



**LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT
OF DEPRIVATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES**

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DECLARATION

I, **SIBISI RUDOLPH NTUTHUKO**, declare that:

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As the candidate's Co-Supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Signe 

Professor Phumlani Erasmus

Signed:

Professor Vusi Jan Msiza

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all principals leading small schools in the deprived context who are struggling everyday as they try to enact leadership for teaching and learning. I hope and wish that the findings from this thesis will be able to assist the school principals and policymakers to try and improve the conditions in such schools.

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ABSTRACT

Recently, studies on leadership have increasingly focused on successful leadership in deprived schools. Though there is this literature, very little is known about leading deprived small schools. Leadership in small schools is shaped by unique, context-specific challenges, particularly in areas affected by deprivation. These challenges are common in deprived contexts, but in small schools they are intensified by limited resources, lack of administrative support, increased workloads, multiple role demands and inadequate funding. As a result, leading such schools demands specific capabilities and leadership approaches. This study employed two theories as study frameworks: Leadership for learning and Contingency leadership theory. The study was carried out as a qualitative study and adopted an interpretivist paradigm. Semi-structured interviews and document reviews were used to generate data. Three research questions guided the study: (1) How the principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning? (2) How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning? (3) Why do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning in the way they do?

The findings show that principals have numerous understandings of the concept of leadership and leadership for teaching and learning. The study identified sharing leadership, leadership involving personal sacrifices and resource improvisation as the dominant leadership approaches in small schools in the deprived context. Further, the study found limited time, heavy teaching workloads for principals, insufficient educators, limited management portfolios, absence of administrative clerks and insufficient financial resources as reasons for adopting certain leadership approaches. The study concluded that the principals' varying understanding of leadership and the leadership for learning was moderated by their personal characteristics. The context of being small and deprived schools played a significant role in influencing the type of leadership approaches adopted by principals. The study recommended: All schools, regardless of size be allocated departmental heads to focus on the leadership of curriculum management. All schools allocated administrative personnel to focus on the administrative duties. The study recommends the NNSSF policy to be reviewed and be structured to address context of small schools.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL	Contingency Leadership
DBE	Department of Basic Education (since 2009)
DoE	Department of Education (pre-2009)
DH	Departmental Head
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and training
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
LfL	Leadership for Learning
NMUNS-PSI	National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
PL1	Post Level 1
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PPN	Post-Provisioning Norms
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

CHAPTER 1

AN ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

School principals are regarded as key agents for school effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Goddard et al., 2021; Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2020). There is a general view that while the principal is not the only key agent in school, principals' leadership can influence the schools' success or failure (Chikoko, et al., 2015; Goddard et al., 2021; Myende et al., 2024; Preston & Barnes, 2018; Sun et al., 2024). More focus recently has been on studies of successful school leadership in a deprived context (Chikoko et al., 2015; Lumby, 2015; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Myende, 2016; Preston & Barnes, 2018). However, there is very little literature in the public domain focusing on the leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts, especially in the South African context. Therefore, this study explored the principals' experiences in leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation. The main research question in the study was: *What are the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation?* The focus of the study was on principals' understanding of leadership and leadership for teaching and learning and then how they enact this leadership and why they enact it the way they do.

This chapter is an orientation to the study; it presents a background and describes the problem and the rationale for the study. The chapter further presents the purpose of the study and its critical research questions. Towards the end of this chapter, the clarification of concepts, the limitations and the structure of the thesis are presented. Lastly, it provides a summary of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Recently, literature on leadership (Chikoko et al., 2015; Myende, 2016; Preston & Barnes, 2018) has increasingly focused on deprived yet successful schools. Greater emphasis has been on successful leadership in these deprived schools.

1.2.1 Leadership in Deprived Schools

Researchers such as Chikoko et al (2015) and Preston and Barnes (2018) believe that in deprived school contexts, the key agent in enabling change is the school principal, because of

the power vested in his/her role as a leader. However, principals leading in deprived school contexts are expected to deal with multiple challenges related to deprivation compared to their counterparts leading schools in affluent school contexts (du Plessis, 2017). School principals in deprived contexts are expected to successfully lead these schools regardless of the challenges that come with such contexts. Some of the challenges of multiple deprived school contexts as highlighted by Chikoko et al. (2015) relate to poor socioeconomic communities, poor health and inadequate infrastructure to champion teaching and learning. Thus, schools in such contexts are always struggling in their endeavours to ensure that quality teaching and learning is taking place. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) argue that two-thirds of schools in South Africa are categorised as struggling schools and that most of them are located in deprived contexts. The realities of deprived school contexts demands a particular set of leadership practices (Myende et al., 2024).

1.2.2 Leadership in Small Schools

Leadership in small schools in the deprived context faces challenges that are context-specific, additional to those commonly encountered in schools within deprived communities (Kim et al., 2024; Mansor et al., 2022; McKay, 2018; Wildy et al., 2014). In terms of this study, small schools are defined as schools with low learner enrolment. Fargas-Malet and Bagley (2022) contend that schools are considered small in size according to learner enrolment in the school. In the South African context, the regulations relating to the National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (NMUNS-PSI) classify a small primary school as a school with learner numbers between 135 and 310 with one class per grade, and a small secondary school as a schools with learner numbers between 200 and 400 with two classes in each grade (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2013). The distinctive features of small schools may include limited resources and outdated facilities (du Plessis, 2017), difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers (See et al., 2020), work intensification and role multiplicity (du Plessis, 2015) and inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012). All public schools in South Africa receive funding in terms of National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) policy (Department of Education [DoE], 2008). The state has introduced the policy to redress past imbalances and to offer excellent education for all. However, Ndhlovu (2012) argues that the NNSSF policy has not realised its good intention. The NNSSF policy stipulates that all Quintile 1 to 3 schools to be declared no-fee-paying schools (Department of Education [DoE], 2008). According to NNSSF policy, no schools in Quintiles 1 to 3 are allowed to charge school fees from learners and they are only dependent on the funding from the DBE (White & Van Dyk,

2019). Small schools in the context of deprivation therefore fall within these categories, only dependent on the state funding. The budget allocated to small schools is usually inadequate to support the school needs and ensure effective teaching and learning. Inadequate budget allocation means inadequate resources.

Low learner enrolments in small schools have an influence on the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Low learner enrolment led to some small schools to have multigrade classes. In South Africa, multigrade classes are common in small, deprived schools where the number of the learners does not meet the required threshold to have separate classes (Joyce 2014; Mpahla & Makena, 2022; Schlebusch & Pele, 2024; Joyce, 2020). Therefore learners in several grades are taught in one classroom simultaneously (Joyce, 2014). Teaching multigrade classes can be challenging because of the widely varying needs of children of different ages (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015). Implementing the curriculum in a multigrade classroom is more complex and demanding for the delivery of quality teaching and learning (Joyce, 2014; Recla & Potane, 2023). This is equally complicated and demanding for principals to lead teaching and learning (Joyce, 2022). Leadership in small schools is associated with what researchers call role multiplicity (Cailen, 2022) or dual roles (Medina et al., 2019). Principals must attend to a number of administrative and managerial duties while being expected to handle their daily instructional tasks in schools (Elomaa et al., 2023). These principals spend most of their time teaching in the classroom or attending to their roles as school managers and administrators.

Given the argument highlighted above regarding the complex nature of leading small schools in deprived contexts, there is no doubt that leading in these contexts requires special capabilities and leadership styles. While research on school leadership in deprived contexts is growing, there is still no work specifically examining the leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived South African settings. Therefore, the study seeks to explore the principals' experiences in leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools. The focus of the study is on understanding how principals in small, deprived schools lead teaching and learning and why they lead teaching and learning in the way they do.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study is motivated by the desire to know more about the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The rationale for undertaking this study was grounded on three fundamental motivations i.e., personal, professional and theoretical motivations.

The desire grew from my teaching career journey that started 27 years ago as a Post Level 1 educator (in the South African context, Post Level 1 refers to entry level-position for educators in the school). I began my teaching career in the Umbumbulu Circuit, Umlazi District in a secondary school located in a deprived area just between a township and the outskirts of a town. I worked in that school for 10 years. My experience in that school was characterised by constant frustration caused by different factors that negatively affect my effort as an educator to produce good results despite my commitment and hard work. I had to put a lot of effort into my teaching to ensure good results. I had to conduct extra-classes in the afternoon, over the weekends and even during the holidays. After 10 years, I left the school to teach at a neighbouring ex-Model C school (South African term refers to formerly white only, state funded school). I had a wonderful teaching experience in this school, with little effort, and I always produced a 100% pass rate in my subject for the next 5 years. The experience of teaching in both these schools made me wonder if the resources the schools have and the location have a great effect on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. While the ex-Model C school had all the resources needed for quality teaching and learning to take place, it was the opposite for a semi-rural school. The first school did not have any facilities such as a library or laboratory to support teaching and learning in the classroom. The principal and educators had to spend their own time and money transporting learners to the municipal library in town. There were limited educators to teach all grades and subjects. At one stage, I had to teach three subjects at Grade 12 level due to the limited number of educators in the school. The principal sometimes had to request educators from neighbouring schools to come and assist. I felt sorry for the principal and educators as the lack of school resources affected their effort to offer quality education to learners.

In 2016 I was appointed as principal of a small primary school located in a deprived context in the Ugu District. I believed that the previous experience that I had acquired of teaching in both a deprived and a privileged school would equip me in my new adventure to successfully lead this small, deprived school. However, from my personal experience as a novice principal in a small, deprived school coming from a large urban school, I was presented with a shocking reality. I was confronted with two major challenges.

The first challenge was to try to successfully lead a school with multiple deprivations. I inherited the school with very poor infrastructure. The school had old classroom buildings that had not received any attention for a long time. These classrooms still have asbestos roofs which leaks during rainy days. The classrooms had walls with cracks and the floors with a lot of

potholes. Adjacent to these classrooms, there was a collapsing building that was deemed unsafe by the Department of Works. The school still uses the pit toilets system, and those toilets are very old and hazardous to the health of both learners and educators. The school did not have a staffroom for educators or a kitchen to prepare food for learners. As a result of these challenges, the school was losing a lot of learners to other neighbouring schools. The community cited the infrastructure as a reason to take learners to other school. As a principal, I was expected to come up with solutions to these challenges as a trusted leader of the school. Chikoko et al (2015) argues that instead of schools complaining about multiple deprived contexts, they must generate their own solutions. I wrote several letters to the Department of Education to ask them to renovate the school, but without any success. Together with the School Governing Body, we approached local businesses for donations. Through the donations, we managed to paint the school. There was a lack of parental support and academic support for learners from their parents and therefore this contributed to the low learner achievement. In the first parents meeting, only 30 parents actually attended. I felt that I was alone and did not know what to do. I felt I was in need of support. I wondered how other principals in similar situations dealt with such challenges. This experience motivated me to know more about the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools.

Second, while still grappling with the challenges of leading a school in a multiply deprived context, I faced the additional pressures unique to small schools. As Clarke and Stevens (2009) describe, I carried a "double load": unlike principals of large schools who teach only 10% of the time, I was required to teach a full timetable. This left little to no time for the administrative and management duties expected of a principal. The absence of administrative personnel at school compounded the challenges. I struggled to attend to all management tasks including the monitoring of educator's work, as expected. The office work fell behind as I did not have a free period that I could dedicate to attend to the office management tasks. I therefore had to spend lot of time outside school hours and school days to attend to matters of administration and management. As a principal, I had to be out of school for different mandatory principals' meetings called by Circuit Management or different sub-directorates of the District Management. There were many different departmental submissions that I had to honour. Being away from school for long periods not only affected my teaching time but also compromised my leadership of teaching and learning at school.

From conversations with a few principals leading small schools in deprived contexts, I learned that they had frustrations similar to mine in leading effective teaching and learning. Some

argued that there were several hindering factors limiting effective leadership of teaching and learning in small schools. They specified factors such as unqualified teachers, due to redeployment, teaching multigrade classrooms due to low enrolment, teacher burnout due to abnormal teaching loads, and inadequate resources to support teaching and learning due to insufficient school funding. Some principals stated that the DBE expected them to perform their managerial tasks as leaders, teach full loads in class, be class teachers and perform the administrative duties since most of the small schools did not have administrative personnel. Others blamed the disruption caused by the DBE, by often being away from schools because of departmental meetings and submissions. These principals shared the view that leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts was more complex than in large schools in the same context. Therefore, while I concur with the statement made by Chikoko et al (2015), I believe that leading small schools in deprived contexts has additional challenges that need further scrutiny. However, my experience and conversations with other principals remain anecdotal, which motivated me to conduct research that provides empirical evidence on the leadership complexities and lived experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts.

Research on leadership in the context of deprivation has been documented (Chikoko et al., 2015; Chikoko, 2017; Lumby, 2015; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Mkhize, 2017; Myende, 2016), but very little focus has been paid to leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation especially in the South African context. Most literature on leadership in small schools in the context of deprivation is from international studies (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022; Meyer & Patuawa, 2022; Miller, 2015; Starr, 2015).

This gap in the literature, especially in the South Africa context motivated my desire to conduct an empirical study to explore principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts, considering the complexity.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

While research on leadership in deprived school contexts has grown, the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived schools remains under-researched, particularly in South Africa. Many of the studies about leadership in small deprived school contexts are from Australia (Clarke & Wildy, 2005; Clarke & Steven, 2009, Ewington et al. 2008, Gillet et al., 2016; Starr & White, 2008) and Europe (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022; Jones, 2009; Smit et al. 2015), with few studies in the South African context (Lumby, 2011; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

However, few of the studies have focused on the challenges of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools as they only focus on the duties of teaching principals. Existing studies do not explore in-depth experiences of principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. Principals in such contexts face various challenges unique to them (Starr, 2015). Therefore, this is the gap the study intended to fill.

As highlighted in the background, most small schools struggle to draw interest from and retain teachers. They face an absence of administrative assistance, limited resources and outdated facilities as some of their challenges.

These schools receive inadequate school allocation funding in terms of NNSSF policy (DoE, 2008). Because of inadequate funding, small schools are unable to get additional resources that will support effective teaching and learning, when compared to their urban counterparts. Leadership in small schools is associated with work intensification and role multiplicity (du Plessis, 2015). The challenges in these schools overburden school leaders who are expected to provide effective leadership of teaching and learning in school. The lack of these essential features associated with school effectiveness has negative consequences for the leaders of these deprived small schools in their endeavours to enact leadership of teaching and learning. Therefore, the challenges that are associated with small and deprived schools are recursively linked and exert significant influence on the lived experiences of leaders in such schools.

The study by Starr and White (2008) focusing on Australian small rural schools concurs and contends that there is a significant difference between small, deprived school principals and their counterparts in large, privileged schools. For instance, principals in small schools do not enjoy administrative support such as administrative clerks and non-teaching personnel. Principals in small schools do not have the luxury to delegate management tasks compared to principals leading larger schools. However, they are subjected to standardised compliance irrespective of contexts (Starr & White, 2008). This study thus argues that what might be appropriate and work in large schools in terms of policy implementation may not necessarily work in small schools due to their distinct characteristics. Thus, this study explores the principals' lived experiences in leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The focus is on their understanding of the leadership for teaching and learning, how they lead teaching and learning and the reasons they lead teaching and learning the way they do.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

Against the background and the research problem highlighted above, the aim of the study was to explore the principals' experiences of leading of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The focus of the study was on the principals' understanding of leadership and leadership for teaching and learning and how principals in small, deprived school contexts lead teaching and learning. The study further looks into the reasons that account for the way leadership of teaching and learning is practised.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the aim of the study as mentioned above, the study thus poses the following research question:

- What are the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation?

To respond to the main research question effectively, three sub-questions are formulated and investigated. The following sub-questions are deduced from the main research question.

- How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning?
- How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning?
- Why do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning in the way they do?

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to explore the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. This first entails exploring how the principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning. Second, it explores how they enact the leadership of teaching and learning in their schools. Lastly, it aims to account for the reasons why they lead teaching and learning the way they do. In the background of this study, I note the growing literature on school leadership in deprived contexts but argue that research on the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived schools remains limited, particularly in South Africa. A study of this nature is important because it will contribute to the already existing knowledge base. The findings from the study will provide a new insight into the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts, especially in the

South African context. This study has significance in contributing to knowledge in the following ways: First, it hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge by bringing to the fore the voices of principals and their experiences of leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. It is important to understand how the principals' experiences affect and shape their approaches to the leadership of teaching and learning. Second, understanding principals' experiences has the potential to enable a broader understanding of challenges associated with the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts.

Further, the study hopes to shed deep insight into how the principals leading in small, deprived contexts enact the leadership of teaching and learning and the factors that influenced their reasons to lead teaching and learning the way they did. In the earlier sections, I highlighted that leadership in small schools encounters challenges specific to their context, alongside the common difficulties faced by schools in deprived areas, due to their unique characteristics. The distinctive features of small schools may include limited resources and outdated facilities (du Plessis, 2017), difficulty to attract and retain teachers (See et al., 2020), work intensification and role multiplicity (du Plessis, 2015) multigrading (Joyce, 2014) and inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012). The study therefore hoped that the findings will assist principals with recommendations on how to enact leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived context.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The previous section presented the background to the problem and gave the aim and the research question of the study. This section describes the concepts as they are used in this study.

1.8.1 The Concept of Leadership

There is abundant literature on leadership which leads to a plethora of definitions of what leadership is, therefore, there is no one universally accepted definition of leadership (Day & Antonakis, 2012; Lunenburg, 2012; Mkhize, 2017; Squires, 2018). For example, Northouse (2016) and Silva (2016) define leadership as a process of influencing the members of an organisation toward achieving a goal. Taylor et al (2014) defines leadership as the ability to develop and communicate clear visions to provide purpose to the work of an organisation. The literature provides four points of views on leadership i.e. (1) leadership as influencing others to perform at a level which brings about improvement and effectiveness in an organisation; (2) leadership as empowering others to attain organisational goals; (3) leadership as working with

others and through others to achieve the goal of an organisation and lastly, (4) leadership as developing an organisational vision (Lord et al., 2015; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Northouse, 2016; Taylor et al., 2014). Against the above viewpoints, this study understands leadership as involving the process of influencing others in an organisation towards achieving the organisational goals and vision.

1.8.2 The Concept of Management

Management refers to the process of getting things done, effectively and with other people. The term process refers to the main activities performed by efficient managers, through planning, organising, leading, motivating (Hellriegel, 2022). According to Erasmus (2019), management is a process of activity tasks (planning, organising, leading and control) that are carried out to enable a business to accomplish its goals by employing human, financial and physical resources for that purpose. Similarly, McCartney and Campbell (2006) define management as a set of activities directed at an organisation's resources with the aim of attaining organisational goals in an optimised manner. This common view indicates that management is a process that consists of four basic activities, namely, planning, organising, leading and controlling, which are performed to enable the organisation to achieve its goals (Erasmus, 2019; Hellriegel, 2022). In this study, management refers to the planning, organising, leading and controlling activities through which school leaders direct human, financial, physical and information resources to achieve the school's goals and vision efficiently and effectively.

