakeholders forms an essential part of the principal's duties (Camburn et al., 2010; Grissom et al., 2016). Clear communication also provides clarity on the roles and expectations of all the stakeholders in the school. Principal I note that misunderstandings, strikes, and mishaps can be avoided through proper consultation with stakeholders. This participant views the inclusion of all stakeholders as paramount for effective teaching and learning. He trusts that each stakeholder will be sufficiently disciplined to play the proper part if they feel that their voice has been heard, and their opinions valued.

Discipline is reiterated by the participant from School J. She makes the following remarks on the value of discipline:

I think the most important thing is discipline at school. You must maintain discipline always …

Section 8(1) of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996a:8), indicates that discipline must be maintained in the classroom to allow effective teaching and learning. This section of the Act views discipline as the conditions created by which teaching and learning can flourish. The participant subscribes to this idea − create an environment that allows teaching and learning to blossom. The absence of discipline leaves a chaotic classroom that distracts the learners, causing poor focus and concentration (DiGiulio, 2005). This, in turn, may hinder learners from achieving good results, or reaching their educational potential.

Seven out of ten participants have explicitly shared their views on discipline. The importance, the presence, and the maintenance of discipline in the school may have a positive effect not only on the smooth running of the school but also on the results achieved in the school. Organisations such as schools can only run efficiently when they are well managed. Maintaining discipline and efficient management are central to effective teaching and learning (Nagler, 2015). Such can only be achieved through effective communication with all stakeholders. School principals have a duty to seek advice, and to communicate regularly with all the stakeholders in the education sector, and with those departments who support the school in one or another form.

Effective communication is important for success in any organisation. Communication between staff and learners was noted by all the respondents in the interviews, while inviting opinions and input was mentioned by six out of ten principals. Four principals noted that adherence to rules and guidelines are vital to their roles as principals, while two reported that their actions would be based on the information that they received or gathered. Rigby (2014) states that principals need to possess a variety of instructional skills, dimensions, and commitment to lead a school effectively. Van der Molen and Gramsbergen-Hoogland (2019) affirm that organisations are networks of people; effective communication between them will strengthen such an organisation. Sixty per cent of the informants can be described as invitational leaders. This is once again in line with McGregor's Theory Y managers. While these common aspects were noted in most cases, there were some individual, or isolated responses, that should be noted. Communication was valued by most of the participants, and the views on communication are outlined next.

The participant from School A articulated her views on communication as follows:

> *… but you need to realise that you are working with people that have so much good capability, so teamwork is the most important thing, I think, at management level you must keep, stick to and you have to give them that experience, that opportunity to use that and bring something to the table because together it makes it such a strong team.*

Principal A believes that teamwork is a key factor that influences the matriculation results. She promotes the idea of working as a team to achieve success as a collective effort. Baeten and Simons (2014) value the idea of collaboration and team teaching. Teamwork may involve team teaching, consultation, and discussion to gain improvement in results. The exchange of information is noted by this principal, who says that teachers share ideas. She adds that teachers are allowed to bring their ideas 'to the table', implying that communication and the exchange of ideas are promoted in School A. This outlook on the part of this participant is in line with Theory Y (McGregor, 1960) assumptions that organisations can flourish under the influence of shared values, trust, and organisational commitment. Sebastian, Herman and Reinke (2019) would also regard this as skillful management which brings about positive change in the achieved results.

In School B, the participant also believes that communication is vital. She notes:

> *My preferred management methods are to have the people that I am managing buy into what we are doing, so I believe that the more information you give people the more likely they are to see that what you are asking them to do, makes sense because a manager shouldn't be asking anyone to do anything without a good purpose in mind, …*

When the teachers buy into the ideas that this principal is proposing, they agree to work together to reach that common goal. Theory Y managers (McGregor, 1960) also thrive on cooperative relationships between managers and workers. Barahona (2017) states that team involvement may lead to improved situational and contextual awareness at school and understanding of the school culture and how learners learn. This may result in these teachers working together more efficiently to enhance the learning process and to drive the school to achieve better results.

School C

> *If I'm having a staff meeting, teachers know, it's not my staff meeting. It's their staff meeting. I have briefings twice a week at the High School and in those briefings – teachers share! Teachers come with their problems. Let me not say problems, they come with their challenges, and we work on those challenges together because sometimes a teacher, just a normal Post Level 1 teacher, will have a solution that you didn't think about, …*

The principal from School C concurred with the common aspects mentioned above, but also maintained that every member of the staff should contribute to the meetings. Teachers are encouraged to talk about their challenges and to seek solutions from their colleagues. This form of professional discussion is characteristic of a professional learning community (PLC). Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, and Wallace (2005, p. 145) describe a PLC as a community "with the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing student learning." In this way teachers support one another. Barahona (2017) believes that team discussions such as these, can boost appreciation of group work and team teaching. Teamwork and consultation may also make experienced, established teachers confront their own views of learning and teaching. Baeten and Simons (2014) contend that such forums promote the tendency to view the teaching

process as essentially a collective activity. These teachers will work towards the same goals, and that may result in the school achieving greater academic success than would have been the case had this consultation been neglected.

The informant from school D was recently appointed as principal; however, had spent a length of time as the deputy in his school. This informant valued transparency. He noted delegation and supportive approaches to ensure academic success. Respect for fellow workers and learners was highly valued by this individual. Setting of objectives, organising the staff, and giving regular feedback was key to ensuring success. These beliefs are firmly entrenched in the Theory Y leadership approach. Principal D states:

> *I believe in the flat management style, where there is transparency, there is delegation and at the same time, I make sure that everybody is aware of what is happening. I prefer this management style because I think it's a good start for me, where people can actually explore their expertise, where they are not limited, they can express their expertise freely and I believe that if you do that, it would be easy for me to get the support needed from the SMT together with the staff in general, because they are aware of what is happening. It makes it easy for me to delegate to people.*

Consultation, delegation, and trust that teachers want to improve academic output is a Theory Y outlook (Russ, 2011). This participant believes that the teachers in his school are motivated to work hard, improve results, and to strive to build positive relationships amongst colleagues. The principal is trying to create a workplace communication that was absent before, in which teachers are asked for their input and involved in making workplace decisions. The principal is also aiming to create a culture of professional growth, in which teachers can explore their expertise, and grow from this experience. Principal D also promotes the idea of improved academic success. These are elements of a PLC (Bolam et al., 2005), which may promote professional growth and more effective teaching practices in this school. These aspects have been positively linked to improved pedagogical practices and improved academic results.

In School E, the participant described his approach as invitational. He says:

> *… for me, is to invite inputs from colleagues that I work with. My experience has been, by doing that, they know that they are part of running the school …*

This participant has also learned that the school may function better when all the members of the staff are working together. Russ (2011) states that Theory Y-aligned managers tend to be more collaborative and take a more social approach to their assigned duty. Principal E complies with this description. He involves all the teachers to gain the desired outcome. This is skillful management to ensure academic success.

Collaboration and consultation are also important to the participant from School F. The input and involvement of stakeholders is seen as vital. He responds as follows:

> *In the sense that as a manager, I give a chance to all the stakeholders to participate in the form of meetings. I do give teachers, if I may focus on them first, the circulars and then we discuss the circulars and then in the SMT meetings, in the staff meetings we do share the ideas and come up with informed decisions to run the school…*

The duties of the school principals include consultation and interaction with multiple stakeholders (Loeb & Master, 2013; Grissom, et al., 2015). This principal ensures that teachers, school governing body (SGB) members, and staff are consulted on important matters. It may be that this participant understands that the best way to ensure academic success is to allow all stakeholders to grasp the school's outlook, ideas, and plans. The involvement of all parties could be a measure put in place to ensure that the school experiences academic progress.

Certain schools are fully focussed on rules, guidelines, and routine. School G noted that instructional management is required in schools. While the participant from School G believes that instructions are important, he also welcomes the idea of giving teachers the opportunity of rendering their input. This participant states:

> *I normally prefer a style of management because as a teacher we work on instructions, normally we work on instructions, but also you must be offered an opportunity to air your views, to have an input in the decisions that are being taken and, I would roughly say I also prefer the same style, democratically applied style of teaching and of management be it at whatever level of management …*

Participant G's approach was guided by the rules and the procedures that presented themselves. This principal accepted that the information available should guide his

actions; and contingency management was now institutionalised in this school. This participant shows a combination of McGregor's (1966) Theory X (instructions) and Theory Y ('air your views') in his management approach. Cardo (2018) believes that educational leaders must have an acute awareness of documents that outline rules, procedures, and guidelines to be followed in schools. This should form the basis for the management of the school, and the drive to improve academic outcomes. Alexander (2013) points out the complex nature of leadership when educational policy dictates the actions of teachers, principals, educational administrators, and school board members. Einola and Alvesson (2021) point out that leader-follower relationships are relational practices that are ongoing and dynamic. Principals normally instruct, and the teachers follow these instructions. Principal E, however, insists that he provides opportunities for the teachers to have input into the running of the school and in decision-making processes within the school.

The participant from School H concurred with the views expressed in School G and added that management should be an interactive process − all stakeholders should be involved in the management of the school. He intimates the following:

> *you will prefer a method where you will tell, there are times when you tell people, you will tell people to do this because you know it's going to help and sometimes, in most cases, be democratic, so that people can work with you. Democratic means … work together with people. You allow people to bring suggestions, to bring what they want to do at the school … Teamwork ….*

School H is managed by instructing teachers, but also by encouraging teamwork and collaboration (Green & Collett, 2021). Teachers being allowed to bring their suggestions to the table may indicate an invitational approach. This principal also displays a combination of McGregor's Theory X and Y management approach by giving instructions (Theory X) and inviting inputs (Theory Y). Russ (2011) notes that organisations are always expected to grow, adapt, and improve. In School H, the principal strives to achieve this by using a combination of management styles. Communication with teachers is vital for the school to progress and improve their practice. It seems that this participant enforces such to bring about better results.

In School I, the participant has also indicated that they value communication. Through this, teachers will know the goals, ambitions, and the focus of the school. This participant states that communication is vital at school. He articulates this as follows:

> *The preferable one to me, is the communicative one because communication is the best, because if you don't communicate, it won't be known. But what you have communicated, that is where people …they happen to know your ambition, your vision and your mission … communication I've seen to be the best way…*

Green and Collett (2021) aver that PLC can flourish through creating a mission statement and developing a vision. The ideas which this participant proposes about people having to know the vision and mission of the school could be an attempt to turn the school into a learning organisation. The idea of working in collaboration with others is central to learning organisations. Furthermore, it is the duty of the principal to create an appropriate learning climate (Rigby, 2014). Barahona (2017) believes that discussions and involvement of teachers in the educational processes at school have a positive impact on the school's performance. Theory X-aligned principals also tend to be collaborative and involve other stakeholders. In trying to gain an improved academic outcome, Principal I may be following these ideas.

Principal J was also a strong advocate for the involvement of teachers in the decisions taken at school. Principal J notes that she is democratic, but still sets boundaries. Principal J states:

> *As the principal, … it's a tough one now… that is a tough one because people like to take advantage but, as the principal, you set boundaries, as long… yes, I am a democratic principal, I invite opinions of my colleagues, and I respect them, but there are boundaries that they mustn't cross …*

Principal J purported that the principal should be actively communicating with teachers and stakeholders but should always set boundaries and take the final decisions. With reference to setting boundaries, this participant may be referring to principals monitoring learners' progress and protecting the teaching/instructional time (Shatzer et al., 2013). Teachers' input is valued but should not interfere with the teaching time. Principal J promoted the idea of experimental learning, in which learners can make mistakes but are then guided to correct mistakes, finding the correct answers. These

views further stress the point that principals need to engage with aspects inside (rules, routines, and guidelines) as well as aspects outside the school (stakeholders). Such will ensure that the school is successful in its academic pursuits. Consultative and participative principals (such as these informants) adhere to the Theory Y orientation. They seek to establish a working environment in which the personal needs and objectives of individuals can relate to and harmonise with the objectives of the school (McGregor, 1960; Russ, 2011).

The participants from nine out of ten schools value communication, teamwork, and collaboration. While some have explicitly noted these aspects of importance in the functioning of the school, others have merely hinted at this. The idea that a principal should be flexible, a decisive decision-maker with a strong focus on learning also came through quite clearly in the discussions. These participants also accepted that the principal, as the school manager, should be accountable for the events unfolding at school; should have an awareness of the rights and responsibilities of the learners, and should be highly motivated to effect positive change.

Well-prepared lessons and class activities, enforcing rules and being fully informed on their assigned tasks was noted by some participants. This was seen as an integral part of effective management; the principal having to oversee and ensure all these aspects in their schools. Well-prepared lessons, increased supervision, and clear routine provide clear structure and predictability for learners. This makes achieving academic success more attainable (Curby, Brock & Hamre, 2013). Active academic engagement between learners and teachers was positively associated with regular references to routine and structure (Pestana et al., 2016). These were some of the factors that emerged as the participants' understanding of the factors that shape the results achieved in English FAL.

5.2.2 Class size and composition of classes

Class size is often regarded as a factor which directly influences academic performance. The informants in this study reported several different numbers when it came to class size. School F had the smallest number of learners (15 – 20) per class, while School D had over fifty (50) learners per class. The rest of the sample reported an average class size of between 30 and 40 learners per class. The average class size for the sample was thirty-eight (38) learners per class. The responses from the

questionnaires confirmed these figures. Schools A and F indicated that they had fewer than ten (10) learners in the English FAL class. Schools B, C, E, and G indicated that they have between 31 and 40 learners per class. Schools D and H had more than 41, between 41 and 50, while Schools I and J had over 50 learners per class.

There is a strong belief that smaller classes provide a better teaching and learning environment (Koc & Celik, 2015). Various countries such as the United States of America (USA), European countries, China, and Japan, have enforced policies to reduce their class sizes (Blatchford & Lai, 2012). There are countries such as Iceland, Finland, and the United Kingdom (UK) with class sizes of 19 and lower. On the other side of the spectrum, countries such as Turkey, Korea, and China have class sizes of 28, 34 and even 54 (OECD, 2012). In Israel, there is a strict maximum class size of 40; with 30 as the ideal number of learners in Sweden (Schanzenbach, 2014). Most of the schools in the sample were on a par with the tendencies shown in schools across the world.

Smaller class sizes, however, are not a guarantee of academic success. They do, however, allow for more intense teacher-learner interaction. In the USA, some states drive for smaller class sizes because this factor is believed to enhance student achievement and improve time on task. Also, smaller classes allow teachers better to tailor their work and instructions to their students (Schanzenbach, 2014). The French have reduced class sizes to focus on the spending per capita for each learner (Bouguen, Grenet & Gurgand, 2017). Johnson (2011) remarks that a lower student-teacher ratio allows teachers to spend more time with each learner and to check the progress of everyone they are responsible for. This can also provide a more individualised teaching more suitable for each learner. Schools such as School D do not enjoy this option, class sizes often numbering 50 learners per class. The concept of providing individual attention to each learner is almost impossible in a school with such large numbers. The common denominator in the classroom situation is social interaction.

Vygotsky (1986) was a strong supporter of constructive learning through social interaction. The value of this interaction strongly depends on the context. Cummins notes that language supported by contextual clues in the environment is known as context-embedded language. Cummins regards a “here and now” context as a

necessary ingredient if the input is going to be comprehensible (Cummins, 2000). Smaller class sizes favour this approach. Context-embedded language is also a direct result of students interacting with one another to gain interpersonal clues which allow further constructing of meaning. Cummins describes BICS as communication in which there is contextual support of language delivery. Contextual support in the form of body language, facial expressions, and hand gestures is more easily detectable in smaller classes. Learners are not lost in the crowd of large numbers, as in the case of School D. CALP, on the other hand, supports academically oriented contexts; contextual support is often absent in this form of communication. Context-reduced language (CALP) is abstract; and usually the context is familiar only to the author, teacher, or presenter, i.e., textbooks, a teacher, a lecturer. Vygotsky (1986) refers to these as the more knowledgeable other (MKO) in this respect. The danger exists that learners could be exposed to CALP before efficient BICS has developed. This could result in teaching and learning being much less effective than when BICS is firmly in place.

The sample used showed variations of nationalities and genders in the composition of the classes. All the schools reported more girls than boys in their schools. Schools F, I and J reported a larger drop-out rate amongst the boys. The females tended to last at school longer, even if they fell pregnant. In South African education, girls generally outperform boys academically (Van Broekhuizen & Spaull, 2017). All schools in the sample had many Zulu, Xhosa, and Sesotho learners. All the sampled schools reported a substantial African enrolment. Schools E, F, G, H, I and J reported a 100% African enrolment. Schools A and C reported also having Coloured and White learners; and School B reported also having Coloured, White and Indian learners. The legacy of racial differentiation remains in South Africa with schools very aware of the racial composition of their schools. Vygotsky (1986) embraced diversity, as the level of social interaction would be widely varied and diverse. This could expose learners to a large variety of sources that could support social learning. Being exposed to the cultures and experiences of other learners could be a source of learning new information and knowledge. This variable could be of enormous value as peer interaction would provide richness in teaching and learning.

5.2.3 Teacher qualifications

While teacher qualifications are important, they are not a guarantee of academic success. In the interviews, the principals from Schools F and J stated that they were also the English FAL teacher. Both these principals stated that they were not qualified English teachers but had been teaching the subject for over ten years. Given that School J had another qualified English teacher, the results obtained in English FAL are noteworthy. The school subject reports for 2014 to 2019 reflect an average mark between 2014 and 2018 for School F as 87.77%; while School J produced an average of 96.55%. Their respective 2019 English FAL results were 80% and 100%. School F, however, managed to obtain a 100% pass rate in 2017 and 2018, while School J only reached the 100% mark in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, six schools in the sample managed to obtain a 100% pass rate in English FAL. These were Schools A, B, C, F, H and J. In this range (2018) only Schools F and J had unqualified English FAL teachers, yet they also managed to score 100%. The rest of the teachers in this group were all qualified to teach English FAL. Vygotsky (1986) views the teacher as the MKO in the classroom. The fact that some teachers are better academically qualified than others should make them even more valuable and useful in the classroom; however, this is not always the case. The MKO is described as the person who holds more knowledge (wisdom, content knowledge) than the person being taught. The teacher is thus expected to know more than the learners to be taught.

This data on teacher qualifications is confirmed by the data generated in the questionnaire. The questionnaire revealed that the sampled principals were also well qualified. Four informants had M+4 (four-year qualifications), while five of them had M+5, and one principal had M+6. This principal from School D had an MBA (M+6). They were all well qualified and had university qualifications to supplement their years of teaching in their respective schools. The figure below indicates the qualification profile of the sampled principals. Since the minimum requirement is only an M+4 (four-year qualification), the indication is that six out of the ten principals have qualifications beyond the minimum requirements for the post that they occupy. This may imply that these school managers value qualifications and might see such as a valuable tool to promote the learning culture in their school. These principals seem to lead by setting the example on qualifications.

