



**School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity
Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools**

by

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Supervisor's Statement

This dissertation has been submitted with/ without my approval.

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Date: _____

Declaration of Originality

I,, hereby declare that this dissertation is my work and does not contain any materials which have been submitted before for any degree in any institution. Use of any published material has been dully acknowledged.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research first and foremost to God Almighty, who bestowed upon me the strength, wisdom, and inspiration to complete this work. This dedication is lovingly offered in memory of my beloved father, Sibusiso Msomi, who instilled in me the true values of love, respect, and hard work. I also honour all my family members who have passed away. Your love lives on in my heart. May this work stand as a testament to the profound impact you have had on my life, and may your love continue to guide me. I also extend my gratitude to my husband Dumisani Cyril Nkosi for constantly believing in me and supporting me in pursuit of my dreams.

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Abstract

The study explored school principals' perceptions and experiences in managing diversity among learners and educators in primary schools, aiming to address the knowledge gap on how principals can leverage diversity to improve performance and achieve organisational goals. Data were collected from four purposively selected participants through semi-structured interviews, with Downton's (1973) Transformational Leadership theory and Levin's (1947) Theory of Change serving as the study's theoretical framework. These theories helped illustrate how principals can implement strategies that not only accommodate diversity but also foster acceptance and engagement among all stakeholders. Findings revealed that principals prioritised harmony and inclusivity, demonstrating a strong commitment to cultivating a positive school culture. However, they faced challenges such as cultural differences, discrimination, and communication barriers. Some successfully navigated these issues by integrating diversity into policies, employing transformational leadership, adapting teaching strategies, and collaborating with community stakeholders to create more inclusive school environments.

Key words: Diversity, diversity management, socio-economic background, inclusivity, transformational leadership, and management strategies

Abbreviations

EE Act	Employment Equity Act
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
SASA	South African Schools Act
SMT	School Management Team
DBE	Department of Education
KSAOs	Knowledge, skills, abilities and, other characteristics
SACE	South African Council of Educators
KPS	Khwezi Primary School
VPS	Valley Primary School
CPS	Crestwood Height Primary School
MPS	Mophela Primary School
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
PSW	Personal and Social Well-being
ANC	African National Congress
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
DA	Democratic Alliance

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

The study is aimed at examining the perceptions and experiences of primary school principals regarding managing schools with educators and learners of diverse backgrounds. This study is based on the experiences of four principals in one circuit in the Umlazi District. In the study, the terms school principals and principals are used interchangeably. This study seeks to explore how principals manage diversity intending to improve performance in their schools and achieve their core duty which is effective teaching and learning.

In this chapter, I present an overview of the study. I begin by discussing the background of the research, followed by a description of the problem statement. Then, I introduce the primary research question along with its sub-questions. I proceed by explaining the significance of the study and conclude with an outline of the study's delimitations, key concept definitions, and the structure of the dissertation.

1.2 Background of the study

There is a special quote about diversity from quotesgram.com that says:

“Different

Individuals

Valuing

Each other

Regardless of

Skin

Intellect

Talent or

Years.”

This quotation on how each letter of the word diversity is explained resonates with the context of this study because the educators employed in most South African schools and the learners enrolled therein are different individuals that need to be valued regardless of background, skin colour, language, and cultural diversity. There are diverse situations and different dynamics in the country, the communities, as well as schools, and everyone needs to be valued regardless of those differences and dynamics. In 1994, South Africa attained freedom and became a democratic country which meant that people of all races were considered equal. According to the Bill of Rights, which is Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa), the people of South Africa are entitled to freedom of expression, religion, belief, inclusiveness, equity, and other human rights. No one should be unfairly discriminated against. The Equality Act 2010 makes provision for this and protects people from discrimination in society and even the workplace. The Employment Equity Act (EE Act) (Republic of South Africa), Section 6 states, “No person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice, on one or more grounds including race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language, and birth.” School principals have a responsibility of ensuring that all employees and even learners are treated fairly and enjoy equal opportunities in schools. According to section 16, (3) of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, some of school principals’ core purpose in the South African context are to lead teaching and learning in the school, shape the direction and development of the school, manage quality and secure accountability, develop and empower self and others, manage the school as an organisation, work with and for the community, manage human resources (staff) in the school, and manage and advocate extramural activities. Some of these core duties might not be executed diligently if and when the school principals are not empowered, and are unable to promote collaboration and inclusivity for effective teaching and learning.

Principals need to ensure that the learners have access to quality education without discrimination. The South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa) makes provision for that by making schooling compulsory for children aged 7 to 15 without discriminating against them. Most important is the provision made for the democratic transformation of the schools to redress the injustices of the past and provide high-quality education for all learners and grant equal opportunities for all the learners who have been

marginalised, (Department of Education 2001, the White Paper 6). Schools in their admission policy should be accessible to all learners. No learner may be refused admission on the grounds of race or religion in both private and public schools in South Africa, as per Section 29(2) of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996. For example, in my school, we have Coloureds, Africans, Indians, and Whites among staff and learners, and such diversity is characteristic of the South African population.

Section 20 of the EE Act supports diversity and protects everyone from being discriminated against by promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment of employees through the elimination of unfair discrimination. Therefore, it crucial for the Department of Basic Education to employ educators because of their competencies. Education is a fundamental human right for every individual irrespective of gender, belief, background, race, and nationality (section 27, of the Constitution of South Africa). The Department of Education (DBE) works with different stakeholders to improve the quality of education in South Africa, subsequently improving the living conditions of South African citizens (Samuels et al., 2017). I agree with the statement because all citizens of South Africa need to be provided with quality education and equal opportunities for their lives to improve. Educators in their activities in the classroom need to find ways to affirm diversity by using methods that will cater for all learners.

That will get learners to understand and respect diversity.

The citizens of South Africa speak different languages and have different beliefs and values. There are 11 official languages in South Africa, sign language being the twelfth one. Despite the 11 official languages, English continues to be the dominant medium of instruction. Most learners in schools around the study area speak other languages as their mother tongues. A majority of them are IsiZulu and IsiXhosa-speaking learners. There are also a lot of Shonaspeaking learners. A majority of these IsiZulu and IsiXhosa speaking learners come from the squatter camps. Others are raised by unemployed parents. Some of the parents are low-income earners and that makes it difficult for these learners to afford school fees and other resources needed at the school to support their learning. Language diversity poses a challenge when it comes to teaching and learning. The former Model C schools, post-apartheid started accepting learners of all races, that came from different backgrounds and spoke different languages. This poses a challenge to some educators and learners who do not speak English as their mother tongue, as some struggle with teaching and learning in English.

Inequalities determined by factors like ethnicity, language, socio-cultural background, class, education opportunity, and poverty are the biggest obstacles that prevent countries from giving students a fair and quality education. Hoa (2022) notes that the inequalities exposed by online learning during times of Covid-19, where we witnessed some schools failing to conduct online classes due to lack of skills and resources on the part of both educators and learners. Other schools in South Africa managed to continue with teaching and learning because the educators and learners had the resources and skills to do so. Andrews et al., (2021) remarked that there are learners in South Africa who are experiencing learning challenges like lack of parental involvement, lack of resources, living environment, and mental health and wellness, therefore they are at risk of not accessing unbiased education opportunities. They further explain that their research findings identified rigid curriculum compliance and ethos as some of the constraints restricting schools from implementing inclusive education. For quality education to take place, as it is the key to the development of the country, school principals and the education system as a whole need to understand those dynamics.

Khadija (2022), refers to the principals as the main actors who have the capability of building bridges between school stakeholders. Different stakeholders are impacted directly or indirectly by what happens within schools. The Department of Basic Education as a stakeholder (from the national to the circuit level), provides and communicates framework and policies that promote diversity and inclusion in education. DBE ensures that the changes in policies are communicated and support is given to the schools for diversity to be managed properly. Educators are the most important stakeholders in the promotion and support of diversity in schools. The educators are the ones that interact with the learners in the classrooms, therefore can recognise the potential of each learner and honour diversity. It is the principal's responsibility to assist educators to understand and embrace diversity. The learners too are another important stakeholder that have to understand and respect diversity. That lays a foundation for caring learners that respect each other's differences. Parents as part of the school community, need to understand why diversity is important and how diversity can enrich their children's education.

The purpose of this study is to look at the school principals' perception and experiences of managing diversity among the learners and educators in the primary schools in one circuit under the Umlazi district. School principals in their process of management, recognising and cherishing diversity, must have systematic and planned management strategies, (van Vuuren

et al., 2016). Therefore, principals need to be equipped with insight into how to embrace diversity and encourage innovation among the people they lead. As a result, the learners and educators will be motivated, and a healthy school environment conducive to effective teaching and learning which is the core function of the school will be created. Subsequently, the schools' performance will improve.

People's cultural backgrounds are different. Farrell (2018) and Choong et al. (2020) commonly agree that in schools, those backgrounds influence the school culture. Therefore, the principals must manage the schools properly and create a positive school culture to achieve the vision and mission of the school. The economic, social, and political factors have an impact as well. The school as an organisation has to develop its own positive and healthy organisational culture. That is in line with section 29(1) of the Constitution of South Africa which was mentioned earlier, which states that everyone has the right to basic education. Quality education can only happen in a healthy environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. However, White Paper 6 which is a policy on inclusive education recognises that some children experience barriers to learning, for example, family background and lack of access to information, and others have disabilities. As a result, the South African Education system has adopted inclusive education intending to address these barriers to learning, and ensuring the education system is committed to transformation and accommodation of all the learner needs.

In the South African education system, the principals as they are said to be the biggest driver of the education outcome, together with their school management team (SMT), are the key role players. They have key duties that they need to perform as the most important partners in education. The leadership of the school has to improve their leadership skills to be able to motivate, support, and invoke change in educators. As the face of the school, principals that lead a team of different stakeholders, need to have strong leadership skills to lead the team in creating an environment safe for effective teaching and learning. Highly motivated educators as a result of distributed leadership are said to perform their duties better and that is one of the contributing factors to improved learner performance (Engin, 2020). Acquiring decisionmaking skills, and communication skills can enable principals to work collaboratively with the diverse staff by motivating, and encouraging innovation and creativity.

Great schools are said to be the ones that have a cohesive staff that works very hard, is determined, and has a positive school climate, community involvement, a strong leader, and a challenging curriculum. The principals and the SMT have to create a positive school climate and cohesion. For the school principal to develop the school culture that they want, it has to start with them. To have diversity and inclusion as a leader calls for understanding and acknowledging the people that you work with. As individuals, educators and learners are unique and have something unique to offer the school. It is a challenge for the school principal to create an environment that allows every individual to make their unique contributions. It calls for leaders to acknowledge that educators and learners have different lived experiences, strengths, and weaknesses, and that will enable individuals to fully develop. The principals and their SMT as leaders must face, humanise and embrace diversity and inclusion. Celebrating and managing diversity in schools might create a school environment that allows people to reach their full potential.

1.3 Statement of the problem

From my teaching experience, some learners struggle to communicate clearly and effectively. That is a communication gap. Some learners lack a supportive learning environment, which is an environmental gap. There are also learners with motivation, knowledge, and skills gap. Identifying and understanding the gap as educators, helps in assisting learners to improve performance and achieve the learning goals. The sad truth for the schools is that, some in the country are high-performing and others are poor-performing. In the area where the study is based, the primary schools there serve diverse communities. The communities are different concerning background, nationality, race, religion, beliefs, and culture. The principals of these schools themselves have their own different identities. Language diversity is a major problem that is affecting teaching and learning in some schools. Using the mother tongue language when implementing teaching and learning has its benefits like promoting socialisation, and improved educational achievement, (Chidarikire et al., 2021).

Language diversity presents both challenges and opportunities in education. It can create barriers in teaching and learning, especially when learners have varying levels of proficiency in the language of instruction, leading to difficulties in ensuring everyone understands the material. However, when managed well, language diversity enriches the classroom, fostering inclusivity and cognitive flexibility. To address this, schools can implement strategies like bilingual education, teacher training, and curriculum adaptation to value multiple languages, transforming diversity into an educational asset.

From what I have observed as a deputy principal in a school in this area, the language issue and socio-economic background are barriers to learning and have a huge impact on educators as well as learner performance. This needs to be taken into consideration when teaching and learning take place for the lessons to be more effective. According to EU Business School (2013), exploring the children's differences creates a space for the enrichment of their experience and they achieve more in a multicultural environment. EU Business School, (2013) further speaks of how exploring the subject from varying perspectives, referring to planning lessons that reflect the students and their varied backgrounds, opens their minds to deeper insights. Educators tasked with day-to-day planning of classroom activities and lesson planning need to understand the learners' backgrounds to be able to plan insightful lessons.

As a researcher, there is concern regarding the performance of the learners in the primary schools in one circuit in the Umlazi district and if diversity in these schools is not properly managed, the learner performance might not improve. There is a great need to manage diversity in the schools as this might lead to motivated, inspired, innovative learners and educators that approach teaching and learning differently in order to reach their full potential. Thus, educators must develop critical thinkers who are also open-minded. When the principals address diversity-related issues, they assist the staff, learners, and parents to embrace diversity, tolerate and respect each other. When learners are accepted and respected, they develop empathy, gain more confidence and understand the lesson better. The principal who treats the educators fairly and equally develops the educators' full potential. Educators become encouraged and utilise all resources at their disposal to celebrate what makes each learner unique, such as educational material and activities. Despite the normal focus of most studies on diversity, which is race, ethnicity, and language (Lui & Ball, 2019) in their study focus on programmes that prepare teachers for diverse learners. The educators that develop themselves, are developed and supported by DBE and the principals, become fully equipped with various strategies of teaching and handling unique learners they have in class. In most cases where educators are discriminated against and not supported, a lot of conflicts arise and these educators cannot function successfully.

Drastic changes in the leadership of the schools need to take place, which will have a domino effect on all educators and learners. Unless the leadership of the schools embraces diversity, recognises that there is an opportunity to learn together, and consider people's strength when

doing job allocation and when delegating duties, the gap will continue to widen. A lot of studies have been done regarding diversity in the workplace, especially the relationship between workplace diversity and employee performance (Volson, 2020), and the impact of diversity management on achieving organisational goals (Thomas, 2022). Further studies need to be conducted regarding the experiences and practices of the principals on embracing diversity among educators and learners and how the principals manage diversity to improve performance in primary schools, hence this study.

1.4 Research questions

Main research question. How do school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity?

Sub-questions

1. What strategies do school principals practice to manage diversity?
2. What do principals regard as factors affecting their management of diversity in primary schools?
3. How do the principals think diversity can be managed better?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study hopes to contribute some knowledge about how selected primary school principals understand and experience their roles as managers of diversity. Such knowledge may help other school principals in similar contexts to better understand their role in managing diversity. This study additionally hopes to deepen the knowledge of diversity as a phenomenon and to explore how diversity is embraced by the leadership of the schools. Furthermore, the study hopes to explore factors affecting diversity to overcome those factors and improve the selected primary school's performance.

1.6 Research design and methodology

The study will employ a qualitative case study. Four primary school principals in a specific circuit under Umlazi District will be selected using purposive sampling to select participants that will provide relevant information required by the researcher. The participants will be given pseudo-names to protect their identities. The participant will be interviewed and open-ended questions will be asked in the interview to guide the participant while allowing room to probe for further clarity should it be required, for data collection purposes. The researcher will record the interviews, go through the recordings and generate themes and codes. Data collected will be analysed using thematic analysis. Data collected will be stored in a safe file with codes only the researcher and supervisor can access to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

1.7 Defining the key concepts of the study

The following key concepts are defined for a better understanding of the context of this research study.

Key concepts: Diversity, inclusion, language diversity, school management team, leadership, school culture, and stakeholders.

Diversity is the description of the variation of characteristics, including but not limited to personal, physical and social characteristics for example race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, tribe, caste, socio-economic status, thinking and communication styles collectively and as individuals (Marinaki 2022) **Former model C** schools refers to schools in South Africa that used to be for white children only and are now mixed.

Inclusion means that the organisations put in place and implement procedures to integrate everyone in the organisation. Inclusion in a school context relating to this research means having equal opportunities to access education, opportunities, and resources despite the learners' unique qualities (Marinaki 2022).

The school management team (SMT) also referred to as the leadership of the school in this study involves the principal, deputy principal, and departmental heads.

School culture: According to Chris (2023), school culture refers to the customs, interpersonal dynamics, assumptions, values, and behaviours that might be formal or informal as well as the stakeholders' practices.

Stakeholders: Drew (2023) defined stakeholders as all the people who are directly or indirectly impacted by the things happening in the schools. The main stakeholders in this study are the learners and the educators. Other stakeholders include the parents, the support staff, union representatives, and the business community.

1.8 Dissertation outline

This study comprises of five research project chapters outlined as follows.

Chapter One- Introduction to the study

This chapter introduces the research study by providing the introduction and the background of the study. The statement of the problem, main research questions, and sub-questions are identified in this chapter. To introduce the study, the significance of the study, delimitations of the study, and the definition of key concepts are sponsored.

Chapter Two- Literature Review

The chapter provides a review of related literature along with the theoretical framework. Upon reviewing related literature regarding managing and embracing diversity in schools, I present debates regarding diversity. The study seeks to explore principal's perceptions and experiences of managing diversity to improve performance. Reviewing related literature will help identify the gap in the literature regarding diversity in schools.