1.8.3 The Concept of Deprivation

There has been an increase in literature on schooling and deprivation, especially within the South African context (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Lumby, 2015; Maringe et al., 2015; Mkhize, 2017). Mkhize (2017) views the term deprivation as characterised by deficit thinking, therefore it focuses on what is not available in the situation being discussed. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) see deprivation as a lack of access to resources needed to alleviate or eradicate poverty. Deprivation can manifest itself in a wide range of dimensions or domains (Abascal et al., 2022; Maringe and Moletsane, 2015; Smith et al., 2015). According to Maringe and Moletsane (2015), in the South African context, multiple deprivations have four main dimensions: (1) income and material deprivation; (2) employment deprivation; (3) education deprivation; and (4) living environment deprivation. This study uses the concept of deprivation as mainly referring to the lack of resources needed to meet certain needs.

1.8.4 The Concept of Small Schools

The research, both international (Diwan, 2015; Ewington et al., 2008; Starr & White, 2008) and local (DBE, 2013; Lumby, 2011; Naicker & Mkhabela, 2020) on small schools has been documented, but there is no general agreement on a standard definition for small schools. Many scholars define small schools by learner enrolment (Starr & White, 2008; Diwan, 2015), but there is no consensus on the exact threshold. For example, Diwan (2015) classifies Indian small schools as those with fewer than 100 learners; Kim et al. (2024) define UK small primary schools as those with 101 or fewer learners and small secondary schools as those with under 400; while McQuillan (2008) describes small schools in the United States as having 300–400 learners. This study uses the concept of small schools as defined in the National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (MUNS-PSI) in the South African context as explained in section 1.2.2 of the study.

1.8.5 The Context and Leadership

The literature on leadership documents the existence of the relationship between context and leadership (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Lord et al., 2013; Marishane, 2016). Leadership does not occur in a vacuum: it is shaped by its social context and cannot be separated from the environment in which it operates (Lord et al., 2013; Marishane, 2016). Marishane (2016) states that there is a symbiotic relationship between leadership and context arguing that, while the context influences leadership, leadership influences the context. Endrissat and von Arx (2013) argue that leadership and context are two side of the same coin. Leadership does not take place in a vacuum, but it is always influenced by a particular context (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013). Lord et al. (2013) posit that leadership is always understood in a social context. Against the above, this study specifically refers to the relationship between the small, deprived school context and the principals' leadership of teaching and learning in such schools.

1.8.6 Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Leadership for learning depicts the leadership approaches school leaders use to attain important school goals, with a primary focus on learner learning (Hallinger, 2011). Heck and Hallinger (2014) describe leadership for teaching and learning as leadership that determines learning outcomes by improving the quality of the school's educational environment. In this study leadership for teaching and learning refers to the different leadership approaches employed by school leaders in leading teaching and learning.

1.9 THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This thesis has seven chapters dedicated to different purposes and areas of the study. Below I describe what each chapter entails.

Chapter 1 presents the orientation to the study. The chapter provides a background to the study, describes the problem statement and the rationale for the study, the aim of the study and the critical research questions that guided it. The chapter further provides a clarification of concepts and the significance of the study. Lastly, it outlines the structure of the study and provides a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review relevant to the study. This chapter presents an overview of the current national and international debates and a discussion of the leadership for teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts.

Chapter 3 presents and discusses the theories that were adopted to form a theoretical framework for this study. The chapter begins by presenting the two theories adopted by the study: leadership for learning and the contingency leadership theory. In discussing the theories, the chapter covers their development and constructs, and later concludes with an explanation of how the two theories are integrated to present the framework for the study. Later, the chapter presents a diagrammatic representation showing how these two theories are used as a theoretical lens in this study.

Chapter 4 provides a methodological orientation of the study, its research design and methods. The chapter begins by describing the research paradigm adopted for this study. It discusses how the interpretive paradigm, in terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology relates to this qualitative study. Second, it outlines the research design and its justification. Third, the chapter describes the procedure followed in selecting participants for the study. Fourthly, the chapter describes the variety of data generation methods and how the data was analysed. Lastly, it discusses the ethical considerations and trustworthiness issues as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 presents the data from the first sub-question on how the principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning. The chapter is presented in three sections. The first section of the chapter presents a detailed profile description of each site where the study was conducted. This is followed by profiling the participants of the study who are employed as principals at these sites. The second section presents the data generated

from the interviews with participants focusing on the first sub-questions. The chapter is then concluded by presenting a summary highlighting the key issues from the findings.

Chapter 6 is a second data analysis chapter. The chapter focuses on the data analysis of the second and the third sub-questions of the study, namely, understanding how principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning, and an account of the reasons why they lead teaching and learning in the way they do.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion on what I learned from the findings as they relate to the study's research questions. This chapter will be presented in five sections. First, I look back and provide a summary of the study. The next section presents what I learned from the data and interprets the findings through the study's theoretical framework, using leadership for learning and contingency leadership to make sense of the results. Finally, I present the contributions made by the study. I conclude the chapter by presenting the study's recommendations.

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study by outlining its background and stating the research problem. I argued that leadership in small schools is shaped by unique, context-specific challenges, particularly in areas affected by deprivation. These challenges are not only common to schools in deprived contexts but are further compounded by the distinct nature of small schools. As a result, leading such schools demands specific capabilities and leadership approaches. I outlined the research questions, which defined the scope and direction of the study. In addition, I explained the personal and professional motivations behind my decision to conduct this research. While I agree with Chikoko et al (2015) that schools should seek their own solutions rather than focusing on the limitations of deprived contexts, my experiences suggest that leading small schools in these environments involves additional complexities that deserve deeper investigation. Lastly, I clarified key concepts related to the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The next chapter addresses local and international debates on leadership of small, deprived school contexts.

CHAPTER 2

LEADERSHIP OF SMALLS SCHOOLS IN DEPRIVED CONTEXTS: LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEBATES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explores the principals' experiences regarding the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. It focuses on understanding how these principals understand leadership teaching and learning and the reasons that account for the way they do things. To facilitate achieving the above, the study seeks to address the main research question: *What are the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context deprivation?* In Chapter 1, I presented the orientation, the background, problem and the rationale of the study. Later I presented the overview of the whole thesis. This chapter presents a review of literature on the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

Maringe and Moletsane (2015) state that multiple deprivation is still a new concept and has not been sufficiently conceptualised. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) further posit that there is inadequate information in the literature that describes how deprivation affects learners and learning, and on the challenges experienced by leaders leading schools located in contexts of multiple deprivations. Part of this literature review deals with how the concept of multiple deprivations is perceived by different scholars, especially in the field of education. Different scholars have used various terms like challenging context (Gillett et al., 2016) and disadvantaged context (Lamb et al., 2014; Zikhali, 2013). However, there has recently been an increased focus on the usage of the concept of deprivation in educational leadership research (Chikoko et al., 2015; Lumby, 2015; Mkhize, 2017; Bhengu & Myende, 2016).

An analysis of literature has shown that different scholars have different understandings of the meaning of the concept deprivation, especially in the context of schooling. For example, Maringe and Moletsane (2015) distinguish between multiple deprivations and challenging contexts. They argue that multiple deprivations refer to the combined impact of a range of indicators of poverty on the quality of people's livelihoods. It differs significantly from the idea of a challenging context, which tends to generate little sense of measurability and comparability across different communities. According to Maringe and Moletsane (2015),

multiple deprivation, as a concept, has been developed to implement measures for comparability between circumstances of different communities, whereas a challenging context as a concept does not lend itself to measurability. Lincaru and Atanasiu (2015) note that, deprivation is shaped by how individuals or groups perceive their conditions within their local community or the broader society. On the other hand, Bhengu and Myende (2016) make no distinction between the concepts of multiple deprivations and challenging contexts, arguing that both refers to a negative situation that makes the provision of quality of education difficult. According to Bhengu and Myende (2016), the two concepts are interconnected and can be used interchangeably. On the other hand, Maringe and Moletsane (2015) state that while the concept of poverty and deprivation are closely interrelated; they are a very distinct in meaning. They argue that, in terms of material resources people can be rich and yet be deprived in other areas of life. Noble et al. (2019) similarly argue that poverty reflects a lack of capital to meet basic needs, while deprivation can arise from shortages in other essential resources beyond income. Therefore, according to Noble et al. (2019) deprivation refers to people's unfulfilled needs, on the other hand poverty refers to the lack of access to the resources required to fulfil those needs. Lumby (2015) suggests that poverty is not in itself a deprivation but argues that it may lead to deprivation if it results in a decline in the way of life that is perceived appropriate by social standard.

Maringe and Moletsane (2015) postulate that multiple deprivation is a multidimensional concept. In education, it implies a number of different factors that come together to undermine the education benefit intended for a group of learners. They further argue that these factors are prevalent in an environment where communities face socioeconomic hardship, a lack of an educationally stimulating environment, and cultural and social dissonance. Furthermore, such communities are exposed to many such factors at the same time. In the following section, I present the dimensions of deprivation and how they negatively affect education.

2.2.1 Domains of Deprivations

Noble and Wright (2013) define multiple deprivation as a weighted combination of discrete dimensions of poverty. Noble et al. (2019) echo this, stipulating that Townsend first set the foundation for articulating multiple deprivations as an accumulation of different types of deprivation. Based on census data internationally and in South Africa, multiple deprivation indices have been centred around various key domains (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). According to Maringe and Moletsane (2015) the domains include but are not limited to income

and material deprivation, education deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and living environment deprivation (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015).

Below, I provide a detailed explanation of each of the dimensions listed above. Each dimension consists of a basket of indicators on which the domain is based.

2.2.1.1 Income and material deprivation domain

Income and material deprivation refers to the number of people in an area experiencing relatively low income and/or material deprivation, which includes both people that are unemployed and those that have work but earn a low income (Noble et al., 2019). The indicators of income and material deprivation according to Noble et al. (2010) include numbers of people who have a low household income, below 40% in value income, people without refrigeration, a television or radio.

Most of the people with income deprivation have very little or no income, and, thus, always struggle to provide for their families. The academic attainments of children in such households are usually negatively affected by the home situation as they rely on financial support from parents to obtain the necessary resources to support their education. Unfortunately, financial lack does not always allow this. To address this problem, the government introduced the NNSSF policy (DoE, 2008).

The NNSSF policy legislates progressive funding of schools, as mentioned earlier, where schools are categorised into national quintiles based on the communities' socioeconomic status, where Quintile 5 represents the well-resourced schools and Quintile 1 represents the poorest schools (Ndhlovu, 2012). The NNSSF policy stipulates that all Quintile 1 to 3 schools are to be declared no-fee schools. Thus, no schools in quintiles 1 to 3 are allowed to collect school fees from learners and the schools thus depend entirely on the funding provided by the government. Because these schools do not charge school fees, their material resources are usually inadequate to support the delivery of quality education.

However, Ndhlovu (2012) argues that although the NNSSF policy aims to reduce funding inequality and improve education quality, it has not achieved its intentions because the ranking system considers only a school's physical location and ignores learner demographics. Learners in these schools are not expected to pay school fees, but there are many resources these learners need to support their education. For example, some of the schoolwork might require them to use the internet or to watch television to get information. The learners from the poorest

households may have neither the benefit of owning a cell phone or a computer, nor having a television at home to access the required information. For them, owning such gadget is a luxury. Since most of the parents with income deprivation earn little or no income, they find it very difficult to give adequate support for the education of their children. Thus, learners in a deprived environment do not always have access to adequate resources that support quality learning.

Maringe and Moletsane (2015) contend that schools with material deprivation have fewer qualified staff, many of whom routinely seek employment in less deprived schools with good infrastructure. Most of the deprived schools are characterised by a lack of classrooms conducive to quality teaching and learning, and no specialised buildings such as libraries and laboratories supporting the delivery of quality teaching and learning.

2.2.1.2 Employment deprivation domain

Noble et al. (2019) suggest that employment deprivation relates to the number of economically active population in an area that is involuntarily excluded from labour market. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) list the indicators of the employment deprivation domain as a number of people who are unemployed or unable to work because of disability.

(Gradín, 2012) argues that the employment of household members is the main source of regular income. Thus, when one household member is excluded from the labour market, the impact extends to the entire household, which experiences reduced resources and the broader hardships associated with unemployment (Gradín, 2012). Mooi-Reci and Bakker (2015) share this view, suggesting that socioeconomic change that comes with parents' employment in the household is not limited to one's career but may well extend to that of their children. It may thus influence their children's educational attainment. For this reason, a household with unemployed members increases economic insecurity for the household. A high rate of unemployment in the families or communities exposed to multiple deprivations makes it difficult for the adult members to provide the much-needed resources to support their children's education.

2.2.1.3 Health deprivation domain

The health deprivation domain measures the population experiencing poor quality of life due to poor physical or medical health. The domain measures the morbidity, disability and mortality that may be predictive of future health (Noble et al., 2019). Noble et al. (2010) state that, the indicator of health deprivation domains is the "years of potential life lost".

In a study conducted by the Education Initiative (2014), it was found that poor health can lead to educational setbacks and interfere with schooling, thus putting educational attainment at risk. Children who live in a household in a health deprivation context may have difficulty with learning at school. Things that happen in the household may cause the children to have trouble concentrating in class. For example, if children are worried about the health state of their family members, especially parents, while they are at school, they may not be able to pay attention. That may put the children's education at risk. Matingwina (2018) maintains that some of the problems that emanate from health deprivation include a higher probability of school failures, poor levels of concentration, absenteeism, grade retention and increased dropout rates.

2.2.1.4 Education deprivation domain

Maringe and Moletsane (2015) describe education deprivation as referring to the number of people in an area with low levels of education. According to Noble et al. (2010), the intent of the education deprivation domain is to understand the scope of deprivation of educational qualification in a local area. The indicator of education deprivation domain is the "number of 18 to 65 years old with no schooling at a secondary level".

The lack of education achievement in the local population has a negative impact on schooling in such areas. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) maintain that a lack of parental education especially up to secondary level has implications regarding their ability to support their children's learning, e.g., with completing their homework. Drajea (2015) concurs that when parents lack education, they face challenges that are likely to impact negatively on their children's education. Drajea (2015) further argues that the development of the child in all aspects does not start at school; neither can the school alone do everything to ensure desirable educational outcomes. This means the children's academic development in schools must start at home with the base support. The parents' contribution to their children's education is vital but requires that parents should be literate. Children who are living in a household where most of co-inhabitants are illiterate will struggle to receive adequate support with their schooling. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) further state that communities that face deprivation lack an educationally stimulating environment.

2.2.1.5 Living environment deprivation domain

The living environment deprivation domain refers to the number of people in an area living in a poor-quality environment (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). Among other things, Langa (2013)

states that communities exposed to living environment deprivation are characterised by a lack access to basic services such as water, electricity and poor infrastructure. Noble et al. (2010) describe living environment deprivation as households without piped water, flush toilets, electricity or telephones, as well as those living in shacks or in overcrowded housing with two or more people per room.

Langa (2013) contends that most schools in multiple deprived contexts are faced with difficulties that arise from a poor environment that is characterised by high levels of poverty and social impoverishment. Therefore, leadership of teaching and learning in these environments is always negatively affected. Most of the households that face environmental deprivation do not even have basic needs like electricity and reliable water supply. This poses a challenge for children who live in such conditions as some of the resources they will need to support their education rely on a reliable supply of electricity. These challenges have the potential to hinder the educational attainment of children who dwell in such environments. Langa (2013) thus asserts that the challenges presented by the environment can prevent the educational achievement of children in those areas and may even limit the educational achievement of the most promising learners. It is unfortunate that most schools in multiple deprived contexts serve learners who experience such impoverishment that adversely leads to poor educational performance in school.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership has been studied and acknowledged at length, aiming at forming leadership competences for leaders (Clipa, 2018). McCleskey (2014) states that, the study of leadership spans more than 100 years. Mkhize (2017) contends that the literature on leadership is very rich which has led to the plethora of definitions of what leadership is. It is therefore not surprising that there is no one universally accepted definition of leadership. Silva (2016) argues that the searching for a one universally accepted definition of leadership may be impossible since the precise definition depends on the researcher and the phenomenon of study. Day and Antonakis (2012) share a similar view arguing that given the complex nature of leadership, finding a widely accepted definition of leadership is unattainable and a universal accepted definition does not exist.

In the light of the complex nature of leadership and seemingly no widely acceptable definition of leadership, the literature suggests that scholars agree on some commonalities in understanding the concept of leadership. For instance, Maringe and Moletsane (2015) argue

that literature gives emphasis to four perspective on leadership:(1) leadership that involves influencing other people to work towards efficiency, effectiveness and achieving organisational improvement; (2) leadership that involves empowering others to achieve the goal of an organisation; (3) leadership that involves working with others to achieve the goal of an organisation; and (4) leadership that involves creating a vision for the organisation. Similarly, Northouse (2016) seems to concur and identifies four common perspectives of leadership i.e., leadership involves process; leadership involves influence; leadership involves working in a group context; and leadership involves goal achievement. He thus views the concept of leadership as a process of influencing the action of group toward goal achievement (Northouse, 2023). The definition by Northouse is comparable to the one by Silva (2016) who defines leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an organised group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement. According to Silva (2016), leadership is not just an individual trait but a process of influence upon others. Therefore, according to these scholars: Maringe and Moletsane (2015); Northouse (2023) and Silva (2016), leadership is a process of influencing others in an organisation. Therefore, according to Lunenburg (2012) leaders are able to influence others because of the formal power associated with the position they hold. For example, when a principal leaves and a new principal takes the position, the authority attached to the role transfers with it, enabling the incoming principal to influence school activities. On the other hand, Mkhize (2017) further states that the significance of defining leadership as a process is that it occurs over a period of time and is not only limited to the time when a leader is formally appointed. These definitions therefore capture the essentials of a leader being able to inspire others because of the position that they hold in an organisation.

Taylor et al. (2014) state that the creation of a vision for the organisation is the definition of leadership, thus defining leadership as the ability to create and articulate clear visions, meaning and purpose at an organisation. Lord et al. (2013) argue that leadership is about articulating a vision and working with others to transform that vision into reality. The most noticeable aspect in these definitions includes perceiving leadership as creating an organisational vision in which all members are motivated toward achieving it. Wanasika and Krahnke (2016) argue that a clear vision enhances organisational success by motivating members, strengthening shared values and guiding the achievement of collective goals. Taylor et al. (2014) echo this, suggesting that when a vision is not well-articulated, people do not act, and people spend most of their time trying to find which direction to go in.