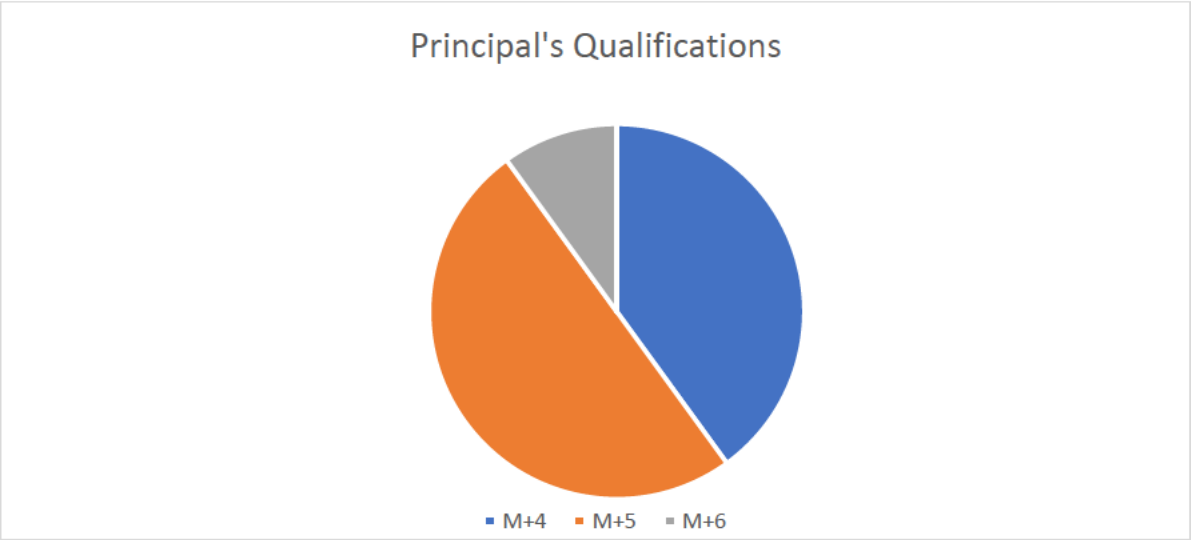

Figure 5.2.1.4 The qualification profile of the sampled principals.

Mosha (2014) points out school-related factors such as the learner's attitude towards learning; teacher-related factors like teacher qualifications, teaching methods and teacher's motivational levels as contributing factors to academic success. School F and School J still had a fair amount of success; therefore clearly, teacher qualifications are not the only variable that determines academic success. On the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate their staff on a scale from highly effective, effective, not effective, ineffective, or not sure. On how effective these principals rated their staff, only 4 of the 10 principals rated their staff as highly effective. These were Schools A, B, C, and I. Schools A, B and C had had consistent results in their schools over the period under discussion. The exception was School I, which did not perform academically as well as the other three schools. This principal could rate his teachers as effective because they still managed to gain fair results, albeit not excellent results. This rating could also be an attempt to be collegial, and not to put other teachers in a negative light in the public eye. The fact that this school had produced inconsistent overall results during the time under review, should be taken as an indicator that teachers in this school are not highly effective. The table below indicates the results achieved in English first additional language (FAL), and the school's overall results. This data indicates that English FAL had performed consistently better than the school's overall performance. English teachers could be credited for being effective.

School	**2014**		**2015**		**2016**		**2017**		**2018**	
	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final

School A	100	89.8	100	94.7	100	94.2	100	100	100	97.7
School B	100	94.8	100	96.4	100	97	100	90.7	100	84.4
School C	100	99.3	100	98.3	100	97.7	100	94.1	100	98.4
School D	95.6	57.6	89.44	35	86	38.5	92.13	64.9	91.4	69.4
School E	89.8	55.1	85.14	47.3	95	81	100	90.6	90.5	48.6
School F	76.5	23.5	85.71	50	75	8.3	100	50	100	37.5
School G	97.6	90.2	87	48.8	82	38.4	93.33	81.8	91.4	56.1
School H	97.2	52.3	86	37.8	71	18.1	95.18	52.4	100	90.5
School I	90.5	51.4	91.58	50.4	99	79.3	93.77	53.7	96.3	79.6
School J	97.2	72.2	98.57	68.6	94	75.6	93	45.9	100	51.2

Table 5.2.3 Schools' English First Additional (FAL) and Overall Results (2014 – 2018) – adapted from DBE 2015 and DBE 2018 School Performance Reports.

While the principals of Schools F and H rated their staff ineffective, these were in the minority (2 out of 10). The principals from Schools D, E, G, and J rated their staff members effective (4 out of 10). When studying the data displayed in the table above, the rating of 'effective' assigned by Schools D, E, G and J seems to be questionable. These principals are likely trying to protect their teachers from scrutiny; they would rather label them as effective to avoid confrontation and unpleasantness. The two principals who classified their teachers as ineffective (F and H) seem more aligned with the results obtained in their schools. This assessment seems fair. The figure

below indicates how principals have rated the effectiveness of their staff (teachers) at school.

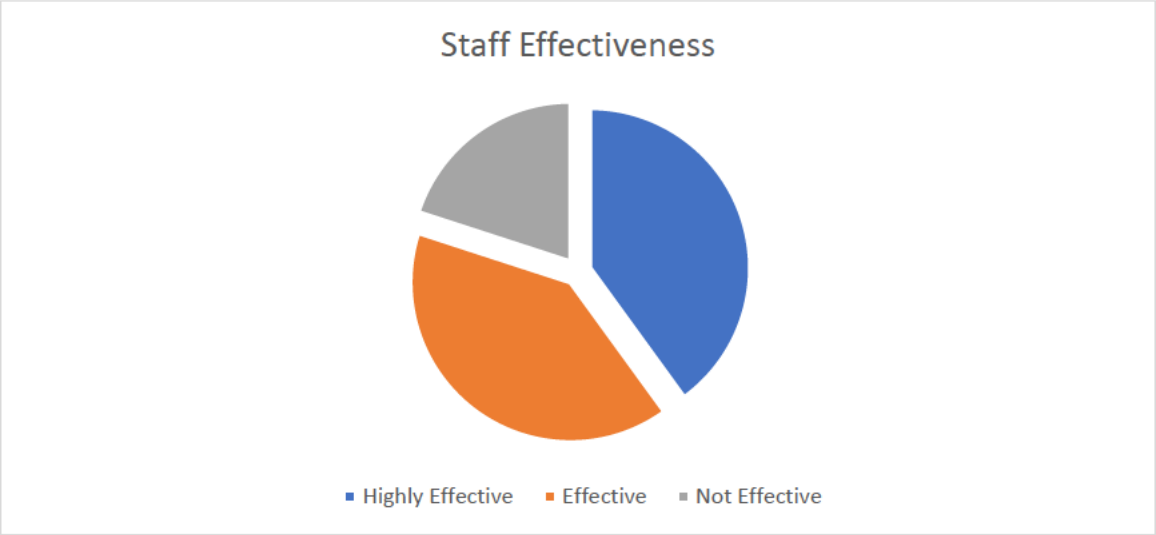

Figure 5.2.3.1 Principals' rating of their staff (teachers) effectiveness

The principals of Schools H and I stated that they were very pleased that the Department of Education had removed unqualified and under-qualified teachers from all schools. These principals clearly valued the qualifications that teachers bring to the school. In the questionnaire it was also indicated that no teachers were unqualified or underqualified. Participants also acknowledged in their questionnaires and interviews that their English teachers were fully qualified (except for Schools F and J) to teach the subject at the required level, and this was very important to the participants.

5.2.4 Resources available to improve English FAL

Another factor that influences principals' understanding of the results obtained is the availability of resources. On exploring this aspect, participants were very forthcoming with their responses. These responses are outlined next.

5.2.4.1 Resources available to improve English results

The study has revealed that resources are very unequally distributed amongst the sampled schools. This concurs with the views of El-Omari (2016), who noted large variations in the availability of resources in South African schools. While some schools have a wealth of resources, others struggle with the bare minimum. Principal A reported through the interview that they provide mechanisms such as access to social media platforms so that learners can access information. The advancement of

technology has made it possible for learners in School A to learn on various platforms previously not available (Mattar, 2018). This school has access to the funds to make use of these technological advances to enhance education for its learners. The internet and technology are increasingly recognised as an MKO. Vygotsky (1986) notes that the MKO can be comprised variously, including books, the internet, and people.

Access to the internet at school produced a mixed reaction in the questionnaire. Schools A and D have internet access for the teachers only. School C provided access to the internet for all teachers and learners. Some teachers and some learners had access in School H, while only some teachers had access in School F. Schools E, G, I and J reported that no internet access was present at their schools − 4 out of 10 in this sample. The availability of a library was also minimal. Only Schools A, B, and C had access to a well-resourced library. The rest of the sample (7 out of 10) had no access to a library. Vygotsky (1986) would note the absence of these MKOs as a notable drawback. The absence of such resources can make the learning process more challenging for those schools who must cope without these resources.

In the interviews, School A notes that social media allows their learners always to have access to teachers. WhatsApp, YouTube, and resources provided by the Department of Education were always within reach of these learners, even when they were not at school. This was a notable advantage, as the learners from School A could learn at any time and place if they had access to the internet. The complete opposite was true for School J. At this school, the learners did not even have access to a reliable cellular phone network. The signal was intermittent and not stable, or unavailable most of the time. These learners are clearly at a disadvantage compared with learners from School A. Unfortunately, this was the case for most other schools in the sample. This means that certain schools, per the internet, have access to much more of Vygotsky's (1986) MKOs than others.

Some schools have entered partnerships with outside organisations to supplement the infrastructure and resources, and to help with provision of needs of the school. These schools (A, C, D, I and J) have outlined how they have benefited from being involved with partners. The partners in these schools have assisted the schools in acquiring resources such as laptops and data projectors (School C), special rates when

purchasing stationery (School A), funding for school projects (School D), assisting learners with funding for further studies (School I), and providing resources for teaching and learning (School J). These principals confirmed that they would not have been able to fund all the projects in their schools without assistance from their partners.

5.2.4.2 Resources from the Department of Education

In the interviews, Schools A, B and C indicated that they are not reliant on assistance from the Department of Education. While they value and appreciate the resources offered by the department, they consider themselves privileged to generate an income from school fees. A no-fee school, such as School C has become almost self-supporting through their involvement with outside partners. Schools C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J are all no-fee schools. Most of these schools depend on the resources, particularly financial resources supplied by the Department of Education. Parents at these schools are not required to contribute financially, and the school cannot count on financial assistance from the parent community in these schools. When there is a delay in the provision of funds from the Department of Education, this has a major impact on curriculum delivery. This dependency on the Department of Education often impacts negatively on curriculum delivery, directly affecting the school's academic performance. This aspect was noted in the response from the principal of School I.

In the interviews, the principal of School I stated that the late arrival of funds from the Department of Education derails the school's academic progress. He asserts:

> *I am telling you it is very hard to run an institution like this these days. We face financial constraints sometimes that hinder the performance. That hinders the performance … servicing the big machines, buying papers and all that, we don't have money and now … today, we don't have electricity, you won't believe it. We don't, as I am saying, we don't have electricity. Why? It has been shut down because the school can't pay, then we don't have money and that is very, very, difficult and that hinders the performance of the school and like, for instance, today, they had to write an SBA for English. I had to go to JSS. I was going there to beg JSS. Ask, can you do photo-copying? We can't photocopy and then there is a lot. There is a lot, which means now a lot of our SBA… now, we've got to re-schedule them. Today it was the English, then others… they must wait. Running a school, … academic performance and all that is very*

difficult. The question of money … up to now, you won't believe it, but we don't have even a cent from the Department … up to now. In fact, every year we start the year, … January, February, March, April, May, they give you money by July… and then you ask yourself, how do you run the school, big like this, from January?...

This principal had to buy electricity for a neighbouring house and draw it from there to power the school's photocopier. This was to ensure that the upcoming assessment tasks were printed and ready for learners to write. Many assessment tasks had to be rescheduled; and the principal stated that this was a regular occurrence. Rescheduling meant that some learners may possibly write the assessment tasks without having efficiently prepared for such. The principal had to use his own funds to facilitate this process and to ensure that the school's academic programme remained on track. Other informants also commented that the funds from the Department of Education arrive very late; however, no other principal went into detail about this matter.

This aspect should be addressed and corrected as soon as possible if the Department of Education wants to ensure academic progress. It is unrealistic that the Department of Education expect schools to perform well academically while they fail to supply the resources required for schools to function. School functionality should be a priority, and the key aspect for this should be available in all schools.

When schools are not able to acquire the resources needed for academic attainment, learners will suffer. Cummins (1984) propounds that CALP involves skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject-area-content material. The absence of resources to facilitate this learning process can hinder academic performance. Learning material and resources, such as books are vital for learning. The Department of Education should guard against aspects that hinder academic progress; however, in this case, they are part of the problem. Funding to schools should be consistent, allowing schools to acquire the necessary resources for teaching and learning. The problem of irregular funding must be addressed and corrected.

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) (Republic of South Africa, 2012:3) was intended to improve equity in the funding of education. Quintiles 1 and 2 schools should receive more state funding than schools serving more affluent communities. It was expected that this decision would result in an equal and fair

distribution of funds between impoverished and affluent schools. Van Dyk and White (2019) point out that the implementation of the quintile system and fund distribution has not, however, proved to be as effective as originally envisaged. This was noted in the interviews. Almost all the principals in the sample complained about the late and inconsistent arrival of funds to sustain and maintain the school. This has a direct and negative impact on the school's ability to secure learning resources to support teaching and learning.

The economic status of the schools in the sample was confirmed by the questionnaires. Quintiles 1, 2, and 3 schools are no-fee schools that depend on government funding. All schools, except for Schools A and B formed part of the government's nutrition programme. Schools in this programme received daily food, prescribed according to a set menu, for the learners that attend school at their institutions. When it comes to the economic status of the sampled schools, only Schools A and B described their learners as coming from average backgrounds. All the other schools saw their learners as coming from indigent backgrounds. The questionnaires confirm the information from the interviews conducted on this matter.

5.3 What shapes Principals' Understanding of the Factors influencing English FAL Results at Matriculation Level?

School principals' understanding varied on the factors that influence matric results. Some of the informants believed that their long years of service and the changes seen shaped their understanding. These aspects are discussed next.

5.3.1 Time spent as a principal

The average time spent by the sample in managing the school was 15 years. The principal with the least experience as a principal had been in that position for only 13 months, while the most experienced principal had occupied this position for over 30 years. These time frames were confirmed in both the interviews and questionnaires. These informants have a wealth of experience in the educational field that has shaped their beliefs and understanding of factors influencing the English FAL results in their schools. The age profiles of these principals were very similar, as revealed by the questionnaire. Three (3) were in the 46-to-50-year category, while four (4) were in the 51 to 55 age group. Two (2) were in the 56-to-60-year category, while only one (1) principal was in the over 60 age group.

These principals also had a wealth of teaching experience. Only Principal F was in the 16-to-20-year category, while most were in the 25 years and above category. These were Schools A, C, E, G, and I. Four (4) school principals were in the 21-to-25-year category; however, they all had several years' experience in the teaching profession. All these principals had more than 16 years of experience in teaching, as confirmed in both the interviews and questionnaires. The informant from School F has over 20 years as a principal. Principal F articulates his experience as principal as follows:

> *Yes, good and bad things have occurred to me.*

The informant from School I has been a principal for 30 years. He considers the constant changes in curriculum as a negative aspect that causes the results to fluctuate. In the interview, Principal I explained his views on this matter as follows:

> *The changes are seen as causing instability and this is credited for poor results, you know, with the change of curriculum. Like for instance, you will see that the curriculum has been changing and … you are also experiencing that. We've been experiencing that, but we've been saying 50, 58, 59, 60, 58, 59, 60, you see. They have been not stable because of the change of curriculum. The curriculum has been changing and you see the curriculum has not been stable now. Moving from NCS, OBE. So, that has been affecting our results as well, because the adaptation process, it takes time. Even educators you know, to adapt to that curriculum, so our results have been dwindling, but they were not that bad although sometimes where you are below 60, the departmental bench mark, you are being known as an underperforming school (participant laughing). We've been falling in that trend.*

School	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final
School I	90.5	51.4	91.58	50.4	99	79.3	93.77	53.7	96.3	79.6

Extract from Table 5.2.3 indicating results for School I (2014 – 2018) (p. 141)

While the principal from School I blames the change in curriculum for the school results, the extract from Table 5.2.3 above indicates that the school had been

performing at an inconstant level for quite some time. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) currently in use were introduced in 2011 (DBE, 2009). Nakedi, Taylor, Mundalamo, Rollnick and Mokeleche (2012) argue that CAPS was introduced in reaction to the confusion and implementation challenges caused by previous curriculum revisions. The principal from School I may be justified in stating confusion on curriculum delivery and its impact on the school's results; however, curriculum delivery has been stable during the time of this study. The same curriculum was used over the last decade and cannot be solely credited for the lack of academic stability in schools.

The other participants did not focus much on the change in curriculum as a factor, but rather expressed various aspects that shape their perceptions on results achieved. School A asserts that their staff has been stable, and they try to keep the senior staff with senior learners to maintain that stability. When they have changes in staff, they normally place the new people into the junior grades. This is to keep the school's higher grades stable and performing consistently at their peak. Disruptions and changes in the system are absorbed elsewhere to maintain stability. This allows the Grade 12 learners to focus on the exit exam more steadily.

Sebastian et al. (2018) view skillful and supportive leadership as a significant requirement for improving pedagogical practice. Principal B subscribes to this and believes that you should give the task to the person best suited to that duty. Theory Y principals, such as Principals A and B will seek to establish a working environment in which the personal needs and objectives of individuals can relate to and harmonise with the objectives of the organisation (McGregor, 1960). In this orientation more cooperative relationships between managers and workers are favoured. This requires the principal to have an acute awareness of the skills and attributes of the staff. Principal B also insists that they carry a tradition of English at their school, and this compels them to excel in English. It is simply expected that learners do well in English because of the strong English tradition in the school. This is one of the key reasons for the school performing well in English, according to this informant. Theory Y principals will strive to maintain healthy work relations with colleagues and supervisors. This seems to be the case with most of these principals in the sample.

5.3.2 The conversion of primary schools to secondary schools

Two schools in the sample reported that their schools had been primary schools previously but had been converted to secondary schools. School F had been a primary school (Grade R to Grade 7) but had converted to a combined school (Grade R to Grade 12). In 2002, School J had been converted from a primary school (Grade R to Grade 7) to a secondary school (Grade 8 to Grade 12). The teachers in the school were not given any training, bridging course, or induction on how to teach the new senior classes. They were merely given the usual orientation session, given to all teachers, and expected to teach the new senior classes assigned to them.

Although this had happened sometime in the past, the principals of these schools were adamant that this move had negatively influenced the school's academic performance. It should be noted that some of the original staff were still teaching in these schools; however, most of them had been replaced over the last decade and a half. These principals, nevertheless, believed that these changes had had a lasting effect on academic performance. Although Principals F and J predominantly display Theory Y notions, an element of Theory X is visible in their outlook. Theory X supporters have a negative outlook on the school and their supervisors (McGregor, 1960; Russ, 2011; Şahin et al., 2017). There is a sense that these principals believe that more should have been done to support them during this transition in their schools. The staff complement has undergone much change since the conversion; however, these principals still regard this occurrence as a serious factor which has affected their respective institutions.

5.3.3 The rise of the AmaBhaca

The principals from School D, E and I have reported a unique phenomenon. These schools are situated on the former border region of the Eastern Cape enclave in the KwaZulu-Natal province. It thus consists of a mixture of Zulu (KZN) and Xhosa (EC) residents. The intermarriages between the Zulu and Xhosa in this area have resulted in what the informant from School I calls "not a pure Zulu and not a pure Xhosa." This group speaks a language that is neither exactly Zulu, nor Xhosa, but a mixture of the two. These people are colloquially referred to as Amabhaca. The principal from School I is the Xhosa teacher in his school. Principal I narrated how this mixture of Zulu and

Xhosa translates to learners being unable to speak a standard version of neither Zulu nor Xhosa. Coupled with this, the LoLT is English in these schools.

The principal from School I describes this aspect as follows:

> *They are mostly isiZulu… you see, the language of uMzimkhulu, sometimes we end up not knowing … is it isiZulu or isiXhosa, but they prefer to say it's Amabhaca (participant laughing). Amabhaca is a mix of isiZulu and isiXhosa. As we are just on the boundary here. Like for instance, now you find that there were a lot of isiXhosa here married to isiZulu girls and then, that offspring… kind of (participant laughing) … It's a mix and then they end up now referred to as the Amabhaca. That's the term.*

The laughter on the part of this participant could be interpreted in several ways. The principal could find it bizarre that the learners are exposed to a mixture of languages, and yet that teachers are expected to teach learners successfully in English. This unusual combination of languages was also mentioned by another principal from the same area. The participant from School I also found it funny that a largely isiZulu learner population is subjected to being taught isiXhosa as home language. This participant is the isiXhosa teacher and knows the background and linguistic abilities of these learners but cannot change the status quo. The term 'Amabhaca' itself might also be amusing to this participant as it is loosely translated as 'running away' or to 'flee' (Hammond-Tooke, 1952). It is not clear why this name was assigned to this group of people as it does not explain what they were fleeing from.