Chapter Three- Research Design and Methodology

First, the explanation of the research design and methodology is dealt with in this chapter. Second, the research paradigm and the case study approach employed is explained. Then, the schools case study is dealt with, sample selection process, data collection and interview method are discussed. Lastly, ethical issues and limitations of the study are dealt with.

Chapter Four- Data Analysis and Discussions

In this chapter, the researcher draws from data collected using the instrument mentioned in chapter three. Data, analysis, and discussions are presented in a thematic system per research questions. Data analysed by providing the descriptions of participants' experiences

Chapter Five- summary, conclusion and recommendations

Reflected in this last chapter of the case study, is the summary of the research study being conducted. Highlighting the importance of managing diversity for improved performance is going to form part of the conclusion. The indication of areas that need further research is going to be done as a recommendation to conclude the dissertation.

1.9 Summary

Provided in chapter 1 is the introduction to the entire study about the principals' perceptions and experiences of managing diversity among learners and educators. Presented in the introduction, is what the study seeks to achieve. That is followed by a background of the study which is followed by the statement of the problem. Presented after that, are the research question and the sub-questions. Dealt with thereafter is the significance of the study, the delimitations, and the definition of the main concepts. Furthermore, the entire dissertation outline is presented. Chapter 2, the next chapter, presents a review of related literature.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One dealt with an overview of the study. Chapter two discusses important literature related to this study, focusing on school principals' experiences and perceptions of managing diversity. This review of literature provides a critical synthesis of available research into perceptions and experiences of primary school principals regarding the management of diversity in order to improve performance in schools. Section A in this chapter begins by exploring key concepts that frame this study, then reviews related literature that informs the discussions with the attempt to answer the research questions sponsored in chapter one. The literature review will be presented in themes and the empirical evidence will follow. Thereafter, in section B, the theoretical framework of the study will follow. Lastly, the conclusion will be sponsored.

Section A

2.2 Conceptual Framework

According to Gemma et al. (2023), a conceptual framework helps the researcher to “map” or “steer” the research activity and it guides the researcher to realize what the study intends to achieve.

The literature on managing diversity uses an excess of concepts to describe or refer to how school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity. The key concepts that frame this study are diversity, management, and diversity management.

Diversity

A vast range of definitions has been sponsored by scholars on the term diversity. Diversity is most commonly defined as the differences among individuals or groups of people (van Vuuren et al., 2016). These differences that exist among the people and the groups of people are the factors that make them unique. The people’s similarities and differences are sometimes embraced in diversity. van Vuuren et al. (2016) posit that diversity refers to multiculturalism in a cultural context. Another definition of diversity is understanding people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions, age groups, and other aspects like thinking, ethnicity, education, gender, sex, etc. It is also understanding that people are unique in their own identities (Francis et al., 2017). The ways in which people differ can be categorized as primary and secondary characteristics (Williams, 2013). By the primary characteristics, Williams spoke of age, gender, race, age, physical and mental abilities. Categorized as secondary characteristics, are family status, economic background, nationality, work experience, education, and geographic location.

There are things an individual can control for example education and the things they cannot control for example ethnicity (Volson, 2020). In view of the above definitions, Volson alluded to the things that we cannot control rather than the secondary characteristics of diversity as per William’s definition. Primary characteristics of diversity according to Williams (2013), are the things we cannot control as alluded to by (Volson, 2020).

In the explanation of diversity, the issue of a group surfaces. Individuals are diverse when compared to a group (Natter, 2019). The scholar Natter argues that there should be acceptance

and understanding that people have different characteristics that make them unique when compared to individuals in the group. Allen et al. (2017) points out that diversity is a variation of individuals. The variations are visible for example race and the other variations are less visible for example socio-economic status. Diversity is a terminology with different definitions and researchers' perceptions of diversity influence their definitions depending on the group an individual belongs to (Allen et al., 2017). There are commonalities in the scholars' definitions of diversity even though they use different terminology. What Allen refers to as visible variations of individuals, Williams refers to as the primary characteristics of diversity. Volson refers to secondary characteristics as the things we can control. This supports the latter argument by Allen about definitions of diversity being influenced by the researcher's perceptions.

Jayne and Dipboye (2004) characterize diversity in three different ways:

- Human diversity- which involves employees' physical differences, personal preferences, or life experiences.
- Cultural diversity- which is characterized by different values, beliefs, and personal characteristics.
- Systems diversity- which has to do with management systems and organizational structure in the workplace.

In light of the above definitions of diversity and due to the fact that schools have become very diverse, it is critical for organizations to manage diversity, since diversity is concerned with the recognition and management of differences for the advantage of the organization.

Therefore, school principals need to be clear about what diversity is and what management is. The school principals might find it difficult to understand and manage diversity if they are not attentive to issues pertaining to diversity, and if they do not develop their knowledge with regard to the management thereof. Cultural and human diversity are the most prominent ones in the schools that the study is conducted in and that has to be understood in order to be managed properly.

Management

The concept of management is a well-established term. When most scholars define management, functions like planning, organizing, leading, and controlling are some of the concepts used in defining management. Management is defined as a straightforward process

of planning, leading, organizing, staffing, and controlling organizational resources with the aim of attaining organizational goals with minimum costs (Cortez, 2023).

During the planning process, managers determine and set the direction of an organization (Kukrejal, 2020). The planning stage is future-oriented and is regarded as a systematic and rational manner of making decisions today that will impact the company's future. Planning also encompasses the prediction of the future and the control of the activities. According to Kukrejal (2020), effective planning programmes include both internal and external factors like resources, customers, competition, material, capital, environment, etc. Kukrejal points out that changing patterns in an organization, and limited growth opportunities due to saturation requiring diversification are some of the factors that affect planning.

The purpose of the organizing process is to distribute the resources and delegate the activities to personnel to achieve goals that the organization established in the planning stage (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). During organizing, the managers provide something for a business or an organization, for example, the tools, personnel, and capital. The function of organizing involves determining activities that need to be done to achieve the goals of an organization (Kukrejal, 2020). These activities are assigned to proper personnel and the duties are delegated to the employees with expertise, and in a cohesive and coordinated manner. It is during this stage that managers strive to create a healthy work environment that is conducive to productivity (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023).

Leading involves the function of influencing and motivating employees to achieve the organizational goal (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). During the leading process, the focus of the managers is on the management of people such as teams, groups, and individuals rather than focusing on the tasks to be performed. The most successful leaders are believed to be those leaders who utilize their interpersonal skills to inspire, encourage, and motivate employees to perform at their utmost best (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). The article further states that there are different leadership styles that managers use, for example, situational leadership style which includes directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Managers sometimes change their leadership styles in an attempt to adapt to diverse situations.

The purpose of controlling encompasses measuring and correcting the activities of personnel to ensure the planned programmes are adhered to, to accomplish the objectives and the goals of an organization (Kukrejal, 2020). It is during the controlling stage that performance

standards are established, actual performance measured, performance measured against predetermined performance standards, and the corrective measures taken (Kukreja, 2020).

Managers do things right and ensure that the course is followed (Chikoko, 2019). They design and oversee how plans are carried out, and influence the employees to get work done productively. Chikoko (2019) concurs with numerous scholars that managing involves problem-solving that involves planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding, and controlling. Schools need effective managers (school principals with good managerial skills) for the school systems, policies, structures, and procedures to remain intact.

Good management is a discipline that makes organizations possible and works well; they just do not happen by themselves, and make society prosperous (Magretta, 2012). Principals as managers need to follow a certain code of conduct, basic functions and procedures of administration, and various methods of managing resources efficiently, to ensure the core function of the school is achieved, which is effective teaching and learning. Principals as managers in schools should measure the performance of the school, their learners, and staff's (teaching and non-teaching) success on how they meet their goals. Three elements often surface when scholars define management. Those elements are functions of management, the people, and meeting the organizational goals (Magretta, 2012). It is important to understand clearly what each function of management as defined above means and to ensure that the principal as a manager is well equipped in all functions and to develop themselves where they lack.

Management in education aims at creating conditions and supporting learners and educators to be able to achieve effective teaching and learning. It is believed to be the key to transforming education by providing guidelines on good management practices (Coleman, 2003). School principals should ensure that they provide a nurturing, effective, safe, and efficient environment by ensuring that the school, its people, assets, and all other resources are managed and organized properly (DoE, 2013). Some of the systems and processes the school principals manage are human resource matters, discipline, and inclusion. They manage data for the sake of making recommendations that are in the best interest of the learners, the school, and all the other relevant stakeholders (DoE, 2013). According to the South African Department of Education, having knowledge related to the functions of management alluded to in the definition of management, might help principals build and strengthen the capacity of educators and learners.

A broad overview of the concept of management has been sponsored, the four basic functions of management which are planning, organizing, leading, and controlling necessary for the principals to understand how to manage diversity for the benefit of the school, the learners, and the employees. All the functions of management that have been defined above are the critical skills all successful managers should possess and develop when they want to influence individuals, a team, or a group of people to achieve organizational goals. Without the direction, resources, clearly defined activities that need to be executed to achieve goals, and supervision of programmes, it will be difficult to manage the organization properly.

Diversity Management

According to Francis et al. (2017), diversity management is a set of policies and practices of the organization that aims to recruit, retain, and manage employees of different backgrounds and identities. The above is done while the organization creates a culture where everyone is equally enabled to perform and achieve both personal development and organizational objectives. Diversity management is also referred to as an action taken in the organization to include people from different backgrounds, different religions, age groups, cultures, etc. (ResearchGate, 2020). Organizations ought to view diversity management as a need. Managers ought to bring more diversity in the management of the organization to encourage prosperity and give better ideas to solve problems, for example, a group of diverse individuals can come up with a range of ideas resulting in innovation and creativity. CFI Team (2022) is in agreement with the above definition as they define diversity management as the use of specific policies and programmes by organizations to promote the inclusion of employees with different backgrounds into an organization's structure. To improve diversity management as a school, there should be clear and proper policies.

Appiah and Adeyeyye (2019) refer to diversity management as a process where the managers at the highest-level focus on utilizing diversity as a core competence. Changing is one of the key features of our schools today, the diverse learners in the classrooms need growth and to feel included. The school principals have to admit and own the fact that we cannot stay the same, and promote inclusion among the learners and the employees. The increase in diversity among the employees further obliges the management to embrace diversity in the workplace as one of the fundamental pillars of ensuring inclusion (Appiah & Adeyeyye, 2019). Diversity

management is further alluded to as what appears to be an autonomous effort to treasure the need to celebrate diversity as an integral part of the organization's operations to promote fairness and equality.

Principals have a responsibility to ensure that there is fairness and equality in their schools at all times to create and promote a positive school culture. It should be understood that creating a positive school culture is not an easy task to do. It might be challenging at times to influence people coming from diverse backgrounds, with different beliefs and values to work together towards a common goal without a conflict of interest and misunderstandings.

2.3 Diversity Training

Many public and private organizations have included diversity management in their strategic planning, as one of organizational objectives. Often, that is done without a clear understanding of what diversity management entails. To assist employers and employees in achieving the mission and performance objectives of organizations, a proactive approach to diversity training might help (Bruhns, 2017). According to Burns, diversity is often low on the list of priorities of the manager's strategic objectives. Burns further states that with diversity training, different skills have to be recognized and various training methods incorporated to promote selfdiscovery. One of the aims of the diversity training process should be to stimulate important changes in the organization to create a positive organizational culture (Bruhns, 2017).

Employers must understand that diversity is not an independent factor. Diversity should always form an important part of the organization's ongoing development strategies for the employees.

These development strategies cannot be understood in a one-day training event because it is complex. It needs to be an ongoing training process for it to be successful and sustainable. Bruhns (2017) argues that "Strategic planning, assessment, longitudinal measurement, relation to other initiatives, policy and practice reviews, training and mentoring must all be used to create and maintain an effective diversity management programme" (Bruhns, 2017, pg.2). When strategic planning for diversity training is done, taking into consideration the context of the organization is important. As indicated earlier in the study, diversity is

contextually driven. The planning policies and programmes have to be contextually driven to be successful.

The Department of Basic Education needs to ensure that all schools are led by high-quality principals. It is therefore critical for the Department of Basic Education to identify, develop, and maintain effective school principals. For schools to be successful, the most important ingredient is effective school management. The principal leading the school has to be a strong principal with great managerial skills. As mentioned in the background of the study that if the principals are the key role players with a duty to support, motivate and evoke change in all the stakeholders in the school, they need to be well-equipped and developed with effective managerial skills. If they are not equipped, they might have difficulties managing diverse employees and managing diversity in schools. These role players also need to ensure that all the employees and the relevant stakeholders are trained and developed as means of support and for the change process to be smooth.

Managers who organize empower, and inspire a team can only reach their potential and achieve goals and objectives with a team effort. In most cases, the studies have found that the performance of learners and the school's performance decline because of the poor leadership and management displayed by the principals (Naidoo, 2019). The principal's job is very critical and challenging. Naidoo further argues that aside from the principal's qualification, the principals can improve and develop their leadership practices by subjecting themselves or by being subjected to development programs. The principals need the same development and mentoring from the Department of Basic Education, that they provide their educators. In cases where the principal is not firm in their leadership and management and does not know how to provide proper guidance and direction, mostly the employees and learners follow suit and lack direction.

Guided by the discussions above, it is clear diversity training is important for effective diversity management in an organization. If school principals aim to eliminate problems related to diversity in their institutions, they need to have proper processes in place. The training the managers receive on diversity management strategies should also be transferable to the employees and their success monitored and evaluated for areas of improvement. Each employee and learner are unique and has unique knowledge that needs to be recognized, accepted, and supported for holistic development. The policies developed at the school, the structure and practices should recognize, embrace, and celebrate people's uniqueness.

Enhancing good management practices, preventing discrimination, and promoting inclusivity is the principal's role in managing diversity.

The power of diversity management

Diversity management plays an important role in school performance (Yadav & Lenka, 2022). When schools attract educators from different populations, with different talents, that might help in understanding the learners from the same population. Understanding people from different backgrounds, with different abilities, and different experiences can create collaboration and cohesion. The team-building workshops and staff development workshops are some of the strategies the schools use to build collaboration among the employees. Diverse perspectives may create cohesion but they might also fuel laziness and boredom among the team (Refiloem, 2021).

Riccucci (2021) views that managing and embracing diversity is vital since demographics are ever-changing. The researcher further adds that when diversity is managed properly, that has positive implications for the employees. Even though diversity management strategies are put in place, Riccucci stresses that these programs do not correct the institutional and structural barriers responsible for systematic biases against some demographic groups (like black people). The organizations still need to address those issues of discrimination and prejudice. For diversity programs to be effective, they should not just be on paper (Riccucci, 2021). Organizations should ensure that what reflects on paper is carried through to practice through execution.

However, Jayne and Dipboye (2004) contend that when employees work with dissimilar individuals, it is more than likely that they will exhibit negative behavior, negative attitude and express displeasure as well as observe more discrimination. Therefore, these authors assert that diversity does not necessarily build commitment, improve motivation, enhance morale, and increase job satisfaction as Riccucci (2021) and other researchers have implied.

Nevertheless, people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas, innovation, and creativity rather than a team of people from the same background and with common interests. Creativity and innovation assist in finding different strategies for realizing organizational goals and improving problem-solving and decision-making (Allen et al., 2007). Refiloem further argues that it is extremely valuable to have diverse perspectives as that shakes the

conformity of thoughts. But how the school principals lead their school may encourage or discourage employees to express themselves freely and make contributions. Therefore, I argue that the more diverse the school principal and the school management team are, the more innovative and creative the school is.

Allen, et al. (2007) is of the same view that diversity has performance benefits for businesses. Furthermore, their study echoes that by allowing and encouraging employees to be creative, to have a contribution in decision-making, accepting different views of employees, the organization gets a competitive advantage. The competitive advantage leads to increasing creativity and innovation which will result in better organizational performance.

In addition, other benefits of diversity in the organization may include the ability to attract and retain the best employees (Volson, 2020). The researcher Volson points out that diversity contributes to providing employees with equal opportunities and they get to be exposed to different learning experiences. The more the employees engage with each other, they learn to be more understanding, accepting, and tolerant and they develop as individuals and as professionals.

On the other hand, increased diversity in an organization does not guarantee an increased talent pool (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Their view is that by using effective diversity programs, organizations are likely to identify and select employees with the right knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and other characteristics (KSAOs). They also believe that these KSAOs can be enhanced by training, developing, mentoring, and coaching employees.

From the discussion above, it is clear that there are positive impacts of diversity. For example, increased morale, creativity, innovation, and that assists in realizing the organizational goals and objectives. However, there are also negative impacts of diversity in an organization and a lot of issues that still need to be addressed like the issues of discrimination and prejudice. It is therefore clear that the management of diversity in schools is important to limit or eliminate the negative impact of diversity, and improve performance and cohesion. In the study, I intend to discover the positive and the negative impact of diversity in the concerned schools and the management thereof.