The above discussion clearly indicates that the success of any organisation in achieving its goal and realisation of its vision lies in the leadership powers vested in the leaders. Leadership tends to direct the effectiveness and success of organisations (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). In the context of school leadership therefore, the effectiveness of the principal as a leader influences the school effectiveness as an organisation. The principal is vested with the power of influence due to the position she/he holds in the school. Studies by Chikoko et al (2015) and Preston and Barnes (2018) show that in a deprived school context, the key agent in enabling change is the school principal, because of the power vested in this role as a leader. The principal as a leader of a school is tasked with a huge responsibility to lead the school towards achieving its vision. However, the principal together with the School Governing Body (SGB) needs to create and clearly articulate the school vision to all school stakeholders and have the ability to influence all of them to work together as a team toward achieving it.

2.4 MANAGEMENT

Management as a concept has been studied for some time, with the first publication appearing almost two centuries ago, in 1825 (Nienaber, 2010). A study by Cohen and Eimicke (2020) acknowledges that the concept of management traces its evolution back to Frederick Winslow Taylor at the beginning of the twentieth century with his influential management theory called Taylorism. A common view is that management is a process of activities that are carried out to enable an organisation to achieve its goal (Erasmus, 2019; Hellriegel et al., 2012). To reiterate, McCartney and Campbell (2006) define management as a set of activities directed at an organisation's resources with the aim of achieving organisational goals in an efficient and effective manner. In addition, Hellriegel et al (2012) defines management as the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people. The definition by Hellriegel focuses on three important components: the 'process' refers to management activities or tasks: leading, motivating, organising and planning; effectiveness refers to performing those activities to ensure that the organisation achieves its goals; and efficiency refers to how well activities are performed (Hellriegel et al., 2012). According to McCartney and Campbell (2006), Hellriegel et al (2012) and Erasmus (2019) the management process comprises of four basic functions, namely, controlling leading, motivating, organising and planning and the manager uses these functions to achieve goals and objectives of an organisation.

2.4.1 Planning

Hellriegel et al (2012) states that planning is considered to be the main activity of management and it determines the direction of an organisation. Planning involves setting organisational objectives and outlining the steps, resources and tasks needed to achieve them, thereby establishing the organisation's direction (Hellriegel et al., 2012).

2.4.2 Organising

Organising is the second step in the management process. After planning has been done, those abstract ideas must then be turned into reality, thus turning the plan into action (Hellriegel et al., 2012). Erasmus (2019) therefore contends that organising includes creating an organisational structure and a framework of roles be employed to reach the predetermined goals.

2.4.3 Leading

Hellriegel et al (2012) argues that planning and organising are only initial steps to begin a process, the process is complete, but it still needs to be implemented. It is this step that is crucial. Hellriegel et al (2012) defines leading as a management activity which involves an ongoing process of motivating others to perform the tasks necessary to achieve the goals of an organisation through effective communication.

2.4.4 Controlling

Controlling is the last step in the management process. According to Rigolosi (2012), controlling is a process that involves setting up systems of ongoing monitoring and evaluation by comparing results with plans so that the adjustment in plans can be made accordingly. The function of control is therefore executed to ensure that the activity does not diverge from the predetermined plans.

Daries (2021) argues that in a school, principals are responsible for ensuring that the school is effective, efficient and safe through effective management. Therefore, they implement management activities or tasks such as planning, organising, staffing, coordinating, motivating, leading, monitoring and controlling through the process of delegation so that the school's objectives are accomplished.

2.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In this section, the study first looks at how different scholars view or understand the concept of leadership as related to management. Later, it argues the position to be taken by this study on the use of the two concepts. Some scholars such as Lopez (2014), Azad et al. (2017) and Wajdi (2017) use the concepts of leadership and management interchangeably, while other scholars such as Toor (2011), Bârgău (2015) and Lunenburg (2020) view leadership and management as two distinctive concepts, therefore not synonymous. Bârgău (2015) argues that the present debate about leadership and management is not new; the subject of the differences between leadership and management has been discussed at length in the literature. Dike et al. (2015) concur that the debates on leadership and management have been ongoing for decades. Azad et al (2017) cited Abraham Zaleznik as the first scholar to take a stand on this issue in an article published in the Harvard Business Review in 1977 which described leadership and management as two separate functions.

Lunenburg (2013), for example, is one of the scholars who believe that leadership and management are not synonymous, arguing that leadership and management entail unique sets of activities and functions therefore are two distinct concepts. For Lunenburg, the leadership process involves developing and communicating a vision for the organisation, and motivating people to execute that vision. On the other hand, management processes involve activities such as planning, organising, controlling, budgeting, staffing and problem-solving. Therefore, the leadership process creates change in organisation whereas the management process ensures stability in the organisation. This view is echoed by Bârgău (2015), arguing that leadership and management are terms that are frequently used interchangeably. However, they are not the same. Bârgău (2015) further states that leadership is a group of processes that uses influence to attain organisational goals and management is an administrative means of supervising and directing. According to Bârgău (2015), management focuses on creating order and stability, which results in consistency, while leadership aims to bring about change and movement in an organisation. Highlighting these differences, Toor (2011) draws three distinctions: leadership drives organisational change, whereas management maintains order; leadership uses power and influence, while management relies on power and structure to sustain order; and leadership empowers people, whereas management enforces authority.

However, on the other hand, some scholars view leadership and management as essentially the same concepts, thus using them interchangeably or acknowledging that there is some degree of

overlap (Lopez, 2014). Azad et al (2017) argues that leadership and management are just an example of the lexical concept of polysemy, meaning the use words in a different form to describe a related concept. Thus, leading and managing are not just complementary; but they are the same concept (Azad et al., 2017). Wajdi (2017) argues that leadership and management overlap, that both involve influence and working with others to achieve a common goal. Another notion of overlap between leadership and management is confirmed by Mabrouk (2018). When principals are influencing others member of staff to achieve school goals, they are involved in leadership, and when they are doing planning, organising, staffing and controlling, they are involved in management. Shonubi (2012) therefore argues that, when principals are performing their everyday work, they are hardly aware of whether they are leading or managing – they are simply executing their work as principals. This study seeks to explore the principals’ experiences in leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. It is for this reason that this study uses the words management and leadership with some degree of overlap.

2.6 LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the earlier part of the chapter, I looked at the complex nature of the concept of leadership with its myriad definitions. The above section presented a view on how different scholars understand and define the concept of leadership. In this section, I present literature on different leadership approaches for leading teaching and learning and analyse the key principles of each. The intention is to try to identify different leadership typologies or approaches that are used in response to different contexts. Marshall et al. (2011) state that the main objective of leading teaching and learning in schools is to improve learning, and therefore argue that there are three key responsibilities of leaders of teaching and learning to achieve that objective: to develop a school culture where teaching and learning are prioritised and valued; to develop both educators and their teaching practices; and to develop and maintain a collaborative culture where teamwork becomes a key leadership strategy (Marshall et al., 2011). Day et al. (2016) contends that there is no single leadership formula for achieving success, successful leadership draws on element of different styles.

2.6.1 Transformational Leadership

Bush and Glover (2014) posit that transformational leadership suggests that the main focus of leadership should be the commitment and capabilities of members in an organisation. The level of commitment and the capacity of members moving towards achieving the organisational goal

results in greater production. Anderson (2017) posits that in transformational leadership, a leader who works with others to identify areas that need change in an organisation, develops and implements a vision to guide the change. Transformational leaders therefore focus on the performance of group members and motivate them to work together towards achieving a common organisational goal. Sun and Leithwood (2012) view the aim of transformational leadership as motivating others to work toward achieving organisational goals instead of personal interests. These leaders enact their leadership by motivating and inspiring their followers to work towards achieving common organisational goals instead of their individual self-interest. They emphasise teamwork rather than individual effort. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) state that, transformational leadership improves the morale and performance of members using various methods to inspire and challenge them to take pride and ownership in their work. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) identify the four components of transformational leadership as charisma, inspiration motivation, intellectual engagement and personal and individual attention. According to Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013), principals who are transformational leaders are proactive, work to change the school culture by implementing new ideas and motivate their educators by encouraging teamwork rather than individualisation. They put the interests of the group first.

Principals who display transformational leadership focus on creating new school norms such as collaboration and teamwork, modelling positive attitudes and inspiring staff commitment. They encourage creativity and support innovative problem-solving. Transformational leaders achieve stronger performance by showing genuine interest in educators, promoting shared goals and mission, and motivating staff to prioritise collective interests over individual ones (Rath, 2016).

However, transformational leadership does not come without critique. Amongst other criticisms, Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) contend that transformational leadership theory assumes the heroic leadership stereotype. Odumeru and Ogboma (2013) argue that transformational leadership assumes that the performance of the individual or group in an organisation is dependent on the skills and expertise of a leader to give direction and influence others. The theory postulates that an effective leader will influence other to sacrifice themselves and put in extra effort. Influence is a one-way direction which flows from the leader down to other members. In a school environment, a transformational leadership approach assumes that the principal as a leader has the ultimate power of influence and gives no recognition to educators as followers. Lee (2014) critiques transformational leadership for redirecting

attention away from issues of power and diverse needs toward a shared goal, arguing that this elevates leaders above followers' needs and becomes anti-democratic. In the deprived school context, the key agent in enabling change is the school principal, because of the power vested in his/her role as a leader (Chikoko, 2015; Preston & Barnes, 2018). Transformational leadership is utilised by principals to influence educators to reach a high level of commitment and the capacity towards achieving the school goals.

2.6.2 Instructional Leadership

Sofo et al. (2012) define instructional leadership as school-based leadership that focuses on learners and their learning as the primary purpose of schools. It provides improved learning opportunities for learners by developing a school climate that influences the educators' behaviour. In addition, according to Ismail et al. (2018), instructional leadership is associated with the roles of a principal such as coordinating and supervising curriculum delivery, setting school aims, encouraging learning and promoting the professional development of educators. Ismail et al. (2018), further describe instructional leadership as having three dimensions. The first dimension is framing and communicating the school vision, mission and goals. The second dimension is managing the instructional programme, which includes coordinating curriculum, supervising classroom instruction and monitoring learner progress. The third dimension is developing a positive school learning climate, which includes promoting educator professional development, protecting contact time and maintaining high visibility. Therefore, effective instructional leaders develop a collaborative culture and provide teaching and learning resources for educator and learners (Taylor et al., 2015).

The discussion above indicates that the principal objective of instructional leaders is to enhance teaching and learning opportunities at school. Therefore, principals who are instructional leaders focus their attention on ensuring that effective teaching and learning, as the primary objective of the school is taking place. The role of the principal as instructional leader is to develop a clear vision and mission for the school, to create a common goal for everyone, and to control and monitor the delivery of the instructional programme at school. Gülcan (2012) describes the role of instructional leadership principals at school as (1) defining the school mission; (2) determining and sharing the goals of the school; assessing, developing and implementing them; (3) controlling and assessing teaching time; (4) motivating learners to learn and maintain good settings for learning, collaboration and cooperation; (5) rewarding the

success of staff; ensuring professional development of teachers; and (6) initiating organisational change and strengthening communication.

However, instructional leadership is criticised by some scholars as being too directive (Pan et al., 2015). Bush and Glover (2014) argue that this model is limited because it focuses more on teaching than on learning and reinforces the “heroic principal” stereotype, overlooking the leadership roles of deputy principals, heads of department and classroom educators. The principals leading teaching and learning in small deprived school contexts always ensure that the core function of the school, teaching and learning is always placed at the centre. Munna (2023) further explains that instructional leaders in small schools are more directly involved compared to principals in larger schools where they focus on building the leadership capacity of other staff.

2.6.3 Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is regarded as most the prominent leadership approach in the present era; tracing back its origin to the mid-1960s (Harris, 2011). The distributed leadership approach has drawn the interest of many researchers and policymakers and has become leadership of choice for many (Bush, 2013; Harris, 2011; Lumby, 2013; Spillane, 2015). The distributed leadership approach has been viewed by Spillane (2015) as an alternative to a traditional “great man’s” leadership approach. At least two ideas are central in emphasising distributed leadership as an alternative approach to organisational leadership, in this instance, school leadership. First, it assumes that school leadership is a shared responsibility, involving not only the principal but also formal and informal leaders such as educators, parents and learners. Bush (2013) posits that leadership is not confined to formal leaders but may arise anywhere in the school. According to Bush (2013) distributed leadership, unlike other traditional approaches that emphasise formal leadership, especially of the principal as the only one with the power of influence, recognises both formally and informally designated leadership. Second, Lumby (2013) posits that the principle of distributed leadership suggest that leadership is open to everyone with relevant expertise in a school, arguing that the skills and experience of diverse people are necessary to create successful leadership. According to Lumby (2013), the great emphasis of distributed leadership is on the engagement of a wider group of staff in a school instead of one leader. Therefore, Bush and Glover (2012) define distributed leadership as the expansion of leadership roles in schools beyond those in the formal leadership or administration positions.

This clearly illustrates that principals who use distributed leadership approaches at their schools acknowledge that even though they are an important part of leadership practices at school, there are other sources of leadership within the school. In such schools, leadership is not only centralised in the formal position of the principal but extends to other individuals such as deputy principals, departmental head (formal leadership) and educators, parents, as well as learners (informal leadership). Therefore, in such schools, leadership is more widely shared and spread among multiple leaders within the school. Harris (2011) argues that the principal's role in distributed leadership is not that of authoritarianism but of power sharing and shared decision-making.

However, Harris (2011) warns that while there is a shift from the absolute authority of the principal to shared authority of multiple leaders in a school, it does not mean that the principal's leadership is no longer necessary. Without the effective leadership of the principal, even a distributed leadership approach is unlikely to be successful. Principals play a crucial role in distributed leadership and in building capacity throughout the school. Therefore, the principal's role is to create the conditions for others to lead rather than to lead from the front (Harris, 2011). Principals leading small, deprived school contexts adopt this approach is because of the limited management portfolios caused by the limited resources associated with the characteristics of small schools in the deprived contexts. Therefore, leadership roles are distributed even beyond those in the formal leadership positions.

2.6.4 Situational Leadership

As the name implies, the situational approach is focused on leadership in particular situations. The principle of situational leadership is founded on the proposition that every situation is unique, and therefore, there is no approach to leadership that can universally fit all situations (Khan, 2013). The situational leadership approach is a style of leadership that belongs in the category of contingency theories. Nawaz and Khan (2016) also argue that there is no one universally acceptable approach to lead because the internal and external environmental context may require leaders to adapt to that particular context or situation. Sott and Bender (2025) posit that situational leadership is a type of leadership that is able to acknowledge complex and unpredictable situations and able to respond flexibly and creatively. It is therefore noted that the advocates of the situational leadership approach believe that there is no one leadership approach that will be appropriate to all situations. One kind of leadership approach can be appropriate in one situation, and be inappropriate in another situation. Wright (2017)

for example, argued that there is no wrong or right leadership approach, each situation is unique, therefore it requires a certain type response from the leader. Sethuraman and Suresh (2014) share this opinion, stating that an effective leadership approach can be applied, based on understanding the situation.

According to McCleskey (2014), principals who enact situational leadership do not lean on one leadership approach. These principals use different approaches depending on the situation they encounter at that time. They choose the best style based on the situation and alter their leadership approach to fit and respond to the situational need. These principals dedicate their time to understanding the context within and around their school and try to devise strategies to respond to that situation. McCleskey (2014), notes that successful situational leadership needs a reasonable understanding of the situation to adopt an appropriate response.

First, principals who are successful in implementing situational leadership understand the educators they are leading and are able to assess their skills and their maturity levels when it comes to their work. Wright (2017) contends that an effective leader would be able to judge the responses needed, based on the ability of the followers to complete the task. Rosch and Anthony (2012) state that leaders who use this approach recognise that all situations are different therefore each requires a different leadership approach. Leaders must be flexible and creative when dealing with different individual members in a school and chose the leadership approach that acknowledges the skill and comfort level of the individual member. For example, Rosch and Anthony (2012) argue that a novice educator would require closer supervision and monitoring in completing the task than a senior educator. In this way, leaders adapt their leadership approach to suit individuals' needs.

Second, they understand that in the school context, no two schools are the same; each school is unique and has its unique contextual factors. These contexts demand a leadership style that is responsive to that context. For example, the South African education context has both developed and developing economies simultaneously, where the developed economy section consists of privileged, functioning schools and the developing economy section consists of deprived dysfunctional schools (Myende & Bhengu, 2016). Therefore, situational leaders are able to bring about sustained improvement in their schools by adapting their leadership styles to fit the school context.

However, like any other leadership approach discussed above, situational leadership has its critics. Khan (2017) alludes to the shortcoming of situational leadership as being unable to

distinguish between the issues of person-to-person versus the issues of a group. There is a vast difference between matching styles and approaches to one employee than to those of 20 (Khan 2017). Principals leading teaching and learning in small deprived school contexts utilises situational leadership approach by recognising their school situational contexts and adapt their leadership styles to respond to the school context. Rosch and Anthony (2012) state that leaders who utilise situational approaches recognise that different situations require different leadership styles, therefore they must always be flexible.

2.7 THE CONTEXT AND LEADERSHIP

In this section, I discuss the relationship that exists between the context and leadership, especially with regards to school leadership. This is done to gain insight into the influence context may have on the leadership of schools.

The field of leadership is increasingly recognising the influence of context in understanding leadership (Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Lord et al., 2013). This is evident in most recent literature on leadership (Chikoko et al., 2015; du Plessis, 2017; Gu, 2013; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Marishane, 2016; Mkhize, 2017; Zikhali & Perumal 2016), in which the concept of context seems to feature prominently, giving substantial evidence for the existence of a link between context and leadership. Marishane (2016) argues that it has now become a universally accepted fact that leadership cannot be divorced from the context in which it operates. Lord et al. (2013) share the same view, stating that leadership does not happen in a vacuum and must be understood in a social context.

School leadership is no different: there is a strong relationship between the leadership style of a school leader and the school context. Marishane (2016) refers to it as a symbiotic relationship and explains that leadership style and school context is interdependent: the context shapes the leader's style, and the leader's style, in turn, shapes the context. Endrissat and von Arx (2013) concur, saying that leadership practices and context are two sides of the same coin. This clearly means leadership does not operate in a vacuum and is always influenced by a certain context. As discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter, the leadership style the principal ought to enact to be successful must be responsive to the context. Therefore, each leadership style or approach principals choose to use is somehow influenced by the contexts in which they operate. Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017) identify four contexts in school leadership as "situated contexts", "professional contexts", "material contexts" and "external contexts". They define situated contexts as those aspects of context that are linked to the history and location of the

school. Professional contexts include value, educator commitment and management of policy in school. These elements of professional context can have an influence on school leaders. Material contexts are the aspects such as infrastructure, technology, staffing and budget and external contexts refer to aspects which can relate to local communities and their expectations of the school (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2017). Principals leading schools located in deprived contexts, for instance, have to deal with difficulty in meeting expectations of the society in fulfilling children's need to secure their rights, while functioning in a context where rights are denied (Lumby 2015). Each context can have a major influence on how leadership is enacted to respond to the context.