The informant from School E articulates the phenomenon as follows:

> *… in uMzimkhulu, not really 100% isiXhosa and not really 100% Zulu. It is a mixture of both.*

The use of a blend of isiXhosa and isiZulu is described by the participants as negative, with these learners not able to converse effectively in either isiXhosa or isiZulu. They communicate in a language that can be described as a hybrid of these languages. This could be described as subtractive bilingualism. Cummins (1979) observed that studies reporting positive effects of bilingualism mostly involved learners with additive bilingualism; those reporting negative effects involved subtractive bilingualism. These principals state that such groups cannot speak either isiXhosa or isiZulu effectively.

This observation accords with the pronouncements of Pretorius and Mampuru (2007, p. 42), who maintain that a lack of second-language knowledge ‘short circuits’ the use of the home language reading skills. Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) concur on this point. These authors comment that the linguistic threshold hypothesis assumes that “language is the key factor in reading activities . . . to read a language, one has to ‘know’ the language” (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995, p. 17).

Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) further state that learners’ engagement in increased reading has positive results. Their study revealed that second-language reading contributes more variance to first-language reading than to first-language proficiency. The study furthermore indicated that reading in both languages also contributed significantly to academic performance. Barzegar and Fazilatfar (2019) contend that good readers can make generalisations, work easily with abstract ideas, and analyse relationships. These are attributes that make learning and comprehension easier to attain.

Cummins (1981) believes that CALP can only efficiently develop in the second language when it is firmly established in the primary language. Strong MT proficiency can promote the smooth acquisition of a second language (Cummins, 1080). The learners under discussion, however, have had exposure to both isiXhosa and isiZulu from their earliest developmental stages, thus making them unable to latch onto a single primary language. This mixed language (Xhosa and Zulu) now appears to be their home language. The introduction of English as the LoLT further complicates the linguistic capacities. The participants from Schools E and I note that these learners cannot speak either a standard form of Xhosa or Zulu but are now taught in English.

When learners are given improved language support in the home language, they perform better in English as a second language (Oliveira et al., 2015; Viesca et al., 2019). For these learners under discussion, English becomes their third language, but also the language of teaching and learning. This factor places these learners in a position that makes them require so much more academic support in English, both as a subject and as the LoLT. Sibanda (2017) describes the shift in LoLT to English from Grade Three (3) to Grade Four (4) as a critical schooling transitional landmark that either disorients or empowers learners in the South African context. Van Staden and Bosker (2014) attribute the poor performance of South African learners to poor

communication between learners and teachers in the LoLT. This aspect must enjoy more attention to ensure that learning takes place effectively.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on the sampled principals' understanding of the factors influencing English first additional language (FAL) matriculation results, and the aspects that shape their understanding of the factors that influence the results.

The factors which shape principal's understanding of the results achieved, included the way in which schools were managed. Most principal noted a mixture of autocratic and democratic styles. The influence of class size on academic achievement was discussed, and it was noted that class size is one factor that could not ensure academic progress on its own. It must be combined with other aspects like teacher qualifications and resources available for the school. These two aspects were also looked at, and critically discussed. Principals, however, had different sources, experiences and ideas which shaped their understanding of the factors which influence the English FAL results at matriculation level.

Some of these factors were explored, discussed, and unpacked. These included looking at the time spent as school managers. This time that these principals spent in managing their respective schools have made them experience educational aspects differently, and it was explained as such. The second aspect of concern was the impact that principals' experiences with some of their primary schools being converted to high schools. This dramatic change was explored and discussed. The third aspect that was explored under this heading, was the appearance of the so-called AmaBhaca. The presence of these groups of learners were looked at, and the presence of their mixed language was highlighted as a concern for the teaching of English FAL.

The following chapter continues to discuss the findings by considering the measures that principals have put in place to improve the English FAL results.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings: Measures put in place by Principals to improve the English FAL results at matriculation level.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to provide discussion and analysis of the findings. Stronger focus is placed on the measures that principals have established to improve the English FAL results, the data generated from the interviews, the questionnaire, the subject improvement plans (SIP), and the way forward. This chapter will also examine why it is important to understand principal's explanations of the English FAL results achieved in their schools. The focus in this chapter is on the findings related to all the research questions to some extent but unlike chapter 5, this chapter is mainly focused on research question three (3) and four (4) of this study. (Research questions are outlined on page nine (9) of this paper.)

6.2 What Measures have Principals put in Place to improve English FAL Results at Matriculation Level?

Principals that place high priority on curricular matters undeniably influence teacher and learner performance positively (Mestry, 2017). Principals are also held accountable for the results achieved by their schools. Argon (2015) reminds that accountability is an instrument that ensures that organisational managers adhere to suitable conduct in line with the directives and policies during the administration of organisational goals. Because principals are held accountable for results obtained, it is logical for them to put measures in place to ensure sound academic performance. Green and Collate (2021) articulate that it is the principals' duty to advance their schools as learning organisations. Schools should enhance the cognitive processes that can improve the school's academic performance. The next section explores these measures put in place. The sampled schools lend themselves to varying degree of academic achievement due several factors. These factors affecting certain schools are explored in the next section of this paper. The data has revealed some common factors, but also some unique features in the way that the sampled schools operate.

6.2.1 Methods employed to improve results in English FAL

The school is an institution with its own unique culture and way of operating. Christie (2020, p. 2) refers to a 'sameness' in schools but acknowledges the differences in the

context of each school. The schools in the sample, however, are bound by the same curriculum and assessment standards. Schools are all assessed by the same criteria; however, schools inherently differ in their culture, their values, and their resources. Schools employ various methods of achieving their goals, targets and set academic standards. Van der Berg et al. (2021) note that teachers find it extremely challenging to teach learners who have not mastered the required content for the current grade during the previous year. Some of the methods employed to improve the results are enforced by the Department of Education; but some are initiated by the school itself. What follows is an overview of the methods employed to improve academic performance by the sampled schools in this study.

6.2.1.1 School performance

In both the interviews and the questionnaires, the ten informants gave various reasons for the performance recorded in their respective institutions. A target of 100% is enforced by the district for all languages. Schools are thus expected to reach a 100% pass rate in all languages that they offer. While most schools in the sample have reached this target at some point in their existence, only Schools A, B, and C have consistently reached this target in English FAL (From 2014 to 2019, and beyond). They have consistently managed to achieve the set target of 100%.

The question thus remains of what schools A, B and C are doing differently from the rest of the sample? What is the secret to obtaining a 100% pass rate year after year?

6.2.1.2 The best-performing schools in English FAL

Schools A, B, and C have consistently performed well in English FAL. They have recorded a 100% pass rate for the NSC English FAL in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. In fact, these schools have continued to record a 100% pass rate in English FAL in 2019 and 2020. However, this study is only concerned with results from 2014 to 2018.

During the interview, the principal from School A informed me that their learners are mostly recruited from former Model C schools. Christie and McKinney (2017) describe Model C schools as dating back to the dying days of Apartheid. The researchers argue that the National Party, dominant at that stage, took steps to protect White schools from the imminent change that would unavoidably see the end of racially based

privilege. At that stage, schools were to be classified as either Model A, B, or C (Asmal & James, 2001). Model A schools would become fully private, Model B schools would remain state schools, and Model C schools would become state-aided schools. Christie (1995, p. 49) avers that these schools were required to remain majority White and had to give preference to White children from their feeder areas. They would also have to remain upholding principles of Christian National Education (CNE) and they had to provide mother-tongue instruction for Afrikaans and English speakers while maintaining their "traditional values and ethos." Model C schools were the best resourced schools in the system, as non-White schools received less funding under Apartheid policies. In the interview, Principal A states the following:

> *… but a lot of our children come from former model C schools and our feeder schools in the area which means that these kids have been exposed to the system that we have, right from primary school…*

This confirms the former Model C attendance in the earlier grades. These learners are already in possession of a strong linguistic ability and comprise most of the top achievers in their primary schools. The principal informed me that the school has a post provisional norm (PPN) – the number of teachers allowed to be employed at the school – of 18; however, the SGB employs a further seventeen (17) teachers to ensure that the workload is not too great for any teacher. Principal A put it as follows:

> *Oh, in that sense we are very lucky that we can do many things ourselves. We can do that. Our governing body is very strong, and our staff complement, we have a PPN of 18 and we have almost 35 educators on our staff. The rest are all paid by the governing body because we want quality teaching at our school.*

The school also charged a hefty amount of school fees to be paid by parents/guardians. The school therefore has the funds to ensure that resources required are bought, maintained, and used optimally. Christie and McKinney (2017) remark that most of these schools still charge fees, and they remain the best resourced in the system. These schools are also the best-performing public schools in the country. Principal A states:

> *… times are tough for everybody now, so whenever people want things done, they expect payment. Those that are prepared to do things for charity are the*

ones that should be accessed by the schools that don't have the mechanisms that we have in place.

School A has a mission of sending well-educated, well-equipped learners into the world through providing great education. They achieve this by collaborating and maintaining strong networking with others. Green and Collett (2021) also endorse this for creating a healthy learning culture and promoting academic progress. In the interview, Principal A articulates this as follows:

> *We have a lot of networking that we do with the various educators from various schools because when you go to workshops, you meet these people and our subject advisors are very good at that, because they have various WhatsApp groups. Our teachers are always liaising with other teachers about their various fields on these WhatsApp groups and a lot of things come from the Department as well and our teachers can access things through the internet. So, yes, we have a lot of contact with a lot of people out there.*

Networking is vital for PLCs to flourish (Green & Collett, 2021). Interaction between School A's teachers and other professionals gives them the opportunity to grow, exposes them to various resources, and enhances their teaching skills. Wills and Hofmeyr (2018) have found that resilient learners are also more likely to be in schools with higher percentages of language teachers with language specialisations, as is the case with School A. Caskey and Carpenter (2014), however, have found that many teachers work in isolation; these researchers argue that collaborative engagement can make teachers more effective and prevent this working in isolation. Principal A clearly subscribes to this notion. This is significant, as a school with so many resources (both physical and human resources) is still keen to engage with other professionals to improve their academic output.

School B has been managed by a stable SMT; however, due to the retirement of the principal, the deputy has been acting as principal for about thirteen months. Principal B was the informant for this study and was immensely helpful and accommodating. She passionately believes that the school's success in English FAL is largely due to learners taking English home language from Grade R up to Grade 9. Principal B states:

> *They do English Home Language until Grade 9 and then they choose either English FAL or English Home, so their basics are very strong. I haven't even*

thought of that but… we do isiZulu FAL, we do English FAL, and we do Afrikaans FAL for grade 8 and grade 9.

During the interviews, the feeder schools were credited for producing linguistically capable learners. This exposure to English HL makes it easy for the learners to adapt to English FAL in the FET phase. The informant further states that learners struggling with English in her school would normally have come from schools, where they did not have the same exposure to English as did her learners. Spaull (2014) argues that schools which largely served White learners (such as former Model C schools) remain functional, while the bulk of those schools which served Black learners continue to be dysfunctional and unable to convey the necessary numeracy and literacy skills to learners. This may be what this informant is referring to. Her school occasionally receives learners from such dysfunctional schools. She notes that her school has a strong English culture; a learner struggling in English is assisted to quickly catch up with peers. This was reiterated in the responses to the questionnaire. Cummins (1979) proposes that a solid linguistic foundation promotes the future learning of languages. This seems to be the case in Schools A and B, who acknowledge the vital role of the earlier schooling years, which exposed their learners to English HL. Former Model C schools ensured a good literacy foundation for these learners. This may have promoted future language learning, leading to better results.

The informant from School C also accredits success in English FAL to the fact that the school's learners were exposed to English HL from Grade R to Grade 7. Learners effectively only begin to take English FAL in the secondary school, with an already strong linguistic competency. This school is a combined school, and learners are all taught in English HL in the primary section. When reaching the secondary school, the learner can make the choice of retaining English HL or taking another language as the HL. The informant from School C articulates this as follows in the interview:

Because we are a combined school, from grade 1 to grade 7 we do English Home Language only and we see the dividends it pays for the learners when they get into matric. I don't want to speak badly about other schools but when we compare our grade 8s to the grade 8s coming from other schools, our learners are well conversed in English. In grade 8, the learners can choose

whether they want to do English FAL and isiZulu HL or English HL and Afrikaans FAL…

The same view expressed by Principal C confirms Cummins's theory (1979) that a solid linguistic foundation promotes the future learning of languages. This notion is apparent in Schools A, B and C. Such may very well be a key factor that sets these schools apart from the others in the sample. This phenomenon of instructing learners in English HL from Grade 1 to Grade 7 reinforces the linguistic capacity of learners, and consequently allows for better performance in English FAL in the exit exams.

Principal C believes in consultation with all the stakeholders, accountability by both teachers and learners, as well as constant monitoring of set goals and targets. He particularly values the input and efforts put in by the teachers. He expresses this as follows:

> *The teachers, the dedication, the commitment, team teaching …because we find that maybe one teacher is excellent in literature and the other teacher is excellent in language. They have no problem in cross teaching where they swop, okay you support here and I support there. The teachers also use the study guides that we have and you also get an NGO, a company that comes to the school to do the set works with the learners also … they come and put on a play, come and put on the different acts for the different set works. They pay for that but the learners are willing, because they see something different to the teacher explaining to them. So, to me, it's the teachers first and foremost and what strategies they put in place, but that team teaching and cross teaching between the teachers, that works wonders for us.*

Team teaching is a form of collaborative learning. Baeten and Simons (2014, p.93) describe team teaching as "two or more teachers in some level of collaboration in the planning, teaching and/or evaluation of a course." Team teaching has been positively linked to improved English language proficiency (Heo & Mann, 2015). Team teaching has also been positively linked to professional development, in which more capable or experienced teachers work in collaboration with new, or less experienced teachers (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2014). This principal from School C values team teaching and has exploited the value that it holds. This skilful and supportive form of management is seen as vital in improving pedagogical practices (Sebastian et al., 2018). Skilful

leadership is also highly valued by Lunenburg (2013), who cites it as essential to academic success.

Einola and Alvesson (2021) refer to a concept that they term a 'leader/follower' relationship (LFR) in leadership. This outlook asserts the equal importance of both the teacher (follower) and the principal (leader) in the learning process. Principal C subscribes to this outlook. The input, efforts, and opinions of all stakeholders are important to this informant. He acknowledges and credits the work done by the teachers in his school. This principal empowers his colleagues to specialise in certain parts of the curriculum, and uses secondary resources, such as study guides, to improve academic output.

Principal C also proudly states that each learner is provided with a textbook, and the school invests much money in secondary resources such as study guides and electronic resources. Principal C noted this in the both the interview and the questionnaire. He reiterated that each learner must have a textbook and study guides to assist the learning process in School C. Principal C airs his views as follows:

> *… and then, also very important, and that is one thing that we take pride in our school … in any department …is that every learner has a textbook, every learner has a textbook, that also adds value…*
>
> *We also encourage the parents to pay and buy the study guides that the learners need because you find that our study guides are an immense secondary resource that the learners can use.*

Although School C is a no-fee school, the school encourages the parents to pay towards the study guides to help learners in class. The support given by teachers and the use of resources is an attempt to improve academic performance. When linguistic support is fused appropriately in the classroom, it has a proven positive impact on results (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2017). Oliveira et al. (2015) and Viesca et al. (2019) echo the findings that greater language support given to second-language speakers reduces the achievement gaps between English HL learners and their FAL peers. Tshuma (2017) sees competence in the language of communication and language of learning and teaching (LoLT) as a prerequisite for academic progress. Schools A, B, and C have applied these principles, reinforcing English usage to ensure that learners perform well in English FAL at matriculation level.

Exposure to English HL in the primary school years appears to have produced a solid linguistic foundation in English. This trend reflects those learners in these schools (A, B and C) had a solid foundation in English by the time of reaching the secondary school. Cummins's theory on common underlying proficiency (CUP) between two languages seems to be at play here. The linguistic skills, ideas, and concepts that learners learn in their first language are transferred to the second language. The result is competency in English as a L2. Bruner (2010) acknowledges reading proficiency by the end of Grade Three as a key landmark in a child's educational development. This researcher sees it as an important indicator of future educational success. Furthermore, Thomas and Collier (2002) found that the strongest predictor of L2 (FAL) achievement is the amount of L1 (MT) schooling and exposure received.

6.2.1.3 The enforcement of using English as LoLT and for communication

During the interview, the principal from School A stated that learners are "*expected to speak in the language of instruction*." This concurs with the views promoted by Tshuma (2017). English is promoted in this way. Principal A insists that learners be exposed to English as much as possible to ensure that they develop a good command of the language. The same rule is enforced in School B. The principal from School B regards this as a racist policy (the enforcement of speaking English only) but acknowledges that it strengthens the learners' command of the English language. During the interview, she stated the following:

> *You know initially when I started teaching here in '97, the rule was, regardless of what race you were, you had to speak English. You were not allowed to speak in other languages. Now…when I came back to teach here again, that policy had been abandoned because it's basically a racist policy, even though it will help them with their English…*

Principal B articulates that the school carries a tradition of speaking English, and it is "just expected of the children." She further states that children arriving at the school with a poor command of English is rare. However, in the event of this happening, they still manage to provide the learner with a significant command of spoken English. She further narrated a story of a learner who arrived at school unable to speak English well, failing in her matric year, but still able to find work in a call centre due to her good English conversational skills. She relates her experience in this regard as follows:

> *… the year before, we had a learner who failed matric that year … that year she was employed, when she left matric, at a call centre because her English was so good…*

Cummins (1984) distinguishes between conversational and academic language. It appears that this individual had excellent conversational skills but lacked the cognitive command to pass her exit examination. Bylund (2015) concurs, relating that BICS and CALP skills are important for succeeding academically. This learner had excellent conversational skills (BICS) that afforded her an occupation in a call centre where this skill could be applied successfully.

Principal C recognises the impact of a good command of English on other subjects, such as mathematical literacy and business studies. He states the following:

> *…we feel that our learners are equipped as such and you can see it when they write essays for Business Studies, Maths Lit. If a child is not good in English, they suffer in Maths Lit. Our Maths Lit teacher's pass rate was 96% in 2019 and I put that down and the teachers put that down to the language proficiency to understand that. Business studies was a 97% pass rate … language proficiency. It's essays that are written there. History … 100% pass rate… language proficiency…*

In referring to the impact of English on other subjects, Principal C reflects that English as the LoLT is important. He confirms what Tshuma (2017) has pointed out. The importance of the LoLT is noted (Demie, 2013). A poor command of English will hamper academic progress in all other subjects. The principal further states that code-switching is *not allowed* at all. Code switching is the practice of teachers diverting to another language, such as isiZulu or isiXhosa, to explain certain concepts for learners to understand. He explains as follows:

> *At this school we do not allow code switching. IsiZulu and Afrikaans are the only subjects that are taught in another language. Teachers are not allowed to code switch and explain mathematics in isiZulu or history in isiZulu because English is crucial. You get taught in tertiary, you get taught in English, so we don't allow code switching…*

Principal C states that they do not allow code switching in their school. The researcher considers this a restriction to learning, as Cole (1998) points out that the language teacher can use the learner's established home language to explain new or difficult terms encountered in the second language. By translating this new or difficult term in the learner's home language (code switching), the term can be contextualised, and the meaning more clearly explained. Sert (2005) describes code switching as a bridge between the known language (home language) and the unknown (second language). Grosjean (1982 p. 145) defines code switching as the fluctuation that occurs "between two or more languages simultaneously or interchangeably within one conversation." While code switching, *per se*, is not under discussion here, the issues surrounding it should be noted. The researcher believes that this practice should be allowed to make difficult or problematic concepts in the English first additional language (FAL) understandable to learners. However, role modelling a language could be beneficial as well.