Conflict Management

Ayoko and Konrad (2012) argue that the leadership of an organization is an important factor in ensuring that high group performance and morale are maintained even under conditions of conflict. They further posit that a leader's conflict management, emotion management, and transformational behavior determine the impact of the conflict in a group outcome. As a result of diversity in an organization, task-related and relationship-related conflicts might arise (Ayoko & Konrad, 2012). The leadership that effectively manages the conflict and is a good mediator, can reduce both the task and the relationship conflicts in their organizations. As a result, that will indirectly reduce the negative impact of diversity in a group.

One of the roles of educators including the principals, is learning mediator (Norms and standards, Republic of South Africa, 2000). The learning mediator is tasked with the duty of ensuring that the learning environment is inspirational. Another responsibility is effective communication by showing recognition of and respect for other people's differences. Due to a lack of communication, miscommunication, and even misunderstanding, conflict may arise. When that happens, the organization cannot run smoothly. Therefore, the school principal has to find effective and unbiased ways of resolving conflicts in order to promote cohesion and collaboration. However, managers have laws and procedures to follow when resolving conflicts. As a lifelong learner, the principal needs to stay updated, and develop themselves and others on issues that can cause conflict stemming from diversity and the procedure that needs to be followed when resolving those issues (SACE Act no. 31 of 2000).

Friedman and Davinson (2001) in their study posit that there is a distinction between first-order and second-order diversity conflict. The researchers refer to discrimination as the first order, while the disputes over remedies designed to eliminate discrimination are referred to as the second order. The people that are strongly affected by first order disputes in a group are the subordinates. These are the group members that are mostly stronger than others, and are organized when it comes to societal and organizational procedures. The dominant members of the group as well as subordinates, are mostly affected by the second order disputes (Friedman & Davinson, 2001). The latter affects more people in an organization, tends to be hidden, and results in hostility.

In light of the above discussion, in an attempt to effectively manage conflict, the leadership should have a clear understanding of the dynamics of diversity conflicts. Failing which, this

might lead to an escalation of conflicts within an organization and might affect the group outcome as alluded to by Ayoko and Konrad. Managing diversity can address the problems in the school and can enhance problem-solving skills and decision-making power (Yankar & Lenka, 2022). However, in a school environment where learners and educators have differences (like gender, nationality, culture, age, education, and background) it is bound to have problems that might affect performance. Riccucci (2021) agrees with the above statement as he states that in an environment where people come from different backgrounds, age cohorts, and lifestyles, communication breakdown, misunderstanding, and even hostility are inevitable. Diversity training programs by principals to raise awareness, as practice can assist the learners and employees to better understand each other. This might create job satisfaction and might lead to increased morale, employee retention, and productivity as indicated earlier in the importance of diversity management.

Some effects of diversity in an organization

It was mentioned earlier on in the chapter that misunderstandings and hostilities are inevitable in an environment where people come from different backgrounds; the same applies to the school environment. “Diversity can be a double-edged sword” (Kollen, 2021, p.19). On one hand, it can increase performance and on the other hand, creates conflicts and reduce cohesion among the employees. Since South Africa is a rainbow nation, it is bound to have challenges related to language and cultural diversities (Omodan & Ige, 2021). Even in schools, these challenges exist. These diversities and the management thereof pose challenges if not done effectively. As much as people come with different viewpoints in an attempt to contribute to decision-making, that might lead to slow decision-making processes as everyone might want to have their point of view considered. As a result, the conflicts may rise, hostility, bias, and cultural misunderstanding can also increase. On the other hand, different viewpoints encourage innovation and creativity which is the benefit of diversity that was mentioned earlier.

Most of our schools in South Africa and in other countries are entrenched with learners from various cultural groups who speak different languages. This leads to cultural misunderstanding and communication issues among the learners themselves and the educators. The learners need to learn from each other, learn each other’s language and each

other's culture. Because of the language barrier, some learners especially blacks, do not understand during teaching and learning (Omodan & Ige, 2021). They further explain that most learners are unable to cope with teaching and learning that is done in English which is not their language as language comes with a "peculiar culture". These learners that are unable to cope refer to some of those learners that have other languages as their mother tongue and those who are not exposed to the use of English at home (Omodan & Ige, 2021). These researchers also believe that learners might feel excluded and at a disadvantage when teaching and learning is done in English.

Upon reviewing the literature, the styles of teaching and learning is another factor that came up. Some learners are slow while others are fast. They do not comprehend at the same level. Learning differentiation is crucial for the support all learners to comprehend in the actual learning process, and to improve the performance of the school (Omodan & Ige, 2021). Wikipedia views learning differentiation or construction as means of utilizing numerous tools, content, and due process with the aim of reaching all individuals. The methods and the approaches teachers use has to be adjusted to be able to meet the need of diverse learners. Differentiation may comprise designing and delivering instruction utilizing a variety of styles of teaching and awarding learners an opportunity for making sense of ideas and absorbing information (Michelle, 2010). In differentiated classrooms, educators plan and present their lessons using various styles with the aim of supporting them and awarding all learners an opportunity to learn no matter how diverse they are and how different their levels of abilities are.

Even in the planning process of the lesson, which is the administrative part, teachers need to consider the background and the socio-economic status of their learners. This helps in planning an inclusive lesson that will promote the holistic development of all learners (Omodan & Ige, 2021). Therefore, all learners ought to be given attention as they learn in different ways. Omodan and Ige add that some learners learn better through sight, hearing, touch, etc., and for those reasons, all learners require special attention. Given the above, educators need their teaching styles. They need to cooperate in teaching styles and classroom activities that foster diversity management and give learners equal opportunities. Different styles might also encourage different perspectives, celebrate diversity and involve diverse learning material (Omodan & Ige, 2021).

Msoni (2020) views the purpose of teaching and learning as the platform provided for all learners despite their disabilities to acquire knowledge successfully. I believe the use of different teaching styles can assist in fulfilling that purpose. Msoni (2020) agrees that teaching methods, resources, activities, and assessment tasks need to be modified to be relevant for individual learners to maximize their learning as alluded to earlier in the definition of learning differentiation. But some challenges can be associated with differentiation, (Msoni, 2020). Differentiation requires a focus on designed instruction and assessment tasks that will accommodate the individual's differences. That can be difficult to achieve due to a number of reasons like a large number of learners in the classroom, the time factor, etc.

From the discussions above, it emerges that there will be challenges and barriers that affect the smooth process of teaching and learning in schools. Educators need to be creative in their teaching practices and school principals also need to identify those barriers and challenges and come up with best practices for managing diversity.

Practices for managing diversity

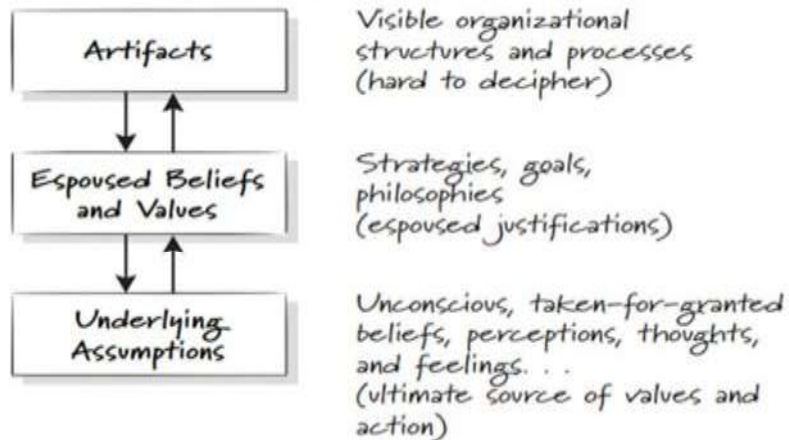
Creating a strong school culture is important. This is because the culture of a school is its backbone that can be transformed and needs to be improved at all times in order to see what works, and what does not work for that institution. School culture is viewed as the assumptions and values that a group of people therein have incorporated and on which they base their actions (Schein, 2016).

School culture determines how people behave in an organization. It is a shared way of being, thinking, and acting. By embracing each other's complexities and improving the school culture, organizational goals can be easily achieved.

Schein recognizes the different characteristics of culture. He posits that culture adds other critical elements to the concept of sharing, namely structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration. Teams that work together and share ideas can actually overcome any circumstances that might hinder performance in an organization.

Schein (2016) identifies three levels of culture as illustrated in figure 2.1 below: -

Figure 2.1. Levels of Culture.



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The researcher states that culture consists of observable artifacts that may be formed by the organizational structure and communication patterns as the first level. Artifacts according to Schein (2004), include all the things that one can see, hear, and feel. It also includes the visible products of a group, such as the architecture of a physical environment, language, style, values, money, and rituals. The artifact level of culture is both easy and very difficult to decipher. For a person to understand this level of the culture quickly, they need to try and analyze the values, norms, and rules that provide the day-to-day operating principles that guide the behavior of a group.

The second level is the espoused beliefs and values. The behaviour that is observed at the artifact level, can be predicted by the beliefs and values at this level of culture. The espoused level also predicts what people might say in various circumstances. However, the predictions may be out of line with what they will do in circumstances in which those beliefs and values should be operating.

The third level of culture according to Schein is the underlying assumptions that form part of the basis of values and artifacts. “Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations” (Schein, 2004, p53). In life, things are not always smooth, and so are the situations in a school environment, especially where people are coming from diverse cultural backgrounds, and having diverse opinions. That is why it is important to

establish a positive school culture to be able to know as stakeholders, what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

The culture of the school cannot remain the same as the group of people in it are diverse and the school climate and circumstances evolve. The need for proper, effective, and appropriate management of the school culture to accommodate diversity and the evolving school as an organization is crucial. Ineffective and outdated practices that no longer contribute to improving an organizational culture are therefore replaced by more effective, relevant methods to achieve continuous improvement (Schein, 2016).

Therefore, creating a positive school culture where everyone feels accepted and valued is important. Skillful school principals can transform the school culture by promoting professionalism among the employees (Nehez & Blossing, 2020). However, where there is misunderstanding and a lack of trust among the school principal and the educators, it is difficult to transform the school culture into a positive one. According to Nehez and Blossing (2020), it is very significant for school principals to build schools (organizations) that support professional and collaborative cultures as it is one of the decisive factors in the school's improvement. Therefore, schools should design and support an organizational culture that maximizes the benefits of diversity. The school principals should also utilize that culture to manage employees and learners. Refiloem (2020) concurs with Schein's second level of culture and adds that developing and communicating values and behaviors that will be agreed upon by all employees is important. The Department of Basic Education has a code of conduct for educators. The schools develop, communicate, and implement their own code of conduct that will speak directly to creating a positive school culture. According to Refiloem, once a code of conduct is accepted by everyone, all employees feel accountable regardless of their position and background.

There are school principals who are born with some managerial skills and some learn and develop these skills. The principals cannot transform education as mentioned earlier on in the chapter without good practices, like ensuring fairness, that diversity is celebrated, promotion of equality, and inclusivity. It starts at the top with the leadership of the school that ensures that all people are provided with quality education, are safe, and supported, feel a sense of belonging, and are valuable and that their disabilities are viewed and accepted as part of diversity.

The focus of diversity management practices for most organizations is mostly on less job-related demographics, for example, gender diversity rather than on job-related practices like relevant work experience (Kollen, 2021). The emphasis is mostly on background, gender, and culture. This is evidenced in the study where diversity management played a positive role in the careers of the employees who were facing discrimination and prejudice due to their cultural, language, and gender differences (Volson, 2020). The same sentiment is shared by Schein (2016) who stated that the importance of creating a strong school culture is for a group to accept and respect each other. The definition of diversity management, that is found in the conceptual framework also attests to this notion. Where diversity management is defined as an action taken in the organization to include people from different backgrounds, religions, cultures, ethnicity, age, etc. (ResearchGate, 2020).

The practice of employee branding for a supportive and positive work climate seeks inclusivity of the diversity that is already in existence within that organization (Kollen, 2021). The schools must make an effort that aims to foster the inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds into the school structure. Embracing different learners and employees who represent different cultures, ideas, generations, and thinking, supports a positive and healthy school climate. Encouraging learners and educators to work in a diverse group (encouraging interaction), is another practice of managing diversity (Kollen, 2021).

This means that to be able to understand what influences the learner's worldview, educators need to learn about their students' cultures, beliefs, and values to be able to lead the students toward the fourth industrial revolution agenda (Omodan & Ige, 2021). Learning about the learner's homes, puts educators in a better position of understanding where students lack, whether there is an element of neglect, abuse, or poverty. For inclusivity learning about learners' weaknesses, especially those weaknesses that are barriers to learning, helps educators overcome those barriers. That is why it is pointless to have diversity within an organization when everyone is working with their community groups. Collaboration with each other, and getting a better understanding of each other's points of view should be encouraged to promote diversity. Omodan and Ige (2021) also add that teaching learners about diversity helps in creating a harmonious classroom environment where learners cooperate without discrimination and prejudice.

Schools are part of communities. The communities have people from different cultures and ethnic groups. Schools too have educators and learners from different cultures and ethnic

groups which is referred to as cultural diversity (GradeFixer, 2023). Principals and educators ought to develop strategies for dealing with cultural diversity to be able to promote a healthy school environment that will promote and benefit culturally diverse groups. A form of teaching that incorporates history, values, beliefs, and people's perceptions is multiculturalism (GradeFixer, 2023). The principals of the schools have a responsibility of promoting a multiculturalism curriculum where learners and educators will learn about the different cultures and backgrounds of the people that are in the school. This equips the educators and the school principals with the skills that will enable them to better manage diversity and helps them to understand cultural differences. With the culturally diverse curriculum, lessons that are taught should seek to respond to the issues of ethnicity, poverty, inequality, language, disability, etc. The lessons should also spark an interest in the learners.

However, it is a challenging task for the principals and the educators especially in the schools to incorporate diverse cultures in their teaching and learning at times. For instance, in the school where the study is based, some learners and teachers are White, Black, Indian, Coloured, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu. The learners vary in culture, religion, language, and ethnicity. As a result, educators struggle to accommodate all the different cultures, religions, and backgrounds.

Diversity in schools needs to be managed with the purpose of achieving a strategic advantage in serving the educational needs of all learners (van Vuuren et al., 2016). The researcher points out the key elements of practices the school principals can utilize to manage diversity. These key elements for best practices and steps to be taken include but are not limited to policy to manage diversity, directives, situation analysis, management strategies, implementation, and evaluation.

As a management strategy, introspection is crucial. The better the principal understands diversity, the better they can manage it. The principals need to do an intrinsic reflection on their views and beliefs about diversity and have a positive mindset about it. Only then can these principals manage to influence educators and learners to manage diversity.

In addition to a shift in mindset, respect, and care for other people based on the recognition of their unique characteristics, is a key principle for effective diversity management. In schools (van Vuuren et al., 2016). Knowledge of diversity and the intricacy of circumstances and challenges identified is another principle in managing diversity. van Vuuren et al. (2016)

point out that caring and respect for others should be regarded as the essential precondition to effectively manage diversity in schools.

Without being aware of the dynamics and the diversity profile of the school, it will be difficult to manage diversity (van Vuuren et al. 2016). Situations in schools are not the same, therefore, a strategic vision is necessary to give guidance and direction to the principals in their attempt to provide for the unique needs of their teachers and learners. To achieve the goals and objectives of their respective school, principals should view diversity management as a strategic priority.

Based on the above information about the different levels of culture, it is imperative that in a school, the managers, educators, learners, and all the stakeholders understand the shared values, norms, beliefs and basic assumptions that make up its culture. However, it is not easy to understand and manage cultural diversity. Therefore, introspection and a shift of mindset is important. Employees and employers as well as learners and other stakeholders have to be willing to accept and embrace one another regardless of their differences. This study seeks to further investigate the diversity management practices the school principals use to establish a strong school culture. This study further seeks to explore how the principal's diversity management practices affect the achievement of the organizational goals.

2.4 Some empirical evidence

Omodan and Ige (2021) conducted a study on managing diversity in school: The place of diversity and ubuntuism in South Africa.

This study reveals that there are a number of challenges that hinder the management of diversity the schools battle with. For example; language, cultural and personal relativism, and learning impairment and comprehensibility. This results in some learners feeling excluded in the process of teaching and learning. However, there are possible solutions to these challenges; solutions like using democratic and ubuntu principles. More training programmes, inculcating classroom relations, and a sense of belonging might help alleviate the challenges of diversity that still persist in schools.

From this study, it emerges that in South Africa, there is a great improvement in the management of diversity in the education system in order to improve performance and

encourage collaboration and innovation. Even though that is the case, it is evident that the educators and the learners still lack the expertise to manage diversity. Therefore, school principals together with their management team need to put more effort into the development of teachers' and learners' skills to enable them to understand and learn people's cultures, and differences, and enhance cross-cultural understanding. More diversity training programmes need to take place. This needs to be an ongoing process because the school environment and the group of people in the school are ever-changing. Having ongoing diversity training programmes will enable the school principal to re-evaluate their diversity management practices and improve them for the better performance of the school. Therefore, I would like to find out if there are any ongoing training programmes the participants have in their schools and if those programmes are a success.

According to Appiah (2019) in the study titled exploring the challenges encountered in managing diversity and inclusion in the telecommunications industry by multinationals in Ghana, there are global challenges in managing diversity and inclusion. Providing equal opportunities for various groups of people and ensuring that these groups of people feel like they belong while ensuring that they maintain their culture is one of the challenges associated with diversity. It is important to explore diversity management and inclusion as a continent or an organisation in order to develop diversity management strategies that will be relevant and practical for that specific continent or an organisation.