School contexts can differ greatly in terms of location, the quality of resources and infrastructure; thus, the leadership ought to differ in how it responds to a given context. The South African context for example, comprises of schools from both privileged and deprived contexts. First, schools in these two contexts differ in terms of human and material resources and infrastructure (Maringe and Moletsane, 2015). Some of the distinctive features of deprived school contexts, as highlighted by Chikoko et al. (2015) relate to poor socioeconomic communities, poor health and inadequate infrastructure supporting teaching and learning. Thus, schools in such contexts often struggle to ensure the delivery of quality teaching and learning. Communities in these contexts are incapable of supporting their children's education and being involved in the life of the school. Privileged schools, on the other hand, are totally different.

Another contextual factor is size of the school (du Plessis, 2017; Ewington, 2008; Lowe, 2006; Ndhlovu, 2012; Starr & White, 2008). These differences have an impact on the leadership. Leadership in small schools faces more context-specific influences than those commonly experienced by big schools in the same context of deprivation, due to their distinctive characteristics; thus, these distinctive characteristics of small schools appear to distinguish them from big schools. These special characteristics may include limited resources and outdated facilities (du Plessis, 2017); difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers (Lowe, 2006); absence of administrative assistance (Ewington et al., 2008); work intensification and role multiplicity (Starr & White 2008); and inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012). Therefore, leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts appears to be more challenging than leading in bigger schools within the same context.

Lastly, the organisational complexity of the school can have an influence on the leadership (Mkhize, 2017). Mkhize (2017) argues that due to the differences in school structure, principals leading in secondary schools are less involved in instructional leadership practices compared to principals leading in primary schools. The context of leadership in primary schools differs considerably from secondary schools.

Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017) provide some important guidelines with regard to leadership in diverse contexts. These guidelines include school leaders acknowledging the diverse nature of context; being sensitive to context and being flexible in their strategies to respond to contexts. Contingency leadership theory as a lense toward understanding how being in a small school in a deprived context influences the way principals lead teaching and learning is discussed at great length in the next chapter.

2.8 CONCEPT OF SMALL SCHOOLS

Makori and Onderi (2014) argue that the concept of school size has been debated in the past. The debate was first influenced by two publications at the beginning of 1960s: First, by Conant, published in 1959 and second by Barker and Gump published in 1964. These publications led to a debate about school size resulting in 'small school' and 'large school' movements (Makori & Onderi, 2014). However, the absence of consensus with regard to the definition of a small school is still evident in the literature today. Starr and White (2008) for instance, argue that there is still no widely agreed definition of what a small school constitutes. This statement is supported by Schwartz et al. (2013) stating that there is no consensus of defining what a small school is in the literature. However, Howley (2002) argues that existing empirical literature has focused simply on school size on the basis of learner enrolment.

International studies such as those by Ewington et al. (2008), Schwartz et al. (2013), Makori and Onderi (2014) and Dewani (2015) reveal the inconsistency in a defining a small school. For instance, in the United States, the federal government defines small schools as schools with a limit of 300 learners, while New York considers learners up to 500 constituting small high schools and in Chicago, schools with 600 or fewer learners are considered small (Schwartz et al., 2013). Ewington et al. (2008) reveal the inconsistency across Australian states. For example, Victoria categorises a small school as a school with fewer than 70 learners, whereas the Northern Territory defines small school as those with enrolments of 133 or fewer and New South Wales as 160 or fewer. Diwan (2015) suggests that in India, small schools are defined as schools with enrolments between 150 and 200. A study conducted by Makori and Onderi

(2014) in Nyamira, Kenya, seems to categorise small primary schools as those with 100 or fewer children and small secondary schools as those with 600 learners or fewer.

In the context of the South African education system, the National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure classifies a small primary school as a school with numbers between 135 and 310 learners, with one class per grade, and a small secondary school with between 200 and 400 learners with two classes per grade (DBE, 2013). However, others scholars such as Lowe (2006), Starr and White (2008), Ewington et al. (2008), Ndhlovu (2012) and du Plessis (2017) argue that small schools have unique characteristics. Ewington et al. (2008) argue that the special features of small schools distinguish them from large schools. These special characteristics may include limited resources and outdated facilities (du Plessis, 2017), difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers (Lowe, 2006), absence of administrative assistance (Ewington et al., 2008), work intensification and role multiplicity (Starr & White 2008), and inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012). These unique characteristics are dealt with in detail in the next section. In South Africa, rural provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo typically have many small schools with low enrolment, while more urban provinces like Gauteng tend to have fewer but larger schools (DBE, 2018). Education Statistics from the 2016 SNAP Survey recorded 29 479 public and registered institutions, of which 25 574 were ordinary schools. Briefing the Portfolio Committee in 2015, Dr Phumzile Langa reported that South Africa had 11 252 rural schools, including 3 060 secondary schools, 8 192 primary schools and 5 153 multigrade small schools. Most of these small schools are found in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

2.9 CHALLENGES OF LEADING DEPRIVED SCHOOLS

Earlier in this chapter, it was argued that the literature provides limited insight into how deprivation affects learners and learning, as well as the challenges faced by leaders in schools experiencing multiple deprivations. Researchers such as Chikoko et al (2015) and Preston and Barnes (2018) highlight that in deprived schooling contexts, principals act as key agents of change because of the authority vested in their role. Yet leadership in deprived contexts involves facing multiple, overlapping challenges (du Plessis, 2017). Lumby (2015) observes that deprivation introduces qualitative constraints not present in more privileged environments, while Lumby (2015) adds that school leaders in deprived communities experience pressure from families who view education as a vital pathway to a better future. These unique challenges hinder leaders' attempts to effectively execute their multifaceted roles (du Plessis, 2017).

Resource limitations are widely cited as one of the most significant constraints in deprived schools. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), note that such schools often lack essential infrastructure because they are situated in underdeveloped areas. Fiscal constraints, limited infrastructure, and shortages of basic resources impede efforts to meet quality and accountability requirements comparable to those expected in privileged schools (Klocko & Justis, 2019; Naicker & Mkhabela, 2020). This places additional pressure on leaders to sustain effective teaching and learning despite inadequate facilities.

Developing strong school-community partnerships presents another major challenge in deprived contexts. Stefanski et al. (2016) highlight the potential of such partnerships to improve student learning and strengthen neighbourhoods. However, Myende (2016) notes that these partnerships often fail to thrive in deprived communities, partly because many community members have limited formal education (Drajea, 2015). This lack of educational background hinders their ability to support school programmes and contributes to strained relationships between schools and communities. Where partnerships are weak, schools often face high dropout rates and increased incidences of drug abuse, which severely affect teaching and learning (Sibisi, 2015). Consequently, leaders in deprived schools must navigate both educational and social challenges that complicate their efforts to improve learner outcomes.

2.10 CHALLENGES OF LEADING SMALL SCHOOLS

Makori and Onderi (2014) suggest that the review of literature reveals several positive characteristics of small size schools. According to Makori and Onderi (2014), small schools have smaller classes and a low pupil-educator ratio. Low pupil-educator ratios enable educators to give more individual attention to learners, therefore contributing towards learners' cognitive development. The cognitive development results in improved instructional quality and academic success (Makori & Onderi, 2014). However, these scholars argue that learners' academic success may only be attainable if the school has all the vital features linked with school effectiveness. Unfortunately, this is not the case with most small schools, especially those located in contexts of multiple deprivation which are deprived of such essential features. The lack of those essential features associated with school effectiveness has negative consequences for the leaders of these deprived small schools in their endeavours to enact leadership of teaching and learning.

Leadership in small schools faces context-specific challenges that extend beyond those experienced by schools in deprived contexts, owing to the distinctive characteristics of small

schools (Starr & White, 2008). These challenges shape the lived experiences of leaders, who are still expected to meet the same accountability standards set by the Department of Education, regardless of school size or location. Unlike principals of larger schools, those in small schools have limited capacity to delegate because of staff shortages, which intensifies their workload (Starr & White, 2008). Studies highlight several recurring challenges in these schools, including inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012), limited resources and outdated facilities (du Plessis, 2017), difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers (Lowe, 2006), absence of administrative support (Ewington et al., 2008), and work intensification linked to role multiplicity (Starr & White, 2008).

One major challenge in many small and deprived schools is low learner enrolment. Lingam (2014) notes that most deprived schools are located in sparsely populated areas, which often results in small school size. Low enrolment contributes to inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012), multigrading (Quail & Smyth, 2014), and staffing difficulties (Lowe, 2006), all of which complicate efforts to maintain quality teaching and learning. In the South African context, funding is determined by the NNSSF policy (Department of Education [DoE], 1998a), which allocates resources based on enrolment numbers. Although intended to redress past inequalities, this policy has not achieved its purpose, as small schools receive far less funding than larger schools, limiting their capacity to support effective teaching and learning (Ndhlovu, 2012).

Staffing remains another persistent challenge in small and deprived schools. According to Lowe (2006), many small schools struggle to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Similarly, in deprived contexts, the post-provisioning model (PPM) allocates educators according to enrolment numbers, which disadvantages small schools and perpetuates inequities (Salmon & Sayed, 2016; Buthelezi & Makhoba, 2020; Veriava, 2017). In many deprived areas, leaders often attract unqualified or under-qualified educators, partly because qualified educators are reluctant to relocate to isolated locations with limited opportunities (Hlalele, 2012; Kooymans, 2013; Lingam et al., 2014). This undermines efforts to close achievement gaps between learners in deprived schools and those in more privileged contexts.

Because of low enrolment and inadequate staffing, many small schools resort to multigrading. Joyce (2014) notes that multigrading are common in rural settings, where learner and teacher numbers do not justify separate classes. Multigrade teaching places heavy demands on

educators due to the diverse needs of learners across age groups (Hyry-Beihammer & Hascher, 2015), adding further strain to school leaders aiming to maintain teaching quality.

Compounding these challenges is the dual role often assumed by small-school principals, who frequently teach full timetables while simultaneously managing administrative and leadership responsibilities (Clarke & Stevens, 2009). Medina (2018) explains that principals in such contexts must manage multiple tasks daily, despite their limited capacity. Conflicting role demands and a lack of resources therefore create tensions for leaders, who feel stretched across responsibilities that cannot be effectively executed because of time constraints.

2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I reviewed both local and international literature on the leadership of teaching and learning, with a special focus on small, deprived school contexts. First, I explored how scholars understand multiple deprivations. The literature suggests that multiple deprivations are a combination of discrete dimensions of poverty, and they have a negative impact on education. I examined different views of scholars on leadership and management. The literature reveals that some scholars view the two terms as interchangeable and others as two distinct concepts. I concluded the section by arguing the position taken by the study in respect to the usage of the two concepts. I explained that this study uses the two terms with some overlap. Various leadership approaches to teaching and learning were also discussed. Here I highlighted their key principles and how they relate to context. I argued that there is no single leadership formula, but successful leadership draws on element of different approaches. I further looked at how context influences school leadership. First, it emerged that leadership cannot be divorced from the context in which it operates. Second, literature reveals that school contexts can differ in terms of location, available resources and infrastructure; thus, leadership differs in how it responds to that given context. I then reviewed literature on small schools and noted that there is no consistent and universal definition of what constitutes a small school. However I argued that the existing literature focuses on school size based on the learner enrolment. Finally, I discussed the challenges of leading both small and deprived schools. Here, literature reveals many challenges that include low learner enrolment, limited resources, role multiplicity and inadequate funding amongst others. I argued that these challenges exert a significant influence on the leaders' experiences.

In the next chapter, I present an in-depth discussion of the theories that underpin this study.

CHAPTER 3

LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING AND CONTINGENCY LEADERSHIP: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study examines the principals' experiences regarding leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The previous chapter reviewed literature emanating from local and international contexts on leading teaching and learning. This chapter presents and discusses the theories that were adopted to shape a theoretical framework for this study. This study adopted two theories that were used as the framework of the study. To understand the nature of principals' leadership for teaching and learning, the study adopted the leadership for learning theory and the contingency leadership theory to explore the convergence or divergence between leadership and context. In this case, contingency leadership was adopted to make meaning about how the context of small schools and deprivation influences the way principals lead teaching and learning.

I begin by presenting the leadership for learning theory and then the contingency leadership theory. In discussing the theories, I cover their development and constructs and later conclude by explaining how I integrated these two theories and models to provide a framework for the study. I include a diagrammatic representation showing how these two theories are used as a theoretical lens in this study.

3.2 LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

The first theory informing this study is leadership for learning by Hallinger (2011). In discussing this theory, I begin from its development and move to discuss the constructs of the theory.

3.2.1 From Instructional Leadership to Leadership for Learning

The section describes how leadership for learning as a theory has advanced from other theories such as instructional leadership and transformational leadership theories to become leadership for learning. Hallinger (2015) draws the leadership for learning theory back three decades, with instructional leadership having the greatest influence during the 1980s, then transformational leadership assuming prominence during the 1990s and eventually becoming leadership for learning since 2000.

Hallinger (2015) argues that in the 1980s the literature on effective schools asserted that the instructional leadership role for principals was crucial. Adding to the same argument, Pan et al. (2014) argue that instructional leadership was viewed as one of the leadership theories that distinguishes between high- and low-performing schools in which leaders provide clear guidance toward improving learner achievement. Sofo et al. (2012) refer to instructional leadership as leadership that emphasises learners and their learning as the core purpose of schools and that provides enhanced educational opportunities for learners. In addition, according to Ismail et al. (2018), instructional leadership is associated with the principals' role such as establishing school aims, setting targets, coordinating and supervising curriculum instruction, encouraging learners to study and promoting educator professional development. However, Hallinger (2015) reveals that instructional leadership was not without critics. Scholars such as Bush and Glover (2014) criticised instructional leadership, first, as being too concerned with teaching rather than learning. Pan et al. (2014) argue that instructional leadership centres power and expertise on the principal, which downplays the contributions of deputy principals, leadership teams and classroom educators. Pan et al. (2014) further state that some critics raised concerns about the authoritative nature of instructional leadership and therefore they shift focus toward a leadership that emphasised developing others, enhancing parent and educator participation in decision-making and promoting educator leadership.

In the 1990s, more scholars advocated transformational leadership as leadership for school improvement (Bush, 2014; Cherry, 2012; Leithwood & Sun, 2012) and distributed leadership (Lumby, 2013; Spillane, 2015; Swaffield, 2008) which both focus on a shared responsibility to enhance school performance (Pan et al., 2014). In support of this argument, Bush and Glover (2014) argue that transformational leadership is about leadership influence on others, while instructional leadership is primarily about a leader's power and its focus on improving teaching and learning. Transformational leadership therefore focuses on the performance of group members and motivates them to work as a team towards achieving a common organisational goal (Bush, 2014; Cherry, 2012; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

However, in the 2000s, Pan et al. (2014) asserts that the debate over the most suitable model for educational leadership has subsided. Scholars now advocate for leadership for learning which has come to integrate the attributes of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributive leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Swaffield, 2008; Tulowitzki et al., 2021). The features of these three leadership theories are discussed in detail in the next section of the chapter. Recently, affirming the same argument, Malakolunthu et al. (2014) stated that

leadership for learning had risen to prominence, and it is viewed as a developing model for educational improvement in schools in the past decade. Leadership for learning as a concept first emerged in the Carpe Vitam project that was conducted between 2002 and 2005 (MacBeath, 2006). MacBeath (2006) explains that the Leadership for Learning (Carpe Vitam) Project is an international study conducted in schools across eight major cities, examining leadership practices that create positive learning environments at school, at home and in the wider community. The project developed a set of common principles, which follow next.

3.2.2 Five Principles of Leadership for Learning

The leadership for learning framework may be applied to any areas of learning where leaders and teachers believe improvement is required in their schools (Dempster, 2009). Therefore, this theory is very useful in understanding the nature of leadership for teaching and learning in small, deprived schools' contexts. Below, I discuss five principles of leadership for learning.

3.2.2.1 Leadership has a learning focus.

This principle is the first of the five leadership for learning principles. This principle forms the base of all other principles (Macbeath & Dempster, 2009).

Coenen et al. (2021) posit that this leadership principle emphasises the importance of focusing specifically on learning, where everyone in the school should be afforded maximum opportunities to learn. Macbeath (2006) on the other hand argues that the focus on learning refers to what Clarke (2016) calls the three-tier wedding cake of learning. According to Clarke (2016), the three-tier wedding cake of learning refers to learner learning, professional learning and system learning, all interconnected so that a focus of learning is alive to the iterative flow of learning between various layers. According to Clarke (2016), this is a belief that everyone in an education system is a learner, including learners, educators, school leaders and the wider community. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) therefore suggest that, in terms of this first principle, educators must not only focus on implementing or delivering a curriculum, but their focus as professionals must also be on learning and building their professional knowledge. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) argue that teaching should extend beyond delivering the curriculum to focus on the deeper aspects of student learning, viewing classwork, homework and assessment as tools to enhance understanding rather than merely to assign grades.

3.2.2.2. Leadership creates conditions favourable for learning.

The second principle alludes to the creation of conditions favourable for learning in schools (Macbeath, 2006). Coenen et al. (2021) argue that the principle considers the creation of a school climate that is necessary for a strong vibrant learning to ensure school performance and improvement. This means that school leadership must always strive to create the conditions at school that will sustain a supportive environment for learning. In order to achieve this, MacBeath and Dempster (2009) suggest few aspects that are regarded as instrumental in creating a school culture that promotes a positive learning environment. First, MacBeath and Dempster (2009) argue that the school must be committed to creating a school learning culture, where everyone adopts the attitude, skills and knowledge needed to achieve at their best. According to MacBeath and Dempster (2009), this means that the school must have principals, educators, parents and learners who share the same interest in making a positive school environment for learning. It requires teachers to learn more about their learners and teaching, and learners to learn more about their subject and developing effective learning strategies. For the parents, it is to learn more about how they can help their children to learn best. Second, MacBeath and Dempster (2009) suggest that schools must create a learner friendly environment where technology is easily accessible to sustain positive learning experiences vital to learners' development. Third, it should encourage teachers' strategies that match to the learners' needs, interests and abilities. Lastly, MacBeath and Dempster (2009) argue that the school must use documentary proof of learners' performance to assist individual learner achievement.

3.2.2.3 Dialogue is central to leadership for learning.

The third principle according to Coenen et al. (2021) demonstrates the importance of a qualitative and ongoing dialogue about both leadership and learning within the school. This principle stresses the importance of dialogue and places it at the centre of leadership for learning. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) posit that dialogue provides the connection between people that enables them to develop a common purpose. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) argue that if principals as leaders are to ensure that all educators collaborate towards achieving a common objective, they have to develop a shared vision and strategies that can be employed collectively. Therefore, according to McBeath and Dempster (2009), a common vision and strategies cannot be achieve without dialogue. Van Loon and van Dijk (2015) share this sentiment, arguing that developing a shared understanding can only be achieved through

dialogue. Therefore, for effective leadership for learning to be realised, school leaders must ensure that there is always an effective dialogue with all stakeholders, i.e., educators, learners and parents. Shields and Edward (2005) argue that school leaders and teachers must develop more positive relationships with each other and with their learners and parents to create a deep level understanding that could form the basis for more educational opportunities.