El-Omari (2016) emphasises that exposure to role models who use English in the correct way is beneficial to learners. Role modelling is an effective way of reinforcement of correct English speaking by proficient English-speaking teachers, peers, and parents. School C strongly relates to this notion. Code switching is discouraged in favour of the exclusive use of the LoLT. The LoLT, English, is promoted through the teachers' use of the language.

Reading is also highly valued by Principal C. In the interview, he states that his school offers a compulsory supervised weekly reading period from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Learners must write book reviews, retell the story, or be involved in question-and-answer sessions in class, using these readers. Confirmation of the reading period was also seen in the questionnaire. The principal describes the reading period in the interview as follows:

> *Look, from grade 1 to grade 12, on a Monday morning, they have a reading period… they have a full reading period supervised by their class teachers. There is no exchange of lessons for them. Every class teacher supervises the reading period, where every child must read a book. There is no homework or catching up of notes being done. They sit and read for that 30 minutes because if a child can't read, they can't learn.*

While not all schools had a dedicated reading period, such was strictly reinforced at School C. This is significant, as this principal acknowledges the correlation between reading and learning. The poor state of reading was highlighted in the PIRLS (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017). Maila and Ross (2018) concur and argue that South Africa shows low levels of reading literacy. Schools A, H and I did not have a compulsory reading period (as indicated on the questionnaire), while the rest of the sample had this measure in place, albeit not strictly enforced.

The impression was created that these principals either did not realise or value the importance of reading and its direct impact on effective learning. The positive effect of reading on academic performance was pointed out by researchers such as Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) and Barzegar and Fazilatfar (2019). Enforcing good reading skills may have a positive influence on the results obtained. However, the haphazard way in which some schools enforce reading may not yield the results that they wish to achieve.

Only School C mentioned the value of reading during the interview. However, on analysis of the questionnaire, Schools B, D, E, F, G and J had also indicated that they do have a compulsory reading period. These were attempts to strengthen the learners' English proficiency by those schools that enforce this practice. Furthermore, Baker (2001) highlights the CUP theory and states that speaking, listening, reading, or writing in the first or the second language helps the whole cognitive system to develop. This participant strongly believed that this practice is what has helped to improve the academic performance in mathematical literacy, business studies, and history at School C.

In contrast to School C, during the interviews, the principal from School F reported that learners are often absent from school when oral tasks for English FAL are scheduled. He further stated that learners are resistant to English learning. They do not like it, and he struggles to teach and enforce it. He describes this as such:

> *I don't want to say they like it. I had tried to make them speak the language within the school premises, but they don't like it. I don't want to say they like it but they work with me. I am forcing them to do what they are supposed to do, that's all, but they don't like it. I don't know, some of them, when we are*

preparing for orals, they just decide to absent themselves … because we are fighting. We are really fighting … you fight with them…

The learners in School F are resisting the use of English. Mosha (2014) notes learner-related factors, such as that this can negatively affect the academic performance in a school. Furthermore, the oral component forms a vital part of the final mark achieved in a language. Principal F states that he struggles to gain learner compliance with this form of assessment; and that English is only spoken at school. Learners only speak English in the classroom, thus exposure to English outside school is extremely limited. This seems to be the norm in all these schools (School D, E, F, G, H, I & J). English is reserved for the classroom. Mosha (2014) points out that the rare use of English language at school and home can contribute to poor performance in English. Cummins also argues that the best way to improve L2 is to strengthen L1 (1984). This is not happening, nor is it the norm in these last-mentioned schools. Minimal exposure to English can be a factor that hampers performance, not only in English, but in all subjects, English being the LoLT.

Orals form a vital component of the final mark achieved in a language. Should the oral component not be conducted at school, the learners are effectively not assessed correctly. The oral component counts towards the learner's final mark in the language; and attaining a zero mark in this section could lead to learners failing the language. Principal G stated that English is only spoken at school. Learners only speak English in the classroom; therefore, exposure to English outside school is extremely limited. This seems to be the norm in all these schools (Schools D, E, F, G, H, I & J). English is reserved for the classroom only. Limited interaction with the English language may have a negative effect on proficiency, and eventually on results obtained by these learners.

6.2.1.4 Target setting

All schools in the district are required to set targets for all subjects offered. The District Office also imposes a district target on the schools for each subject. The schools then employ various means and strategies to achieve these targets. Horng and Loeb (2010) state that the targets imposed on the school present challenges to principals; however, those strategic principals do not rely on a uniform approach. Skilful management is required to effectively conduct this process. While targets are set, only some schools

involved the teacher, the learner, and the parents/guardian. These were Schools C, G, H and J. School C also holds accountability sessions, at which teachers and learners account for the results obtained in a certain assessment period.

By involving all the stakeholders in target setting, Schools A, C, G, H and J are promoting shared values to promote the academic success of the school. The involvement of these parties also spreads the responsibilities, and lets all parties know that they have an important role to play in the school's success or failure. During the interview, Principal C articulates this approach as follows:

> *Every beginning of the year, in our first meeting, we have target setting meetings. I let the Departmental Heads meet with the teachers to account with them because they are the first in line. We have a full meeting, and every teacher stands up and says today, this year, I want to have a 100% pass rate. Last year I received 80%, I want to push up to 90% so that's how we are setting and then I have one on one accountability sessions with the teachers where we see, okay, you said your target is 90% but you are falling short. You had 85%. Let's see what we can do to get that up…*

Principal G describes their approach to target setting as follows:

> *… setting of targets … the procedure or the method that we apply in setting of targets … we see in each of the subjects … the subject educators goes to the class and then we will require each and every learner to set his or her own targets and then we calculate all the targets from the learners in a particular subject … they are put in a basket and calculations are made to give the subject target, okay? It becomes easier, because the target … if a learner says, in English, I am going to get 100%, and then when it's the performance of the first term and the 100% is not achieved, it is easy to engage with the learner because the target is the learner's that we are referring to… it is the target that comes from the heart of the learner. That's number one and then on the department's side, per department, all the subjects in that department will come with their targets and it will give a target for the department, and then for my side as the school manager, I take the targets of the departments and put them together to be able to give a target for the school…*

Principal G follows an approach that involves both teachers and learners to make them accountable. This is significant, as both parties are intimately involved in the setting of targets, and thus bound to work towards achieving those set targets. Leithwood and Louis (2011) insist that fundamental leadership practices, such as target setting, staff development and culture are influential for academic success. Targets are not simply imposed on teachers and learners; however, they are instrumental in this process. Green and Collett (2021) refer to a concept which they call cognitive education. This is the process of equipping learners with thinking skills to improve learning. It is also a central aspect of PLCs. Knowingly, or unknowingly, Principal G has introduced aspects of PLCs into his school's attempts to improve academically.

The principal from school H follows a similar approach to school G. He explains:

> *Yes, we do set targets. There are targets which are given by the Department, and there are targets for us, because the Department can give you targets but when you sit with the teacher, the teacher will tell you no, I cannot make the targets set by the Department. Our target is this … because remember … in order to reach the Department's target, you must work towards the target. So, if the Department says they want 100%, and you see we are on 90%. It is our target to first want to reach 90% and then thereafter you can talk about 100%, but our target is mainly 90%, okay...*
>
> *… We sit down in the office here, as we did with the deputy, we look at the mark for every learner. If there is a learner that is below the target, we call the teacher and the HOD … we sit here and we ask the teacher what's the reason. What is the problem? Why is this child not performing? The teacher will say this and that, and then after that, we will call the child. All the children that are below the target will sit in the office here, even if they are 20 years or what, we will call them into the office here. We tell them, you are below the target, you are not passing in school, therefore, what are you going to do? Okay, the teachers would have said something, but we let the learners, each learner must say something, and learners will be followed then. We allow the learners to go to classes and then we will tell them, we will follow you…*

Principal H involves the teacher and learner in each subject during target setting. The accountability is then placed on both parties. The learners are then tracked and

monitored on the progress made. Verplaetse and Migliacci (2017) insist that when linguistic support is fused appropriately in the classroom, performance in English can improve significantly. Pereira and de Oliveira (2015) also confirm that more academic support given to second language speakers can reduce the performance gap between first- and second-language learners. Principal H subscribes to this notion by tracking, monitoring, and giving the required support to learners to achieve academic success.

Principal J involves the parents and teachers in the target-setting process. Principal J describes her school's approach to target-setting as follows:

> *Yes, it starts with the teachers because they have to be involved, since they are the ones who are the teachers in the classroom, who are with the learners, so they draw their improvement plans. We try and involve as many stakeholders as we can, like we invite parents and, in the parents', meeting we inform parents of our targets and the strategies that we are going to use in order to reach those targets so, everybody is like … we rope in everybody so that we all have a common goal…*

By involving stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, Principal J displayed a desire not only to have learners, but also their families involved in the learning process. Research, such as that of El-Omari (2016) has demonstrated that learners whose parents are involved in their education tend to do better than those who have absent parents. Family support has been positively linked to academic success (Robison, 2019). By involving parents, Principal J shares the accountability for the school's academic performance with them. Parents are also intrinsically involved, as they understand the role that they must play in supporting learners during the learning process. This is significant, as both School C and School J have emphasised the role of parents in the success of the school. While other informants have hinted at this, these two schools have been quite explicit about parental involvement in the target-setting process.

The other schools have also set targets; however, such is merely for compliance, and poorly monitored. The principal from School E admits that they set targets, but that they are not monitoring these efficiently. During the interview, Principal E states:

> *… we do set targets, though, we are not very … not much strong in monitoring those…*

The fact that targets are set implies that the principal from School E has complied with the requirements set for him. The fact that these set targets are not effectively monitored is a serious indictment of the principal. The school would not have any credible record of progress, or lack thereof, as targets are not effectively monitored. Van der Berg, Van Wyk, Selkirk and Hofmeyr (2021) remark that school-based assessment (SBA) marks serve as a fair projector of learners' success in the matriculation examination. This prediction is impossible unless there is monitoring. Leithwood and Louis (2011) insist that fundamental leadership practices, such as target setting, staff development and culture are influential for academic success. The valuable role of PLCs, as noted by Green and Collett (2021), also provides the platform for school principals to drive the academic performance of their school.

The schools that do not reach the district target in this district are supported and monitored. The principals fear being placed in this group as they are closely monitored, and they are further subjected to regular visits and evaluation sessions from the district officials. Interventions, such as content capacitation, team teaching, and extra tuition time are enforced in such schools to ensure that targets are reached.

6.2.1.5 Recognising academic achievement

Several schools recognise learners for their academic achievement. One of the earliest pioneers of defining intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was Edward Deci (Deci, 1971). High levels of motivation are positively linked with academic achievement. Mike (2014) notes a sense of achievement, or satisfaction on a task done well as an intrinsic reward. An intrinsic reward, on the other hand, is a tangible or physical reward given to someone for achieving some set goal. Kalsoom and Khanam (2017). asserts that rewarding and recognition plays a dual role. It motivates high performers, but also attracts other people who have not been recognised, encouraging them to excel as their peers are doing. Ramkrishna (2002) concurs that recognition may lead to an even better performance. School A has a programme termed Club 15. The Club 15 is recognised as the best performing learners for that term. They also have an official award ceremony at the end of the year to recognise those learners who have excelled academically. Principal A states:

> *… top three in each grade is recognised and becomes part of Club 15. That is the top three performers (overall performance) in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.*

The Club 15 is recognised each term, and parents are informed on who has made it for Club 15. This motivates learners and encourages healthy competition amongst the learners. We also have an award ceremony at the end of the year where all learners who excelled academically are recognised. You find that some learners who never made it for Club 15 are afforded the opportunity to be recognised for their efforts in the class. Club 15 is a bit more exclusive, as it is the top performers in each grade, but the year-end awards event, it includes all the other performers in the grades, not just the top three. We try to make the kids see that we value their hard work. They might not be in the top three, but they still performed well. We give them a certificate to show that they did well in this or that specific subject or field.

School C also has an awards evening, at which academic performance is recognised and rewarded. Teachers' input is recognised and rewarded at assembly. Principal C says:

… we reward that teacher in assembly. Just for a certificate…for the first term, Teacher X, you received ten (10) As. Come up to the stage, in front of the learners…and that encourages the other teachers, as well as the other learners in other subjects to also excel, especially the teachers. Teachers like to be praised…they like you to acknowledge them…Learners are rewarded at the Awards Evening…

In School D they also have a reward system, awarding the top ten in each subject per term. A major awards event is held at the end of the year, at which learners who excelled academically are recognised and awarded. Principal D describes their award system as follows:

… firstly, we have a top 10 for subjects. We also have an overall learner in that stream … that is what we do, we are doing it in phases, quarterly, but at the end of the year we also have a another big one that involves the whole school, in that case we take the best learner in each stream…

Principal I describe how they motivate and recognise learners' efforts as follows:

… we motivate them, certificates and trophies, and at the end, we call some motivational speakers from outside to come and talk, and sometimes … we normally use our ex-students.

Awards events are important ways of recognising learners' hard work. Hallinger (2009) contends that the promotion of a positive school learning climate can positively influence the results. Green and Collette (2021) argue that schools should be professional learning communities (PLCs), promoting learning on different levels. These efforts by these schools also aim to develop the school as a learning organisation (DBE, RSA, 2015). Recognition of learners' efforts can create this positive climate for academic progress. The informants from these schools have attested to this being the case in their respective schools. McGregor (1966) contends that the Theory Y principal is motivated by the success of the school; such can motivate teachers and learners to achieve greater success. All ten of these principals display these characteristics. Seeing learners rewarded for their performance and efforts in the class, has a vicarious motivational aspect to it. Other learners, who are not rewarded, see their peers being rewarded and recognised, and in turn also want to achieve at that level. This promotes healthy competition amongst learners of that school. The rest of the schools in the sample did not conduct such activities, or only occasionally, and did not mention this at all in our discussions, nor in the questionnaire.

All the informants have indicated that the English FAL results were largely the result of the hard work and commitment on the part of the subject teacher. This response was unanimous in the interviews. When scrutinising the English FAL results illustrated in Table 5.2.3, this is understandable. The English FAL results have consistently been better than the school's overall results. This implies that some of the other subjects in the school have caused the results to drop. McGregor (1966) states that Theory Y principals have a favourable outlook on their staff, as indicated in this case. Principal A has stated that the qualities that the teachers bring to the classroom have a great influence on the English results. Principal A notes:

I think passion, our educators' qualifications. They are well versed in the language that they are teaching. The children learn from them and the way they speak to the children, so children are getting that first-hand … the education. It's not just words that they are reading, they hear the language, they write the

language, they speak the language. They are corrected and when we are at school, we expect them to speak in the language of instruction, but when they speak to each other on the fields, they are allowed to do whatever.

Principal B describes her teachers, and their work ethic as follows:

… the two teachers involved in English FAL are two people who are not frightened to ask for help and they not frightened to say I don't understand what is going on here. Please help me or I don't know the way forward. They are not people that are just going to carry on regardless, so their maturity is reflected in the fact that if they need help, they ask for it …

The informant from School C credits the teachers for the results obtained. He praises their hard work, commitment, and dedication. In the interview, he states:

Number one is the dedication and commitment of my teachers. Let me tell you this. The teachers, from January already, they prepare an extra lesson plan, which they do dutifully and carefully and diligently. You come to the school in the evening … it's like a normal night school. You come here on a Saturday morning… you'll wonder when these teachers have a break. So, it's the teachers who want the learners to excel…

Principal D also credits his English teachers for the results obtained. Principal D notes:

…I can attribute that to the hard work of the educators because they go an extra mile. They understand the situation here … that our learners … in terms of the language, they are not good since it is not their mother tongue, and secondly, they are speaking different languages, so they go an extra mile having some remedial lessons and learners do respond to that…

The informant from School E also praises the values of the English teacher. Principal E avers:

… I want to believe that we are fortunate to have the English teacher that we have… I hear the way she motivates these learners. What I'm trying to say is, she is good at motivating… She is a disciplinarian as well…

The informant from School F was the English teacher in his school. In answering the question on how he tries to maintain the pass rate, he responds as follows:

*I network with the teachers from the performing schools (*You network?*) Yes, I do networking with those teachers and if they are a number that I can help sometimes, I take them and mix my learners with the other groups* (…with other groups from other schools?*) From other schools, yes, networking is the one thing that helps me and when we sit for the exams there are papers that are not set by the Department when we write these common papers, being an underperforming school, then like for instance in English Paper 2 it is never set by the Department, so, I always take the paper from the other schools to make them write that...*

The informant from School G was also in praise of the English teacher. Principal G states:

I think one, it is the quality of the teachers that we are having in the subject English FAL and then the dedication that they put … because the learners that have cost us not to achieve the 100%, are the learners that we are failing to get support from the parents…

Principal H also acknowledges the input of his teachers in achieving their results.

They are hardworking because they've got too many learners. All the learners are doing English, so they have got to teach these learners for all to pass. It is the same as isiZulu. … Yes, yes, our teachers are committed, and they are working hard in English …

The informant from School I describes his teachers as dedicated. Principal I comment as follows:

… we happen to have dedicated educators in English and… No, I should think the other weapon… that we have been using here, the debates involving the learner involvement… the debates. Yes, because English … normally is about practice with learners and if you now not let your learners… not let them practice the language, they will not master the language…

In School J, the principal noted the team teaching between herself and the other English teacher which had paid dividends. Principal J describes the set-up as follows:

… firstly, I don't teach English alone. I cannot take the credit alone. There is another teacher. He is a very young, energetic gentleman and he is very good in English. He majored with English at university, and he is very good at it. Previously when we started matric, I was the only one who was teaching English. Although I produced good results, but I was not happy with the language because most of the time, as the principal, I am committed to other things. I miss the periods. I must go off to meetings, workshops and …attend to various things as the principal of the school. So my learners were not good in English, although they were passing, but they were not good in English when it comes to speaking and in writing. So ever since this gentleman came to the school in 2012, things started to improve, so even when I enter the class when he is doing orals, I can see, and I can hear that my learners are now well in English. He is a hardworking guy. And he has also encouraged the learners to be involved in the things like debates. He has introduced debates … those are the things that boost English … reading competitions in the school … those are the things that boost us ...

It is noteworthy that all informants expressed the value of the English teacher in gaining good results. This is significant: Einola and Alvesson (2021) note that if a positive leader-member exchange is maintained, favourable outcomes are more attainable. The shared vision and collaborative engagements indicated in the interviews between principals and teacher are elements of PLCs. The strengthening of the schools in the sample as learning organisations could lead to better academic performance by learners and better efficacy on the part of the teachers (Green & Collett, 2021).

The principals, while recognising the efforts of the English teachers, were themselves also contributing to the positive results. The results were not easy to come by, and the principals faced many obstacles in their work. Bottery (2016, p.98) argues that principals find themselves working extra hours, "not just on weekday evenings but also at weekends and during school holidays, …where the job becomes unsustainable if they do not". All these principals, except for Schools A, B, and C, reported that they work long hours and have morning and evening classes. They even work over weekends and school holidays, as pointed out in the Bottery (2016) study.

In the interviews, all these principals, except for at Schools A and B, reported that they work long hours, having morning and evening classes. They even work over weekends and school holidays, as reflected in the Bottery (2016) study. While principals showed Theory Y tendencies during the interviews, the questionnaires had more Theory X attributes. Only 40% of participants regarded their teaching staff as highly effective.

While School A never conducts extra weekend or morning classes, this took place in School B only when the teacher saw a need; while this was a norm in School C. Extra classes, morning classes, weekend classes, and holiday classes are also the norm in all the other schools. The exception to this was School E, at which English is not part of these extra classes. Note the extract from Table 5.2.3 below.