The study reveals that to mitigate these challenges, countries and organizations should develop context-specific programs that are in alignment with the socio-cultural, political, and historical feature of the country and an organization. Appiah (2019) points out that out of the African challenges revealed in the study, diversity management is one of them and that is caused by the diverse nature of the continent of Africa (for example age, gender, ethnicity challenges, etc.). Appiah further states that in Ghana, there is limited literature on diversity and inclusion. Therefore, diversity and inclusion management strategies are not normally incorporated, and the diversity management strategies applied do not always yield the required outcome or produce the required result. From this study, it emerges that it is important to take cognisance of your situation as an individual or a group as well as a manager in order to develop diversity and inclusion strategies that will be effective in your organization.

The case study by Herzog-Punzenberger et al. (2020) titled: - Teacher responding to cultural diversity: case studies on assessment practices, challenges and experiences in secondary schools in Austria, Ireland, Norway, and Turkey indicates that there are challenges teachers encounter. Some of the challenges they refer to relate to teaching and assessing learners from diverse cultures. More importantly, the key finding of the study is that the educators in the study revealed that some lack proficiency when it comes to teaching in the language of instruction (English).

Herzog-Punzenberger et al. (2020) posit that teachers feel there is a lack of adequate support material and most teachers lack expertise in order to plan, teach, and assess culturally diverse classrooms. In the study, it is believed that there is material readily available, the teachers who are well-equipped, are not ignorant of cultural diversity, have great leadership, are able to access and utilize the readily available material for inclusivity and to respond to the challenges these teachers face.

Demonstrated in the studies above is that in order for the continents and organisations to improve their diversity management practices, they should have a better understanding of what diversity is. However, for the schools, principals need to develop diversity management strategies that will be best suited for their particular employees, learners, and their school environment for those strategies to be effective and for the school to benefit from diversity. This can be achieved by taking some time and learning more about the learners and educators the principals lead (their culture, religion, personality, values, and beliefs).

It also came out that few teachers are trained to teach and assess learners using language of instruction as a second language, to cope with cultural diversity. Some teachers in the study did not feel they should adapt their assessment to accommodate students' diversity but most educators tried to adapt assessment procedures to cater for learners from diverse backgrounds. The school policies hardly ever supported the teachers in incorporating culturally responsive assessments. As a result, the educators had to rely on their limited expertise. The national policies also gave limited support to educators in challenges relating to cultural diversity in teaching and mostly assessment.

It emerges that to overcome the negative impact of diversity in schools, the Department of Basic Education, the principals, the school management team, educators, and learners have to work hand in hand. Among the important policies that need to be developed, and

implemented is the diversity policy. That might assist the principals in overcoming the negative impact of diversity and ensuring that schools to benefit from diversity. Educating the principals and the educators, supporting, and putting systems in place as the department to support the schools in dealing with cultural diversity is essential. Even though the Department of Education has developed a framework for developing and implementing the diversity policy, there is a lack of support from the education authorities with the implementation of policies in schools. Educating educators and providing support might assist educators in planning lessons, and assessments, and finding resources that would enhance teaching and learning and encourage flexibility of teachers. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how school principals understand and support the diverse stakeholders in their schools, and the policies they have put in place in an attempt to assist employees to better manage diversity.

What is common in the studies is a need for the school principals and the Department of Education to support the employees and provide developmental programmes for educators and learners. There is also a need to develop school policies that support educators in their attempt to incorporate culturally responsive lessons and assessments. This study seeks to establish how the principals and the Department of Education support diversity in primary schools. It further seeks to explore training programmes the school principals have planned for effective diversity management.

Section B

2.5 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Two theories guide thinking in this study of *School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools*. The first part of a theoretical framework explores the transformational leadership theory. This will be followed by the theory of change developed by Kurt Lewin (1947). I have decided to use Transformational leadership and change theory because I believe these theories guide how school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity.

Transformational leadership theory helps guide the implementation of transformation by inspiring and motivating followers, in this study, the educators and learners to align their

interests with the organisation's vision. Transformational leaders foster commitment, intellectual growth, and enthusiasm, which are essential for successful change. In the context of schools, transformational leaders can effectively guide the integration of diversity by promoting an inclusive environment, encouraging respect for all backgrounds, and motivating learners and educators to embrace diverse perspectives. Lewin's change theory provides a structured framework to manage the change process, from recognising diversity to ensuring its reinforcement. When combined, transformational leadership drives the vision and motivation needed to navigate through the change process, while change theories offer the roadmap, ensuring the transformation toward diversity is structured, effective, and sustainable.

Transformational leadership

James V. Downton (1973) is the one that introduced transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory is a widely used theory and scholars have expanded on it. James Burns (1978) developed this theory and defined transformational leaders as those who seek to influence employees to change their thinking, techniques, and goals for better performance. It was further developed by Bernard M. Bass (1985) by adding techniques that can be used to measure its success (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Two of the foremost models in the field of education have emerged over the past 25 years, namely; instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Hallinger, 2003). The researcher posits that in the early 1980, instructional leadership theory emerged from early research of effective schools. As a result, that model shaped the thinking about effective principal leadership. The instructional and transformational leadership theories have some similarities and differences. Often, scholars compared the characteristics of these two theories when trying to better understand the other. Bass (1999) stipulates that a transformational leader uplifts morale and motivates their followers while transactional leaders cater for their follower's immediate self-interests. The transactional leaders reward the followers for their efforts and their emphasis is on what the country can do for them, as opposed to the transformational leadership whose emphasis is on what you can do for your country. For the sake of this study, the focus is on transformational leadership as mentioned earlier on in this section.

Kearney and Gebert, (2009) are of the view that the practical strategy constituted by transformational leadership theory helps the team and helps influence the team positively resulting in them being fruitful and fulfilling the objectives of the institution. They also revealed that this leadership style goes beyond what they refer to as the social exchange process. Which is referred to as an emotional bond between a leader and a follower. They believe this style enables the followers to perform beyond expectation because they are fully engaged. It is believed that high levels of transformational leadership result in a positive relationship between transformational leaders and diversity. They also believe that when transformational leadership is low, the relationships of diversity are non-significant.

The focus of transformational leaders is on challenging the employees to be innovative problem solvers, to coach, mentor, and support employees, with the aim of developing their leadership capabilities (Berkovich, 2016). A similar view is shared by Ugochukwu (2023) who states that transformational leaders are full of passion, energy, and drive, which are the important qualities of a good leader. Kearney and Gebert (2009) also concur with the above statements and add that transformational leaders act as role models and facilitate team performance. This view point is shared by Bass (1999) who posits that transformational leaders inspire and influence followers to move beyond immediate self-interest. That is done by elevating the level of maturity of followers, ideals and concerns for achievement, and the wellbeing of others is also elevated. Facilitating the team's performance is achieved by aligning the goals and values of the team members, promoting efficacy, and identification with a team and its objectives.

Ugochukwu (2023) further explains that if transformational leadership is applied properly, it can completely transform a struggling or stagnant team. I concur with the research and argue that school principals who are leading schools with diverse educators and learners need to possess these transformational leadership skills and other critical leadership qualities and develop them among themselves and the people they lead to be able to transform the school positively. The leaders that use the transformational leadership style, inspire a team to work together as a single unit. This is done through encouragement and raising morale for the success of an organization. Using transformational leadership theory, I argue, is relevant for this research as it will assist in a better understanding of how these school principals will inspire and motivate employees (as transformational leaders), create a positive work

environment, and promote diversity. The next theory that will be discussed is Lewin's Theory of Change.

Theory of Change: Kurt Lewin (1947)

I have decided to employ Lewin's Theory of Change (1947) as I argue that it complements the transformational leadership theory in a sense that both theories when employed successfully, bring about a positive effect on diversity management. These theories share common principles that can enhance the success of organizational change efforts. For example; transformational leaders can inspire and motivate employees that are resistant to change and encourage them to be more receptive to it.

Change is inevitable in a school because of globalization, ever-changing policies, curriculum, learner needs, societal needs, etc. Therefore, change management is crucial. Sarayreh, et al. (2013) define change as a process where something or an organization moves (transforms) from one state to another. For the school to transform its status quo, change management is imperative. By change management, Sarayreh et al. (2013) believe that, it is a process of planning, controlling, coordinating, executing, and, monitoring change.

Kurt Lewin was of the view that he could resolve social conflicts by facilitating planned change through learning. Therefore, enabling individuals to better understand and restructure the way they perceive the world around them. Kurt Lewin had an interest in groups and that led him to focus his research on the elements that impacted people to change (Sarayreh, 2023). Then Kurt Lewin, among other theories, proposed a three-stage change theory. He was of the view that to effect change successfully, involves three steps, namely: - unfreeze, change and freeze/ refreeze. The words steps and stages of theory are used interchangeably in this study. Connelly (2010) argues that as much as the world has changed since the inception of Lewin's theory of

change, this model has become the foundation of change management and is still extremely relevant. Figure 1 below shows the activities or practical steps that need to be taken in each stage of the change theory.

Lewin's Three Stage Change Model

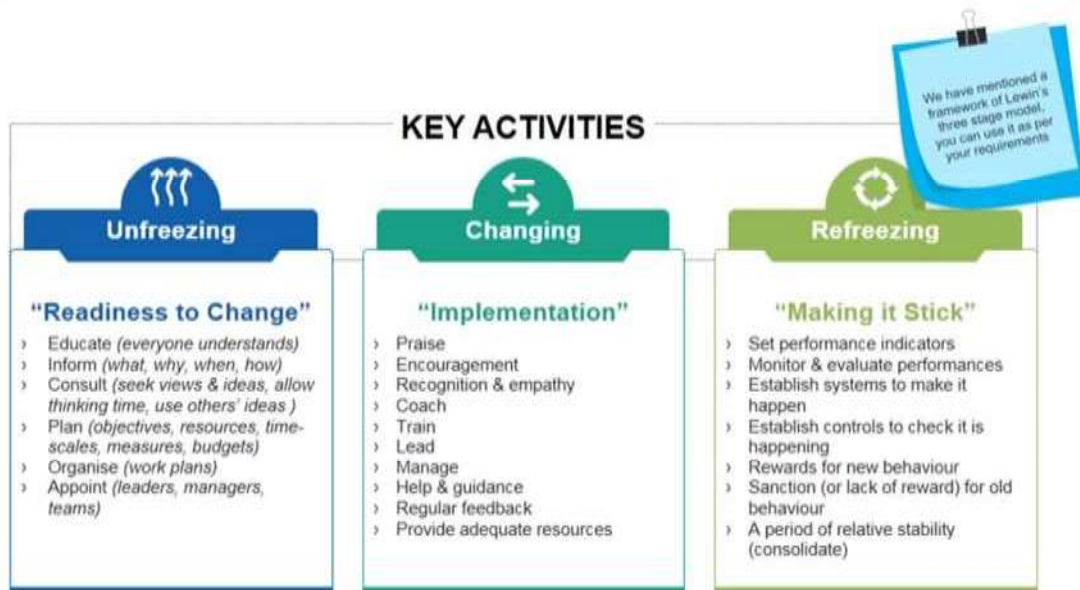


Figure 1: <https://www.slideteam.net/change-management-powerpoint-presentation-slides.html>

In every stage some activities need to be implemented to transform an organisation. Further explanations shall be provided as the three steps are explained.

Step 1: Unfreezing

According to Kurt Lewin, cultural groups like organizations were in a state of balance and human behavior was based on quasi-stationary equilibrium (Sarayreh, 2023). To unlearn the old behavior and to successfully learn the new one, the equilibrium needs to be 'unfrozen' or disrupted. The stage of unfreezing involves creating awareness as to why change needs to happen. Connelly (2010) acknowledges that during this stage, problems might be encountered and some techniques might not work in some circumstances. Schein (1996) agrees with that view and adds that some hindrances were as a result of the personal psychological defences or group norms rooted in the organizational or culture of the community. Therefore, ensuring that

people are supported is essential. This scholar believes that the unfreezing stage is where the leaders get the team to understand why change is necessary. Some of the practical steps or activities on change at this stage as indicated in Figure 1 above are getting a team ready for change by; creating an awareness of a need to change, encouraging the team to be open-minded, lessening resistance, establishing a sense of urgency, and engaging key stakeholders. It should be explained clearly to the individuals in an organization, the reason behind the need to change. A safe environment needs to be created where people can voice their fears and concerns. An emphasis also needs to be placed on the benefits of change, so are the consequences of not changing. The next step to be discussed is change which is also referred to as moving.

Step 2: Change (moving)

In the first stage, individuals learn about why change needs to happen. This is the difficult and the hardest stage where they now need to start the process of change. The moving stage is associated with feeling unsure and fearful (Connelly, 2023). Now at this stage, we see movement of individuals to a more acceptable set of behaviour (Sarayreh et al., 2013).

Stage 3: Freezing (refreezing)

In the first step, a group was destabilized. In the second step, there was movement towards acceptable behavior, and in the third step, there is the stabilization of a group to a new quasistationary equilibrium (Sarayreh et al., 2013). This is done in an attempt to guarantee that learnt behaviours are relatively safe from backsliding. It is during this stage that stability is established once the changes have been made (Connelly, 2023). As a result, the changes become the new norm, and with time, the group feel comfortable with their new routines. Sarayreh et al. (2023) share a similar view and add that change can never be achieved by an individual and it will only be sustainable if group norms, routines are also transformed, and changes to individual behaviour occurs.

The purpose of the study is to explore how school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity. I believe the two theories utilized have assisted me to explore the *School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools*. Since transformational leaders are of the view that the organization's success can be achieved by encouraging and inspiring employees to be innovative and develop new ways to grow. Also, Lewin's theory of change focuses on how

leaders can help employees and other stakeholders to adapt to change, and make the process of change smooth and effective. I argue that the two theories complement each other in the study as they assist school principals bring about change and improvement, resulting to achieving the objectives of a school. I seek to explore how the school principals utilise their leadership style to adapt to change, accommodate diversity and influence employees to embrace it.

2.6 Summary

This chapter reviewed existing literature that is relevant to *School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools*. The first part of section A focused on the concepts that framed the study, namely; diversity, management, and diversity management. The second part of section A reviewed related literature and the empirical evidence. The literature review was presented in themes. Then, section B presented the transformational leadership and the Lewin's theory of change which combine to form the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology employed.

Chapter 3

Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presented a review of literature on school principals' perceptions and experiences of managing diversity among learners and educators in primary schools. After that, the theoretical framework underpinning the study and the conclusion were presented. This chapter presents the research design and methodology of the study. It opens by presenting the research paradigm. Next is a presentation of the study's research design. This is followed by a focus on the selection of participants, data generation tool, data analysis, ensuring trustworthiness, and the issues of ethical clearance. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter is presented.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The word paradigm was first used by the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn in 1962. A paradigm is a researcher's philosophical orientation, meaning the philosophical way of thinking (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The latter authors (2017) believe a research paradigm has a huge impact on every decision made in the research process which includes the methodology and the methods. Mackenzie and Snipe (2006) define a paradigm as a distinct set of loose concepts and assumptions that inform thinking and research. The word paradigm has its origin in Greek and it means pattern (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Mackenzie and Snipe (2006), in educational research, the objectives of a paradigm are to set down the intent, and motivation and is also used as an inspiration for undertaking the study. The latter authors (2006) point out that a paradigm also describes the 'worldview' of a researcher. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) agree with Mackenzie and Snipes and add that the researcher's worldview entails the perceptions, thinking or school of thought, and belief that inform the meaning of research data. By the researcher's worldview, these scholars refer to the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees, interprets, and acts within the world.

This study adopts the interpretive paradigm. This research paradigm was deemed appropriate for the study because it had the potential to allow for thick descriptions by the researcher of how school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity. Mackenzie and Snipe (2006) argue that with interpretivism, reality is socially constructed and that the researcher relies on how the participants view the situation that is being studied, the background, and their experiences. This paradigm was deliberately selected to assist in making meaning and understanding of school principals' reality and truth regarding managing diversity in the environment they are in.

Each paradigm comprises four essential elements that need to be understood as they contain the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values. These elements are epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Epistemology as alluded to by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) means how the researcher comes to know something (the truth or reality) and how knowledge is acquired. It has to do with how an individual understands knowledge and their thinking process. The epistemology of the interpretivism paradigm is that knowledge is subjective. The stance of the interpretivism paradigm epistemology as alluded to by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), is that the researchers use their own understanding and intellectual processing to make meaning of their data influenced by their engagement with the participants. I believe the above statement suggests that individuals actively construct knowledge based on their interpretation of the world and understanding of the meanings participants assign to their experiences.