3.2.2.4 Leadership for learning is shared.

The fourth principle of leadership for learning views leadership as a shared responsibility. According to MacBeath and Dempster (2009), this principle is grounded on the basis that leadership is open to everyone. Dempster (2009) concurs, stating that principals as leaders cannot lead alone, but can only attain the school's objectives through sharing leadership with other members of the school community. Bush and Glover (2014) add that schools with the highest learner achievements attribute that to significance influence from all leaders within the school. Therefore, according to Dempster (2009), shared leadership refers to collective participation in leadership activities. It is not a single leader's knowledge and experiences; but the product of collaboration and the relationships among all the leaders in a school. (Goksoy, 2016).

Studies have revealed that there is a positive connection between shared leadership behaviours and organisational commitment of employees (Cobanoglu, 2021). Shared leadership aims to exploit the wealth of talent present in an organisation, increase satisfaction among team members, and create stronger group cohesion and an attainment of a shared sense of purpose (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017).

3.2.2.5 Leadership for learning means being accountable.

The fifth and the last principle stress a shared sense of accountability (Coenen et al., 2021). This is echoed by MacBeath and Dempster (2009) who argue that for leadership and learning to be connected, a shared sense of responsibility must be forged amongst all members of a school staff.

Kapur (2018) thus argues that when there is shared accountability, everybody is, in some way, accountable for every action taken, every decision made, or task performed. Therefore, according to Kapur (2018) through an ongoing dialogue amongst the school staff, decisions can be reviewed and discussed, so everyone is accountable. Therefore, in the context of leading

teaching and learning at school, according to this principle, every staff member shares the accountability for the learning and success of every learner at school.

3.3 FEATURES OF LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

Leithwood and Sun (2012) posit that many scholars who have made an effort to capture the leadership for learning theory have argued for transformational and instructional leadership as the main features of leadership for learning. According to Hallinger (2014), leadership for learning embodies features of instructional leadership which has a teaching and learning focus and the capacity-building features of transformational leadership. Therefore, there are two discrete conceptualisations of school improvement leadership: instructional leadership and transformational leadership. However, some scholars, such as Swaffield (2008) and Tulowitzki et al. (2021) add distributed leadership as another feature of leadership for learning, criticising both instructional leadership and transformational leadership as one-sided views of school leaders, expecting principals to possess all the know-how and skills for running schools as organisations. Swaffield (2008), for instance, argues that leadership can be distributed to everyone in varying degrees within a school, depending on the scope and the complexity of the task. Present-day leadership for learning has incorporated features of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed or shared leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Swaffield, 2008; Tulowitzki et al., 2021). The features of leadership for learning are discussed in detail below.

3.3.1 Instructional Leadership

Leadership for learning theory drew some of its features from instructional leadership. Prytula et al. (2013) argue that, despite school reform, instructional leadership is still regarded as a model for emulation by most school leaders. This is supported in leadership literature by features such as monitoring, mentoring and modelling and for its promise to improve school performance. Therefore, Manaseh (2016) asserts that instructional leadership is the most important model to create an environment for effective teaching and learning in schools. Sofu et al. (2012) refer to instructional leadership as leadership that emphasises learners and their learning as the core purpose of schools and that provides enhanced educational opportunities for learners. Manaseh (2016) further asserts that leaders who adopt instructional leadership roles differ from traditional school leaders. According to Manaseh (2016), unlike traditional leaders who strictly focus on the administrative tasks, instructional leaders redefine their roles to strive for excellence in education, therefore instructional leaders work with educators to

manage the instructional programme in schools. Instructional leaders focus on staff development by developing their strengths and reducing their weaknesses (Manaseh, 2016). Therefore, according to Manaseh (2016), instructional leaders devote a significant amount of time to concentrating on developing knowledge and the implementation of the curriculum. In addition, Ismail et al. (2018) suggest that instructional leadership is responsible for developing, coordinating and monitoring the curriculum, developing the school vision and aim and developing staff capacity.

Ismail et al. (2018) describe instructional leadership theory as having three dimensions. According to Ismail et al. (2018), the first dimension is defining the school mission, which includes developing and communicating goals of the school. The second dimension refers to managing the instructional programme, which includes coordinating, monitoring and supervising curriculum instruction and learner performance. The third dimension refers to developing a school climate which emphasises learning by protecting instructional time and promoting educators' professional development. Therefore, effective instructional leaders develop a school culture which emphasise collaboration and provides resources for educators and learners for effective teaching and learning (Taylor et al., 2015). Mestry (2017) posits that instructional leaders formulate a school vision, empower educators and develop strategies to enhance teaching and learning. Therefore, if school principals expect to make a difference in the learning at their schools, their central focus must be around curriculum and instruction.

3.3.2 Transformational Leadership

Some features of leadership for learning are drawn from transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is another leadership style that is highly regarded by many scholars as still the most suitable for schools today. Transformational leadership is a leadership style where leaders work with other members of the group to identify changes that are required in an organisation, and develop strategies to carry out those changes (Anderson, 2017). It is therefore not surprising to note that, according to Cherry (2012), transformational leadership theory is known as relationship theory, as it focuses upon the connections formed between leaders and followers. According to Cherry (2012), transformational leaders motivate and inspire each member of the group to fulfil their full potential. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) echo this, stating that transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through being the role model for followers and inspiring them to take greater ownership of their work. Anderson (2017) suggests that transformational leaders

facilitate change by restructuring the school to respond to the school needs and to ensure improved school performance. Andrian et al. (2022), state that transformational leadership is therefore a form of leadership that is contrasted with leadership that maintains the status quo. Andrian et al. (2022) describe transformational leadership as a change-oriented approach that motivates followers to pursue new, higher-level goals and guides the organisation toward achievements not previously reached. Principals are school leaders responsible for transforming schools to meet the increased demands for school effectiveness and improved learner performance. Therefore, principals exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours focus on developing a new school culture of teaching and learning, creating new visions and norms for the school (Anderson, 2017).

3.3.3 Distributed Leadership

Lastly, leadership for learning draws its features from distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is an assertion that leadership responsibilities and positions should be shared (Goksoy, 2015). Therefore, Lumby (2019) argues that distributed leadership was adopted as a model to understand leadership practices in an organisation which includes both formal and informal leadership. Bush (2013) concurs, stating that leadership may arise anywhere in the organisation and is not confined to formal leadership. Therefore, according to its advocates, distributed leadership recognises both formally and informally designated leadership. Lumby (2013) suggests that the skills, expertise and experience of multiple individuals are required to create successful and effective leadership. This implies that involving more people in leadership is more effective than relying on just one leader. The common view of proponents of distributed leadership is that different individuals within the organisation are essentially given greater responsibility and accountability for their roles rather than these responsibilities resting only on one person. Goksoy (2015) argues that the school management and leadership role is too complicated to be assigned to only one person in a school. Therefore, in terms of distributed leadership, leadership is more widely shared and spread amongst multiple leaders within the school including deputy principals, departmental heads as formal leaders and educators as informal leaders. The basic philosophy underlining this approach, according to Goksoy (2015) is to create teamwork amongst educators at school by developing a feeling of shared wisdom and common objectives and maximising staff efficiency. Therefore, it is important to develop the leadership potential of all members of staff to achieve the common goals of the school (Goksoy, 2015).

3.4 HALLINGER'S SYNTHESISED LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING MODEL

The study examines the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The leadership for learning theory presented above was employed to understand the nature of leadership for teaching and learning that principals in small schools exercise. Therefore, I adopted a synthesised leadership for learning model by Hallinger (2011) to frame the study.

According to Hallinger (2011), leadership for learning put forward a wider conceptualisation that embodies diverse leadership sources. Figure 1 portrays a synthesis of conceptualisations presented by leadership researchers over the last few decades (Hallinger, 2011).

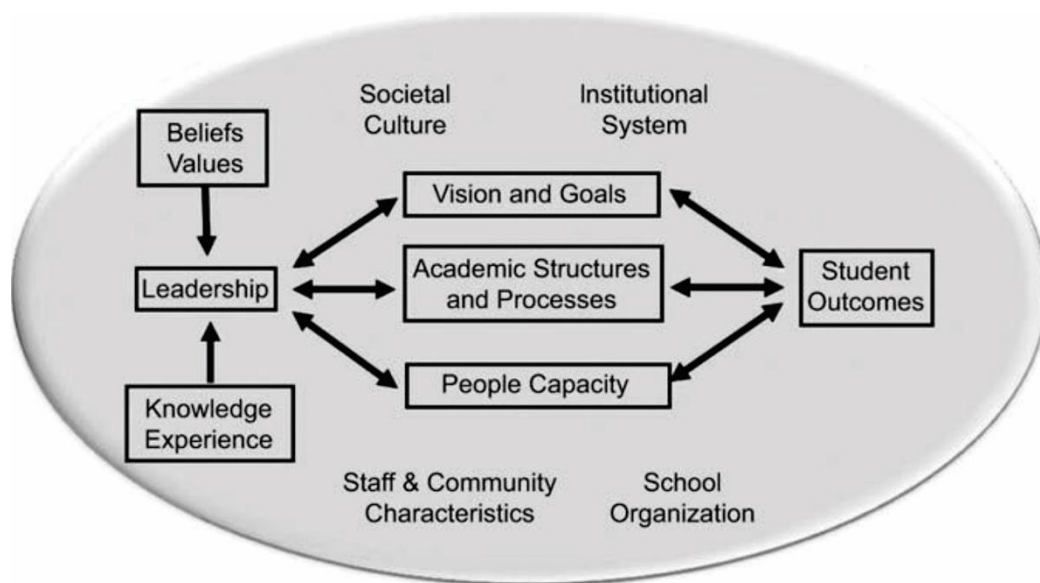


Figure 1: A synthesised model of leadership for learning

Source: (Hallinger, 2011, p.127)

3.4.1 Leadership and the Context

The model portrayed above accentuates various key propositions about leadership for learning. The first proposition emphasises that leadership is enacted in an open system that consists not only of the community, but also a wider organisational system and social culture (Hallinger, 2011). Lord et al. (2013) agree, stating that leadership does not happen in a vacuum and must be understood in a social context. Adding to this view, Marishane (2016) argues that leadership cannot be divorced from the context in which it operates: there is a strong connection between the leadership styles of a leader and a school context. Marishane (2016) describes the above relationship as a symbiotic relationship, where the school context influences leadership, and leadership influences the school context.

This study sets out to explore leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. Mkhize (2017) indicates that principals, as identified leaders, must understand their context, the stakeholders and the most effective instructional leadership approaches to enhance student success. Hallinger (2011) argues that effective leadership is both shaped by and responds to the challenges and opportunities existing in the school organisation and its environment.

The second proposition suggests that the variation in leadership practices is mediated by the leaders' personal values, beliefs, knowledge and experience (Hallinger, 2011). Ertosun and Adiguzel (2018) affirm that personal characteristics such as values, beliefs and experiences always cultivate and uphold certain qualities of the leaders within the organisational culture and therefore shape their behaviours and decisions. Leaders collaborate with different individuals to create cultural forms and determine how best they can reach the targets of an organisation. Therefore, according to Ertosun and Adiguzel (2018), personal characteristics and leadership are very influential in creating the organisational culture, which results in the achievement of the desired aims by developing common behaviours and understanding in an organisation. Thus, the reasons principals enact their leadership the way they do is influenced by their personal characteristics.

The third proposition, according to Hallinger's (2011) model of leadership for learning suggests that leadership does not impact student learning directly; rather, its impact is moderated by school processes and conditions. The school leadership processes include managing teaching and learning, developing school vision, developing educators and designing the organisation to emphasise shared decision-making processes among various members in a school (Tan, 2018). Tan (2018) therefore, argues that if principals, for example, focus on educator professional advancement, it may lead to educator empowerment that enables them to carry out effective teaching strategies. Furthermore, if a principal focuses on the development of organisational goals, it may have an effect on the school culture that is grounded in high educator expectations of student learning. Therefore, when principals communicate these expectations to educators, provide support and monitor educators in their achievement of these expectations, it is likely that this will have a positive impact on educators' work morale and accountability, thereby indirectly impacting positively on learning.

Moreover, the model further suggests that while school leadership influences school processes and conditions, conversely, school processes and conditions are influenced by school

leadership (Hallinger, 2011). Hallinger (2011) therefore concludes that this synthesised model of leadership for learning provides a lens through which to understand how leadership can contribute towards effective learning and school improvement.

Li et al. (2016) argue that leadership for learning does not only incorporate learning for learners but also incorporate learning for educators. According to Li et al. (2016) there is evidence that educator learning leads to improved instruction and, as a result leads to learner achievement, therefore it is the responsibility of the principal to organise and support the professional development of educators. Therefore, ongoing professional learning is a fundamental means of improving educators' instructional skills and adapting to changing demands of their teaching (Li et al., 2016). It is important to note that principals play a key role in shaping a school environment that motivates and supports the learning of educators.

Leadership for learning therefore incorporates four dimensions. These dimensions include values leadership, leadership focus, context for leadership and sharing leadership. I discuss the four dimensions below.

3.4.2 Value Leadership

The leadership for learning model is a values-based leadership framework. It highlights the role of values in shaping leadership. Hallinger (2011) argues that values define what the leader desires to achieve and how s/he will work to achieve them. According to Hallinger (2011), principals understand the values that exist in the school culture and how those values shape a positive learning culture.

3.4.3 Leadership Focus

The model suggests that effective leadership for learning acknowledges and responds to the conditions of the school over time. Therefore, for the purposes of school improvement, the school vision and goals should be learning-focused (Hallinger, 2011). Hoekstra and Newton (2017) concur, stating that leadership for learning focuses on school improvement by defining clear goals that support learner achievement.

3.4.4 The Context for Leadership

The model suggests that leadership approaches will vary across different school contexts. Hoekstra and Newton (2017) argue that there is no single leadership practice that will guarantee school improvement. Hoekstra and Newton (2017) therefore, posit that leadership can have a

strong influence on the school context and conversely, the school context will always have a strong influence on leadership. Each context can have a major influence on how leadership is enacted to respond to the context. Hallinger (2011) argues that principals need to acknowledge the school context and develop appropriate leadership strategies that will respond to such school contexts. Leaders who use only one leadership style will struggle to succeed without understanding why.

3.4.5 Sharing Leadership

Hallinger (2011) argues that leaders should share leadership and make an effort to develop others by empowering them. Therefore, according to Hallinger (2011), shared leadership is a key to achieving a school vision and expanding its capacity (Hallinger, 2011).

I adopted Hallinger's (2011) synthesised leadership for learning model as a theoretical framework. It has already been demonstrated in the early sections of the study that being a principal in a small schools in a context of deprivation places the principal in multiple dilemmas. Within the confines of this study, the leadership for learning theory is used as a lens to understand leadership for teaching and learning that principals use in small, deprived school contexts. The model highlighted that leadership operate both within a school context as well as in a wider community and institutional system (Hallinger, 2011). This model helped me understand how teaching and learning leadership in small, deprived schools is shaped by both organisational and environmental contexts, and how principals interpret and respond to these complexities. As Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017) emphasise, successful leadership is dependent on the context in which it operates, therefore it necessitates a proficiency to acknowledge the complexities of that context.

Second, the model suggests that leadership is mediated by the leader's personal attributes. Thus, it emphasises the role of values, beliefs and experiences of principals in shaping their leadership. Hallinger (2011) posits that values, beliefs and experiences define what leaders desire to achieve and how they will work to achieve them. Based on the individual values, beliefs and experiences of principals, this theory thus allowed for an opportunity to understand the leadership approaches employed by principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. It further allowed for an opportunity to understand the reasons that account for the way they enact their leadership.

Leadership for learning theory clarifies how principals in small, deprived schools are still able to maintain a strong, school-wide focus on effective teaching (Hallinger & Heck, 2010) and create supportive learning conditions (Dempster, 2009) despite contextual challenges. Below I discuss the second theoretical framework underpinning this study.

3.5 CONTINGENCY LEADERSHIP

The second theory informing the framework of this study is the contingency leadership theory as developed by Fred Edward Fiedler. Contingency theory traces its origin back to 1951 (Miner, 2015). According to Miner (2015), Fiedler's leadership model was called contingency theory because it was the only leadership approach that existed during that period. Therefore, it was viewed in isolation.

Bush (2007), one of the major proponents of contingency leadership, argues that most models of leadership do not provide a complete picture of school leadership; they provide only one particular aspect of leadership. However, according to Bush (2007), contingency leadership recognises multifaceted school contexts and the need to adopt a leadership approach appropriate to the particular context, instead of adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. As Yun et al. (2006) note, there is no one widely accepted leadership type that can universally apply to all situations. In furthering his idea, Bush (2007) makes an interesting reference to the South African context, arguing that South Africa has the most diverse education system in the world. According to Bush (2007), South African schools range from well-equipped urban schools to less equipped schools from multiple deprived contexts without access to basic facilities, such as water and electricity. Given the diversity of South African schools, Bush (2007) argues that relying on a single leadership approach is impractical and instead supports contingency leadership, which enables leaders to recognise and respond to their school's unique context.

McAdam et al. (2019) take a similar view, stating that contingency theory suggests that the organisational effectiveness of an organisation results from contingencies that are fitting to the context of the organisation. Therefore, from this perspective, McAdam et al. (2019) argue that contingency leadership seeks to improve the organisational performance by applying contingencies that align the organisation. Van de Ven et al. (2013) contend that a contingency theory proposes that performance and organisational success are a result of an alignment between the organisation's external context and internal arrangements.

Langa (2013) describes the contextual factors as issues that affect schools which include socioeconomic status of parents, poverty, resources, culture and values. Langa (2013) argues that despite the positive improvement in South Africa in recent times, there is still clear evidence of inequality with deprived areas experiencing high levels of poverty. There is still a lack of access to basic services in deprived areas, and most people in these areas suffer from poor socioeconomic status. Langa (2013) describes the school's internal factors such as infrastructure, resources, quality of educators and leadership as some of the issues that contribute the effectiveness of that particular school. According to Langa (2013), most schools located in multiple deprived contexts have limited access to basic resources that support effective teaching and learning. These resources include special classrooms such as laboratories, libraries and even books. Therefore, most educators become reluctant to work in these deprived contexts. Frequently, schools located in these deprived contexts are characterised by limited educators as they grapple to use and retain good educators. These factors therefore impact negatively on the provision of quality education in schools located in deprived contexts. There is no doubt from the argument above that such schools and their leaders need to acknowledge their context and be able to adopt contingency leadership where required. Principals of schools, especially small, deprived ones, need to develop leadership styles that will be most relevant to be effective.