School	**2014**		**2015**		**2016**		**2017**		**2018**	
	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final
School E	89.8	55.1	85.14	47.3	95	81	100	90.6	90.5	48.6

Extract from Table 5.2.3 indicating results for School E (2014 – 2018) (p. 141)

The extract from Table 5.2.3 above indicates that School E has not performed consistently in English FAL nor in the overall school performance. That this school does not perform well should mean that extra classes would be the norm. However, the English teacher does not see a need for extra classes in the language. The fact that the principal does not insist on some form of intervention is also a failure on his part. The table clearly indicates that the results are not good, and that some form of intervention must take place to assist this school to improve their results. A failure to act by both the teacher and principal will not bring about improvement in this school.

In Schools F, I, and J, the principals are the English and isiXhosa (School I) teachers, therefore they insisted on having their subject on the extra classes timetable. School A noted in the interview that they do not conduct these lessons as they use their contact time optimally; but admit that their learners often attend these classes in other schools where they are offered. It is therefore important to note that School A, while achieving excellent results, had their learners receiving additional assistance from

other schools in the district. Most schools in the sample saw a need for these classes and insisted that they are useful in maintaining academic achievement. This notion was reinforced by the responses to the questionnaire. Only School A indicated that they do not engage in extra classes. The rest (90%) of the sample indicated that they conduct regular extra classes. These include morning classes (starting earlier in the morning before regular contact time), afternoon classes, weekend classes and holiday classes. This is in line with Bottery's (2016) observations and confirmed by both the responses to the interviews and to the questionnaires.

Classroom contact seems to be inadequate in these schools and must be supplemented by extra contact time. This may be due to ineffective teaching, with learners still not understanding work taught by teachers. This may result from constant interruptions in the learning programme, or discipline issues, such as late coming, absenteeism, and social problems. The participant from School A noted that they have a teacher in every class, every period of every day. Contact time is used optimally. This school does not have learners walking long distances or travelling long distances to school. Late coming is also managed and monitored at School A.

6.2.1.6 Partnerships to assist the school academically

During the interviews, School A indicated that they do not have partners per se; however, they have forged good relationships with businesses around them. Stationery suppliers would, for example, give them discounts on bulk purchases of stationery. The principal stated that they were fortunate that they could do almost everything required in the school on their own. They had enough income from school fees to ensure that the school could afford to employ almost double their PPN. The principal noted that they have a very strong and active SGB that ensures that the school has all the resources needed to function optimally. Principal A attests:

> *… we can do many things ourselves. We can do that. Our governing body is very strong, and we have 35 educators on our staff even though our PPN is 18. They are paid by the governing body because we want quality teaching at our school…*

This is significant, as this informant indicated that their school has the financial resources to ensure that sufficient teaching staff is hired and maintained. Most of the other schools in the sample do not have this capacity. School A does not have any

outside partners who assist them; they are financially sound enough to cope without additional assistance from outside the school.

School B also reported that their income generated from school fees had them in a position to keep the school functioning well. They do not have any partners actively involved in the school's academics. In School C, however, they had previously been in a partnership with ESKOM and the Siyafundisa Foundation. ESKOM was involved in 2010; and the Siyafundisa Foundation was active at the school in 2015. The principal from School C stated the following on assistance from ESKOM:

> *Eskom played a major role. What they use to do, they use to take, fly the teachers up to Gauteng once a term for meetings, strategies, listening to other schools, getting together … they use to also supply us with material, consumables, ink, masters... They used to have a special awards ceremony where the principal, SGB Chair as well as educators who were performing at 100% were rewarded at a full function in Gauteng … so they really played a big role in that way and with supplying us with data projectors, supplying us with computers, supplying us with laptops … so that was from 2003-2010 … that was a partnership which was most valuable to us.*

These resources are still used for the advancement of the school, and learners are the benefactors of the partnership that existed between the school and ESKOM.

School D stated that they are in a rural setting − the school is surrounded by farms and farming communities. They have forged a relationship with some of the farmers in the area. The principal presents the school's improvement plan to these farmers. The farmers, in turn, support the school financially with the school's activities, such as the reward ceremonies. The principal states that the relationship with these farmers is invaluable − they are an important asset to the school. Principal D states:

> *I don't know whether I can say 'partners' but there are some farmers around that are helping us… especially Mr Biggs and Mr Engelbrecht. They normally help us in the activities we are having here at school Those guys … they normally help because I present my improvement programme to them … to Engelbrecht and Biggs … they are very supportive.*

These farmers in this community support the school financially. This partnership indicates that the school is not an island but linked to the community that it serves. While these farmers do not have learners who attend school at this place, they are still willing to support the school in their efforts to be progressive.

Schools E, F, G and H have reported that they are not in partnership with any organisations. They are completely dependent on the Department of Education's intervention programmes and support visits to schools. These schools are not in the same position as those who have additional support from outside partners.

School I is fortunate enough to be involved with a partner known as Rise Beyond Expectation. This organisation supports the school in various ways. Principal I remark:

> *…it says Rise Beyond Expectation … that NGO … it's our good partner and like, for instance, we are talking about motivating learners at the end, like, for instance, this year, those learners who have passed with flying colours … you won't believe it … they give them laptops, they give them I-pads, bags, and they give them the money for registration at the tertiary institutions.*

During the last visit to School I, this organisation had secured several calculators for the mathematics learners. These were a donation from a well-established bank. This donation was thus an attempt to encourage learners to perform well in mathematics. The resources were secured and sourced by Rise Beyond Expectation.

School J was also in the privileged position of enjoying the support of a partner. This school had previously been a Catholic Church school. While they have broken away from the Catholic church, they still enjoy the support of the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE), which provides resources to the school. The principal was quick to point out that the resources were mostly geared towards the lower grades. Principal J states:

> *… we have CIE who is helping us as a school although CIE concentrates most of the time on the primary school programmes like literacy, numeracy, but they do come, they do advise us on some of the things, they do help us a lot …*

In response to the questionnaires, Schools A, B, E, and F indicated that they do not enjoy any form of academic assistance from outside organisations. Schools C, D, H, I, and J indicated that they are in the fortunate position of enjoying help from outside

organisations. This reflects positively on the interview responses. The exception is School H. The principal regarded the assistance from the district officials as outside partners, and not as part of the system. The reality is thus that School H is not receiving any form of academic assistance from any outside organisation.

The involvement of partners helps School A to obtain stationery at reduced rates. It helps School C to acquire laptops and data projectors for the school. School D can host their awards ceremony with financial assistance from their partners. Schools I and J can supply calculators and learning materials to their learners with the support received from their partners. School H has no such benefits, as they are not involved in any partnerships, and cannot enjoy any perks offered by partners. They remain solely dependent on the Department of Education. The academic programme is negatively affected if the department delays in delivering vital services and resources to the schools. This has a negative impact on teaching and learning, and ultimately on the results obtained by the school.

Bryan and Henry (2012) assert that the relationship between business and a school system involves multiple stakeholders operating in a shared relationship which accomplishes mutual goals. Business leaders want to partner with schools in a way that is more significant than mere surface-level support (Gross et al., 2015). There are numerous benefits to such partnerships. According to Willems and Gonzalez-DeHass (2012), school–business partnerships can sustain the creation of learning encounters which nurture learners' ability to connect academic content to a real-world context. Similarly, Tracy, Knight and Rieman (2014) discusses how such partnerships can fill an evolving gap in community-based support at the school. In partnering with an outside institution, the school can expose their learners to much more than they can without partnerships. Theory Y principals are more invitational, democratic, and participative in their managing of the school (Russ, 2011). Such principals display traits which promote the participation of outside stakeholders to the benefit of the school and its learners.

School C and School G were involved with partners that supplied laptops, data projectors and tablets to the school. Without these partners the schools would not be able to acquire such resources. The role of partners seems to be underscored by most of the schools in the sample. The schools not involved with outside partners depend

on the assistance and guidance from the Department of Education. The time frame, dependability, and timing of the resources from the department are not always reliable, and often lead to schools relying on such suffering negative consequences. These schools are not able to acquire the necessary MKOs to help and benefit the learners. This has a direct impact on the results that schools eventually register at the final examination.

6.2.1.7 The way forward

School A noted that they are content with their efforts. They maintained that they have a winning recipe and that they should stick to it. Providing access to teachers, resources, and exposure of learners to relevant subject matter was the key approach in this institution. Principal A viewed herself as a perfectionist, but also as a team player. She believed that the staff shared her outlook and vision for the school, and that this was the also key to academic success. The teachers were provided with sufficient resources, professional advice, and opportunity to grow and to perfect their teaching practice. The learners had unrestricted access to teachers, and they were constantly encouraged to make use of these facilities.

Principal A displays Theory X as well as Theory Y characteristics. While she feels that teachers need to be controlled (Theory X), she also views herself as participative (Theory Y). School A can provide human and physical resources to their learners. El-Omari (2016), Meiring, et al. (2018) and Van der Berg et al. (2021) cite the large variation in availability of resources in South African schools. School A has access to far more resources than other schools in the sample. The learners also have access to highly proficient teachers, when needed. Richards (2017) stresses that this is a major contributing factor to linguistic proficiency levels at schools. These factors favour school A and can certainly contribute to academic success.

Schools B and C were unanimous during the interviews on the need to give learners the maximum exposure to high-quality education. These participants believe that the teaching staff should be highly trained, thoroughly prepared, and well versed in their subject matter. They also understand that the school should be run in such a fashion that allows for parents, learners, and teachers to be in harmony with the education process. While this is somewhat idealistic, these principals are certain that the school should be managed in such a way that the learners gain the best possible education

and the best teachers. The best-disciplined learners ensure that the clients receive value for money. The school should deliver a good final product. This is once again a combination of McGregor's (1966) Theory X and Theory Y characteristics. These schools also subscribe to the values of PLCs. The focus on learning and constant improvements, as well as on the involvement of all the stakeholders is an element of PLCs (Green & Collett, 2021)

Principal D has a very optimistic outlook for the school. He suggested that the school is on an upward trajectory as far as the results are concerned. The school had initiated a working relationship with a school in another province. This was a prominent, well performing school that would serve as a mentor for School D. Teachers and learners from School D have already been exposed to the mentoring school. They were guided and supported in oral tasks, speech therapy, and assessment standards. Principal D asserts that this collaboration will assist the school in achieving better academic results and will give the school confidence to compete with the best schools in their area. Collaborating cultures are features of Theory Y managers. Principal D is attempting to turn his school into a learning organisation. Collaboration with other professional bodies is once again an element of PLCs (Green & Collett, 2021). This principal's ideas are also consistent with Vygotsky's (1978), who propounded the development of intellect through social interaction with other parties.

The participant from School E was not too concerned about his school's performance. He maintained that it was not alarming at this stage. This school had no programme in place to improve academically but was dependent on the programmes initiated by the Department of Education. Similarly, the informant from School F stated that he had run out of ideas for improving his school's academic performance. These principals seemed to have lost all hope for their schools' ability to perform well. Both seemed content with the current performance (which was not good) and had no long-term plans to ensure or attempt any programme in their schools. These principals did not apply rigorous control (Theory X), nor did they hold a very optimistic view (Theory Y) about their school. Fortunately, these principals are in the minority. The conduct and reports of most others have indicated that they clearly favour either the Theory X, or the Theory Y, or a combination of both when they apply their management skills in their schools.

In sharp contrast to this, School G has serious plans soon to initiate a new approach. The first idea is to align the teaching of English (L2) and isiZulu (L1), by making the teachers work together. Principal G insists that learners write a friendly letter in isiZulu, and later also a friendly letter in English, so that learners can see the similarities in the skills taught in both languages. The same skills taught in one language should also be practised in the other. The second strategy in the pipeline is the adoption of learners. The principal wants each teacher to adopt a group of learners. He calls it co-parenting. The teachers will act as mentors, guides, and parental figures for their groups of learners. Principal G explains it in this fashion:

> *…at one stage something like the adoption of learners came up from the teachers and how this adoption of learners came up is that … if we are having matriculants … a total of 95 matriculants … we as a staff adopt… say … three learners and we do the co-parenting of those three learners because it's easy to work with a small number of learners which implies, as a teacher, I sit with these three learners. I tell them that here at school, I'm your parent, whatever you do, whatever you achieve, whatever problems you have, communicate with me, I will communicate with your parents. At the same time, whatever wrong you are doing at school in terms of discipline and things, it will be reported to me before it can go to your parents because I am your parent here*.

Principal G believes that this approach will assist in the discipline at school and will also help learners and teachers to achieve the set targets for their subjects.

School H is set to focus on tracking learner and teacher performance more closely in the future. The idea is to understand where learners find themselves academically at any stage. Intervention is easier to access if a learner's academics have been closely monitored. The principal posits that this method would allow the teacher very quickly to assess academic challenges encountered by learners when the required intervention can be made. Principal H states the following:

> *… it's just following… tracking the teachers and the learners every time. Don't give them a chance, follow them every minute. They write a test, even if it is a test, a normal test, call them out in a test … you are not doing well … and the teacher is always told… it is the teacher that passes the learners.*

Monitoring and intense tracking of teacher and learner performance is the key for School H. The practical application of this method could be questioned; however, this principal intends going about his duties this way in future to improve the results. This controlling and strict involvement of all aspects in the school is favoured by the Theory X manager. This outlook perceives managers as believing that workers need to be controlled, directed, and even threatened with punishment to compel adequate effort toward the achievement of organisational objectives (McGregor, 1960). Principal H is willing to go this route to ensure that the school performs well.

In School I, the approach to improving results includes going back to basics. The principal confided that they are undertaking compulsory reading. This is followed by exercises to improve pronunciation and followed up with spelling exercises. The informant admits that these are skills and competencies that should be learnt early in a learner's schooling career; however, he is confident that the strategy will pay dividends for them. Those skills that should have been reinforced early in the learner's school career are now being applied on a regular basis to enhance learner's linguistic abilities. This principal seems to accept Cummins's theory (1981) that language develops over time. Certain basics (threshold) must first be present for learners to progress linguistically. These basics are now reinforced. This view also correlates well with Vygotsky (1978) on the ZPD. Learners are guided to achieve certain outcomes, to prepare them for future work on their own.

The informant from School J was under the impression that their results for English were acceptable. She stated that they will maintain the team-teaching approach as it worked for them. The focus for the next assessment cycle was on the quality of the passes achieved at School J. The school is determined to work towards achieving more A and B symbols imminently in the English FAL class. The approach used in school J seems to be more of a management matter. This principal believes that resources in the school must be rerouted, effectively applied, and directed towards improved academic performance. This perception is Theory X-aligned. Such a manager believes that workers must be controlled, directed, and steered towards achieving the set goals of the school (McGregor, 1960).

6.3 The Subject Improvement Plan (SIP) as a means of Improvement

The participants in this study were asked to supply a subject improvement plan (SIP) for English FAL. The ideal SIP will be informed by the moderator's report, the analysis of work achieved and assessed in class, and the problem areas that learners bring to the teacher's attention. There is no formal structure or prescribed format for this document; however, teachers are supposed to have identified problem areas, suggesting possible solutions to fix such problems, and time frames in which the interventions should take place. Bowen (2009) articulates that documents provide a means of tracking change and development in a certain context. The SIP is an attempt to improve the current level of performance in English FAL, and it must be evaluated after the assessment stage.

Some language subject advisors give the language teachers a template reflecting common problems or issues that learners find problematic in class. Something like the format of the formal letter is constantly a problem for learners. This will be placed on the SIP with techniques and strategies to try to correct learners' understanding of how to write the format correctly. The SIP is supposed to be a flexible document that changes, as the interactions with learners reveal problem areas that should be addressed. At least the basic headings of problems/issues, techniques, or interventions to address the issue and time frames should appear on this document. The SIP provided by the participants revealed some interesting facts and these are discussed next. As a research method, document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies (Stake,1995; Yin,1994). The SIPs of the selected schools indicate the school's approach in efforts to improve the English FAL results in the final examination.

It was noted that there was no standardised format in the structure and contents of the collected SIPs. The documents varied in length, priority aspects, and strategies to be followed. The SIP from school G was quite comprehensive. The subheadings or topics listed were aspects of the curriculum, areas of poor performance, mitigating strategies, resources, performance indicators, time frames and date completed. These were further divided into subtopics which included comprehension, visual literacy, summary, language structure and skills. The next areas to be examined were short stories, essay writing, and transactional pieces. This SIP was clearly based on the format of the formal examination in languages. It was logical, focussed, and had a good sense of covering all aspects that learners would encounter in completing the preparatory and

final exam in English FAL at matriculation level. This subject improvement plan may assist learners in becoming exam ready in the sense that they are exposing learners to the format of the exam question paper. Learners may be better prepared to tackle the exams when they know what to expect in the question paper.

School F has also structured their SIP according to the topics or subsections in the various question papers. This SIP indicated the curriculum aspect, such as comprehension, then the areas of poor performance, the mitigating strategies, resources to be used, performance indicators, time frames and the date completed. As with School G, the SIP was further divided into subtopics which included comprehension, grammar, summary, advertisement, and cartoon. The next area to peruse was literature. Here it was indicated that learners should be able to answer high-order questions as well as open-ended questions. The third section deals with the aspects of Paper Three, namely, essay writing and transactional texts. This SIP was clearly based on the format of the formal examination in languages. It was logical, focussed and had a good sense of covering all aspects that learners would encounter in completing the preparatory and final exam in English FAL at matriculation level.

The resources required for the implementation of this SIP were indicated as previous question papers, newspapers, magazines, and the internet. This was a concern as this school had stated in the questionnaire that they do not always have access to the latest magazines, newspapers, nor access to the internet. According to Vygotsky (1986), the more knowledgeable other (MKO) can comprise resources such as these. Coupled with this, these reading materials could be used to teach concepts and new words in English, thus expanding learners' vocabulary and word recognition. These learners are also expected to reproduce newspaper articles, magazine articles, and letters to the editor as part of their creative-writing teaching. The absence of these resources indicates two things. The first is that the SIP is only drawn up for compliance, as mentioned before. This document indicates resources (which are not available at school) to be used in improving the results. Secondly, the English FAL curriculum indicates that the learners must be taught how to write magazine and newspaper articles in English FAL. The question arises how effectively these aspects can be taught with limited exposure to the latest magazines and newspapers. This also reiterates the point made earlier that the Department of Education must ensure that the schools are in possession of the required resources to promote teaching and

learning. This school clearly lacks these critical resources that may assist in promoting linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, magazine and newspaper articles form part of the assessment in Grades Ten to Twelve. These resources should be available in all schools or be removed from the formal assessment schedule.

The format and structure of this SIP was based on the language exam guidelines. Bowen (2009) describes document analysis as data that are organised into major themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis. The SIPs of the above schools show a pattern in that they are aligned with the language question papers. A concern that might be raised is that the problems identified broadly in the SIP might not apply to all learners. In other words, not all learners might have a problem with comprehension, nevertheless all of them will be receiving intervention on that topic. On the upside, such could reinforce the understanding of those already strong on comprehension, helping them to perform even better on this section. The SIP can be described as well laid out, as it follows the same format as the Exam Paper 1 (Language), Paper 2 (Literature) and Paper 3 (Creative Writing). These papers are drawn up in line with the Examination Guidelines for Official Languages (DBE, 2017). The SIP for School I was well structured. It was also based on the exam guidelines and the format of Papers 1, 2 and 3. This SIP was clearly outlined, and the document can be described as a good guide to help learners prepare well for the final exam. The document has merit and could have real value if it is properly implemented, monitored, and assessed. The extract from Table 5.2.3 below may indicate that the SIPs from Schools F and G should be revised. The results obtained overall, and in English FAL, have been inconsistent. Even in 2017 and 2018, when School F achieved a 100% in English FAL, the school only managed an overall pass rate of 50 and 37.5%. An effective SIP will not yield inconsistent results, as indicated in the table below (extract from Table 5.2.3). The SIP must be redone to address failures in the school, then implemented and monitored for effectiveness.