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define ontology as a study of reality and what is the nature of reality. The researcher is concerned with the assumption that something is real. The stance of interpretivism is that knowledge is subjective. The researcher interprets knowledge to discover the underlying meaning. Informed by the interaction with the participants, the researcher through their understanding, and thought process, makes meaning of the data generated. The interpretive paradigm helps me understand the assumptions of relativist ontology that there are multiple realities or multiple truths. Depending on the social world the school principals are studied in, they have multiple realities about diversity management because the stance of this paradigm is that knowledge is not there to be discovered but it is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

With interpretivism, the researcher adopts a naturalistic approach, and gathers data through interviews, discussions, text messages, and reflection sessions, while participating as an

observer-participant in the process. A balanced axiology of this paradigm assumes that the outcome is expected to reflect or mirror the researcher's values, aiming to present an impartial report of the findings (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Lincoln (2011) believes that a criterion of judging 'reality' is derived from community consensus regarding what is real, useful, and has meaning. They point out that there are activities social interpretivists do to make meaning of a group or individuals around them. Therefore, Lincoln (2011) believes that reality is a product of human interaction and collective interpretation.

The next section outlines the qualitative approach chosen for the study and the justification for its choice.

3.3 Research Design

Yin (2003) defines a research design as a logical sequence that has the purpose of connecting the empirical data to the initial research question of the study, and ultimately, to its conclusion. It is when the researcher gets from the question to the answer. I chose to employ a case study as the research design for this study. A case study according to Haele and Twycross (2018 p.1) has been described as 'an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables' Hays (2003) shares the same view with Haele and Twycross, and claims that a case study produces an in-depth description and interpretation of a phenomenon over a short period of time in an attempt to answer the research questions. This is unlike the ethnographies that tend to observe and explain beliefs and practices and make interpretations that last over a long period.

A case study design was deemed appropriate for this study because case studies examine contemporary cases in their natural setting with the aim of understanding them (Hays, 2017). Therefore, it is best suited for this research as it can help me understand the management of diversity by school principals in a specific context, as a phenomenon in question. Another reason for choosing this design is that case studies allow researchers to examine complex phenomena to increase their understanding of them (Haele & Twycross, 2018).

Each methodology has its benefits and its limits. One advantage of a case study is that it allows a researcher to take complex topics and narrow them down to manageable research questions to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Swanson and Holton (2005) share the same view and add that the researcher is able to gain an in-depth understanding

because of the uniqueness of the case study, hence the methodology was chosen. Another strength of case studies is that they are easily understood by a number of people and they are also very strong on reality (Cohen et al. 2007). The disadvantages of this methodology are that the data collected is sometimes difficult to organize and data analysis is sometimes subjective and needs to be carefully thought through (Haele & Twycross, 2018). Other weaknesses of a case study are that the results cannot be generalized and it is a potential cause for bias in some studies (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.4 Sampling

Sampling is a technique of systematically selecting an individual or a group from a predefined population for observation or experimentation as per the study's objectives (Sharma, 2017). Four primary school principals were sampled for this study because they lead schools full of diversity, therefore are expected to be able to contribute rich experiences in that regard and help in an attempt to answer the main research question about how school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity. Schools A, B, and C are in an urban area. All three schools are quintile four schools. School D is in a semi-urban and is quintile three.

For this study, I used purposive sampling to target specific primary school principals which will enable me to capture relevant data for my research study. I selected participants that I believe will help me fulfill the study's objectives. Purposive sampling is believed to be one of the best methods for data gathering to be used with a qualitative research approach (Cohen et al., 2007). Consequently, Etikan et al. (2016) claim that this technique is used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases for proper use of available resources. Purposive sampling allows me to handpick participants that will satisfy my specific needs for the research and achieve my research objectives (Cohen et al. 2007).

3.5 Piloting interview questions

Castillo-Montoya (2016) explains piloting the interview as imitating the real interview in a real situation as far as possible. The purpose of piloting is to get a sense of whether the interview is viable or not, how long the interview might take, and whether the participants will respond to the questions or not (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Majid et al. (2017) share the same view and believe that pilot studies were common in quantitative approach but have filtered into qualitative approach. A pilot test was conducted with the principal of a certain

primary school to test out the interview questions and to try and ascertain the challenges of a research design for modification purposes (Majid et al. 2017). Piloting was important as it assisted me in seeing the need to fine-tune interview questions before the major research study. After pilot testing, I felt that I needed to add more interview questions, to encourage the participants to feel free and be as detailed as possible when responding to the questions.

3.6 Method of data generation

Semi-structured interviews were used for data generation in the study because they allowed me to generate data on more intangible school culture's aspects, for example, values, beliefs, assumptions, and problems (Cohen et al., 2007). Interviews enable either the interviewer or the interviewee to discuss the way they understand the world they live in and also to express how they regard the circumstances from their viewpoint (Cohen et al., 2007). They argue that this makes an interview a part of life rather than just collecting data about life.

Interviews are viewed as a flexible tool for generating data and enable multi-sensory channels to be utilized, which are; verbal, non-verbal, spoken, and heard (Cohen et al., 2007). These scholars assert that the interview is a powerful data generation tool for the researcher and has the potential to transfer pure information. However, researchers need to be aware that the interviews are time-consuming, may cause bias, may be inconvenient, and therefore need to be controlled. Baumbusch (2010) shares a similar view and refers to the interview as an important strategy for collecting data because it facilitates detailed accounts of events and collects rich experiences and perceptions of participants.

According to Cohen et al. (2007), interviews are a social encounter instead of simply being a site for information exchange. Cohen et al. (2007) believe that is critical for a researcher to understand and avoid problematic interview situations, create mutual trust, have control of the interview, and participants feel at ease. To avoid problematic interview situations, I made sure that a detailed explanation of what would transpire was communicated to the participants on time, and that the venues and times selected for interviews were suitable. Keeping the line of communication open ensured that trust was created. The participants were made aware that they could contact me in case they needed clarity about their participation or the study.

According to Magaldi and Berler (2020), semi-structured interviews are exploratory and are mostly used in social sciences for qualitative research. These interviews have both structured

and semi-structured elements in them, but are flexible enough to allow the interview to flow and take its direction. These types of interviews have a guide that is previously devised which focuses on a core topic but also allows for discovery (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Baumbusch (2010) concurs with Magaldi and Berler and believes that semi-structured interviews involve an interview guide, which is a key to collecting data that seeks to address the purpose and the objective of a study, conducting an interview, and the interview data. Hence this method was selected to help me attempt to understand how school principals understand and experience their role in managing diversity. It allowed me to gather insightful data about diversity management by diving into participants' thoughts and beliefs on their experiences and perceptions of diversity.

As mentioned earlier in this section, semi-structured interviews were utilized in the study to allow me to probe and ask clarity-seeking questions where necessary. The researcher conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interview sessions with each participant. Face-to-face interview was employed for the study to ensure that non-verbal data was generated as that would not have been the case in the absence of a visual encounter (Irvine et al., 2013). The interview schedule was planned in advance and utilized as a guide to ensure the questions asked attempted to respond to the research questions. The interview with each of the participants took about 35 minutes to an hour and the digital voice recording was used for later transcription. This also allowed me to focus on the interview and not be distracted by taking notes (Ncwane, 2019). Using a digital recorder enabled me to identify gaps and conduct follow-up interviews in case they were needed.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data generated was analysed using thematic analysis. The study employed a qualitative research approach, and thematic analysis is widely used with this method (Braun & Clerk, 2006). These researchers suggest that thematic analysis should be regarded as a foundation method for qualitative analysis. Qualitative data analysis's purpose is to search for significant meaning, patterns, and themes from the random information seen and heard by the researcher (Swanson & Holton, 2005). Cohen et al. (2007) support these claims as they assert that qualitative data analysis involves making sense of the data by noting patterns, themes, and categories, and regulating from the participants' definitions.

Thematic analysis is believed to be flexible and provides skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Its flexibility allows the research to offer a rich, thorough, and complex account of events. In their study, Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to thematic analysis as a method to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within data. The 5 phases of thematic data analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed to analyze data for this study.

Phase 1: Familiarise yourself with the data

Since the data generation method utilized in this study was the interviews, I engaged with the data on audio recordings. This was done to familiarise myself with the data to make meaning. I then transcribed data into written form to make meaning of spoken sounds.

Phase 2: Generating codes

At the beginning of the phase, I produced initial codes from the data. The notes were reviewed to make meaning and create themes or codes from the recurring concepts. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), coding can be done by writing notes or highlighting the data that is being analysed to indicate patterns and identify a feature of data that appears interesting.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

After coding, there was a long list of different codes that were identified across the data set. These different codes were sorted into different themes. Braun and Clerk (2006) believe that during this phase, the researcher starts to analyse codes and consider how they may be combined to form main themes. The connection and the relationship between themes and codes were examined, and a thematic map was formed to sort them.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase, the themes were reviewed and refined. This was done to ensure that they form coherent patterns and to determine their validity concerning the data as well as guarantee the accuracy of a thematic map (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

I then defined and further refined the core themes and sub-themes which Braun and Clarke (2006) also refer to as the themes within the theme. The aim of defining and refining these core themes and sub-themes was to determine the aspect of data each theme captures and the themes' essence. Braun and Clarke (2006) note in their study that it is important to identify what is important about themes instead of just paraphrasing the content of the data extracts presented. The identified themes were then related to the research topic to avoid overlapping.

Phase 6: Producing the report/ The write-up

In this final step, analytic narratives were devised using themes and verbatim data extracts. This was done while providing a concise, coherent, and interesting account of the story told by data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The write-up provided enough evidence of the themes to validate their prevalence and to develop understanding and interpretation.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Participants need to be protected at all times when conducting a study, by ensuring that ethical principles are applied (Arifin, 2018). Walker (2007) is of the view that failure to address ethical issues may result in putting the research participants' rights at risk. Therefore, as a researcher, I undertook several actions to address ethical issues. I first obtained permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct research in primary schools under its jurisdiction. Secondly, I obtained the gatekeeper's permission from the circuit manager of the schools in which the study was to be conducted. This was part of the university's requirements when applying for ethical clearance.

Upon being granted permission to conduct my research, I obtained ethical clearance to conduct the study from the university. As a researcher conducting research under the university, I made sure I complied with its principles.

All participants were handed a detailed written statement that explained the nature and purpose of the study. After the participants were informed about what the research was going to be utilised for, they voluntarily gave consent for their participation. I made it clear that they

have a right to withdraw their participation at any time should they feel uncomfortable to continue with the research. In an attempt to ensure that participant's identities and privacy was protected, pseudonyms were used for all the principals and the schools. No names, or personal information was disclosed to ensure confidentiality. The recordings of the interview were made available to the participants.

3.9 Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research

Trustworthiness involves ensuring that the research process is transparent, and that collected and analysed data is valid, to establish the credibility of the research. That is done through rigorous study, transparent methodology, and careful consideration of bias and limitations. To achieve trustworthiness, there are certain procedures a researcher needs to follow within their activity and the reports (Stahl, 2020). Junjie and Yingxiu (2022) assert that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability help to measure the reliability of qualitative research. This is referred to as the four pillars of trustworthiness and authenticity in the interpretivism paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.10.1 Credibility

The criterion of credibility within the interpretivism paradigm determines the extent to which data and data analysis are believable, trustworthy, or authentic as compared to the internal validity of the positivist paradigm (Ohman, 2005). Credibility and authenticity in qualitative research are addressed by internal validity whilst generalisability and transferability are addressed by external validity. Issues of auditability or quality control are addressed by reliability (Hignett & McDermott, 2015). To ensure the credibility of this study, a peer debriefing technique was utilized where colleagues familiar with the research process and topic, outside the study were presented with emerging concepts and themes to check if results are relevant, logical, and reasonable (Ohman, 2005).

To ensure and enhance credibility, the interviews conducted were digitally recorded with each participant. Member checking was then employed to ensure the results presented were a true reflection of what transpired during the interviews and the data recorded is what the participants said. Member checking is not straightforward but it is one of the validation techniques that encompasses numerous activities such as returning the interview transcripts

to the participants or a member using interpreted data to check the validity and explore the credibility of the interviews and research results (Birt et al., 2016).

3.10.2 Dependability

The researcher should be able to be flexible and change perspective as a result of the emerging processes of the study (Ohman, 2005). A detailed description of the processes which are the research design underpinning the study and data generation method was provided. This was done in an attempt to ensure dependability and to make it possible for the outsiders to follow all steps and decisions in the research process as well as the reasons why this design and data generation method was chosen (Ohman 2005).

3.11 Summary

This chapter established the foundation of my study as I discussed and presented the research design and methodology employed. Justification and discussions of the employed research design were given. Furthermore, an explanation of how participants were sampled, the interviews that were going to be used, and the justification thereof was furnished. Lastly, ethical issues, and trustworthiness of the study were sponsored. The next chapter will sponsor data presentation, data analysis, and the research findings.

Chapter 4

Data presentation and discussion

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided information regarding the research design and methodology that guided this study which aimed to explore school principals' perceptions and experiences of managing diversity among learners and educators in primary schools. This chapter delves into the data generated through semi-structured interviews, presents and discusses the findings of the study.

The chapter begins with the participants' profiles. This is followed by a discussion of themes and the sub-themes that emerged through phenomenology data analysis. Key findings from thematic analysis of raw data are reported using emerging themes as section headings, supported by verbatim quotations to authenticate the findings. Five main emerging themes and seven sub-themes are thoroughly examined and discussed. These themes are promoting harmony and collaboration, challenges in diversity management, equity and inclusion in education, setting a tone, engaging diverse communities and forming healthy relationships. The chapter summary of emerging themes winds up this chapter.

4.2 Participants' Profile

This section presents the profiles of all the participants of the study to help provide a comprehensive understanding of the individuals involved in the study and enhance the credibility of the research. The profiles of participants are presented and discussed to assist a reader in having a clear picture of participants regarding their context.

Pseudonyms are used for all participants and the schools to ensure confidentiality and to protect the participants' identity. School and learner background is also included in this section to paint a more comprehensive picture of the participants, which can be crucial for understanding their experiences in diversity management.

All four school principals possess teacher's qualifications which is the minimum requirement for principalship in the Department of Basic Education.

4.2.1. Cindy from Khwezi Primary School (KPS)

Cindy is an over 50-year-old female school principal who currently (2023) has teaching experience of about 32 years. However, she has been a member of the school management team (specifically as a departmental head) for the longest but a principal for 6 years. As a manager, she has the experience but in the interview with her, it was evident that she has not been a principal for long. I had to probe a lot to seek clarity in most cases regarding her diversity management in the school. The school management team (SMT) was formed by a principal, 2 deputy principals, and 4 departmental heads.

Cindy indicated that the learners' enrollment was 913 which excluded the grade R learners. Most of the learners in Khwezi Primary come from more or less the same community but the community has very diverse cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The school is a quantile 4 school that is supposed to, according to the Department of Education cater to students from families with better financial means and may have access to more resources, facilities, and opportunities compared to lower quintile schools (RSA,1996). However, that was not the case for most learners of the school.

Most of the learners that schooled at Khwezi Primary were from the nearby informal settlement. A few percent came from the suburbs around this school. Diverse backgrounds

caused challenges when it came to the paying of school fees and school resources for learners. Khwezi as a fee-paying school had school fees of R800 per annum and was only able to recover less than 45 % of school fees. More than 50% of learners applied for school fee exemption yearly. About 120 grade R learners were housed in dilapidated prefabs.

As a principal, she managed 24 educators and 4 support staff who came from different places, who themselves were very diverse. There were Indian, Coloured, and Black African staff at Khwezi Primary School who subscribed to different religions, were of different age groups, and had differences when it came to values, cultures, beliefs, experiences, and so forth. That led to issues of diversity that needed to be managed to create collaboration in school.

4.2.2. Paul from Valley Primary School (VPS)

The school principal of Valley Primary, Paul is a 58-year-old male. Paul has been a permanently employed educator for 38 years with 8 years of experience as a principal in his school. As indicated earlier in the section, Paul possesses teacher qualifications. Over and above that, he furthered his studies, his highest qualification is a PhD. During our interview with Paul and from his responses, it was evident that he was well-informed about leadership and management.

A principal, 2 deputy principals, 4 departmental heads, 31 educators, and 4 support staff, form the staff of Valley Primary School under Paul's supervision. There is diversity in the staff members especially cultural diversity. Paul mentioned the 3 main cultures that are dominant in his school namely the Zulus, Xhosas, and Hindus, and that posed a challenge when it came to diversity management. Some of the challenges will be discussed in the next section.

Valley Primary had an enrollment of 1020 learners. Like Khwezi Primary, the school is a quantile 4 but servicing mostly learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The school fee for the year 2023 was R1200 but most parents could not afford to pay. Therefore, the school solicited sponsors and engaged in a lot of fundraising activities to supplement funds received from the Department of Basic Education and the parents. According to Paul, the fundraising activities were also challenging to manage in such a diverse school environment.

4.2.3 Sibusiso from Crestwood Height Primary School (CPS)

Crestwood Heights Primary School principal Sibusiso is a male above 50 years of age. He has been permanently employed in the education fraternity for 30 years with 7 years of experience as a principal. Sibusiso furthered his studies and owns a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Management. It was evident that he was knowledgeable about the management of the school because of his education. The interview with him was free-flowing and he also provided more explanation without further probing

Sibusiso heads the smallest school as compared to other participants which was made up of a staff of 15 educators and 400 learners at the time of our interview. Their school management team has a principal, 1 deputy principal, and 2 departmental heads. This is also a quantile 4 school.