Yun et al. (2006) argue that no single leadership style fits all situations as a style effective in one context may be unsuitable in another. Osondu (2012) states that Fiedler's contingency theory postulates that there is no single best leadership style for all situations, as the best style will practically depend on the factors surrounding the current situation. This theory helped me understand how being in a small school in a deprived context influences how principals lead teaching and learning. It was mentioned earlier in the study that contextual factors in small schools may include limited resources and outdated facilities (du Plessis, 2017), difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers (Lowe, 2006), an absence of administrative assistance (Ewington et al., 2008), work intensification and role multiplicity (Starr & White 2008), inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012), poor socioeconomic communities, poor health and inadequate infrastructure (Chikoko et al., 2015). Mkhize (2017) suggests that followers of contingency theories of leadership acknowledge that context mediates a leader's behaviour. Contingency theory therefore suggests that contextual factors influence the leadership behaviours adopted by principals in small, deprived schools.

3.5.1 Contingency Model

This study adopted Fiedler's contingency model in order to understand how the principals of small schools in the context of deprivation lead teaching and learning in their schools. Fiedler's contingency model has been used to predict leader effectiveness and to assign leaders to specific task situations (Miller et al., 2004). Miller et al. (2004), postulate that the contingency leadership model suggests that the relationship between leadership style and leader effectiveness is determined by the leader's situational control. Houghton and Yoho (2005) further argue that the contingency model provides leaders with a framework for understanding context in which each leadership approach can be most effective.

Miner (2005) summarises Fiedler's work on a theory of contingency as applying within the domain of groups that have a task to perform or a goal to achieve and in which this task accomplishment requires interaction among members. According to Miner (2005), within this domain groups may be classified with reference to three major factors: the leader's position of power, task structure and the leader-member relation. Position power is the degree of authority vested in the leader. It appears to assume the existence of an organisation surrounding the group and a hierarchic means of conveying the power. The existence of position power makes the leader's job easier. Task structure refers to clarity of structure in terms of roles, policies and even job descriptions. It is simpler to lead in a more organised environment (Miner, 2005). Leader-member relations refer to the relationship between the leader and group members. When there is a healthy leader-member relationship, the leadership responsibility is much simpler (Miner, 2005)

The contingency leadership theory was chosen as one of the theories that underpin the analysis of principals of small, deprived school contexts in their endeavour to enact the leadership of teaching and learning. Marishane (2016) mentions that while school context influences leadership, leadership influences school context. Contingency leadership theory therefore was suitable for this study as it provided a road map toward understanding how being in a small school in a deprived context influences the way principals lead teaching and learning. The study examined how principals in small, deprived schools lead teaching and learning, why they enact leadership in particular ways and how deprivation and school size shape their practice. Contingency leadership is well suited to this analysis because it accounts for context. Naicker et al. (2020) argue that no single leadership approach is universally effective; leaders must draw on different approaches to respond to the varied and complex contexts they face.

The contingency leadership theory therefore helped me to understand how the principals in small school in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning. First, it helped me understand what leadership approaches and practices these principals used to respond to the constraints of their school contexts. Second, it provides answers to why they lead teaching and learning the way they do. Further it explores why they chose the approaches they used to respond to the constraints that confronted them. Lastly, contingency leadership theory allows for a deeper understanding of how the context of small schools and deprivation combined affect leadership of teaching and learning.

3.6 AN INTEGRATED MODEL USED TO FRAME THE STUDY

The preceding section discussed separately leadership for learning theory (Hallinger, 2011) and contingency leadership theory (Fiedler, 1967). Here, I explain the integrated model of the two theories discussed above to present the study's framework. The model portrayed in Figure 2 is a depiction of an integrated model used for this study.

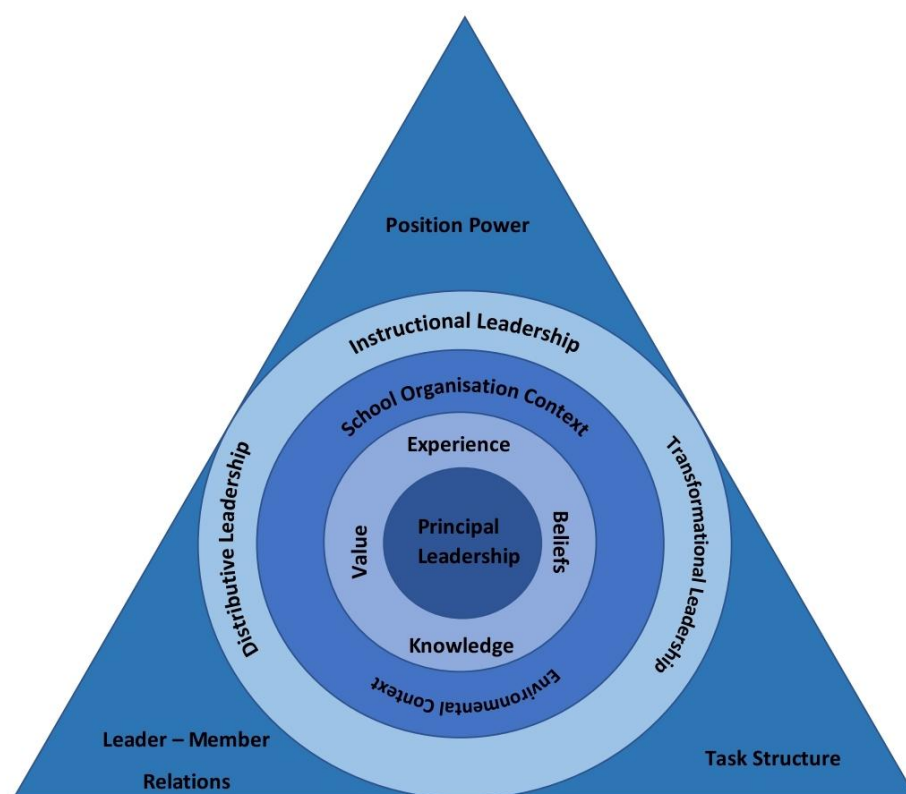


Figure 2: An integrated model used in this study.

The integrated model above highlights four important assumptions. First, both theories put the principal's leadership at the centre, due to their position of power in schools. In this model, principal leadership is placed at the centre. In a deprived school context, the key agent in

enabling change remains the school principal because of the power vested in his or her role as the leader of the school (Chikoko, 2015; Preston and Barnes 2018). The principal as a leader of a school is always tasked with an important duty to ensure that quality leadership of teaching and learning is taking place regardless of the context in which the school is located. Therefore, this model is used to explore the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts.

Second, the two theories assume that leadership is linked to both organisational context and environmental context. The school leadership, therefore, to be effective needs to acknowledge the organisational and environmental context. The leadership strategies used to improve the conditions and effectiveness of the school must fit and be aligned to both organisational and environmental contexts. There is always a symbiotic relationship between the school contexts, either internally or externally and the school leadership. The contexts influence leadership and vice versa the leadership influences the context. The school leaders in small, deprived school contexts must always acknowledge the context of their schools and apply leadership practices that are relevant and fit for the context. This model therefore assists in understanding how principals in small, deprived school contexts lead teaching and learning.

Third, the model assumes that there is no single acceptable leadership approach that can be applied to all situations. One leadership style can be appropriate in a particular situation and be inappropriate in a different situation. Each context can have a major influence on how leadership is enacted to respond to the context. School contexts can differ greatly in terms of location and the quality of resources and infrastructure; thus, the leader's practice will differ in how it responds to a given context. School principals must therefore develop leadership approaches that can respond to different school contexts.

Lastly, both theories emphasise the leader-follower relations. Both theories assume that leadership effectiveness is moderated by a leader's personal characteristics and their relations with the individuals of the group. Leaders interact with individuals in an organisation and determine how the organisation will reach its target. Leader characteristics and relations with individual members of the organisation are influential in determining the common understanding and effectiveness of an organisation. Therefore, when there is a good connection between the principal and educators, the leadership job of the principal becomes much easier.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented Hallinger's (2011) leadership for learning and Fiedler's (1967) contingency leadership theories, which were merged into a theoretical framework for this study. These theories suggest that leadership is enacted within schools and surrounding environmental contexts, therefore principals as identified leaders must not only know their organisational and environmental context but must also develop leadership approaches that will best respond to those contexts. Leadership effectiveness is thus moderated by a leader's personal characteristics and relations with individual members of the group. Furthermore, leader characteristics and relations with school staff members are influential in determining a common understanding and the effectiveness of a school which leads to the attainment of the desired common vision and goals. Here, I argued that leadership for learning theory was used as a lens to understand leadership for teaching and learning that principals in small, deprived school contexts exercise. The contingency leadership theory, on the other hand, was used as a lens for understanding how being in a small, deprived school context influences the way principals lead teaching and learning.

In the following chapter, I discuss the research design and methodology adopted for the study. As part of the discussion, I outline the paradigm, data generation and analysis employed to achieve the aims of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH PARADIGM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This chapter provides a broad methodological orientation of the study. I discuss the research methodology and design adopted for the study. Khaldi (2017) argues that the research methodology chosen by the researcher is directed by the researcher's philosophy, and this choice directs the tools developed and used. I begin by describing the research paradigm and approach adopted for the study. I then outline the research design and the rationale for selecting it. This is followed by a description of the selection of participants and how access to research sites was negotiated. Thereafter, I provide a description of the data-generation methods employed, and data analysis is presented. Lastly, I present the issues of ethical considerations and trustworthiness and the limitations of the study.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is used to refer to the basic set of beliefs that define the worldview of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018; Kamal, 2019; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Khatri, 2020). A paradigm comprises four elements, namely, ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Khatri, 2020; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Ontology refers to the beliefs about reality, how that reality exists and what can be known about it (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and that which would be known (Khatri, 2020; Shisanya, 2019). Methodology refers to the design and research methods used and how they are linked to the study aims (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Khaldi, 2017). Methods refers to the strategies used to collect and analyse information related to research questions (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Researchers (Majeed, 2019; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Yong et al., 2021) have suggested a number of paradigms such as positivist, interpretivist or critical paradigms.

Based on the aim of this study which was to explore the principals' leadership experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation, this study was located within the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism seeks to understand the researched phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved (Elshafie, 2013). Ślawecki (2018) argues that the interpretive paradigm is focused toward understanding reality as perceived by

its participants. From an ontological perspective, Pervin and Mokhtar (2023) argue that reality is socially constructed through people's experiences within their context, meaning it reflects socially situated occurrences. However, since reality is socially constructed, Dieronitou (2014) argues that ontologically speaking, there are always multiple realities that are constructed by participants of research. This means assumptions of interpretive ontology are that social reality is interpreted differently by different people (Mack, 2010). Drawn from this assumption, this paradigm is best suited for this study because I wanted to understand principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts as these principals are best positioned to share their realities.

Epistemology addresses how we come to know that which we believe we know (Hiller, 2016). To elaborate, Berryman (2019) argues that epistemology describes ways of knowing, how we know, what we know and who can be a knower. The assumption of an interpretive epistemology suggests that the researcher's understanding of reality is based on his or her understanding as well as that of the participants (Al-Saadi, 2014). Therefore the researcher's understanding of reality is based on their interaction with the participants (Mustofa, 2023). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the researcher engages in an interactive process with the participants through dialogue, questioning, listening and recording research data. Accordingly, leadership experiences of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts was investigated from the point of view of various school leaders in that context as participants.

The interpretive paradigm was considered to be most appropriate for this study as I aimed to explore the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. In doing so, I tried to understand this phenomenon from the point of view of the principals leading teaching and learning in this context. I argued that principals of small schools in deprived contexts have unique leadership experiences and are best positioned to explain their practices, the challenges they face and the strategies they use to address them. In addition, the interpretive paradigm was adopted because it emphasises subjective experiences and meanings of individual participants (Starman, 2013). The subjective views, perceptions and experiences of the principals in their contexts played a vital part as the study tried to uncover their reality. Therefore, to understand how principals of small, deprived school contexts lead teaching and learning, the study adopted the interpretive paradigm to interpret their views and jointly construct knowledge from the data gathered.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The research design is intended to provide an appropriate framework for a study. Sileyew (2019) posits that choosing a relevant research approach is one of the most significant decisions in the research process since it determines how relevant data will be obtained for the study. Therefore, out of three research designs, namely, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Almalki, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Leavy, 2017), the study adopted a qualitative research design.

As mentioned in the previous section, my intention was to explore leadership experiences of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. In so doing, I was seeking to respond to this critical question: *What are the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation?* In order to answer this question, I aimed to understand the principals' experiences and perceptions of the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. Further, I aimed to look at how the context of small schools and deprivations influenced their leadership behaviours. Lastly, I aimed to understand why they lead teaching and learning the way they do.

To determine the leadership experiences of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts, the study adopted a qualitative research approach as I considered it to be the most appropriate for questions such as those asked in the study. The central feature of qualitative research is that it is related to understanding human being's experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach (Jackson et al., 2007). Austin and Sutton (2014) concur, stating that qualitative research is concerned with participants' experiences of events, and aims to interpret those experiences from the participants' perspective. Therefore, according to Austin and Sutton (2014), qualitative research involves asking participants about their experiences of things that happen in their lives. This type of question enables researchers to gather more information into other people's understandings, experiences and interpretations of their social world. It is suitable for this study, since the study seeks to develop an in-depth account of these principals' experiences and interpretations of the context in which they lead. Berg and Lune (2012) emphasise that qualitative research seeks answers by exploring various social settings and the individuals who inhabit them. The aims and objectives of qualitative research, according to Ritchie et al (2014), are to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' world by examining how they make sense of their social, experiences and perspectives.

Qualitative research processes such as data collection, and analytical and interpretative procedures are in many ways linked to the context or the contextual realities. Flick (2004) thus argues that data about participants' social realities are collected in their natural context through the course of an interview, narrative or even in the biography of the participants. Furthermore, Finlay (2015) suggests that qualitative research studies things in their natural context, attempting to make sense of peoples' meanings and those meanings are fluid, subject to interpretation and are negotiated within a particular social context. Qualitative research aims to understand a particular situation by describing and interpreting participants' experiences within that context. The researcher puts aside any prejudgement and gathers data on how the people make sense out of a particular experience or situation (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006). My intention with this study was to find meaning within the natural setting of principals in small, deprived school contexts, where the context is highlighted as an important factor. I therefore believed that a qualitative research design would be suitable for this study as it would allow me to make sense of and interpret phenomena from the perspective of the participants in their natural setting.

Another central feature of qualitative research is that it does not use a single method, but a range of methods that may be selected according to the research questions (Flick, 2004). Aspers and Corte (2019) assert that qualitative research uses multiple research methods, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative research involves the use of research studies and the collection of various empirical materials such as visual texts, case studies, peoples' experiences, life stories and interviews (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This research used various data-generation methods, namely, qualitative semi-structured interviews and document reviews to generate data from participants. This allowed the researcher to have a broader understanding of the context.

Lastly, a qualitative approach emphasises an understanding of the social life of the participants; hence, emphasis is placed on data quality rather than quantity (Erickson, 2012). In clarifying this, Tuli (2011) states that unlike a quantitative research approach which is concerned with quantifying social event by collecting and analysing numerical data, a qualitative research approach puts more emphasis into understanding the meaning attached to social events. A qualitative approach was used because it enabled an in-depth exploration of how principals in small, deprived schools understand their experiences and contexts.

4.4 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Shorten and Moorley (2014) assert that to determine whether the research question will be answered, the selection of participants is a key factor in research design. Therefore, it is critical to take time to carefully identify the best participants for the specific research questions. The sentiment is shared by Langa (2013) who posits that it is essential in qualitative research to select both the relevant research sites and participants in understanding the phenomenon and answering the research question. Kondowe and Booyens (2014) further suggest that researchers have to consider many factors when choosing both the research site and potential research participants for a qualitative study.

The sampling technique of this study was informed by the qualitative research design. This study therefore used a purposeful sampling technique to select the participants for the study. Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or group of individuals that match a particular criterion or have specific characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria for this study were that participants needed to be principals in small schools located in deprived contexts.

Through purposeful sampling, eight principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts were selected as participants for this study. In this instance, the researcher believed that these principals could best provide reliable information about their knowledge and experience regarding their leadership of teaching and learning in such contexts.

First, the study used data obtained from the Department of Education, Ugu District to select principals leading small schools. Ewington et al. (2008) argue that the distinct features of small schools separate them from large schools. In the South African context, small schools are classified in terms of NMUNS-PSI as defined in Section 1.2.1.

The DBE further stipulates that small schools are school with six or fewer educators, excluding the principal and the Grade R practitioner for primary schools, and for secondary schools, with at least each subject taught by a teacher (DBE, 2017). According to the rural education draft policy, these schools only meet the minimum requirements of being the viable school (DBE, 2017). I selected principals leading schools with enrolments of 300 learners or less. These eight principals had to give an account of their experiences and perceptions of leadership of teaching and learning in schools which are both small and located in a context of deprivation.

Second, these schools were selected in terms of convenience. The convenience sampling was chosen to reduce sampling to a manageable data as most of the schools in the district are classified as small schools. Schools were therefore selected in terms of geographical location and proximity to the researcher. Convenience, according to Etikan et al. (2016), refers to a type of sampling where participants meet specific criteria, such as proximity, accessibility, willingness and availability for the purpose of the study. The schools selected were therefore based on easy accessibility and geographical proximity for me as they are located within the same circuit in which I work. Hence, I considered schools that were easy to reach, based on their geographical proximity. I selected the schools that were closer to where I work. This allowed for affordability and accessibility to the selected schools.

Lastly, Ames et al. (2019) emphasise that using purposeful sampling is one way of achieving manageable data. The selection of participants was limited to eight principals of small schools in deprived contexts who gave an in-depth account of their knowledge, perceptions and experiences of the leadership of teaching and learning. This allowed me to do a thorough and in-depth analysis of the situation using the manageable data from these eight principals. The next section discusses the profile of the participants and their schools.

4.5 NEGOTIATIONS AND GAINING ACCESS TO RESEARCH SITES

I dedicate this section to discussing my personal journey and the experiences of negotiating and gaining access to the research sites. I explain the steps taken during the journey, all the challenges I encountered and how I overcame those challenges. Gaining entry to a research site involves planning, perseverance and luck (Kondowe & Booyens, 2014). I felt it was essential for me to share my journey as it was not straightforward. Peticca-Harris et al. (2016) state that while gaining access might appear simple and straightforward, this stage of the research process can be filled with challenges that make it less straightforward. Notwithstanding the importance of gaining access for successful research, Azungah (2019) argues that there is insufficient literature, especially on the issues associated with gaining access to research sites.

In order to adhere to ethical standards, it is important to obtain approval from the institution's Human and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) before conducting a study (Madushani, 2016). I firstly applied for an ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal HSSREC as a required procedure, prior to conducting the study. This was to adhere to research ethics and to be certain that the study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines set by the University of KwaZulu-Natal HSSREC. Permission from the KwaZulu-Natal

Department of Education was also requested to conduct research in the selected schools. Upon receiving approval from these institutions, I then negotiated access with the Circuit Manager in charge of schools. I was then able to commence with my field work.