School	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final	E FAL	Final
School F	76.5	23.5	85.71	50	75	8.3	100	50	100	37.5

School G	97.6	90.2	87	48.8	82	38.4	93.33	81.8	91.4	56.1

Extract from Table 5.2.3 (p. 141) Overall and English results in School F and G.

School D also had a comprehensive SIP. As with School F, this SIP indicated the curriculum aspect, such as comprehension, then the areas of poor performance, the mitigating strategies, resources to be used, performance indicators, time frames and the date completed. As with Schools G and F, the SIP was further divided into subtopics which included comprehension, grammar, summary, advertisement and cartoon. The next area to be investigated was literature. Here it was indicated that learners should be able to answer high-order questions as well as open-ended questions. The third section deals with the aspects of Paper Three, namely, essay writing and transactional texts. This SIP was clearly based on the format of the formal examination in languages. Schools D, F, and G thus used the same SIP. This could be seen as questionable – the SIPs in these schools being identical. It could be argued that these teachers covered all aspects in the question paper, and learners are gaining a holistic approach to covering the entire assessment task. A counter-argument could arise in that not all learners struggle with the same aspects of the language. The time spent on covering the entire paper could be better spread over the identified problem areas. It is, however, noted that covering the entire paper might be time-consuming, but in the long run, this benefits all the learners.

The SIP for School A was a very simple document. It had a very different structure from all the other SIPs seen. This document listed the vision for the subject, then listed three (3) personal achievement goals set for the academic year. It continued to reflect on the previous year's results in the next section. This was probably to show the English teacher the target to be improved upon in the current academic year. The next section of School A's SIP involved the planning to mitigate identified problem areas, activities to overcome the problem areas, who the responsible person was, and finally, the time frame for this to be completed. Assessment of the identified problem areas was provided for in this SIP. Interestingly, this SIP also placed the problem areas covered in perspective with the curriculum coverage. This SIP holds merit since it was based on a comprehensive analysis to identify problem areas. Teaching, planning, and assessment are focussed on the problem areas experienced by learners.

Schools B and C normally perform well in English FAL, so it was quite a surprise to see their SIP for English. School B had identified the literature (Paper 2) as a problem. It was also noted that poor vocabulary was a problem in the English class. The SIP proposed more reading, dictionary work, revision, and parental involvement for improvement. This SIP was far from convincing; and did not spell out any clear strategies on how English FAL results would be improved. Similarly, the SIP for School C was a one-page document that only had three headings. These were objectives, problem areas, and interventions. The objectives were simply to reach 100% and to improve performance. Five problem areas were noted. These were noted as problems with figures of speech, problems of understanding questions, and not providing sufficient answers in the comprehension paper. Spelling errors and quotation rules were also noted as problem areas. The intervention to remedy these problems were listed as administering extra worksheets, sitting spelling tests, a strong focus on comprehension exercises, and more reading in class. The SIPs for both Schools B and C were scanty and did not provide much in terms of strategies on how to improve performance.

This was significant as these school performed well even though they had minimal subject improvement plans. This may be due to fewer problems experienced in the subject, or it may be that these schools have truly identified the problems experienced in the subject and only recorded these on their subject improvement plans. It may also be that the SIP was written only for compliance and did not have any bearing on the school's academic performance. Nevertheless, the subject improvement plans in these schools were attenuated, and did not provide any real strategy on how to improve performance.

School D had a more substantive SIP. School D identified language aspects, namely tenses, punctuation, direct and indirect speech, as well as active and passive voice. The second part of the SIP focussed on creative writing. As with School C, the interventions, and methods to improve the performance were not very convincing. These aspects were only mentioned. There were no real strategies on how these aspects would be taught. They may have been identified as problem areas; however, no notable teaching strategy, re-teaching or methods were outlined on how to help learners to understand these aspects.

It could be that this school had indeed identified these aspects as problem areas; however, this was unlikely. Punctuation, tenses, direct and indirect speech were taught in every grade from primary school to high school. These aspects are taught, reinforced, and re-taught in almost every grade, and should not be problematic in the FET phase (Grade 10 to Grade 12). Extra classes, more homework and more practice are unlikely to improve learner's understanding of these aspects that they find difficulty with. The same trend was seen in the SIP for School H. This school identified poor reading skills as a factor that limits comprehension and the interpretation of questions (Paper1). This SIP also noted essay writing (Paper 3) as a problem. Poor planning of essays and spelling problems were noted. The next aspect refers to visual literacy (Paper 1) and explains how this aspect will be overcome. This SIP concludes with language and editing aspects (Paper 1). No mention is made of literature, which was pinpointed as a problem area in some schools. The value of this SIP can be questioned as it seems unfocussed and unrealistic. The reading of more magazines and newspapers is also mentioned to overcome reading problems in this school. However, this is contradicted (as indicated in the questionnaire) by the fact that these resources are not readily available in this school. The SIP also jumps between the aspects of concern in Paper 1 (Language Study) and Paper 3 (Creative Writing) but disregards the Paper 2 (Literature), in which most schools normally experience problems such as a lack of books, limited time to complete the set-works, and little time left for revision.

When reviewing the SIP for School J, it was apparent that the English teacher had noted both the areas of good and bad performance. This was the only SIP seen where this was done. This SIP spelled out the objectives such as eliminating misconceptions in grammar, reading, and writing. It further aimed to improve reading and writing. This SIP also endeavoured to improve writing skills by using more creative words. It also aimed to improve the expression of opinions and views. Better analysis of visual information was also its focus, as well as the accurate analysis of visual information and an improved interpretation. Ultimately, it was aimed at improving the English results. This SIP outlined the well-performing areas, the poorly performing areas, and the remedial action to be taken in correcting the poor performance. It further listed the resources to be used, the expected outcomes, as well as the status (time frame) and the responsible people for this intervention. This SIP seemed more focussed, in that the poorly performing areas were identified, and the intervention was focussed on

these aspects. The resources required, as previously noted, were also not readily available in this school. Newspapers and magazines are listed as resources for improving reading, comprehension, and visual literacy. This SIP, however, seems to be a more achievable document, should it be implemented and used.

Most of the SIPs seen in this sample try to cover the scope of the question papers used for formal assessment. The first paper (Paper 1) covers the language study aspects of the language. Paper 1 consists of the comprehension, summary, advertisement, cartoon, and prose, with a picture and short story. Section A (Comprehension) assesses the learner's comprehension skills. Section B (Summary) assesses the learner's summarising skills and ability to find facts in a text. Section C (Visual Texts) aims to assess learner's vocabulary and language use, sentence structure, and critical language awareness. Most of the SIPs seen try to cover all these aspects. The extent to which this will be successful, will depend on its rigorous implementation and strict monitoring.

Some of the documents seen are optimistic in their objectives, calling for the use of newspapers, magazines and the internet, in schools that have indicated that they do not have access to these resources. Extra reading is proposed in some schools; however, they also have learners that by transport daily, which hinders extra lessons, as learners must leave school at a reasonable time to travel home. These schools also do not have a dedicated reading period but propose extra reading for improving vocabulary and sentence construction. In the final analysis, this might be more attainable for those schools that have identified some serious shortcomings or problems encountered by their learners, simply addressing those areas as a matter of urgency. Simply covering the whole scope of the language paper will not benefit all learners. It was also ironic that some of the best-performing schools in English FAL, such as Schools B and C had a very meagre and unconvincing SIP, yet performance in the subject was good.

This may indicate that the SIP does not carry great value in the sampled schools. It could be that the SIP does not actually address the problems noted. The SIP may be misdirected and not focus on addressing the problems that learners experience; or it may be that the SIPs are not actually implemented, monitored, and revised. It may be necessary to guide schools on how to draw up the SIP, how to implement it, and how

to monitor its effectiveness. The key aspect of the SIP should bring about improved academic performance and improved results achieved, if correctly implemented.

6.4 Why do principals put in place or adopt the measures they adopt to improve the English FAL Results at Matriculation Level?

Schools are judged on the results that they produce. The DBE produces a report (NSC School Performance Report) that can be utilised by school managers, curriculum specialists, subject advisors, and district planners to perform a rapid comparative analysis of the general academic performance of schools within an area, a circuit, cluster, province, or district (NSC Report, 2019).

The data presented in the NSC School Performance Report (2019) empowers every school to keep track of their performance over time, so that each establishment can compare their current academic performance with that of the previous years. This can be used as a guide to measure progress made and interventions required in the next academic school year. To this end it is important to note what principals had raised as aspects that could potentially influence these results. Factors which directly influence the results, or those with substantial merit could be addressed before the next assessment cycle to ensure future obstacles to learning are addressed and removed. The next section highlights the aspects that principals have raised as obstacles to achieving good academic results in the final examination at the end of the school year.

6.4.1 English FAL or English SAL?

The LoLT in all the sampled schools is English. This means that all subjects, including English FAL as a subject, are presented in English. The data revealed that several schools are offering questionable language combinations. At School F, the principal has reported that more than 80% of the learners are Sesotho speaking. This is their language at home (L1); however, at school they are expected to do Xhosa home language and English FAL. Thus, English becomes the second additional language (SAL) or L3. According to the principal, attempts by the school to change the home language (L1) to Sesotho were resisted by the parents. The principal is the English FAL teacher and has first-hand experience of the difficulty in teaching English to these learners. The possibility of learners not achieving Cummins's threshold (1979) in their MT is a strong variable in these schools.

At School I, most learners identify as Zulu (60%), amaBhaca (20%), and Xhosa (20%). The school, however, offers Xhosa home language and English FAL as subjects. The principal is the Xhosa teacher, and the informant in this study. He outlined the many difficulties in teaching Xhosa to a mostly Zulu-speaking school, who do not speak either Zulu or Xhosa in the correct format. The difficulty in enforcing English on an unstable mother-tongue foundation (Cummins, 1979) and teaching a different language (isiXhosa to a mostly isiZulu audience) causes linguistic chaos. The combination of language used by these so-called AmaBhaca could also be seen as a new Mother Tongue, which is not catered for in the school, and now makes teaching other languages more challenging.

The same scenario is at play within School J. The principal is one of two English teachers at this school. The principal deals with Xhosa (60%), Sesotho (10%), Zulu (10%) and Afrikaans (20%) learners. This school offers Xhosa as the home language (L1), and English FAL (L2). In this school, the principal is a great lover of literature and does much to promote this. Both Schools F and I have indicated that their learners struggle with the literature part of the language. In School J, the principal focusses primarily on the English FAL literature aspect of the language. The other English teacher is more focussed on the language and creative writing parts of the language. This arrangement between the two English teachers seems to work well. The lack of a solid MT foundation is also a variable here. Cummins's threshold for future linguistic acquisition seems to be missing. The MKO (Vygotsky, 1978) must work so much harder to assist learners to understand, as they lack the CUP to comprehend.

6.4.2 Obstacles to achieving academic success

While School A mentioned that learner attributes were to blame for the school not gaining a 100% overall pass, she failed to give much insight into this. She merely mentioned that the learners were not as committed as they should be. The same was noted in Schools B and C. These principals also stated that they did not conduct any additional classes for English FAL. All the other schools included English FAL on their programme for extra classes. The exception to this was School E. Principal E stated that the English teacher in his school does not bother herself with extra lessons. This was contradicted by the responses to the questionnaire. This principal was asked about this apparent contradiction. Principal E produced the extra class timetable,

which included only certain subjects from which English FAL was excluded. All the other schools, except for School A, indicated in the questionnaire that they conduct extra lessons for all the subjects. All these principals display Theory Y characteristics (McGregor, 1960). They seem to favour cooperative relationships between teachers who band together to achieve academic success in their schools.

Unfortunately, some of the other schools face some serious problems that can have a direct influence on their results. School D noted that many of their learners travel from a nearby town, and often arrive late. These learners often miss the first few periods of school and automatically put themselves at a disadvantage. At School F, learners lack interest in school, and often stay absent when oral tasks are to be conducted. The principal stated that he “must fight with them” to compel them to complete the English work. These complaints were echoed in the questionnaire. On the question of how many learners travelled more than ten kilometres to school, School H reported none. Schools G and J indicated that they have between 21 and 30 learners in this group. D and I indicated that 31 to 40 of their learners travel more than 10 kilometres to school. Schools B and F have 41 to 50 learners travelling, while only School C indicated that they have more than 50 learners who travel over 10 kilometres to school daily. It is interesting to note that School C had indicated the greatest number of learners travelling daily; however, they have consistently produced a 100% pass rate in English FAL for the last decade. Nevertheless, the interview and questionnaire responses correlate well in indicating that so many learners must commute to school daily. It appeared as though School C was able to manage the travelling learners’ academic needs better, since this was not seen as a big problem in this school. Despite these travelling learners, this school still managed to perform well; and English FAL still recorded a 100% pass rate year on year.

School G is situated in a rural village between two towns. Many learners travel from these towns by minibus taxis. The principal noted that the Department of Education pays the transport cost for two minibus taxis. The number of learners that require transport, however, is more than the funds allowed. According to the principal, they have almost 100 learners in need of transport. The teachers in the school have started their own fund to pay for these learners to travel to school. Teachers are thus funding the learners’ transport with their own money. Apart from the risk of the daily commute, learners are also not able to fund their travelling to and from this school. Late coming

is thus second nature in this school. When funds are not available, no minibus taxi is available to transport the learners to school. This is an obstacle to good results. The principal's response to this matter, however, is contradicted by his response to the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, Principal G indicated that 21 to 30 learners travel more than 10 kilometres to school daily; however, during the interview it was said that at least 100 learners travel daily. Maybe the time allowed to fill in the questionnaire was insufficient for the principal to verify and confirm his total numbers; nevertheless, this principal did not ask to correct his travelling totals. He confirmed and acknowledged the transcript of the interviews as correct and as a true reflection of the interaction. Later interaction with this principal clarified that some learners (which he referred to in the interview) travel far more than 10 kilometres, hence the difference in numbers stated.

The principal from School G argued that the community does not support the school in any way. In fact, the school was burgled and vital electronic resources, such as Wi-Fi Routers, forty-nine (49) tablets and data projectors were stolen. The 50th tablet was with one of the educators, and thus not stolen. These were resources donated to the school for e-learning purposes but lost through criminal activities. The school was now left with no internet access for both teachers and learners, as indicated in the questionnaire. The community also harasses and intimidates learners who attend the night classes and weekend classes. Learners had to attend classes under duress, knowing that they would be targeted on the way home from school. This led them to avoid these extra classes, which in turn led to the results not being what the school had anticipated.

The questionnaire also revealed that schools were not keeping learners gainfully occupied. This statement is made because not all schools offered sporting activities for learners. Only Schools A, B, and F offered sports − the rest did not. Cultural activities were offered by all schools, except for Schools E and J. Academic competitions were provided by most of the schools. These were Schools A, B, C, D, I, and J. Academic competitions were not present in at Schools E, F, G, and H. Furthermore, a homework timetable was also not used in Schools A, B, and H. The rest of the sample reported the use of a homework timetable to assure that work is given in fair proportions and on a regular basis.

According to the responses provided through the questionnaire, most schools also do not have regular access to the internet. Schools A and D have internet access for the teachers only. School C provided access to the internet for all teachers and learners. Some teachers and some learners had access in School H, while only some teachers had access in School F. Schools E, G, I, and J reported that no internet access was present at their schools. This is 4 out of 10 in this sample. The availability of a library was also minimal in the sampled schools. Only Schools A, B, and C had access to a well-resourced library. The rest of the sample had no access to a library. The absence of this type of MKO (Vygotsky, 1978) places these schools at a disadvantage.

The questionnaire also provided some troubling factors on media, which is a powerful source of information. Many schools (A, D, E, G, H, and J) did not have access to the latest magazines and newspapers. Schools B, C, F, and I indicated that they do have access to the latest magazines and newspapers to assist their learners with reading. Thus, 60% of the sample did not have access to the latest magazines and newspapers. Half of the schools indicated that their learners had access to television. A, B, C, G, and J had access to television, while D, E, F, H, and I did not have access to television. C, D, and H further indicated that their learners had no access to radio, while A, B, E, F, G, H, I, and J had access to radios in their homes. Some 30% had no access to radios at their homes. This will impact negatively on learners, who will have a very limited access and exposure to English, but also to other valuable information that is disseminated through these forms of media. Vygotsky (1978) would consider this absence of MKOs as a definite disadvantage in these schools compared with those who have access to these resources.

6.4.2.1 Parental involvement

Parental support is useful in academic success; and several informants have noted that they enjoy this support in their schools. School A reported that they have a very strong SGB and enjoy good parental support. The same can be said about Schools B and C. In School C, the principal reported that they have parent-teacher-learner meetings to ensure that parents are aware of the school’s expectations of both learners and parents. Parents are also invited to approach the school to register their interest in their children’s progress and to be a part of their academic journey. School J also enjoys some measure of parental support. Unfortunately, the other schools in

the sample all noted a lack of parental support; and some have cited child-headed households and aged guardians.

In the interviews, participants stated that when principals initiate engagements in the form of meetings, these are frequently poorly attended by parents. In the questionnaire, parental involvement was rated as poor in Schools F, G, and H. The other schools, D, E, I and J described their parent component as fairly involved in the school's activities. Thirty per cent of schools thus see parental support as lacking, while most the other respondents enjoy such support to a greater or lesser extent. It is once again noteworthy that some schools, such as School F, have reported poor parental involvement but have succeeded in producing a 100% pass rate in English FAL for the last two years of the period under discussion (2017 and 2018). McGregor notes that the Theory Y-aligned principals are likely to engage in consultation and participation by parents; however, the parental involvement is still reported as absent in many schools.

It should be noted that parents who themselves have a reasonably high level of education tend to be more aware of the importance of education than less educated parents; and would also be able to be much more realistic in their academic expectations. Learners whose parents are involved in their education tend to perform better academically (El-Omari, 2016). School A, B, C, D, E, I, and J are in this fortunate position that parental support is visible (to a greater or lesser extent) and enjoyed in these schools. This, however, is not the case in the other schools in the sample. Some have reported absent, deceased, and even aged and frail guardians.

6.4.2.2 Aged guardians

School F, G, and I reported that parents and guardians do not attend meetings and school functions. In El-Omari's (2016) studies, this was found to have a direct negative consequence on teaching and learning. On investigating why parents are not attending school functions, principals found that the learners are living with grandparents or old relatives. There was consensus amongst the participants in the study that parental support is beneficial to both the learner and the school. Principal G narrated a story that "*you will find a very old lady … that it becomes very hard to work with…the majority of the learners that we are having at this school are staying with grannies*…" He further stated that he had to retain some learner's reports and ask the guardians to come and

collect the reports personally as this was the only means of bringing them to the school. These guardians were unable to assist learners in any academic capacity as they are illiterate or have little formal schooling themselves. This is a problem that is almost completely absent in Schools A, B, and C.

Principal I reported that a high rate of absenteeism and late coming prompted the school to investigate the cause of the problem. They found that learners at school were also living with aged guardians that were dependent on them. The learners would be absent during social grant paydays. Some of these guardians were dependants of the learners at his school. The guardian would receive a social grant, but the learners would be doing shopping, cooking, and cleaning for the entire household. These learners would then lead a double role as learners at school and caretakers at home. Further investigation has also revealed that several households are headed by learners. These child-headed households are quite prolific at this school, according to the principal.

6.4.2.3 Child-headed households (CHH)

Several definitions exist for child-headed households (CHH) (Collins et al., 2016). Such a phenomenon has been defined as a household in which both parents have died in the preceding 5 years, the children being supported by relatives. A child-headed household has also been defined as a household in which all occupants are younger than 18 years. Other definitions include bedridden parents and the elderly who are not economically active. According to Meintjes et al. (2015: p. 4), “Child headed households or child-only households, is defined as a household in which all members are younger than 18 years”. Among other negative implications of CHHs is that these affect the development, well-being, and realisation of human rights of the children that live in them.