Most of the learners enrolled in Crestwood Height are from a similar background and he believes that this contributed to limited challenges when it came to diversity issues as that will be reflected in the next section of the chapter. The learners' and educators' socio-economic backgrounds were not that diverse but their religions were.

Crestwood Height Primary School fee was R1400, which goes up every second year but the recovery rate is around 35%. The school building is an ordinary one with enough floor place for all the learners enrolled.

4.2.4. Analisa from Mophela Primary School (MPS)

This 58-year-old participant has been an educator for 33 years. She is the most experienced school principal of all the participants, with 14 years of experience. Analisa believes that her experience and education assist her in the management of diversity in school. As a wellexperienced principal, during the interview, she volunteered most of the information without a lot of probing. That assisted a lot.

There were 34 educators employed at the school with the enrolment of 1100 learners at the time of the interview. The school management team was formed by a principal, 2 deputy principals, and 4 departmental heads.

Mophela Primary is quantile 2 which is a no-fee paying, and it had a problem of overcrowding and challenges of infrastructure. The school is in an informal settlement that is surrounded by a socially challenged community like Khwezi Primary School. There are no schools within

an approximately 10 km radius of the school. Therefore, the school is overcrowded with about 60 learners in a class. Most of the classrooms are small prefabs that need repairs and do not have adequate air circulation. Mophela Primary had a higher teacher-pupil ratio compared to the other 3 schools and the educators faced challenges in providing individualized attention and that affected the learning environment and learner performance. The resources received from the Department of Basic Education are not enough to fulfil the diverse needs of learners in the school.

4.3 Themes emerging from data analysis

Through analysing transcriptions of the interviews, five themes emerged as mentioned in the second paragraph of the introduction section of this chapter. This section presents and discusses themes that emerged from data that was generated through semi-structured interviews with four participants. The five main themes are aligned to the research questions. Furthermore, three out of five themes have sub-themes. Verbatim quotes from participants are used to better clarify and substantiate each theme and sub-theme.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Promoting harmony and collaboration

I asked the participants to share with me how they managed diversity. One key issue raised was the importance of fostering harmony and collaboration among staff members and learners regardless of their diverse backgrounds, to achieve a common goal as the school, which is improved learner performance. In this regard, Cindy (KPS) had this to say:

I think we've got to listen to whatever is bugging the teachers and learners, whatever is troubling them and to sit together and work out a solution to all the problems and then, if there's anything that they are not happy with, we've got to get together and sit down and come to a compromise.

I then asked Cindy if it was easy to find a compromise and make the teachers and learners happy in instances where something was troubling them and she responded by saying:

No, but I'm open to suggestions. For the sake of the learners. I think first thing we've got to put the learners first and then all our other personality clashes come last.

When Paul (VPS) responded to the same question, he said:

When I draw my year plan, I give each staff member a duty and a subcommittee to chair, irrespective of their race, or whatever background they come from, each one has a duty. So that's how I try to bring the staff together to work on the team. Bringing people from different backgrounds with a common purpose.

Similar to Cindy, Paul reported that he encouraged working together as his approach, emphasised bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds united by a shared goal, promoting teamwork and cohesion.

The same sentiments were echoed by Analisa, a participant from MPS and she said:

We manage to work together in harmony. We tolerate each other, we understand, and we appreciate each and everyone's culture.

I asked Analisa how she created harmony:

I involve everyone, including the stakeholders to participate in the school.

Analisa (MPS) further said:

I emphasise working together as teachers.

Unlike the three participants reported above, Sibusiso (CPS) had a different experience. In his response to the same question. He said:

We never had any serious problems when it comes to the management of diversity. We didn't have any race problems any cultural problems, any effect. We didn't have any parents come in and complain that their child is being an example: Yelling, why can't my child do it, kind of thing, you know. So, we never had instances like that. So, when it comes to diversity, it was kind of smooth sailing.

The low enrolment of the school might be a contributing factor to limited problems regarding diversity. Sibusiso further stated that:

For example, when it comes to these religious holidays, we take two for the year. We look at the population of the staff and the children when they take religious holidays. But let's say, for example, we don't have the minimum Muslim children, but when it comes to their holiday, we don't have a problem when they take it up.

It is worth noting that the participants' responses consistently highlight the importance of fostering harmony and collaboration among staff members and learners from diverse

backgrounds. Creating harmony and encouraging collaboration leads to numerous positive outcomes and effectively manages diversity within the school. These efforts are reflected in various indicators of a more positive school environment, such as higher academic achievement, and increased collaboration (Henze, 2000). Sibusiso (CPS) mentioned that he never had any serious problems in managing diversity and manages the situation as it arose. Sub-themes A, B, and C below provide clarity as to how harmony and collaboration were created by participants in their schools.

Promoting collaboration and harmony is connected to section B of chapter two as transformational leadership creates a compelling vision that motivates and inspires followers, thereby improving collaboration and fostering positive relationships through a unified sense of purpose and mutual respect. The participants' experiences illustrate how transformational leadership principles are applied to manage diversity efficiently by fostering collaboration and harmony among staff and learners from diverse backgrounds. Cindy, Paul, and Analisa emphasised creating a shared purpose and open communication to address issues and building a unified team, aligning with transformational leadership's focus on inspiring and motivating individuals towards common goals.

Theme 1A: Prioritising diversity in the school's vision and mission

In this section, I report on the extent to which the participants as school principals utilised their schools' visions and missions to prioritise diversity in their schools. The educators and the support staff were guided by the mission and the vision statement in the development of the curriculum, the methods of teaching, and the broader educational environment offered to learners. When asked if they did prioritise diversity in their school vision and mission, Cindy (KPS) made the following response:

I think in our mission and vision, we are saying, education for all. We incorporate everyone in our teaching and learning, no matter the race group. We have it on paper, and we are practicing it.

Figure 1 below is the quotation of some text from the vision and mission statement of KPS in support of Cindy's response

Figure 1: Khwezi Primary School Vision

The vision of the school is: to offer an environment in which we develop all learners to afford the learners the opportunity to be given the best environment in which to grow

Cindy also emphasised that what was on their vision and mission statement was put into practice. She added that:

I involve parents because I think it is also recorded, it also appears in the school's mission statement, that parents need to be involved.

Likewise, on the issue of the school's mission and vision statement, Paul (VPS) had this to say:

We have a mission to develop everyone, and we look at the middle ground, where we embrace all.

Paul voiced out that as part of the vision and mission of the school, name-calling and labelling was discouraged.

Figure 2: Mission statement of VPS

We as Valley Primary School commit ourselves to being a self-reliant school. In doing this we will ensure that our school provides a relevant and quality learning experience to learners and all stakeholders in the community. We will do this by:

- Placing teaching and learning first in all we do
- Allow everyone to develop their full potential
- Protect all against prejudice and discrimination

Table 2 above has some extracts from the school mission of VPS.

By encouraging commitment to inclusivity, respect, and equality within the school community, Paul and the school's mission statement reflect a holistic approach to education that values diversity, promotes equality, and ensures a supportive learning environment for all learners and staff.

Sibusiso (CPS) was very open and honest when asked if his school did prioritise diversity in the school's vision and mission. I was a bit concerned about his response when he stated:

No, unfortunately. To be honest with you, no, we don't. We need to now think about it. We need to re-word our mission and vision statement basically to include diversity.

Sibusiso continued by saying:

But this mission statement, the school is about 35 years old or something, and it remains the same throughout. It hasn't been updated. So, it needs to be. It needs to change with the times but just to be honest, most of the mission statements in schools are there, but the practice, no, the department wants you to have it.

I appreciate Sibusiso's honesty as he acknowledged the need to change the school's mission and other policies and the importance of putting what is on paper into practice. This did not necessarily mean that the school did not prioritise diversity but it indicated that not everything can be captured in a school's vision and mission. Sibusiso indicated that changes needed to be made in their school vision and mission statement to include diversity. Even though this is commendable, it also highlights a reactive rather than proactive approach to embracing diversity.

Responding to the same question, just like Cindy, Analisa (MPS) pointed out that for her school, parental involvement was very important and it appeared in her school's mission statement. This is what she had to say:

I involve parents because I think it is also recorded in my, it also appears in my mission statement, that parents need to be involved. We deal with learners, we involve everyone, also even the stakeholders to participate in the school, to develop our school. Then the most important thing that appears in my mission statement is to make sure that we instill good values. We teach learners how to conduct themselves.

She further expressed the importance of teaching learners how to conduct themselves in a respectful, kind, compassionate, and non-discriminatory manner, as part of their school's values.

Emerging from the above discussions is that the schools' core values and commitments differed. Schools in different communities might prioritise certain values over others based on their cultural norms or educational beliefs. However, despite these differences, there are

common fundamental values that many schools aim to instill, such as respect, responsibility, kindness, honesty, and cooperation. The parents therefore send their children where their personal values align with the vision, mission, and aims of the school.

The participants' approaches to integrating diversity into their schools' vision and mission statements align most closely with transformational leadership. This leadership style emphasises creating and implementing a compelling vision that encourages inclusivity, respect, and a supportive environment for all staff members and learners. While Cindy, Paul, and Analisa actively practiced and embodied these values in their leadership, Sibusiso's acknowledgment of the necessity to update his school's mission reflects a reactive stance, highlighting the ongoing challenge of aligning vision with practice.

Theme 1B: Creating an Inclusive Environment

The participants were then asked how they created an inclusive environment. This is what Cindy (KPS) had to say:

You can see we're getting a lot of young people coming in, they don't think like the older generation. So, we have got to understand them, that's part of diversity.

I sought to determine if it was easy to ensure that these different groups of educators understood each other and how she as a school principal ensured that, Cindy voiced that:

I don't think there's any hard part, once you understand, I think it's about respect. It will become very difficult if you don't include everyone, then it becomes hard and if you don't respect other religious groups or other racial groups, then definitely you're going to have problems.

In her response, Cindy indicated that she promoted respect among the staff members despite differences.

Paul (VPS) felt that it was important to follow the principles of the country of South Africa to create a welcoming school environment as he articulated that:

But as a public institution, we should follow the BATHO PELE principle of the country. We shouldn't be negative to any race, to any culture, to any people who are different, and we should treat everyone the same.

I asked further if anything else was done to create a welcoming school environment and Paul's response was:

So, we embrace all and teach our learners to do the same. I think that's important because if someone is different from me, that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm better than them or I shouldn't respect them.

Paul further expressed that he ensured that people's needs come before his so that they feel appreciated, valued, empowered, and included in the decisions of the school. Although Paul's response highlights the importance of embracing diversity and teaching respect for differences, it falls short on providing precise actions taken to create a welcoming school environment. A more proactive and detailed explanation of how the school actively fosters a welcoming atmosphere would better demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusivity.

On the same issue, Sibusiso (CPS) referred to scenarios in his school where he had an educator and a learner who were different in their sexual orientation (they were lesbians). At first, the other learners discriminated against this educator and learner but eventually, because of the school environment, they embraced them. Sibusiso reported that:

And there was another child also a few years ago where there was a problem where the class children should pick on the child because of the way he walked and the way he spoke. So even that, we had to educate the children. And once we did that, they accepted that.

It emerged from Sibusiso's response that educating each other helped promote acceptance.

Anelisa shared similar views as Cindy and Paul and she reported that:

If you want to promote inclusivity in our school, we discourage things like discrimination, teen jargon, and swearing, those kinds of things are discouraged.

Analisa also shared that:

I emphasise working together as teachers. Conducting, maybe the teacher development programs to assist each other.

Emerging from the discussion at the beginning of this section, the participants raised the importance of understanding each other's shortcomings and strengths to create an inclusive environment. In fostering an inclusive environment, a sense of belonging, and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities, the principals highlighted that everyone's needs

are actively accommodated irrespective of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Notwithstanding efforts to promote respect and inclusivity, underlying resistance or bias towards individuals of different sexual orientations or cultural backgrounds still resulted in discrimination. Moreover, schools faced challenges in allocating adequate resources and providing ongoing support, potentially impacting the sustainability of inclusive practices.

Theme 1C: Prioritising diversity management in schools

Under this sub-theme, I sought to find out from the participants, how they prioritised diversity management in their schools. As part of prioritising diversity management in schools, it emerged from our discussion with the participants how crucial it was to have policies and procedures in place. Regarding this matter, Cindy said:

I think diversity will be in all those policies that we have in school. Where you include everyone in decision-making, especially the staff. They are all included. Our learners, we don't exclude anybody. Everyone's included. The policy is very clear on that. So, our policies and our school, as I said, we put strategies in place to encompass everyone.

No matter what religion, or culture.

The participant asserted that diversity is included in all school policies and emphasised inclusive decision-making, but did not mention how these policies are evaluated or updated, making it difficult to assess their effectiveness.

Paul (VPS) shared a similar perspective to Cindy's view, emphasising clear policies that supported diversity management within the school. He expressed that:

We even have a language policy and cultural policy where we look at the middle ground and we look at it as South Africans. And our language policy is clear. English is our Lolt, isiZulu is our first additional.

According to Paul's explanation, their policies were in line with the school's mission statement, particularly the aspect mentioned in sub-theme A, as they fully embrace all.

Sibusiso (CPS) expressed a few times in his interview that his school did not have any significant problems concerning diversity hence they did not have specific diversity

management prioritised in his school and managed the situation as it arose. Sibusiso voiced that:

We need to change our policies, code of conduct, dress code, things that we'll have to change to manage this diversity. For me, I think it's very difficult to have a specific policy because situations are not the same. So, your policy must keep on changing. I can say we have a diversity policy, yes, but what is the policy? How do we cope with this situation? That means I must put every situation down. Stick to it. So, we don't have a policy as such, but we cope with our diversity when challenges arise.

As the principal, Sibusiso adopted a situational leadership style when it came to diversity management as he believed that by adapting to a situation, diversity can be better managed, (Silverthorne & Wang, 2001). Sibusiso's situational leadership style, which emphasised adapting to circumstances and addressing issues as they arose, might have contributed to the absence of a concrete and consistent diversity policy. This approach prioritised flexibility and responsiveness over establishing a fixed policy framework.

In her attempt to prioritise diversity management, Analisa expressed the importance of bridging a gap. She voiced that:

The hardest part of working in a diverse environment is that of trying to fill in the gap between people, which occurred during the apartheid regime. When certain groups of people were marginalised and felt discriminated based on their background and capabilities.

Analisa's responses (MPS) suggested that to eliminate marginalisation, inclusive policies needed to be implemented, and foster a culture of diversity to address all learners' needs regardless of their background. In schools, marginalisation involves both institutional and individual experiences, influenced by wider political forces. It results in the systematic exclusion or neglect of certain groups, leading to feelings of isolation, discrimination, or a lack of belonging based on factors like race, gender, or socio-economic background (Mowat, 2015).

Overall, theme 1 accentuated the participants' efforts to promote harmony, inclusivity, and effective diversity management within their respective schools, while also revealing challenges such as policy alignment and resource allocation.

In discussing how the participants prioritised diversity management in their schools, it is evident that Cindy and Paul demonstrated transformational leadership characteristics by embedding diversity into school policies and fostering an inclusive environment. Paul demonstrated transformational leadership by actively supporting and mentoring educators and learners from diverse backgrounds, showing a keen awareness of their unique needs and challenges. As role models for inclusive behavior, the participants embodied the values of respect and equity in their daily interactions and decisions. Cindy, Paul and Analisa's commitment to diversity was evident not only in their policies but also through their active participation in school-wide diversity initiatives, consistently setting a high standard for others to follow. Conversely, Sibusiso's approach replicated situational leadership, as he adapted policies and management strategies in response to emerging diversity challenges, rather than relying on fixed guidelines.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges in diversity management

In this section, I sought answers to the challenges of diversity management in participants' schools. The participants indicated that, in many instances where elements of discrimination, bias, and conflict surfaced, it was due to a lack of understanding of diverse perspectives and backgrounds. That in turn had a ripple effect as in some cases led to ineffective communication and a negative impact on learner and teacher performance.

The participants experienced religious beliefs as one of the challenges of diversity management in their school. Cindy (KPS) encountered a challenge when it came to a programme for the celebration of Diwali, a certain educator left learners unsupervised during the celebration because she did not want to be part of the programme. This is what Cindy had to say:

Recently, we were celebrating the Hindu culture, the Deepavali function. North Indians say Diwali, and the South Indians say Deepavali. So, we had one educator who refused to be part of it. She felt it was not in keeping with the religion.

I posed a probing question to Cindy regarding how she managed the incidents and she responded by saying:

Well, we spoke to the educator. Well, I think in the future, we have to look at it again. We didn't make a big fuss out of it. We allowed her, well, that's how she felt. That was her right.

During the interview with Cindy, it emerged that the matter could have been handled better had the teacher concerned respected the celebration. Cindy's acknowledgment that the situation could have been handled better suggests an awareness of the need for a more balanced approach that honors both individual beliefs and the school's cultural activities. This incident accentuates the importance of clear guidelines and open dialogue to navigate cultural and religious differences efficiently within the school community.

Paul, when responding to what are some of the factors that affect diversity management, shared a similar view with Cindy. He added that in his school, sexual orientation and different cultural beliefs were a challenge, which at times led to discrimination, bullying, and teasing.