The first thing I did when I entered the field was to visit the selected research sites to initiate contact with the school principals. The purpose of my first visit was to introduce myself, explain the study, and request permission to use the school as a research site and its staff as participants. When visiting these schools, I hoped to receive a positive response from all the principals. I was presented with the shocking reality that not everyone was willing to participate in the study. Out of the 10 schools visited, four principals did not agree to participate, citing various reasons. Two of those four principals stated that they did not have time as they were leading small schools with a shortage of educators; they were always busy as they were involved in teaching during the day. One principal did not openly decline participation but would always give different reasons for us not to meet. The last principal cited bad experiences with people coming to school to interview him. When asked to elaborate, he said it was personal. While I was disappointed, I respected their decisions not to participate in the study as it was within their rights. It is important to note that participants can make rational decisions whether or not to participate in a study (Greamey et al., 2012). As plan B, I had to visit other schools that were not initially selected as replacements for the ones that declined participation in the study. In the end, I managed to get eight principals accepting to participate in the study. Fortunately, all the principals who accepted were very excited after I informed them about the research purposes. They were eager to be involved as they believed that their voices would finally be heard.

4.6 DATA GENERATION METHODS

This section presents the methods that were used in this study to generate data from the participants. Ezeonwuachusi (2020) argues that it is important for researchers adopting a qualitative research approach to make a decision on an appropriate method that is fitting and justified by the study methodology as well as the purpose of the study. Soh et al (2020) concurs, arguing that a researcher's ontological and epistemological stance will define both the methodological approach as well as the methods adopted. Therefore, while there are several methods of data generation, based on the ontological position, epistemological stance and methodological approach adopted, this research used two data-generation methods, namely, interviews and document reviews. The two methods used in the study allowed the researcher

to have a broad understanding of the context and ensure the trustworthiness of data generated. Below is the detailed discussion of data-generation methods used by this study.

4.6.1 Interviews

I used qualitative, semi-structured interviews to generate data from participants. Qualitative interviews means the researcher conducts an in-person interview with participants and/or interviews them telephonically (Creswell, 2009). This view is supported by Saarijärvi and Bratt (2021) who describe a qualitative interview as a data-generation method where an interview is conducted either in-person or using video or telephone communication. Rossetto (2014) further argues that qualitative research interviews involve the gathering of data by learning about meanings and experiences in an active listening that involves exploring and encouraging in-depth discussion. According to Oltmann (2016), in qualitative research, interviews are the best ways to understand another person's perspective and develop thick descriptions of their social world. Semi-structured interviews are suitable as they enable the individuals to think and talk about their predicaments, needs, expectations, experiences and understanding of their phenomenon (Frederick, 2018). Langa (2013) argues that the best way to understand the reasons given by people is to ask them, to better understand the meaning they attach to them. Interviews help us understand the meaning that people give to the social world they live in (Langa, 2013).

For this study, I used both in-person and telephone interviews to generate data because of their benefits. In in-person interviews, there is a direct communication between the interviewer and the interviewee with no technical disruptions (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Another advantage of in-person interviews is that they create a safe and comfortable atmosphere (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Webb (2015) further argues that in in-person interviews, the researcher is able to interpret the observed behaviours together with participants' subjective experience to understand the phenomenon. I personally went to schools to conduct the interviews with the principals. This enabled me to interact with them in their environments. I believed that in-person interviews would allow for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. However, telephonic interviews were used in situations where the participants were unable to undertake an in-person interview because of their busy schedules. Farooq and De Villiers (2017) argued that busy participants often prefer a telephone interview, because it is easier to reschedule or even cancel the interview without the interviewer incurring any travel cost and time. Telephone interviews can be conducted with participants at their own convenience, at a time that is suitable

to them (Hawkins, 2018). I believed that telephonic interview allowed for busy participants to agree to participate in the study as it allowed them to do so at a convenient time.

I chose the semi-structured interview and generally open-ended questions to elicit views and opinions of the participants in the study. According to McIntosh & Morse (2015), semi-structured interviews are used to obtain subjective responses from participants regarding their experiences of a particular phenomenon. Adams (2015) describes semi-structured interviews as a type of interview that uses a combination of both closed- and open-ended questions which are often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions. Therefore, according to Adams (2015), the dialogue can meander around the topics on the agenda rather than adhere slavishly to verbatim questions as in a standardised survey and may delve into totally unforeseen issues. To define the semi-structured interview more precisely, Szombatová (2016) posits that the interviewer uses a list of questions to ascertain the interviewee understands of the context and the content. Szombatová (2016) further proclaims the advantage of using semi-structured interviews as being flexible; the researcher does not have to follow a strict schedule and can therefore pose improvised questions during the interview. Kallio et al (2016) notes that semi-structured interviews promote reciprocity, allowing the researcher to ask follow-up questions and giving participants space to express themselves freely. The use of semi-structured interviews resonated well with this study as principals leading small schools in deprived contexts were interviewed to gather information about their experiences and the predicaments of their leadership. The flexibility of the semi-structured interviews allowed for the participants to respond freely without any limitations and gave space for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions for clarification and to gain more insight as the interview progressed. Qoyyimah (2023) argue that, if both the researcher and the participants are bilingual to some degree, the researcher needs to report whether it was participants' choice what language was to be used in their interviews. Some participants chose to use Zulu language during the interview arguing that they feel more comfortable expressing themselves. The paradigm's philosophy of understanding the people being studied means the qualitative researcher (as translator) is required to consider the cultural context of the researched. Hence, translation of interview data can be accomplished directly by the researcher (Qoyyimah, 2023). During the process of transcribing data for analysis, I translated the data that was presented in Zulu. As Qoyyimah (2023) argue that the researchers' understanding of the data set and the subject matter, as well as similar professional background to the participants, helped to minimise lost or distorted meanings.

I visited all the schools selected for this study to arrange for the interviews and gain access. However, I found that the trickiest issue, when requesting an interview was what the duration of the interview would be. Adams (2015) warns that requesting too long an interview may cause an outright refusal by participants. In order to ensure that no valuable time of the participants was wasted and there was enough time for the interview process, each interview lasted for 30-50 minutes. Five out of eight principals were interviewed in their respective schools. Three of the eight participants were interviewed after school hours in the public library, citing time constraints associated with their busy schedule during school hours. They argued that due to a limited number of educators in their schools, they were always busy as they were involved in teaching during the day. Two interviews were scheduled for each participant, with a second schedule used in order to fill the gaps and gain more insight into their experiences and perceptions about the phenomenon being investigated. However, all the second schedule interviews were conducted telephonically due to the busy schedule of the participating principals. The interview schedule of principals followed an alphabetical order from Principal A-H as pseudonyms.

4.6.2 Document Reviews

I used document reviews as another way of generating data. Goldkuhl (2019) asserts that documents provide an important data source in qualitative research as they play an important role in developing and managing information systems. Documents such as policy and legislative documents, reports, meeting minutes, contracts, manuals, or email correspondence can be used as relevant documents for the purpose of the study (Goldkuhl, 2019).

Berg and Lune (2012) state that document reviews are a careful, detailed and systematic examination of a body of knowledge to identify patterns, themes and meaning. They entail rigorously and systematically analysing the contents of written documents (Wach & Ward, 2013). I used document reviews to triangulate data that I had generated from the interviews (Cardno, 2018). In the view of Mackieson et al. (2019), document reviews are often used as a means of triangulation, to corroborate data obtained from other methods and reduce potential biases in a study.

When I entered the schools to gather documents related to the phenomenon I was researching, I was confronted with important decisions about which documents were most important and/or relevant. I requested the principals' permission to review documents which included minutes of meetings, school timetables, distribution of educator duty loads and school records.

Walliman (2017) notes that document review is advantageous because it provides data collected over long periods, offering a form of longitudinal insight that short-term data collection cannot provide. Since some of the information in the documents that were reviewed had been used for years, it provided a wider and a deep understanding of the context which could have been difficult to understand during the duration of the study. The document reviews assisted in getting a deep insight and understanding of the principals' experiences of the leadership of teaching and learning in their respective schools. It assisted in corroborating the data received from participants during the interviews.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data was conducted in accordance with qualitative data analysis methods. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) describe the qualitative data analysis process as organising data into categories, identifying patterns and relationships, starting with the specific data and ending with categories and patterns. The purpose of qualitative data analysis is that it allows the researcher to make sense of data obtained from participants by noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Male, 2016). Burnard (2008) outlines two approaches to qualitative data analysis; the deductive approach which involves using a structure or predetermined framework to analyse data, or the inductive approach which involves analysing data with little or no structure or framework.

The study, therefore, followed an inductive approach when analysing data collected during the investigation since there were no predetermined themes and these would only emerge during the process of data analysis. The purposes of using an inductive approach, according to Thomas (2003), are to reduce large and raw text data into brief, summary format, to establish clear links between the research objective and the summary of the findings. Walliman (2017) concurs, stating that the mind cannot process large amounts of information, preferring simplified information arranged into patterns for easy understanding. Therefore, following the qualitative, inductive approach, the study adopted thematic analysis as a method of analysing data. Thematic analysis is a method adopted to identify, analyse, and interpret themes within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide framework for conducting thematic analysis.

Phase I involves transcribing and reading the transcripts repeatedly (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). I read through all data from all transcripts and written notes and other relevant

documents accumulated from the interviews. During this phase, I became very familiar with the data. During Phase 2, I began the systematic analysis of data through coding. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I read the transcripts to identify, reduce and organise data into manageable themes and categories for greater understanding of the context and interpretation of the set of data. Moreover, I then listened to all the audio recordings of interviews to check the accuracy of the transcripts. This allowed for an increased understanding and the appropriate presentation of the research findings. In Phase 3, I started to search for emerging themes from the table. This phase involved reviewing the coded data to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) recommend reviewing the similarity and overlap by working through hardcopies of the transcripts with pens and highlighters. I used different colour highlighters to identify these areas of similarity and overlap. The data associated with each theme is colour coded.

Phase 4 is characterised by reviewing and refining the themes, as I returned to the raw data to ensure the developed themes were grounded in the data (Xu & Zammit, 2020). At this phase of data analysis, Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest that the researcher reviews and refines data to either eliminate unnecessary data or combine data with the central ideas. I read the data associated with each theme and combined those that supported the data across all interviews. In Phase 5, I developed the main themes and subthemes (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). For example, principals' understanding of leadership emerged as the main theme and leadership as a group activity, leadership as influence, leadership as planning, organising and controlling as subthemes. Lastly, in Phase 6, I compiled the composite report of the study.

4.8 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS

Connelly (2016) defines trustworthiness as the degree of confidence in the data interpretation and methods used in data analysis to make certain of the quality of a study. Therefore, trustworthiness is crucial to ensure the integrity of findings in a qualitative research study (Connelly, 2016). According to Stahl and King (2020), trustworthiness means that the readers will have a sense of confidence when reading what the researcher has reported. In this study, I drew on qualitative and interpretive research methods to address and ensure trustworthiness and the quality of the research. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the criteria of trustworthiness (Elshafie, 2013). This section outlines how the issues of

credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were addressed in this qualitative study.

4.8.1 Credibility

Credibility demonstrates the plausibility of the research findings as obtained from the participants' original views (Anney, 2014). The study established credibility by adopting methodological triangulation in generating data. Data-generation methods were based on more than one method as explained in the data-generation section of this study. First, I used semi-structured interviews to generate data from participants. In order to gather a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question, I further used probing questions and follow-up interviews to allow the participants to provide more detail to their responses, therefore providing greater insight into the phenomenon. I believe that the use of triangulation assisted me to assess the integrity of the participants' responses. Accordingly, the second data-generation method was document review. As stated earlier, having more than one data-generation method was in many ways an attempt to ensure triangulation. Further, the study used a member checking strategy to establish the credibility of this study. Member checking refers to sending the analysed data to participants for them to ascertain if the information was correctly interpreted and to suggest changes of any misinterpreted data (Anney, 2014). Transcripts were sent back to all participants to evaluate the interpretation before the final report was compiled. This allowed the participants to check for omissions, suggests changes and approve the data to avoid misreporting.

4.8.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree of consistency of the research findings (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Kalu and Bwalya (2017) argue that to ensure dependability, the researcher is expected to give the reader adequate data to determine how consistent or stable it is. Shenton (2004) thus suggests that to ensure the dependability of the study, the researcher should provide, in detail, the processes within the study, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work or to gain the same results.

Anney (2014) contends that dependability can be established by using an audit trail. An audit trail in qualitative research refers to an account of how a qualitative study was conducted and how the researcher arrived at the conclusions. It provides a detailed description of the steps taken by the researcher during a research study, supported by a thorough collection of relevant

documentation (Carcary, 2020). Therefore, to strengthen the dependability of findings, this study provided a detailed description of the research design and its implementation, detailed data-generation process and detailed reporting of all decisions and activities in the field. I requested participants' permission to record the interviews. The participants were then allowed to go through the transcriptions to ascertain if they were accurate. This allowed both the researcher and the participants to come to a consensus before the findings were finalised. I believe that this reduced the potential for misrepresentation of data.

4.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher demonstrating that the findings were derived from data, and not their own (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Shenton (2004) therefore emphasises that the criterion of confirmability is to ensure that the research findings are the results of the participants' ideas and experiences and ideas and not those of the researcher. Kalu and Bwalya (2017) argue that to ensure confirmability of a study, the researcher should provide a detailed account of the research processes. This allows readers to ascertain that the processes of data management were followed correctly. In accordance with this provision, I provided the detail of the research processes in the earlier sections of this chapter.

Further, member checking as a means of ensuring confirmability was conducted where each participant confirmed that the findings had not been misreported or clarified their position in instances where misunderstandings had occurred. The study again emphasised the use of methodological triangulation to promote confirmability.

4.8.4 Transferability

Transferability examines the degree to which the research findings can be applied to other contexts with other participants (Anney, 2014). Carcary (2009) conversely argues that for the research to be transferable to other contexts, the researcher must provide thick descriptions of phenomena and context to enable others to assess the findings' transferability to their own contexts (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Haq et al. (2023) argue that a qualitative study is usually conducted with a small population, in a small context; therefore, the findings may not be applied to other situations or populations. Haq et al. (2023) further stress that thick description of data regarding the context will enhance the chances of transferability.

Therefore, to ensure and strengthen the transferability of findings to a different context and population, this study provided detailed contextual information about the research and

phenomenon under investigation and the context in which the study was conducted. In this way, I provided the reader with a thick description of the study's context to maximise the possibility of transferability (Nyathi, 2018).

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Kalu and Bwalya (2017) argue that any research conducted can have potential risks to participants, therefore it is the duty of the researcher to safeguard the wellbeing of the participants involved in the research process. Safeguarding the wellbeing of participants, according to Kalu and Bwalya (2017) means adhering to ethical research principles which include protecting participants from any harm, obtaining informed consent, voluntary participation and protecting the participant by ensuring confidentiality. Thus, researchers must ensure that the rights, privacy, and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies (Berg & Lune, 2012) are protected. According to Mouton (2001), scientific research must adhere to generally acceptable norms and values to ensure that it is ethically acceptable. Madushani (2016) describes research ethics as referring to set of values and standards that help to regulate scientific activity. The set of values and standards in the research include the privacy, informed consent, no-harm, privacy and confidentiality of participants (Berg & Lune, 2012). Against the above statement, I strove to maintain objectivity and integrity in conducting research by adhering to all research ethics guidelines as discussed below.

4.9.1 Applying for Permission to Conduct the Study

To ensure that I adhered to research ethics and observed all the ethical principles in conducting this study, I first requested approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal HSSREC to conduct research (Appendix A). Madushani (2016) argues that before conducting any research that involves humans, it is required to obtain approval from the institution's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This study followed all the research ethical protocols in accordance with the University of KwaZulu-Natal HSSREC. First, I submitted and defended the research proposal with the University's Higher Degrees' Review Committee. The research proposal was approved by the committee. I then applied for approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal HSSREC.

I applied for permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education through a written application to conduct the study in public schools. In the application, I explained in detail the background to the study and the research aim. I stated all procedures that ensured ethical issues

were followed. The application was granted permission (Appendix B). Upon receiving approval from the HSSREC and KZNDOE institutions, I then wrote a letter to the Circuit Manager to negotiated access to conduct research in specific schools (Appendix C).

4.9.2 Participation and Informed Consent

Ethical principles involve access to participants, informed consent and confidentiality (Greaney et al., 2012). I then proceeded to recruit participants. I wrote letters to the selected potential participants and the authorities of the schools the participants represented. This was important because I anticipated that the participants may use school information in their responses. I sought informed consent from the participants. Informed consent, according to Ferreira and Serpa (2018) entails providing participants with adequate information about the study so that participants can make an informed decision whether or not to participate in the research. Informed consent requires a written, signed and dated document and it should use very clear language to avoid any misunderstandings for participants. Manti and Licari (2018) posit that the researcher must present the research-related information in detail to the intended participants for them to take an informed decision whether or to participate in the research study or not. To adhere to the principle, consent was requested in writing from the participants before they could participate. I afforded the participant appropriate time to ask for clarity in seeking questions about the study. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable. After extensively discussing the details of the study with the participants, they were given the written consent and then asked to sign it (Appendix D).

4.9.3 Confidentiality of Participants

Researchers have an obligation to secure the confidentiality of the participants in the research and participants taking part in a study expect a certain level of anonymity (Dooly et al., 2017). Confidentiality, according to Bos and Bos (2020) refers to the guarantee that sensitive or private information will be handled with extreme care (Bos & Bos, 2020). Against this principle, the participants were informed of their right to privacy and were assured that their confidentiality was protected. To maintain confidentiality of the participants, they were informed that their identity was to be protected by using pseudonyms. Subedi (2025) describes pseudonyms as when the real names of the participants in a qualitative study are replaced by false names to ensure that their confidentiality is protected. To protect their identity, neither the real names of the participants nor the schools were used during the study. This was done to

adhere to the confidentiality principle. Therefore, the codes Principal A-H were allocated to participants based on the schedule of interviews conducted.

4.9.4 Interpretation of Data

Dooly et al. (2017) argue that researchers have an obligation to be as ethical as possible when interpreting the results of a study by avoiding misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the data. To avoid misrepresentation of the results, I sought permission to record all the interviews I conducted with the participants. This allowed an opportunity to verify participant's responses during transcription and data analysis stages. I then gave the participants time to go through the recordings for approval before finalising the results. I further used a triangulation technique to corroborate the participant's responses by doing document reviews. I observed this principle to ensure that I reported the findings fully without any fear of misrepresentation.

4.9.5 Plagiarism

Lastly, to adhere to ethical research conduct; I tried my best to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism, according to Park (2017), refers to using the words or ideas of other persons as one's own without acknowledging the source. In this study, I avoided plagiarism by acknowledging the sources used in the research study and by providing the list of references at the end of report.