The problem of CCH was not mentioned by any other informants; however, Principal I was somewhat vocal about this. StatsSA (2015) highlights the systematic disappearance of the traditional family structure among South African families, in which only about 27% of South African children live with their biological parents. This study also noted this aspect in one of the schools in the sample. Botha and Meyer (2019) express that learners in this position do not receive much additional academic

support in coping with their circumstances. Academic success is not always accomplished.

Principal I stated that many learners in the FET are taking care of younger siblings. They are dependent on childcare grants as an income. The problem of CHH causes excessive absenteeism and late coming in his school. Principal I noted:

> *… you see, you've got a lot of absenteeism .. you've got a lot of late coming. When you go deep, you find cases that ... you know, stories … they say, no Sir, you know what, I had to wake up in the morning and I take my little ones to the transport. I take care of them before I come and wash myself and I prepare myself for coming to school. You know … then sometimes, why have you been away from school? No, you know what, I have been facing a problem. My younger brother is very sick. I had to take him to the hospital and all that, you know… that is what we are facing … and others … you find that they are staying with old grannies and then they are taking care of old grannies.*

Hall and Meintjies (2016) argue that the mother is often the only parent in many households and learners are more likely to co-reside with their mother than their father; however, several learners live in households where no parent is present. This is what Principal I noted. This observation by Meintjies et al. (2016) is thus visible first-hand at School I. The absence of parents in a child's life causes a vacuum; and this can have devastating effects on a learner's life chances (Freeks, 2019).

UNICEF estimated that some 150,000 children were believed to live in CHHs in South Africa in 2015, with orphaned children constituting almost 3.7 million of the country's population (UNICEF, 2015). The practice of children taking care of other children, and even adults, is a challenge to the universal models of childhood as a protected life phase devoid of adult responsibilities (Evans, 2011). This is visible in School I, as the school also must deal with social problems such as drugs and poverty. The principal cited these issues as factors that negatively influences the overall pass rate. Ngconjana, Kwizera & Umejesi (2017) contend that child-headed households (CHHs) have become a major feature of the social landscape of various African countries, and in South Africa, as seen here in School I. These adverse circumstances have the potential to harm children's future livelihood and life chances.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview on the responses that were generated from the participants using the interviews, questionnaires, and subject improvement plans. The measures that principals have put in place to improve the English FAL results at matriculation level were discussed. These measures were examined under the topic of methods employed to improve results in English FAL. School performance was then studied, and a discussion was held on the best performing schools.

Next, the enforcement of using the language of learning and teaching for communication was discussed. This was followed by examining target setting and the recognition of academic performance by some schools. The role of partnerships in the provision of resources and enhancing improvement was outlined, and the future of principals for school improvement was considered. As a means of improving academic performance, the various schools' subject improvement plans were interrogated, and trends herein highlighted and explained. These were some of the measures put into place to improve the academic performance in English FAL within the sampled schools.

The next section was a focussed discussion on why it was important to study the reasons provided by principals on results achieved. Such could be an indication of the barriers that prevent certain school from performing at their best. These aspects were discussed in highlighting the language choices practised in some schools, viewing some obstacles faced by schools. Parental involvement, aged guardians and child-headed households were also detected in some schools. These aspects could be important factors that could potentially negatively influence academic performance. Overcoming these aspects could positively influence results.

The next chapter will unpack the implications, recommendations, and conclusions drawn based on the evidence gathered from the sampled schools.

Chapter 7

Summary, Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored how principals understand the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level and the reasons behind such understanding. The study also considers the measures put in place by principals to improve English FAL results at matriculation level.

In this chapter, I will first provide an overview of the findings. I will then discuss the theoretical implications, the policy implications, and the professional implications of this study. The areas identified for future research will be outlined. The chapter ends by providing concluding thoughts and contributions of the study.

7.2 Main Findings

7.2.1 How do principals understand the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level?

Principals have been asked to explain their understanding of the factors that influence the English FAL results in their schools. The response to this question was aligned with four main themes. These include aspects of the management of schools, class size, teacher qualifications, and the resources available to the schools.

The results from this study showed that most principals preferred a democratic, inclusive, and collaborative approach in managing their schools. This democratic approach, however, was often used in conjunction with autocratic tendencies. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y management approach has shown mixed levels of success. It proves to more effective when a combination of Theory X and Theory Y are employed. This seems to be the case in the sample. Communication and teamwork are also valued by the sample. These principals also expressed the value of discipline and collegiality in managing their schools effectively to ensure academic success.

The findings suggest that large class sizes were considered an obstacle to achievement. However, in comparison with many other countries, RSA did not have a significantly higher number of learners per class. Studies have shown that smaller

class sizes allow the teacher to have more individualised contact time with learners. More learners per class would necessarily lead to more learners falling behind as the teacher cannot give the individualised attention that is possible in smaller classes.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that teacher qualifications alone do not guarantee academic success. Some schools have suitably qualified teachers, but still fail to achieve the set targets. At the same time, there were some unqualified teachers who taught English, achieving a significant level of success.

Weekend classes, morning classes, and holiday classes were a norm in most of these schools. Of concern is the fact that some of these schools did not prioritise English during these extra classes.

Some of the principals indicated the improved academic performance in subjects such as mathematical literacy, history, and business studies when learners are proficient in English. These subjects require intense reading, comprehension, and reproducing content in English. This is not possible with a poor command of English; therefore, English proficiency must be prioritised.

This study has also found that no-fee schools, such as the majority in the sample are completely dependent on state funding. This funding is received sporadically, and inconsistently, thus preventing the schools from acquiring essential resources for teaching and learning. Some principals have partnered with private organisations to enable the procurement of resources needed in the school. Partnerships were not the norm in the sample; many schools tried to cope with the limited financial resources received through state funding. The widely reported findings that South Africa has an unequal distribution of resources were confirmed by this study. While some schools have access to the internet, social media and technology, others barely have basic resources for teaching and learning. Poor electricity supply to some schools, for example, hampered the printing of question papers to be used in formal assessment. This caused the rescheduling of assessments and resulted in anxiety and frustration.

A small number of schools were in the fortunate position that they could generate funds to supplement the curriculum. Resources (physical and human resources) are more readily available in some schools where each learner is provided with textbooks, and even secondary resources, such as study guides. One school even employs double the number of teachers based on their income-generation power. The rest of

the sample is completely dependent on government funding. When the funds arrive late, learners are deprived of resources to assist in the learning process. Some schools cannot pay for electricity, photocopiers, and paper for duplicating resources.

It was also shown that many of these schools depend on interventions and initiatives driven by the District Office. When targets were not reached, they were forced to plan, conduct, and monitor additional classes. Most of the sampled schools conducted weekend classes, morning classes, and holiday classes to complete the syllabus, and to reinforce teaching. Despite these interventions, the 100% target for English FAL was seldom reached in most schools. The exceptions are three schools that perform consistently at 100% because they appear to have learners with a solid foundation in English. These learners have prolonged exposure to English HL in the primary school. These schools also have learners with significant exposure to the language of teaching and learning (LoLT).

7.2.2 What shapes principals' understanding of the factors influencing English FAL results at matriculation level?

The results from this study have shown that principals offer varied reasons for their achieved results.

This study has shown that the average time the sample had spent as principals was 15 years. Most principals agree that maintaining the stability in their school was of great importance. Some noted that they keep the senior, experienced teachers with the senior grades to ensure stability.

While some principals blamed the changes in the curriculum, others blamed the results on their primary schools being converted to high schools, without the necessary systems being put in place. Two schools in the sample cited this aspect as having a defining impact on the school's academic performance.

One principal pointed out the poor linguistic foundations of learners, whom they referred to as amaBhaca. These learners are seen as neither well-versed in isiZulu nor isiXhosa and their home language is a combination of both Xhosa and Zulu. The language of instruction in their schools is English, which complicates the language complexity. Poor mother-tongue reinforcement makes it difficult to learn English, as the foundational basis for language is not very well established.

The relevance of mother-tongue education in the foundation phase is clearly supported by the current findings.

Poor English linguistic proficiency is hampering the school from achieving the set target of 100%. The results of this study show that the best-performing schools in English FAL do so based on learners being proficient in English, with English as the LoLT. Long-term exposure to English has benefitted these learners from the better performing schools. Some of these schools enforce the use of English both inside and outside of the classroom. In the poorer performing schools, English is only spoken and heard in the classroom. The English language is seldom used outside the classroom.

7.2.5 What measures have principals put in place to improve English FAL results at matriculation level?

Schools have tried various ideas to improve the English FAL results at matriculation level. While some schools have several measures in place, others have enforced only the minimum measures expected from them. This has also resulted in a mixed level of success in bringing about academic improvement. The best-performing schools have enforced the LoLT (English) as a means of communication in the school. Another measure was the setting of targets which each school had to achieve. Several schools have put in place ways of recognising academic achievement. Others have entered partnerships with outside organisations to help them to improve. These schools have been compelled to draft a subject improvement plan (SIP), and to enforce it to bring about academic improvement in their schools.

The best-performing schools in the sample credit their feeder schools with preparing learners well linguistically. Most of these schools reported that their learners come from a background in which English was taught as the first language throughout their primary schooling years. These learners entered the high school with a strong, well-established English background. Receiving tuition in English, the LoLT was beneficial − a clear understanding of the LoLT can lead to better academic attainment. This is a significant advantage over the other schools, which perform badly in English.

Some of these schools have gone a step further and employed almost double the PPN – the number of teachers in a school paid for by the DoE. These schools have the funds to employ many more teachers than the government can provide. This allows

for these schools to have smaller classes, more individualised attention for those learners who require extra attention, and as a result the ability to achieve better results.

The best-performing schools also ensure that each learner is provided with a textbook and often secondary resources, such as study guides. The involvement of key stakeholders, such as parents, guardians, and service providers, was also evident in the best-performing schools.

Some schools have enforced the use of English as the main language for communication. Exposure to English has proven to benefit learners' ability in the language. Limited interaction with the LoLT diminishes the learner's ability to effectively communicate in English. This was evident in some schools, where learners were deliberately absent from school when oral English was due to be assessed. The main reason provided for their absence was that they were not comfortable speaking English and feared being ridiculed by their classmates.

One of the best-performing schools in English has banned code switching in class. The teachers and learners are compelled always to speak English (the LoLT). Teachers are also expected to model the correct use of English, thus serving as role models for the learners in using English correctly. Unfortunately, the study has found that English is only spoken in the classroom in most of the schools in the sample. The enforcement of using English outside the classroom is not consistently applied, and as a result does not have the intended result of improving English proficiency.

Target setting was enforced as a means of improving academic performance. Some schools have discussed the targets with both teachers and learners, while others merely informed teachers of the targets that they were expected to reach. No concrete evidence of monitoring the set targets was found in this study. In fact, some principals have clearly indicated that set targets are not effectively monitored. This implies that no significant plan is in place to monitor whether the learners are guided to reach these targets.

The sampled schools, however, realise that they are accountable for reaching the set targets, and some have accountability sessions with their teachers when the set targets are not reached. This study has revealed that target setting is merely a formality to be followed, and only a few schools in the sample have some strategy in place for reaching these targets. Some schools have involved stakeholders, such as

teachers, parents, and learners in taking responsibility for reaching the targets. Most schools have indicated that they embark on extra lessons to reach the targets.

This study has revealed that some schools recognise academic achievement and reward it in some way. Several schools have award ceremonies, at which learners who excel academically are rewarded with certificates, trophies, and other items. In some schools the teachers involved are also recognised; however, this was the minority. This practice is seen as having a vicarious rewarding effect. Learners see their peers being rewarded for academic achievement. This motivates them to try harder in their schoolwork, with the aim of also receiving the rewards associated with success.

The current study revealed that most schools in the sample struggle to provide the necessary resources, assistance, and guidance required to help learners to achieve academic success. It was discovered that most schools are struggling to stay ahead of the academic demands; and that some have partnered with stakeholders to supplement the school's requirements, and to improve academic output.

One school had partnered with an organisation that assisted well-performing learners with registration at higher institutions. This organisation also provided resources, such as calculators for the mathematics class. Another school had secured laptops, data projectors, and other learning resources through a partnership with an outside organisation. This organisation even went to the extent of guiding, coaching, and rewarding the best-performing teachers at that school. Another rural school had partnered with the farmers adjacent to the school who helped the school financially to achieve their set goals.

While a few schools have reaped the benefits of partnerships, this is not the norm in most of the sampled schools. Most of the sampled schools depend on the interventions driven by the District Office. This is unfortunate, as these schools miss out on the benefits that partners can provide.

The evidence from this study suggests that subject improvement plans (SIP) do not carry much weight. It appears that these had been drawn up mostly for compliance. The SIPs seen had not mentioned any significant time frames, activities, or targeted interventions. Monitoring and implementation of the SIP was not visible, and their effectiveness was not convincing. The SIP was merely a duplication of the programme

of assessment in most cases. Furthermore, some of these were suggesting the use of the internet, magazines, and newspapers to improve English in the school. The same schools indicated that they do not have access to these resources yet cited these resources to be used for English improvement.

The interrogation of the SIP was significant in that the best-performing schools had a very simple, clear intervention plan, while the poorer performing schools had elaborate, extensive, and complex SIPs.

7.2.4 Why is it important to understand principals' explanations of English FAL results at matriculation level?

Principals are the accounting officers in the school. They are credited for the school's academic performance, whether good or bad. This makes it of utmost importance to understand the explanations provided for the school's academic achievement or the lack thereof. Principals can often provide explanations, clarity, and insights that are not always obvious to outsiders.

7.2.4.1 English first additional language (FAL) or second additional language (SAL)?

This study has highlighted schools with some questionable language choices. While learners at one school are Sesotho speaking, they are taught in English, and the school is compelled to offer isiXhosa as the home language (subject). The community resisted the move to change the school's home language to Sesotho, preferring to have their learners taught in English and isiXhosa. These learners are at risk of losing their Sesotho identity, as this language is not significant in the school context and is only spoken at home. Some learners are taking English, not as the second language, but as the third language. This third language (English) is then used as the LoLT in the school.

Several other schools have reported most isiZulu speakers, yet offer isiXhosa as the home language, and English as the LoLT. These learners are also receiving English as a SAL. The language choices made at these schools are inexplicable. A mostly isiZulu audience should receive this language as the home language, and English as the FAL. The South African schooling system (CAPS) requires a learner to pass the home language to progress to the next level. These learners are placed at risk of failing

the grade through not passing the home language, which is not their mother tongue. The situation is even more complicated by using English as the LoLT. The context that some of these schools operate in, now effectively makes English the third language.

Principals have highlighted several aspects that hinder academic success. One of these is learner attributes. Principals report that learners are not committed to their schoolwork and must be coerced and threatened to do their part. Attendance is poor during extra lessons; homework and tasks are often not completed; and parents are not involved in learners' academic life. Some schools have reported that they have stopped offering extra classes because learners are targeted and attacked when walking home before or after hours. The community was also not seen as an integral, vital part of the school.

Some schools have lamented that several learners commute long distances to the school daily. The transport is unreliable, and learners are often late for school. This, in turn, causes missed classes, late-coming, and disrupted learning. These aspects are almost completely absent in the best-performing schools in the sample. This leads one to suspect that the highlighted aspects found in best-performing schools contribute to academic progress.

Most schools report a lack of parental support and interest in the school. Parental support and involvement are strong contributors to academic success. While several schools enjoy this benefit, most schools in the sample are not so fortunate.

The best-performing schools display a strong parental involvement in the learning process. This could also be a contributor to the notable academic performance recorded in English FAL in these schools.

Most schools report poor attendance at parent meetings; and parents or guardians seldom come to the school when they are requested to do so. The parent is most often seen at school only if the learner has committed a serious violation, and the school has demanded the parent's presence to address the matter. Parental support is lacking in most of these schools. This was also linked to the discipline problems experienced in some schools.

Many principals have revealed that their learners live with old caregivers who cannot read and write; and many learners in the sampled schools have absent parents.

When learners care for aging caregivers, this often results in absenteeism, late-coming and academic regression. These learners cannot count on any form of academic assistance from these guardians.

Principals have noted that such learners are absent from school on pension and social grant pay-out days. These learners must accompany the aged guardians to the pension pay points, perform the grocery shopping, and ensure that everything is taken home safely. This responsibility takes learners out of the classroom and has a direct impact on academic progress.

The current study revealed that some principals are working with learners who come from child-headed households (CHH). Although this was only highlighted in one school, it would be unforgivable not to mention this phenomenon. Learners from CHH have the responsibility to be both learners at school, and to be the caregivers at home. Principals involved in this study have reported absenteeism, late-coming and academic regression due to CHH.

The current study revealed that principals are working long hours, and even over weekends, school holidays, and extra lessons. This indicates that principals are committed to ensuring that schools attain good academic results. However, poor time management could be a factor in spending such extra time. There are also several other reasons offered for these long hours spent at school. These include learners' excessive late-coming and absenteeism, and principals wanting their learners to excel. The reasons for principals working long hours vary, but the data shows that most principals put in long hours of work at school during the academic year.

Overall, in schools in which learners did not travel long distances, did not have child-headed households (CHH), and had adequate resources, they managed to perform consistently well in the English FAL matriculation examinations. Having adequate resources and minimal socio-economic challenges assisted in attaining positive results.

The findings also suggest that the attainment of academic progress is dependent on several related factors. Having suitably qualified teachers, but a lack of discipline or suitable resources, can hamper academic progress. The researcher held an initial assumption that English might be an obstacle to learning, and that mother-tongue teaching should be the first choice. The findings, however, indicate that long-term

exposure to English has allowed learners to perform well enough to achieve a pass mark in the subject, and in other subjects which are taught in English. Academic attainment is not simple and straightforward. Many systems need to be in place, and many boxes must be ticked to ensure that academic performance is enhanced.

7.3 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study confirms that abundant home language (HL) exposure and study can create the environment for the second language (FAL) to be learned more easily. Similarly, when non-English mother-tongue speakers were immersed in English during their primary school years, they performed positively in this subject at matriculation level. However, it became clear that, while many learners are taught English as the home language, they could be speaking a different mother tongue at home. Whatever the circumstances, it became clear that it is vital for one language to be suitably reinforced for a second language to develop successfully.

The study also found that basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) are an essential part of language development before cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) can develop. CALP involves the ability to comprehend and express oneself in academic terms. These skills cannot be acquired without basic communication being present. Cummins (1979) was correct in suggesting that the best way to promote a second language was to gain maximum exposure to the first language. The fact that the amaBhaca group does not have sufficient exposure to their now defunct home language makes it much more difficult to acquire sufficient English proficiency. While this might be difficult, it is not impossible. The researcher would argue that sufficient exposure to English can result in learners becoming familiar enough with the language to ensure that they pass the subject. Learners must be explicitly exposed to English as the LoLT. The required English language proficiency will then develop.

Cummins's (1979) common underlying proficiency (CUP) hypothesis which states that an individual's mastery in the first language supports the development in the second language, is seen in practice. Where the first language is supported and developed, the second language is more easily acquired. If the first language is not suitably supported and developed, acquisition of the second language becomes difficult.

Vygotsky (1986) promoted the idea of social learning. In the study, learners were taught in English within a classroom setting. The teachers serve as the more knowledgeable other (MKO); learning takes place in the social setting of the classroom. The teachers have considerable success as MKOs to ensure that the largest portion of the class passes the English FAL class despite the obstacles that they face. The exposure to English contributes to learners' growing proficiency in English.

While social learning alludes to the idea of learners learning from one another, it is influenced by various other factors. The absence or presence of resources can promote or hinder social learning. Learners who struggle with English soon become proficient in English as they interact with peers who have a strong English background. The same is true for learners who are exposed to various levels of competency in the form of classmates, teachers, resources, and the media.