Discrimination. Especially those who share or display gay tendencies. They are discriminated against and people, and many of the learners in their age group, their peers, do not want to be friends because they feel that they may be intimidated. And when they tell their parents, their parents will tell them, to keep away. See, they're branding the child. Which is wrong. So that's one of the challenges, bullying and teasing

Paul also reported the importance of ensuring that all communication (written and verbal) is clear and accessible to all employees for better diversity management. With important notices and letters to parents, they translate them into isiZulu which is spoken by the majority of their learners.

And some important letters are translated into IsiZulu. Unfortunately, we cannot translate into all the languages. Because some languages are, uh, the very few speakers in the community. And you get a lot of foreigners, so we cannot, we do not have the capacity to translate in all the foreign languages. So IsiZulu. is the most common language with most of our parents and English. So, we try and ensure that the letters, the important letters are translated as well.

Sibusiso concurred with both Cindy and Paul when asked the same question and had this to say:

A bit of a challenge when it comes to cultural differences. Our school policy is, males do not wear earrings. It's like, this year, a child... The parent walks in the office, a child needs to wear the earring because of religious beliefs. So, now where do you draw the line? Where does the child go? And if the schools in the area have the same

policy, where does the child go? Then he goes to the department, right up to the court. You have to accept it. It's the same thing with a Muslim child coming to your school and wearing a full.... What you call it. What do you do? But, as I said, the policy now needs to adapt. Because you're getting children from all over the place coming to your school, and the children are moving to the area from different backgrounds. So, you have to accept the child. The school policy says the child is staying in your road, you must accept the child

Sibusiso (CPS) further revealed that some of the educators discriminated against children who wore earrings by treating them unfairly compared to other learners and making negative comments about their appearance. This is a clear indication that lack of understanding of others' religions can cause a negative impact like conflicts and discrimination. The child who is on the receiving end of discrimination might end up being affected when it comes to learning and performance.

It emerged during our interview that she did find many challenges when it comes to managing cultural differences. What was challenging for her in her management of diversity was the discrimination that was a result of a person's appearance. She articulated that:

I think it was last year. He was doing grade seven, and he had artificial legs. But it was very difficult even to go to the toilet. But because learners help each other, they manage to assist him. And that boy was very, very brilliant. As a result, now he is doing grade eight at Wilberdin.

Analisa (MPS) reported that due to instilling good values and teaching their learners to treat each other the same, they were able to better manage diversity as a school and eliminate the cases of discrimination. As the principal, she had constant communication with all the stakeholders to create an enriching school environment.

Emerging from the discussions with the participants, an inclusive environment in sub-theme 1 a) would be hard to create if participants' challenges of managing diversity are not dealt with. The participants' experiences highlight the importance of addressing the challenges of diversity management to create an inclusive school environment. Key challenges such as lack of understanding, religious and cultural differences, discrimination, and communication barriers must be addressed through updated policies, increased awareness, and adequate resource allocation.

Participants' experiences aligned with the notion that effective diversity management led to numerous positive outcomes, reinforcing the need for ongoing efforts to foster inclusivity in schools. Literature supported this perspective by highlighting several key benefits of wellmanaged diversity in educational institutions.

Sleeter (2015) expressed that schools which implemented effective diversity management strategies experienced improved academic and social outcomes for learners. The later researcher also argued that an inclusive curriculum and a supportive environment that respected and incorporated diverse perspectives enhanced student engagement and performance while reducing instances of discrimination. This finding mirrored the participants' experiences and underscored the importance of addressing diversity challenges to create a more equitable learning environment.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Equity and inclusion in schools

The key issue in this theme was to examine the strategies school principals practiced to manage diversity for the equity and inclusion of all learners and staff.

Equity and Inclusion in schools for this research encompasses two sub-themes namely: staff development and diversity training, as well as curriculum development and diversification. From this theme, the sub-themes that emerged are discussed below.

Theme 3A: Staff development and diversity training

When asked about the strategies the participants had put in place to deal with and manage diversity. It was noted that most of the strategies were common among the participants. There were a few strategies that differed. Cindy (KPS) reported that:

Reading, attending workshops, speaking to people, people in leadership positions, and also unions discussing these things. After attending those workshops, educators don't keep the information to themselves. They cascade it to other educators.

Cindy also indicated that:

Upon speaking to someone in a leadership position or a colleague, that person has dealt with the situation and whatever the person did can work for you as well

Responding to the same question, Paul (VPS) indicated that:

We have a leadership course for prefects. We discuss all this. I have staff development workshops. But I think most of the staff training happens on the ground. But I do have staff development workshops.

In Paul's school, most formal diversity training happened informally on the ground. I further inquired with the principal about any instances where he had organised stakeholders to conduct workshops for his staff. Paul responded by saying:

We do as often as we can. Recently Mr. Laurence did a lovely one during the year and he covered and encompassed everything about being a teacher.

Mr Laurence (pseudonym) was a service provider Paul invited to his school for staff development.

Sibusiso (CPS) responded to the question by saying that the school and the department did not have diversity training workshops that he was aware of but as a school, they taught learners about diversity. Similarly, to Paul, Sibusiso managed the situation as and when it arises:

Again, no specific strategies. I just work on the situation itself and from our experience. We've got a good balance of mature educators, experienced and young educators. So, whenever the young educators have a problem, they come to us. When we have a problem sometimes, we go to them because remember, they were in the university, they come straight from universities, and they are much more au fait with some of the policies that the universities use.

Another strategy Sibusiso mentioned during our interview, was that of discussing the strategies in their Professional Learning Community (PLC).

We just have these discussions about PLCs and things like that where staff development and other teaching strategies are discussed.

In the Professional Learning Community, the key function is the ability to foster and maintain the growth of all school professionals, joined by the common goal of improving student learning (Watson, 2014). The themes of 'trust' and 'openness' are frequently highlighted, possibly in response to the conventional view of teaching as an isolated endeavor conducted in private. This focus on trust and openness underscores a shared vision and values,

accentuating the need for support and transparency in the educational process (Watson, 2014). There is an indication from Sibusiso's response that it is critical to have trust and be open among the staff members as it leads to improvement in the school.

Analisa (MPS) responded by saying that at her school, the strategy she used to manage diversity was to capacitate and support the newly appointed educators, especially by conducting capacity-building workshops. She said that:

We have to conduct workshops continuously, just to assist them. They find it difficult to deal with learners with barriers to learning.

Analisa emphasised the importance of having support from the Department of Education as she shared that:

The positive factor is that we, as a school, receive support from the department, and departmental structures, like the circuit-based support team and the district-based support team, and they conduct capacity-building workshops for teachers.

Analisa added that there are strategies put in place to encourage inclusivity among learners and said:

We also encourage peer support. I also encourage teachers to make them work together, that is what we call cooperative learning. For example, mixing learners with different abilities, even in groups. Allowing them to do projects in groups and allowing them to work in pairs.

The data showed that the implementation of diversity training programs, such as staff development workshops, aimed at enhancing competency in managing diversity effectively. The sharing of personal experiences to deepen understanding and adaptability in addressing diverse challenges daily was evident as they held PLC meetings and conducted workshops. Ultimately, they stressed the significance of continual discussion and collaboration in cultivating inclusivity and empathy within the school environment. Without providing examples or evidence of how these training programmes have directly improved inclusivity and empathy within the school environment, it remains unclear how deeply these initiatives are integrated into the school's culture and daily practices.

From our interviews with participants, I learned that by prioritising equity, and inclusion through diversity training and staff development, schools can benefit in several ways. This

approach can help create a more diverse, dynamic, and effective educational staff, which can lead to effective teaching and learning. Therefore, equity and inclusion can promote a positive and inclusive school culture where all learners feel valued and supported, which can improve learner achievement.

Characteristics of transformational leadership portrayed by Cindy Paul and Analisa, such as individualised consideration and idealised influence, were evident as they addressed the specific needs of educators through staff development workshops and modeling the values of inclusivity and respect for diversity. In contrast, Sibusiso's approach reflects situational leadership, as he adapts his strategies and relies on real-time problem-solving to address emerging diversity challenges.

Theme 3B: Curriculum development and curriculum adaptation

This sub-theme emerged from the strategies principals practiced to manage diversity. In addition to staff development and diversity training, the participants highlighted that curriculum development and curriculum adaptation were integral to addressing diversity because they involve designing educational content that reflects the varied cultural, social, and historical backgrounds of students. Curriculum adaptation entails introducing necessary modifications to align the curriculum with the local context to better meet the needs of specific groups of learners (Shawer, 2009). Teachers have a role in adjusting the curriculum to match their classroom context. Curriculum adaptation focuses primarily on making existing curriculum materials more inclusive and responsive to the needs of a specific group of learners without fundamentally changing the structure or goals of the curriculum. When asked about strategies the principals used to manage diversity, Cindy (KPS) indicated that:

Life skills emphasise and it includes education about diversity (culture, race). We have concerts where diversity is showcased and invite parents. We also encourage working together and being together in our diverse environment and learn one another's culture

Paul (VPS) had a lot to say regarding the strategies he practiced to manage diversity. His response was:

I think it's part of the curriculum, the PSW is where you discuss acceptance and diversity, all that. It's part of your curriculum. You have to use practical examples that

the learners appreciate. You can't use airy-fairy, like what happened in the world war and all that. That doesn't make sense to them. They can't internalize it.

From this evidence, it emerged that practical examples that were relevant and relatable to learners were essential for effective learning, rather than abstract events which students might have struggled to relate to. For example, bringing in guest speakers from diverse backgrounds and using multimedia resources, such as videos, documentaries, and online articles, can provide students with real-world perspectives and make the subject matter more accessible and relatable.

Analisa (MPS) had the following to say:

I encourage teachers to prepare different types of activities because they deal with learners with different needs and abilities. So, there are more concrete activities. Others are abstract, low-order, and high-order. Also, consider time because other learners are very slow to do their activities. I always tell them to give them extra time, so they will be able to finish their task. Even the pace is not the same.

Stemming from the interview with Analisa (MPS), a lot of strategies were used to manage diversity to ensure all learners are included irrespective of their abilities. Concession was applied as early as in the primary schools. For MPS, peer learning was one of the strategies that assisted them in managing diversity among the learners.

Analisa recommended that teachers designed a range of activities to cater to the varied needs and abilities of students, that address different cognitive levels. Additionally, they fostered an inclusive environment where students can collaborate effectively, regardless of their pace or ability level, which interlinks with theme 1 above. Analisa recognised that learners had different needs and abilities, including variations in cognitive levels and pace, reflecting her awareness of the key factors affecting diversity management in her school which speaks directly to the research question that reads thus: What do principals regard as factors affecting diversity management in primary schools?

4.3.4 Theme 4: Setting a tone

In the previous theme, I presented the strategies school principals practice to manage diversity. In this theme, I seek to explore the how part. How do the principals ensure the

strategies are implemented? Two sub-themes emerged from my analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the participants, namely: fostering a culture of respect and putting others first. As school principals, the participants cited that they model the behavior they want to see among the staff and learners.

Theme 4A: Fostering a culture of respect

This sub-theme seeks to explore how the participants ensure that the strategies of diversity management are implemented. Cindy's response was:

Recently, we are finding that the majority of our staff, I've noticed, are very easy-going, and they respect all different groups. I think every person has to do introspection now and learn to tolerate each other, in a way.

Earlier on in the sub-theme of creating an inclusive environment, Cindy (KPS) spoke about promoting respect which is also emerging in this sub-theme. She emphasised the importance of introspection. Cindy explained that she always does a lot of introspection when it comes to creating appropriate conduct and enforcing respect and tolerance.

Paul from VPS shared similar views with Cindy. This is what Paul had to say:

Imagine you have different cultures and a lot of different principles in the country. So, each one must learn to embrace the other and to respect each other's beliefs and values. So, we should embrace all and teach our learners to do the same. The same applies to gender. You've got male, female, and you've got other.

Furthermore, Paul expressed the importance of educating each other about diversity. He reported that:

There are various other people. So, we can't fight them off and be different to them. We have to embrace it and especially teach ourselves about other people's culture.

For Sibusiso (CPS), the response differed. He indicated that:

We will cross that bridge as we go along.

As indicated, Sibusiso had 400 learners enrolled in school and 15 educators. He never experienced major problems regarding diversity management, and Sibusiso did not have specific practices he needed to ensure the implementation thereof.

Principals in the participating schools thought that setting a tone when it comes to promoting a culture of respect was imperative. During the semi-structured interviews, participants consistently emphasised that they promoted respect and tolerance within the school environment and actively worked to deter discrimination and bias.

Theme 4B: Put others first

Diversity can cause challenges if it is not managed effectively. The key issue in this theme is how principals ensure that diversity management strategies are implemented. Cindy (KPS) responded by saying:

I think we've got to listen to whatever is bugging them, whatever is troubling them and to sit together and work out a solution to all the problems. I'm open to any suggestions. For the sake of the learners. I think first thing we've got to put the learners first and then all our other personality clashes come last

The same utterances were made by Cindy in theme one which speaks of promoting harmony and collaboration.

The principal from KPS prioritise listening to concerns, collaboratively solving problems, and putting learners first, setting aside personal differences for their benefit.

Paul expressed that:

Even as a leader, my preferences take the back seat. I put people first. You satisfy everyone.

I probed further whether it was possible to satisfy everyone and Paul made this utterance:

To satisfy everyone is never easy, you have to look for a win-win situation. Sometimes you have to look at what will you be satisfied with discussing an event. What you have to give and take. As leaders, we have to try and satisfy others and find a win-win situation for all people. (VPS)

As a school principal, Paul practiced prioritising other people's needs over his preferences, aiming for win-win solutions that considered both what others wanted and what he was

willing to compromise. Paul alluded that when a principal prioritises others, it establishes a leadership model based on selflessness and empathy, setting a foundational tone of cooperation and respect throughout the school.

In his response to the question Sibusiso said:

We have a family relationship with all members of the community. Whether it's parents, whether it's children or teachers. You might have one or two parents that don't like you for whatever reason. No matter what you do, that is where respect and tolerance come in, mutual respect (CPS).

Sibusiso from CPS built partnerships with the community for the benefit of the learners. This point interlinks with theme five which is discussed below. I believe community engagement for Sibusiso is a sign of selflessness.

These were her utterances regarding the matter:

Recently, a learner in the school dropped out just because of the lack of support from the parents.

She went on to explain that:

When we call parents to school to discuss their children's performance and barriers, few parents come. Sometimes we sacrifice our time and call parents' meetings on weekends or the afternoons to accommodate them, only to find that a few will come.

Considering that the learners needed to be developed holistically and that not all learners are gifted academically. Analisa desired to expose her learners to as many sports codes as possible but was met with challenges. This is what she said:

We don't have the sports fields here. We don't have other codes just because of the lack of infrastructure (MPS).

Analisa wished she could do more regarding ensuring that the strategies of diversity management are implemented but felt there were contextual factors like a shortage of resources, that hindered her.

Emerging from this theme is the emphasis on the need to prioritise learners, solve problems collaboratively, and focus on others' needs. It highlights approaches such as listening and

collaboration, pursuing win-win solutions, engaging with the community, and striving for holistic learner development despite infrastructure limitations. Despite the challenges of low parental involvement and inadequate infrastructure, the principals' commitment to creating diverse opportunities for all learners demonstrates a profound dedication to their overall wellbeing and success. On the other hand, Analisa highlighted the challenge of limited infrastructure, which restricted her ability to implement comprehensive diversity management strategies, such as offering a variety of sports codes. This issue illustrated that while the principals generally focused on listening, collaboration, and selflessness, practical limitations, such as insufficient resources, also influenced their ability to manage diversity effectively. **4.3.5. Theme 5: Engaging diverse communities and forming healthy relationships**

The key issue in this theme was to examine if the participants involved other stakeholders in promoting diversity in schools. When asked if she involves other stakeholders in promoting diversity in school, Cindy responded as follows:

Even though we don't do it as often as we would like, it is always a good idea to bring in other people. Sometimes learners and the staff need to hear these things from other people besides the school management team (KPS).

Cindy's reliance on external speakers suggested that the principal and the school management team might not have been fully addressing and promoting diversity themselves. A more proactive approach could have involved integrating these external perspectives more consistently into the school's regular activities and ensuring that the principal and the school management team also developed the capacity to communicate these important messages effectively. More detailed planning and commitment to regular external engagement could have enhanced the impact on both learners and staff.

In his response, Paul said:

We have three major political parties in the school, the ANC, the EFF, and the DA as resident parties in the school. They have their regular meetings here, monthly meetings. They take ownership of helping me to deal with diversity in the school and the

community (VPS).

The participants explained that educating the community also assisted the school because most learners enrolled in the school came from the same community.

Paul continued and uttered that:

And also, various religious leaders are involved. I have about 10 churches from the community that use the school and they help me with diversity, teaching values, and cascading information to the community.

The principal from CPS responded as follows:

We call in the community and the pastors to give talks about empathy, morality, and promoting good values like respect to the learners. We also invite other sister departments like the health department. They come and discuss health issues.

Analisa made these utterances in response to the question:

We do invite the clinic and R. K. Kan Hospital to address learners especially on issues of stress. Sometimes in a diverse school environment or any environment for that matter, learners are bullied and discriminated against. That can result in many challenges (MPS).

Despite these challenges, the participant school principals felt that they succeeded in creating a welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment for all learners and staff by involving a variety of stakeholders, including community leaders and local hospitals, to enhance diversity management.

4.4. Summary: an overview of themes

Chapter four of the study focused on data presentation and discussion, which was organised into five main themes: promoting harmony and collaboration, challenges in diversity

management, equity and inclusion in education, setting a tone, engaging diverse communities, and forming healthy relationships.

Emerging from the interviews with the participants was a consensus on the importance of fostering teamwork among staff and learners to create a peaceful and harmonious school environment. I learned that participants believed in proactively preventing conflicts by involving teachers in problem-solving and making inclusive decisions that consider the concerns of all learners and educators, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. Additionally, there was a shared perspective among participants regarding the significance of aligning stakeholders with shared goals and values, ensuring that school vision and mission statements embrace diversity, and implementing policies to foster harmony and an effective teaching environment, thereby improving diversity management.

Furthermore, I learned that effective communication was one of the crucial factors in managing school diversity. I say this because failure to address misunderstandings and discrimination can lead to exclusion, conflicts, and hinder collaboration, posing challenges for principals and diversity management. Cultivating a positive school culture of collaboration was identified as being rooted in individual virtues, actions, interpersonal connections, and the ability to make a positive impact on others. However, achieving meaningful outcomes depends on the continuous development and empowerment of self and others (Murphy & Louis, 2018).

Lastly, the data presented underscored the importance of recognising and celebrating respectful behaviors while promptly addressing any disrespectful actions. Doing so helps embed respect deeply within the school's ethos, thereby enhancing a sense of community and belonging among all involved. Participants highlighted the crucial role of collaborating with various stakeholders, including but not limited to community organisations and sister departments like the Department of Health, in addressing issues such as good values, empathy, morality, depression, and stress. This emphasis on stakeholder involvement further underlined the importance of fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes equity.

While many aspects were progressing well, numerous challenges emerged in managing diversity within schools: Communication breakdowns led to misunderstandings, discrimination, feelings of exclusion, conflicts, and hindered collaboration. Inconsistent

implementation of policies meant that not all schools successfully entrenched respect and harmony within their ethos, struggling to foster a positive school culture. Lack of stakeholder alignment further impacted the effectiveness of diversity management, as some stakeholders were not fully aligned with the school's diversity goals and values. Additionally, there were substantial differences in how school principals managed diversity, with some being more proactive and inclusive than others. These issues were often explained by insufficient training, resource constraints, cultural resistance, and communication barriers, which varied the effectiveness of diversity management depending on the principal's approach, available resources, and the school's overall commitment to inclusivity.

This chapter illustrates how transformational leadership fosters long-term, inclusive change in diversity management through team-building and vision alignment, while situational leadership addresses immediate challenges with adaptive strategies. This interplay highlights the balance between proactive cultural development and responsive problem-solving in creating an effective and supportive school environment.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I reflect on the findings concerning selected school principals' perceptions and experiences of managing diversity among learners and educators. To achieve this, I first summarise the study indicating the crux of each chapter. Next, I highlight the findings as they relate to the study's research questions. I then conclude and make recommendations about the study.

5.2 Summary of the study

The research report consists of five chapters. Chapter One introduced and explained the research topic. Therein, I argued that diversity was a cornerstone of effective school management, as principals' recognition and systematic embrace of thereof can create a motivating environment that enhances teaching and learning, ultimately improving school performance. I emphasised the significance of examining the impact of situational leadership on diversity management in educational settings. I further highlighted the growing need for inclusive environments for diverse learners. The chapter identifies challenges faced by the educators and learners such as communication gaps, socio-economic barriers, and limitations of traditional leadership approaches, situating these issues within existing literature and noting consequences like decreased academic achievement and high learner dropout rates. Thus, the study sought to address these issues and explore school principals' experiences in diversity management in schools.

Chapter Two reviewed literature. Therein I explain the term 'diversity' as referring to the differences among people, such as skin colour, experiences, sex, gender, religion, upbringing, education, and socio-economic background, while this research study specifically explores how school principals manage diversity among educators and learners. Managing diversity is discussed as involving addressing a range of organisational policies and practices aimed at recruiting, retaining, and engaging employees from diverse backgrounds and identities, while promoting an inclusive culture that empowers everyone to achieve their personal and organisational goals. Such processes are fraught with challenges including language barriers and lack of support. Some of the solutions to such challenges include ongoing training and context-specific strategies. Omodan and Ige (2021) highlighted similar issues in South African schools and advocated for democratic management principles and continuous

diversity training. I explored management as involving planning, organising, leading, and controlling as the key functions school principals need to practise to manage diversity effectively. The conceptual framework clarified the study's focus on understanding and managing diversity through established management processes, emphasising the need for effective leadership and support. Empirical evidence highlighted global challenges in diversity management and stressed the importance of context-specific strategies (Appiah, 2019). The theoretical framework incorporated transformational leadership and Kurt Lewin's theory of change, demonstrating how transformational leadership can positively influence teams and contribute to achieving institutional objectives through emotional bonds between leaders and followers. The literature underscored that effective diversity management requires principals and education authorities to support educators with appropriate policies, training, and resources to enhance inclusivity and performance.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research design and methodology, employing an interpretive approach to provide descriptions of participants' experiences and understandings. I considered this paradigm as effective in capturing how reality was socially constructed through principals' views, backgrounds, and experiences, offering insights into their specific contexts and practices (Mackenzie & Snipe 2006). The study adopted a case study design, which allowed for an indepth examination of the management of diversity by school principals in their natural settings, thus providing a nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon (Hays, 2017). This design was chosen for its ability to simplify complex topics into manageable research questions and to capture the reality of unique cases, despite limitations in data organisation, generalisability, and potential bias (Cohen et al., 2007). Thematic analysis was utilised to examine the qualitative data, following the five phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method, known for its flexibility and detailed exploration of patterns and themes, aligned with the qualitative approach. Furthermore, trustworthiness and ethical considerations were addressed (Swanson & Holton, 2005).

In chapter four, I presented and discussed data, uncovering five key themes in an attempt to respond to the research questions including what school principals understood as their role in managing diversity, what they regarded as factors affecting diversity management, and how principals utilised these strategies in managing diversity in primary schools. The five key themes that emerged were: promoting harmony and collaboration, challenges in diversity

management, equity and inclusion in education, setting a tone, engaging diverse communities and forming healthy relationships.

5.3 Findings from the study

From the data presented and discussed, the following key findings emerged:

- 1) **Prioritisation of Harmony and Inclusivity:** School principals consistently emphasised the importance of harmony, inclusivity, and effective diversity management in their leadership practices.
- 2) **Commitment to Positive School Culture:** Principals demonstrated a strong commitment to creating inclusive school cultures by integrating diversity into policies.
- 3) **Transformational Leadership Examples:** Some principals exemplified transformational leadership by embedding diversity into school policies and actively mentoring diverse groups, setting high standards for diversity management.
- 4) **Effective Communication and Shared Values:** The importance of instilling strong values and maintaining open communication with stakeholders was highlighted as a way to improve diversity management and reduce discrimination.
- 5) **Challenges in Creating Inclusive Environments:** The study identified underlying issues, such as a lack of understanding of each other's backgrounds, cultural differences, discrimination, and communication barriers, that hindered the creation of inclusive environments.
- 6) **Effective Teaching Strategies:** Some participants successfully managed diversity through tailored activities and peer learning, demonstrating an understanding of learners' diverse needs.
- 7) **Collaboration with Community Stakeholders:** The principals' collaboration with community leaders and local hospitals effectively enhanced diversity management and fostered a welcoming environment.

5.4 Conclusions drawn from the study

Based on the findings reported above, I draw the following conclusions:

1. **Shared Priorities Across Contexts:** Despite varying contexts, all school principals tended to prioritise harmony and inclusivity, indicating a common understanding of effective diversity management. A study by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) on leadership in diverse school settings found that school principals who prioritise inclusivity contribute to a positive school climate that values diversity and equity. The study highlighted that, effective leaders across various school contexts emphasised fostering collaboration and building strong relationships among staff, learners, and the community to ensure everyone's voice is heard.
2. **Need for Policy Alignment and Resources:** The findings suggest that while principals were committed to diversity, challenges related to policy alignment and resource allocation needed to be addressed for improved outcomes. Thomas, J. A. (1980) discussed the equity and efficiency implications of resource allocation in school districts and classrooms, highlighting the importance of ensuring equality and efficiency in education. This provides a solid foundation for understanding the critical role of policy alignment and resource allocation in achieving successful diversity outcomes in schools.
3. **Challenges of Transformational Leadership:** Achieving transformational leadership appears difficult for some principals who **believed in resolving the situation as and when it presented itself** even though this approach aligns with fostering a supportive and growth-oriented environment within some schools in the study.
4. **Importance of Addressing Underlying Issues:** The study emphasises that creating an inclusive environment requires addressing foundational issues related to diversity management through updated policies and increased awareness.
5. **Value of Best Practices:** Adopting best practices from successful leaders, such as fostering shared values and effective communication, can significantly enhance efforts to create inclusive environments.
6. **Positive Impact on School Culture:** The principals' dedication to involving a diverse range of stakeholders transformed challenges into opportunities, contributing to a

positive and equitable school culture for all learners and staff. When stakeholders are engaged in decision-making, schools become more responsive to challenges, transforming these challenges into opportunities for growth. This collaborative approach helps create a culture where all members feel a sense of ownership and responsibility (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

7. **Critical Role of Communication:** Effective communication and the establishment of shared values are vital for improving diversity management, as they help mitigate discrimination and foster a cohesive school environment. Effective school leadership, built on communication and trust, leads to favourable outcomes for school culture, particularly in promoting diversity and fostering an inclusive environment (Moran, 2001).

5.4 Recommendations

Drawing from the conclusions presented above, I advance the following recommendations:

The findings reveal that school principals are dedicated to promoting harmony, inclusivity, and effective diversity management, yet face challenges with policy alignment and resource allocation. To address these issues, it is recommended to enhance policy and resource alignment by regularly reviewing and adjusting policies to better support diversity initiatives. This may involve seeking additional funding, reallocating resources, or refining existing policies to create a more harmonious and inclusive environment.

The findings highlight that principals like Cindy and Paul exemplify transformational leadership through their integration of diversity into school policies and active support for diverse groups. To further promote and expand transformational leadership practices, I encourage other principals to adopt similar strategies.

Targeted professional development programmes focused on mentoring, coaching, and embodying values of respect and equity can cultivate a more inclusive school culture across educational institutions. It can also enhance collaboration, communication, and leadership skills for school principals.

Additionally, the importance of instilling strong values and maintaining consistent communication with stakeholders is crucial for improving diversity management and reducing discrimination. Engaging diverse stakeholders, such as community leaders and local organizations, can further enhance these efforts and create a supportive environment where all individuals feel valued.

For future exploration of diversity in schools, consider examining the impact of principal-led community engagement on diversity initiatives. Investigating how school principals actively involve local organisations and stakeholders can strengthen these efforts and may yield valuable insights. This could include assessing partnerships with community groups, initiatives that promote inclusivity, and collaborative programs. Understanding how these principaldriven efforts contribute to a more inclusive environment could reveal innovative practices that enhance overall diversity management in schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A: An Interview schedules

Section A: Biographical Information

1. Gender

Male		Female	
------	--	--------	--

2. Age

Between 20-30		30-40		40-50		Above 50	
---------------	--	-------	--	-------	--	----------	--

3. Your qualification is

Below M+3		M+3		M+4		M+5 & above	
-----------	--	-----	--	-----	--	-------------	--

4. Nature of employment

Permanent		Acting	

5. Teaching experience

Less than 5 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	Above 20 years

6. Years of experience as a principal

Less than 5 years	5-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	Above 20 years

7. Do you have a relevant leadership qualification?

Yes		No	

Section B: School Information

1. Learner information

1-299	300-599	600-999	Above 1000

2. School fees

No fees	R1-R100	R101-R500	R501-R1 000	R1 001-R5000+

**Section C: School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity
Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools.**

1. What do you understand by the concept of diversity, please share what diversity means to you?
2. Do you consider your school to have diverse educators and learners? Explain.
3. Do you think diversity is important? (Probe: elaborate on that, and give a minimum of about 2 reasons why?)
4. From your experience, what is the hardest part of working in a diverse environment?
5. What are the factors (positive or negative) that affect your management of diversity?
6. Have you ever dealt with a situation where a learner or an employee was not accepted because of his/her differences? (Probe: how did you deal with the situation, or how do you think will be the best way of dealing with the situation?)
7. Does your school have any diversity training and support programmes? (What are those, are they effective, and how can they improve?)
8. What strategies has your school put in place to deal with and manage diversity? (Probe: what strategies can be used to respond to the challenges of diversity?)
9. Is there anything you would like to add to what you have told me?

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

Appendix B: Gatekeeper's Permission

██████████

Nagina

Regency Park

3604

11 July 2023

The Circuit Manager

Dear Sir Re: Permission to conduct research

I Nkosi Nelisiwe Patricia, am a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZuluNatal. I, therefore, request permission to conduct research in your schools. I intend

to interview your school principals and get their views on how they manage diversity in their schools. The title of my study is, “School Principals’ Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools”.

Please note that their anonymity is guaranteed; no one will be able to identify the participants and the content of the discussion will remain confidential. In addition, participants will have full access to the interview transcript and the report when it is completed.

I shall spend no more than sixty minutes with each participant on the day that will be suitable for them. Absolute care will be taken in order to ensure that the smooth running of the school is not disturbed by participating in this research project.

For further information about this research, kindly contact my supervisor, Professor Vitallis Chikoko at the University of KwaZulu-Natal at this [REDACTED] Email address Chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

Thanking you in advance.

Mrs. Nkosi N.P [REDACTED]

Email 222110134@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Tel: 033 392 1051

Email:

Enquiries: Mrs B.T. Ntuli
Ref.:2/4/8/7514

Mrs Nelisiwe Patricia Nkosi

██████████
Nagina

REGENCY PARK

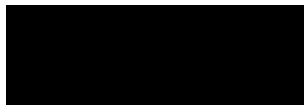
3604

Dear Mrs Nkosi

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE
INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: “**SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF MANAGING DIVERSITY AMONG LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**”, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from **04th July 2023 to 31st March 2025.**
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.



Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 04 July 2023

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix D: Participant consent letter



Nagina

Regency Park

3604

████████████████████
30 June 2023

Dear Prospective Participant

Letter of Informed Consent

Greetings.

My name is Nelisiwe Patricia Nkosi. I am a Master of Education (Educational Leadership and Management Policy) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Education, Edgewood Campus.

I plan to conduct a study titled: **School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools.**

The aim of the study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of primary school principals regarding managing schools with educators and learners of diverse backgrounds.

The study will entail interviewing four primary school principals under Umlazi District to determine how they understand and experience their role in managing diversity.

I, therefore, write this letter to request to interview you.

The study is specifically delimited to the named module. You will not be required to do anything else apart from giving your consent for the use of your interviews. Only your interviews shall be used.

Please note the following:

- All the interviews shall be used for study purposes only.
- The interview shall be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- Your name shall not be used anywhere in the study.
- Data will be stored in a locked cupboard in my office and in my password-protected personal computer.
- I do not envisage any risks in the use of your interviews.
- Your consent is voluntary. You are free not to give it, or to withdraw it at any time should you so wish, and there shall be no penalties in doing so.

- There are no financial benefits in giving your consent. I believe however, such knowledge may help other school principals in similar contexts to better understand their role in managing diversity.
- I shall email to you the link to which you can access the findings after the work is completed.

Should you have any questions, please contact me through email: 222110134@stu.ukzn.ac.za

[Redacted]

Should you have any queries regarding the study, you can contact the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Tel. 0312608350

Thank you

[Redacted signature line]

If you agree to give consent, please complete and sign the declaration below and email this letter back to me.

DECLARATION

I.....(Full names of the prospective participant) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the study, and give consent to the use of my WhatsApp messages exchanged during teaching and learning in the specified module.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my consent at any time without any negative consequences on my part, should I so desire.

Signature:

.....

Date:

Appendix E: Certificate of English Language Editing

25 Maple Crescent Phone 031 – 7075912
Circle Park [REDACTED] KLOOF Fax 031 -
3610 7110458
E-mail:
dr1govender@telkomsa.net sathsgovender4@gmail.com

Dr Saths Govender

20 NOVEMBER 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

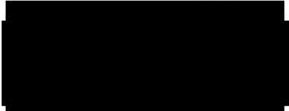
LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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

**School Principals' Perceptions and Experiences of Managing Diversity
Among Learners and Educators in Primary Schools**, by Nelisiwe Patricia Nkosi,
student no. 222110134.

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

Yours faithfully



DR S. GOVENDER

B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.

Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers

MPA, D. Admin.

Appendix F: Turnitin Results

Dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%	7%	2%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	2%
2	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	Herman J van Vuuren, Philip C van der Westhuizen, JL van der Walt. "Leading and manage diverse schools in South Africa", Problems and Perspectives in Management, 2017 Publication	<1%
4	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
5	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	<1%
6	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1%
7	core.ac.uk Internet Source	<1%
8	vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source	

81/89