The role of the MKO is clear in the study. The learner is to be guided to effective understanding of English as a subject. The English teacher, as the MKO, must possess the necessary skills, qualifications, and resources to enlighten the learner in the English language. This study has shown that the innovative, involved, and well-resourced teachers achieve better results than those who do not possess these attributes. The lack of suitable qualifications in teaching English of some teachers was not an obstacle to learners still achieving good results. These teachers have been teaching English for several years, giving them mastery and content knowledge of the subject. This experience placed these teachers on a higher level of English than their learners, making them the MKOs who should impart knowledge to the learners on the English subject.

Managing the learning process has yet another theoretical implication. Theory Y managers, as seen in these schools, consulted with other stakeholders in the education fraternity. The Theory X principals were less successful in their endeavours, but the study has revealed that principals are not exclusively aligned with either Theory X or Theory Y. In line with the theory, the best-performing schools had principals who displayed a combination of both Theory X and Theory Y attributes. Although more aligned to the Theory Y orientation, the school principals seen have displayed some Theory X attributes. This theory is confirmed and reinforced by the findings of this

study. Principals have been identified as important drivers of academic improvement. As such, principals should use their leadership skills, knowledge, and influence to bring about academic improvement. Should a principal not possess the leadership skills required, such a principal should be trained, coached, or even replaced by a more suitable person to lead the school in the desired direction. Collaborative cultures, strategic management, stakeholder involvement, and placing the correct resources (human and physical) must form part of the principal's duties to ensure school improvement.

The study highlighted the role of the principal both positively and negatively. If a principal of an under-performing school puts no corrective measures in place, merely repeating a failed system, no change may be expected. The strong correlation between the school's performance and the principal's lack of introducing new ideas, concepts, and initiatives to improve academic performance, is significant. Where principals have run out of ideas, such schools remain stagnated. In sharp contrast to this, the best-performing schools are constantly trying new ideas to bring about academic improvement. These schools note networking, outsourcing, and seeking help from outside partners as strategies for improving academics. The theory that principals must drive the initiatives for school improvement is confirmed. The principal and the school management team (SMT) must involve all the stakeholders in education to bring about academic improvement in the school. This theory reiterates that this is a core duty of the principal, and it has been confirmed in this study. Some principals have failed in this duty, and it is noted that the lack of reaching the set targets is directly linked to the effectiveness of leadership.

7.4 Policy Implications

An implication of these findings is that both the learners' home language and early formative school years should be taken into consideration in the learning process. Indications are that learners are struggling to effectively learn English, based on a poor home-language foundation. There is, therefore, a definite need for strong reinforcement of the home language to facilitate the learning of English FAL. Language policy requirements must be adapted to ensure that learners in early grades and beyond are thoroughly proficient in their knowledge of their home language, beyond mere conversational competence.

In tandem, the continual demand for English proficiency dictates that more learners must gain proficiency in English. With little prospect of English demand fading, the South African school system will have to review their English teaching strategies and find ways to improve on such. English proficiency has become a necessity for progress at all levels of a learner's academic life and must be effectively managed to ensure that it benefits the learner. Poor English proficiency will result in learners performing poorly in school. It is a prerequisite that learners be competent in English to progress smoothly through the education system. Failure to understand English could have a negative impact on results.

There are several important changes which must be made. The value and practicality of the language in education policy (LiEP) will have to be reviewed. That English is often the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is unlikely to change and must therefore be prepared for. This will require the employment of suitably qualified and competent English Language teachers to navigate the teaching of learners in English. This will ensure that the learners are suitably equipped in English to experience the rest of their academic school learning with ease. The most unexpected revelation was that some communities were resisting the school's efforts to change their language policies to the languages that were prominent in the communities that they served.

A policy implication is highlighted in the dependency of some schools on government funding. When funding arrives late, the school principal is forced to seek assistance elsewhere to run the school effectively. No funds can be requested from the parents as these are no-fee schools. This dependency on government funding also makes these schools no-resource schools, and teaching and learning is negatively impacted. It therefore becomes imperative that the funding policy be effectively implemented so that schools can function successfully.

Schools require resources to effectively teach English and reinforce linguistic competencies. The data has revealed that many schools do not have access to the latest magazines and newspapers. Policies should be put in place to ensure that schools have access to such resources. Failure to do this will necessitate a change in the assessment programme. The assessment programme calls for learners to be able to reproduce magazine and newspaper articles, but the lack of exposure to these

resources will result in the inability to produce such genres. Resources must be available to ensure sufficient exposure for learners to progress academically.

7.5 Methodological Implications

The methodology used in this study proved significant, as schools displayed their unique context, problems, and responses to these. The use of the interpretive paradigm proved positive, as this allowed for the specific characteristics of each school to be interpreted on their own merits. The informants in this study were given the freedom to discuss issues, factors and interventions that both affected and effected the English FAL results in their schools. This thick, rich description was made possible using the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm was a good choice to generate the best suited data for this study. The interaction and understanding within these schools, while making meaning of these events are central to the interpretive paradigm.

Within this study the qualitative approach allowed for the type of enquiry in which the qualities, the characteristics, or the properties of the various schools in the sample were explored to gain a better understanding or explanation thereof. Through the principals' words in the various research instruments, it became possible to see how they explained the factors affecting the English FAL results. The qualitative approach allowed for principals' voices to be heard.

The case-study design was effective in this study as it aimed to describe what it was like to be in a certain situation at that time. The case was to find out what the school principals in the sample declare that they do to be successful in their English FAL classes.

In retrospect, the order in which the data-generation strategies were administered did not affect or shape the findings. However, the questionnaire and the interview questions should have been more aligned with each other to enable easier analysis.

Working with this sample had much merit. Studies (Howie et al., 2016; Meiring, et al., 2018; Shava and Heystek, 2018; Hall et al., 2019, Van der Berg, et al., 2021) have shown that a large proportion (more than 60%) of South African schools were no-fee schools. This sample was representative of this, as eight out of ten schools were no-fee schools. The results achieved in English FAL by the schools in the sample were

intensely scrutinised. The sample was well represented in terms of demographics, geography, and academic performance. In working with these principals, the researcher connected with them on a closer level, until they felt sufficiently at ease to share valuable information. Principals did not fear that the interaction between informant and researcher would harm them in any way. They were regularly kept up to date with the progress made. Principals were visited, and telephonic conversations conducted when visitation was not possible. The researcher noted that most of these principals wanted to tell their story; they were eager to talk and were prepared to provide information on follow-up concerns and questions.

Analysis of the data revealed the varied contexts of the sampled schools. The common problems that the schools in the sample face, and their attempts to mitigate these problems were also revealed. It was also insightful to see how these school principals had varied understanding of effective academic achievement. This is not surprising as management and leadership comprise a varied, wide, and diverse field that evokes a range of viewpoints and outlooks from various people.

7.6 Professional Practice Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for the researcher's present and future practice. The first is that the researcher now has an acute awareness of the contextual factors that accompany the schools in the sample. This now requires a focussed intervention or teaching approach to achieve academic success. Secondly, the unorthodox language choices of some schools could be an indication that other schools in the district might share the same profile in terms of language. Communities and stakeholders will have to be educated on the notable drawbacks of teaching a language that is only utilised at school. Insufficient exposure to the language can adversely affect the progress that learners make in the language.

Thirdly, the limited exposure that learners have to English books and secondary resources such as study guides must be addressed. Teachers will have to be innovative in their planning, strategic in their resource acquisition, and focussed on their teaching. Fourthly, the reinforcement of the first language will have to be prioritised. For the CUP theory to be successful, the first language must have a solid foundation to allow for the acquisition of a second language. The reinforcement of a strong first language is vital for any second language to develop successfully. The

practice of having the mother tongue only in the foundation phase of schooling must be reviewed. Should it be retained, it should be improved and made more efficient, as this phase becomes critical for future learning. A poor foundation to learning becomes an obstacle in the later grades. The workload and complexity of work becomes greater in later grades; and learners will fail to master the content, skills, and knowledge to progress to the next grade without a solid linguistic foundation.

Fifthly, motivation of schools is important. Several schools in the sample have introduced measures to motivate learners, to recognise their academic achievements, and to reward the efforts made by the teachers. Research, such as Mike, (2014); Kalsoom et al., (2017); Green and Collette (2021), suggests that these measures could motivate learners and help in reducing the number of learners dropping out of school before reaching Grade 12. The practice of motivation is not found in all schools; however, it is prevalent in the best-performing schools. The researcher would strongly recommend that principals make this type of recognition a part of their professional approach to enhancing academic improvement. This form of reward can lead to both learners and teachers being highly motivated, valued, and feeling appreciated. In turn, this could lead to learners making more of an effort to improve academically, and to excel in their schooling. The result would be a better performing school, which could attract positive publicity and future partnerships to better the life chances of the learners who attend these establishments.

Sixthly, the researcher has learned that, while schools are judged along the same lines, the resources, teacher competency and learner attributes in schools vary greatly. This might require some type of intervention to level the playing field. The obstacles that some schools face become a notable barrier to learning. Some schools simply cannot effectively overcome these aspects. The schools that have overcome these obstacles, have had great success academically, and so too those schools who have never experienced these barriers to learning. While the school context cannot be artificially created, measures can be put in place to combat negative aspects.

In relation to the researcher's profession, the engagement in this study with the informants in the sample, the data, and the analysis of the data has created an acute awareness of the essential roles played by the stakeholders in the entire education process. There is now a heightened sense of viewing the picture more holistically

when the researcher is working in a school. The obvious factors that play a role in the academic performance within a school are now seen as only one aspect of the equation. The unspoken, hidden factors cannot be ignored when intervention and support strategies for the school are crafted. This study has positively developed me as a researcher, as a teacher, as a parent, as a subject advisor, and as a human being. I have become acutely aware of the many interlinking factors and systems that must be in place for academic performance to flourish. The final matriculation results are the culmination of much hard work, sacrifice, and dedication. The audience that views these results is often not aware of all the efforts that have gone in to produce the outcome. The researcher is now even more aware of the vital role of the foundation phase (and other) teachers, and their essential role in establishing a strong linguistic foundation for future learning to flourish.

7.7 Limitations of the Study

Some important limitations of the study must be considered. While this study considered the final matriculation results achieved in English FAL, this assessment comes at the end of a three-year course. The matriculation examination is the culmination of Grades 10, 11, and 12. The learners' background, educational progress, and previous academic performance before the matriculation examination are not known. This information was not part of the design of this study; nevertheless, this could have played a role in explaining English matriculation results. However, it was hoped that the principal participants would have had some of this information, such as on learners' backgrounds. The study did not delve into learners' educational progress and previous academic performance.

The study was limited in being a case-study design. An important limitation lies in that the findings from one case cannot always be generalised to others. Generalisability of the findings in the study is thus not always possible, as the truth is multi-perspectival. With a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other cases.

Another limitation is that case study can produce large volumes of data, and it may be difficult to analyse all data to identify relevant findings. This was the case in this study. Large volumes of data were collected, resulting in difficulty in separating the most

valuable from the less valuable information. While time and careful handling of the data was in place, it is possible that some important data was missed.

7.8 Areas for Future Research/ Recommendations

This research has highlighted some aspects of research that need further exploration.

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas:

- The criteria followed by South African schools when establishing the language of teaching and learning and the choice of the home language and the first additional language
- The evaluation of teaching through the medium of learners' home languages in South Africa
- The knowledge and application of (the) the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) in schools
- A longitudinal study tracking learners from primary to high school to assess linguistic proficiency and competency

The matters raised above are some of the factors that affect the language results obtained in schools. Due to the scope, focus, and time constraints of this study, these aspects could not be given sufficient time and attention.

7.9 Contribution

The current study adds to a growing body of literature on the importance of a well-established first language learning to acquiring a second language. The role of the language teacher in the school is clear. However, the challenges that some schools face make these individuals' work particularly difficult and burdensome. Means of mitigating these aspects that serve as obstacles to learning must be devised and implemented.

Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers new insights into the learning of English in schools. While Cummins's theory on second-language development is not questioned, the study has revealed that prolonged exposure to English has a positive effect on proficiency in the language. Several schools in the sample appear to have learners with poorly supported home-language or mother-tongue proficiency but have

still managed to produce a pass mark in English FAL. This, despite English being the second, and sometimes, even third language that learners speak.

These findings enhance and expand our understanding of the current body of knowledge on second-language learning, and the growing global demand for English. The South African schooling system is seeking to equip learners in English proficiency by offering English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The success of these efforts, however, is not encouraging, as seen in international reading and literacy studies.

The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the vital role of English linguistic competency in the South African education system. Since English is dominant as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), it is a prerequisite for learners to have a fair amount of proficiency in English to progress smoothly through the education system. Failure to develop a strong command of English will necessarily result in learners failing, repeating grades, and eventually dropping out of school. All subjects are taught in English, resulting in a complete failure if a learner does not understand English. This study has demonstrated that most learners are taught in English, which is often a second, or even third language. The challenging task of achieving learner competency and proficiency in English should be undertaken by highly skilled, suitably equipped, highly motivated and proficient teachers.

Taken together, these findings suggest a need for a strong mother-tongue linguistic foundation in promoting the development of English as the second language. Schools will have to refocus their approach to language teaching and ensure that learners are adequately prepared in the lower grades for the introduction of English. The shortcomings in the poor literacy, reading, and comprehension skills must be addressed to establish these skills on a par with the standards in the best-performing countries. Poor reading skills will manifest in poor learning, diminishing the life chances of learners who ultimately face this deficit.

The present study confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests that teaching and learning strategies, and even the current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) should be reviewed. The CAPS curriculum fails in its goal of producing independent, critical thinkers. The evidence indicates that teachers rush to complete the curriculum in the given time and fail to assist learners

who are struggling with core concepts or who have learning problems. Coupled with this, learners are taught in a language (English) that is not their first language, and this situation presents its own set of challenges.

In South African schools, English serves as both the language of instruction, and as a subject. Inevitably, this implies that learners must have substantive English linguistic proficiency to be successful, not only in the subject, but also in navigating the other subjects successfully. Unfortunately, this English proficiency is hindered by the limited exposure that second-language learners have to English outside the classroom. This matter is especially pertinent in rural schools, where the vernacular is dominant, and English is only heard in the school setting, and in the classroom.

The success or failure of learners in the sampled schools depends greatly on their ability to converse, understand, and effectively respond in English. The role of English language proficiency for academic success cannot be overemphasised. On the positive side, many of the aspects highlighted in this study can be addressed. It is the researcher's opinion that English FAL results can be improved once these matters are addressed and corrected in all the schools that face the mentioned challenges.

7.10 Conclusion

The findings of this study have revealed the ways in which principals understand the factors influencing the English FAL results at matriculation level. This was explained by studying the management of the education process. Factors such as class size, teacher qualifications, and the resources available to the school have been cited as influential to the English FAL results. These aspects were explored, explained, and interrogated as possible determinants of the results obtained in English FAL.

Secondly, the factors which shape principals' understanding of the English FAL results were examined. Conclusions were drawn based on the time spent as a principal, and the various dynamics in some schools.

Thirdly, more conclusions were drawn on the measures that principals have put in place to improve the English FAL results. Target setting, recognising academic performance, and going into partnerships were noted as measures to improve English results. Schools even drew up subject improvement plans to facilitate the improvement

of English in their schools. These SIPs were found to be mostly cosmetic, and of little value to the current way of being implemented and used.

Fourthly, it was imperative to understand principals' explanations of the English results achieved. This aspect highlighted the complex dynamics in schools linguistically, socially, and economically. These dynamics help onlookers to understand why schools perform as they do.

While schools are expected to deliver the same curriculum to all learners, the findings of this study have highlighted the inequalities that exist between schools. The study set out to explore how principals understand and explain the factors that shape their schools' English FAL matriculation results. The conclusion was that a combination of variables influenced the academic performance of these schools. The demand for English, both locally and internationally, will not diminish, and schools should be equipped to respond positively to this demand. When schools are effectively guided on how to empower learners linguistically, both in their mother tongue and in their additional language, the ripple effect across all subjects and subsequent studying and employment will be evident. Complex socio-economic dynamics need urgent addressing in South Africa. Such must begin with educational empowerment to support much-needed change.

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Annexures

Annexure – A Ethical Clearance

Ethical Clearance Approval - Coetzee MJJ Mr 205400618 HSSREC 00000675 2019.PDF

Annexure – B Gatekeeper Letter

Gatekeeper Letter for MC - 2019.pdf

Annexure – C Consent Letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
ETHICAL CLEARANCE NUMBER: ……

Dear Respondent/ Participant/ Student,

PHD
Researcher: Morné J.J. Coetzee [redacted]
Supervisor: Dr Ansurie Pillay (031-2603613)
Research Office: Ms. P Ximba (031-260 3587)

I, **MORNÉ J.J. COETZEE,** am a **PhD** student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study entitled Factors affecting English results at matriculation level: How principals at ten schools in the Harry Gwala district of KwaZulu-Natal explain the phenomenon.

The objectives of this study are to establish:

- What are principals' perceptions of the factors influencing English results at matriculation level?
- What shapes principals' perceptions of the factors influencing English results at matriculation level?
- How do principals explain English results at matriculation level?
- What measures have principals put in place to improve English results at matriculation level?

Through your participation I hope to gain enough information to answer the above questions. The results of the study are intended to benefit the Harry Gwala District in that we can better understand techniques and methods used to improve English results.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequence to yourself or your school. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this study. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the School of Education, UKZN. These will remain confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you may contact me, my supervisor or the Research Office at the numbers listed above.

The questionnaire should take you about **30** minutes to complete; the interview should take about **45** minutes. I hope you will agree to participate in my study.

Yours faithfully

Morné J. J. Coetzee

19 August 2019

INFORMED CONSENT

I…… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study, and I consent to participating in the research study.

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

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

……

I agree to the use of electronic recording equipment for accuracy and transparency. My confidentiality will be respected, and the findings may be made public after I have viewed it. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

……

Annexure – D Interview Schedule

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. Describe some of your preferred management methods as a teacher and as a principal.
3. What do you perceive as effective classroom / school management? Please explain.
4. Describe the composition of the classes at your institution.
5. What was your average matric pass rate for the last five years?
6. How does it compare to the last few years pass rate?
7. What factors do you think influenced the pass rate?
8. Do your school / teachers set pass targets to achieve and what strategies are in place to achieve these targets, if any?
9. What mechanisms do you employ in trying to maintain a high pass rate?
10. Does the school have any programmes in place to help learners academically?
11. Is the school involved with any partners to assist academics?
12. What was your last years' English FAL matric pass rate?
13. How does it compare to the last few years' English pass rate at matric level?
14. What factors do you see influencing English results at matriculation level?
15. What leads you to identifying those factors as influencers of the English results at matriculation level?
16. How do you explain the English FAL results at matriculation level at your school?
17. What measures has the school put in place to improve English FAL results at matriculation level?
18. How do teachers and learners feel about studying English FAL?
19. Are your English teachers qualified to teach English FAL?
20. How do the English FAL teachers prepare Grade 12 learners for the matric exams?
21. Do the English FAL teachers and the school set targets for English results? If yes, how do they arrive at these figures?
22. Are there any programmes in place for English improvement at matriculation level?

    <u>Other:</u>

    Do you have anything else to add, such as other questions or comments?

    Please may I request to speak to you again on another occasion should the need arise?

    Kindly contact me if you think of anything else that you regard as important to this study.

    Thank you for your time and effort.

Annexure – E Turnitin Report

Turnitin Originality Report

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PhD By Morne Coetzee

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Annexure – F Letter of Edit

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NTSD English Specialist
SACE No: 11135129

E-mail: lydiaweight@gmail.com

Pinpoint Proofreading Services

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31 May 2022

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Lydia Weight, have proofread the document titled: Factors affecting fluctuating language results at matriculation level: How principals at ten schools in the Harry Gwala district of KwaZulu-Natal explain the phenomenon, by Morné Coetzee. I have made all the necessary corrections. The document is therefore ready for presentation to the destined authority.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

L. Weight