4.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of any particular study refer to potential weaknesses caused by factors that are usually out of the researcher's control (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) argue that it is the researchers' obligation to present complete and honest limitations of a study. As such, the main limitation of this study is associated with its chosen research design. A qualitative study is often conducted on a small number of individuals in a particular context, therefore it is sometimes impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations (Haq et al., 2023; Shenton, 2004). The study was conducted with eight principals leading small schools in a context of deprivation. This created limitations as this is a small-scale study of just few principals. It cannot be guaranteed that its findings and conclusions can be generalised to a wider population with the same degree of certainty. To address this limitation, I provided a thick description of the study context and the phenomenon of the study. In that way, it provides an opportunity for readers to have a proper understanding of the phenomenon and enables them to assess if it fits their contexts.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented a detailed description of the research design and methodology adopted for this study. This study followed an interpretive paradigm and a qualitative approach as the research design that provides its framework. The study argues the suitability of the research design, based on its orientation towards understanding reality in the form in which it is perceived by its participants. Purposive sampling was presented as the technique used to select the study participants, where principals leading small schools located in deprived contexts were selected. The study used both semi-structured interviews and document review as methods to generate data from the participants. The two methods adopted by this study allowed the researcher to have a broad understanding of the phenomenon. Against the qualitative, inductive approach adopted, the study used thematic analysis as a method of analysing data. The researcher's role and how access was negotiated throughout the study was discussed. In addition, the issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were addressed to establish the trustworthiness of the research.

The next two chapters present the data analysis and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 5

LEADERSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL DEPRIVED SCHOOLS: UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I presented and discussed the methodology and design that underpins this study. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of data collected from eight principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. As indicated in Chapter 1, the aim of this study was to explore the experiences of principals regarding the leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in the context of multiple deprivations. It focused on understanding how these principals understand leading teaching and learning and the reasons that account for the way they do.

To achieve the aim as mentioned above, the study thus posed the following research question:

What are the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation?

To answer the above question effectively, I formulated and investigated three sub-questions so that the findings from these sub-questions contributed to answer the main research question posed above.

The following sub-questions are deduced from the main research question.

- How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning?
- How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning?
- Why do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning in the way they do?

Owing to the large amount of data collected, the data presentation and discussion is divided into two chapters. Chapter 5 presents the data analysis of the first sub-question on how the principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning. Chapter 6 presents the data analysis of the second and the third sub-questions on how

the principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning, and the reasons why the lead teaching and learning the way they do simultaneously.

This chapter is presented in three sections. First, the chapter presents the detailed description of the profile of each site where the study was conducted, as a means of contextualising the findings. This is followed by profiling the participants of this study who work as principals in these sites, to provide the participant's background, qualification, experience and expertise in the study context. This was done to introduce the participants to the readers. The identity of both sites and participants were protected by using pseudonyms. Second, the chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the data derived from the interviews with participants. The data is presented under the three broad themes that will be listed and discussed in detail later in that section. The chapter concludes by highlighting the key issues from the findings.

5.2 PROFILING THE RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

This section provides a detailed description of the profiles of each research site and those of participants in the study. This will enable the reader to understand the context of each site and the participants as they are laid bare in the reader's eyes. First, I will start by profiling each research site, followed by that of the participants.

5.2.1 Profiling of Schools

As indicated in Chapter 4, the study was conducted in eight schools. The original names of schools were not used to protect their identities. Therefore, they were allocated alphabet letters from A- H. This section gives the profile of each site in table below.

Table 1: Profiling of schools

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Type	Prim/Sec	Sec	Sec	Sec	Prim	Prim	Prim	Prim	Prim
Location	Rural/ township	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural
Distance from nearest Town or City (km)		45	12	36	25	7	30	40	35
School enrolment	2020	122	173	94	135	74	177	62	292
	2021	120	178	96	142	72	169	59	283
	2022	126	185	108	149	75	141	57	278
No of classes		7	8	5	7	5	5	7	8
Staffing	PPN	4	5	5	4	3	2	4	7

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Dep Principal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Dep Head	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
	PL1 educators	3	4	4	3	2	3	1	6
Support Staff	Admin Clerk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Security	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Cleaner	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0

Table 1 shows the profiles of all eight schools. The study used data obtained from the Department of Education, Ugu District and NMUNS-PSI policy to profile the selected schools. The study involved five primary schools and three secondary schools. The table indicates that all schools are located in a deprived context (rural areas) with distances ranging from 7km to 45km from their respective nearest towns. As was discussed in Chapter 1 of this study, a small primary school is a school with between 135 to 310 learners with one class per grade, and a small secondary school as a school with between 200 and 400 learners with two classes per grade. The table thus indicates that all schools are classified as small, as they all have enrolment numbers from 57 to 292 from the period between 2020 and 2022. In terms of staffing, the table indicates that the PPN of all the schools is six and below with the exception of one primary school. All of these schools do not have deputy principals. Out of the eight schools, only one school has two departmental heads, and it is a secondary school, and one school has one departmental head. The table further indicates that out of eight schools; only one had an administrative clerk responsible for the office administration. The absence of administrative clerks in these schools therefore suggests that the principals leading these schools have no choice but to do the administrative work themselves or delegate those duties to educators.

5.2.2 Profiling of Participants

In this section I present the profiling of principals. Their original names were not used in this study to ensure confidentiality and to protect their identity as was done with the names of the research sites above. Therefore, the letters A-H were allocated to participants as their identity was based on the schedule of interviews conducted. This was done to ensure anonymity. Brief profile information on each of the principals is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Profiling of school principals

Principal	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Gander (F/M)	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	M
Age category	(35-55)	(35-55)	(35-55)	(35-55)	(35-55)	(35-55)	(35-55)	(35-55)
Qualification	BA, BEd (Hon)	SPTD	B. Paed	PTD ACE	Degree	Degree	NPDE ABET ACE	SPTD HDE Bed (Hon)
Total teaching experience in years	25	26	25	27	10	25	25	28
Total years of experience as principal	15	9	10	9	5	2	9	8
Duty load (periods per week)	20	20	17	18	Above 27	Above 27	Above 27	18
Class Management (YES/NO)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Co-curricular & extra-curricular	Debate, Reading & Spelling	Sport Culture	Soccer	Music Art	Music and athletics	All offered at school	All offered at school	Athletics netball

The study was conducted with eight principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools within the selected district. Five of these principals were male and three were female and all were between the ages of 35–55. The profile table above indicates that all these principals had the minimum teaching qualification expected of an educator in school. Table 2 also indicates that these principals have vast teaching experience, ranging between 10–28 years in the field of teaching. Most had held the position of school principal between 2–10 years, with one participant who had been in a principal's position for 15 years. This table suggests that these principals are subjected to what researchers called role multiplicity. In addition to being principals of the schools, responsible for the management and administrative duties, they are teachers who have large teaching responsibilities. The table indicate that most of them teach way above the expected teaching load which ranges between 18 to more than 27 periods per

week. Seven of these principals are performing the role of being full-time class teachers responsible for class management duties. This table indicates that these principals are involved in both co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at their schools, with two principals involved in all activities because of limited human resources. This table therefore suggests that these principals spend substantial amounts of time in the classroom with teaching duties and very little time for administration and management duties.

5.3 DATA PRESENTATION

This section presents the data generated from participants during interviews. The data were generated using both semi-structured interviews and document analysis. As explained in detail in Chapter 4, I used semi-structured interviews as the chosen data collection method to elicit the participants' views. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for the participants to freely respond without any limitations and gave me space to ask follow-up questions for clarification and to gain more insight as the interview progressed. The study used document review to triangulate the results from the interviews. This, therefore, helped me to verify what I had learned from participants during the interviews.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the identity of participants and their schools were protected by using pseudonyms. The original names of participants were not used in this study to ensure confidentiality and protect their identities. The principals were cited by means of symbols and their original names were not used anywhere in the report. In conducting the interviews, I used a schedule to identify the participants, with the first participant identified as Principal A. Therefore, the codes, Principal A–H, were allocated to participants as their identity, based on the schedule of interviews conducted. This was done to ensure anonymity.

I used a voice recorder during the interviews with the informed consent of the participants. The quotations from the interviews are direct verbatim quotations from the transcribed data. That was done to avoid misrepresentation of findings in any manner.

In this chapter, the data presentation was guided by both research and interview questions as well as document analysis. The three broad themes used as headings in this chapter are: working in small, deprived schools: principals' meanings, principals' understanding of leadership and principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning.

5.3.1 Working in Small, Deprived Schools: Principals' Meanings

When principals were asked about their experiences of working in small and deprived schools, or what it means to them to work in a small, deprived schools. Principals shared several views, which suggested that working in such contexts is not an easy experience. All the principals mentioned how challenging it is to work in a small and deprived school. For example, Principal A indicated: *There are so many challenges that one face in a small school*. Similarly, Principal B stated: *To be in a small and deprived school, means that you are in a serious problem*. According to Principal C: *Leading a small school in a deprived context is very challenging and tedious*. Sharing a same view, Principal E raised a concern which linked low enrolment rates with difficulties in leading these schools. The principal said: *I-enrolment iyona eyenza kube nzima kakhulu ukusebenza*. (*The enrolment is one factor that makes it very difficult to work.*)

While sharing similar views that working in a small, deprived school was difficult, two principals appreciated the reality that their experience of leading small schools was not all negative. First, Principal D alerted us to the fact that leading in small school made it easy to know all learners. The principal said: *Leading in a small school is a challenge but at the same time it equips a lot*. In the same vein, Principal G explained that in small schools, it was easy to know individual learners due to the small number of learners. The principal said:

Kulezi zikole ezincane kanje, ngithanda ngoba uyakwazi ukubona ingane ngayinye ngayinye. (What I like in these small schools is that I am able to recognise learners as individuals.)

In the foregoing discussion, principals expressed what it meant to them to lead in a small school in a deprived context. Their accounts are an indication that leading in such a context exposes one to difficulties. I probed further to understand the difficulties that principals were exposed to and what caused them. There seemed to be multiple aspects that made leading small schools in deprived contexts difficult, thus causing them to lead teaching and learning the way they do. These aspects included a heavy workload of principals and educators, limited time, limited staff and heavy workloads, and the departmental policies that did not cater for such contexts.

5.3.1.1 Workloads of principals and educators

During the interviews, all principals explained that their own workload and that of educators in small schools made it difficult to lead teaching and learning. Principal A noted that, in small deprived schools, principals must juggle management, administration and full-time teaching, leaving little capacity to monitor educators' work. Principal A said,

As a principal having my workload of teaching in class, it put a great stress to me to. I have to juggle around my work to see to it that I also monitor teachers work. It makes it therefore not possible to check and monitor the teachers work the way you would want to. So, in terms of monitoring, it is a challenge. That is because of the nature of the school.

Principal C raised concerns that spending considerable time teaching their own subjects in classes hindered them from leading teaching and learning. Principal C said: *We are all overloaded. When I go to Class A, I will neglect my periods. I am overcommitted, I am overloaded too.* Principal H shared the same opinion, stating that the high number of teaching hours spent in class did not give them sufficient time to do the monitoring of educator's work, Principal H explained:

As a principal, I am expected to monitor the work of my departmental head, also to monitor the work of educators. I also have a load of 19 hours in a week. So, if you look at these 19 hours, I am in the classroom most of the time, I do not manage to monitor my departmental head as well as educators because I have to monitor in the form of class visit, collecting evidence in files, planning and so on. So, the duty load that I carry doesn't allow me to do that.

Principal D shared the same view about the amount of time principals in small schools spent in class as one of the factors that made it challenging to lead teaching and learning. This was what Principal D had to say: *I am teaching more or less the same as educators. More than 60% of the duty load I am teaching in class and that makes 18 hours per week.*

Principal G added that being a full-time teacher proved to be challenging in leading teaching and learning in a small school in the context of deprivation. Principal G said:

Angikwazi ukwenza lutho ngoba mani ngiwuthisha ngokugcwele. Uma kushaya u-8:00 nami sengiwuthisha ngihleli nezingane zebanga 7 kuze kushaye u-14:30. (I cannot do anything because I am also a full-time teacher. I stay with my Grade 7 as a teacher from 8:00 to 14:30 every day)

Some principals argued that it was difficult to delegate duties to other staff members as they themselves had a heavy workload due to the nature of the school context. Principal B, for example, stated:

I am no longer able to do the leadership of teaching and learning sufficiently because it is even a challenge to delegate some of my duties to other educators because the very same educators whom I must delegate duties to are busy doing their own duties.

Principal H echoed this view, stating that even the departmental heads in small, deprived school contexts had heavy-duty loads and that hindered them from monitoring educators work satisfactorily. Principal H stated:

As a school management team, we have a large duty load which hinders us from being able to monitor and control the work of colleagues properly. My departmental head, in her duty of monitoring and controlling the work of educators is also somehow not satisfactory because she also carried the large teaching load.

Principal G stated that the situation in a small school in a context of deprivation was abnormal when it came to the workload which then led to challenges of leading teaching and learning. This is what Principal G said,

Uyayibona lento ukuthi ayijwayelekile (You see this thing is abnormal). That one is painful when it comes to duty load; I think there is no teacher at this school who is having less than 39 periods per week. We are all above going from 50 something and above.

Sharing this opinion, Principal A stated that educators in small schools did not have free periods to do anything other than teaching in the classroom. Principal A said,

There is absolutely no time unless then you ask an educator to take work home and do it at home because no educator can be able to work here at school because all the educators have got full load with no period free. If there is any free period free, it is one or two periods per week.

The findings from the data indicate that the participants felt that their workloads and that of educators working in small schools made it challenging to lead teaching and learning. They expressed that they are confronted with conflicting multiple roles every day. It emerged that participants have to juggle between being full-time teachers with large teaching duty loads and fulfilling their management duties at the same time. They spent most of their time in class teaching and have very little time to focus on their managerial duties that include monitoring of educator's work. Educators working in small, deprived schools have very large teaching loads due to the nature of the schools, which makes it challenging for principals to delegate duties to educators.

What the study found about the challenges experienced by principals leading small, deprived schools as a result of their workload echoes what was discussed in Section 2.9 of the literature review in this study. In Section 2.9, the studies conducted suggested that the dual role for principals in small school, work intensification and role multiplicity were some of the challenges of leading small schools (Clarke & Steven, 2009; Starr & White, 2008).

Literature suggests that principals leading small schools are often teachers who teach a full load and yet are also expected to be school leaders responsible for both management and administration. Therefore, these challenges had impacted on the lived experiences of leaders

in small schools. However, the principals were required to comply with the same standardised functions, like in all other schools, irrespective of size or location. Principals leading larger schools have the luxury of delegating and sharing leadership and management tasks, a luxury that principals in small, deprived school do not have (Starr & White, 2008). Another study by Medina et al. (2018) suggests that the principals in small schools juggle multiple tasks every day, like principals in other school types despite leading a school of a small size.

I am of the view that there is little recognition of the unique challenges faced by principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools. These principals are finding it difficult to balance the demands of their role as teachers and their management responsibilities. Daryl (2009) notes that the unique challenges of small, deprived schools are often overlooked, where principals must manage the school while simultaneously carrying full classroom teaching responsibilities.

5.3.1.2 Limited time

Time constraints were another concern raised by principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. It emerged during the interviews that time was one of the challenges that made principals see leading small, deprived schools as a challenge and which led to the way they led teaching and learning in their schools. Principal C, for example, stated: *Due to time constraints I am facing in this small school, I am no longer able to monitor the whole school's performance and curriculum coverage.*

Affirming this view, Principal B raised the factor of insufficient time as one of the constraints that hindered principals in small deprived school contexts from effectively leading teaching and learning in their school. Principal B argued that most of the time, principals in small, deprived school contexts had to work even beyond school hours to do some of their management and administrative work. Principal B said this:

There is only one period free for me every day and that is the period that I have to use to look at my admin work, to look at my management work. If then I can't finish that then I will see that after the notional time. And that means I have to stay behind and push some administrative work or management work so that I can be in par with the office work.

Principal F shared the same opinion. According to Principal F, leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts was not a seven-hour-a-day job like their counterparts in big and privileged schools. This is how Principal F put it:

To us (principals leading teaching and learning in small schools) is not like a seven-hour job: it is more than that. You can work until 10 at night to make sure that everything happens because you don't have any time.

Principal A stated that in order to ensure that the work was finished; one must stay at school beyond the stipulated time. Principal A said,

There is only one period free for me every day, only one period free and that is the period that I have to use to look at my admin work, to look at my management work. If then I can't finish that then I will see that after the notional time. And that actually means I have to stay behind and push some administrative work or management work so that I can therefore be on par with the office work.

In the same vein, Principal F explained that in small schools, and because of the amount of work for principals there was sometimes not enough time to do management and monitoring efficiently. This is how Principal F explicitly put it:

Anginaso nami isikhathe esanele sokwenza imanagement noma ukubheka umsebenzi, nami ngisuke ngisekilasini ngizama ukuthi nami njalo ngiqhube ukuze ngikwazi ukuqeda umsebenzi kwezami izifundo kwezami izifundo. Ngizama konke okusemandleni ukuthi uma kukhona okuphuthumayo ngishiye ekilasini ngiye e-ofisi, ngasikhathi ngise ofisi abantwana basele bodwa bengenamuntu ekilasini. (I don't have enough time to do the management and monitoring because I am also always in my class trying to push to cover the curriculum in my subjects. I am trying my best, if there is something urgent, I had to leave my class and go to the office, while I am at the office, and learners are left unattended in class).

Principal C added that, due to time pressures, principals in small schools often took work home, which was risky because they could be held accountable if important school documents were lost. Principal C explained:

I sometimes work during my spare time, sometimes I do this (work) at home or in the library, which is a challenge, and which is not acceptable because what if these documents get lost out there, I will be in trouble, big trouble.

Emerging from these findings is that time was one of the challenges that made principals see leading small, deprived schools as a challenge and thus resulted in principals leading teaching and learning the way they did in their schools. The data from principals revealed insufficient time as one of the constraints that hindered principals in small, deprived school contexts from effectively leading teaching and learning in their schools.

Likewise, in Section 2.9 in the study, Starr and White (2008) echo what emerged from this study. The study found that small, deprived school principals are faced with multiple role demands of teaching, leadership and administration. These multiple role demands cause a lot

of stress for principals, and they feel overwhelmed by these multiple roles as they are unable to execute them effectively because of limited time (Medina et al., 2018). Due to the amount of work and the myriad roles for principals leading small schools in deprived contexts, they sometimes do not have enough time to do everything that is expected of them as principals. It is therefore not surprising that the principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts had to work even beyond the school hours to do some of their management and administrative work. Similarly, O’Leary (2015) found that teaching principals in small, deprived primary schools struggle to prioritise and manage their time to meet urgent school and learner needs. In this study, principals had to focus on teaching during the day and complete management and administrative duties after hours or at home to meet the heavy demands of their roles.

5.3.1.3 Limited staff and heavy workload.

The view that came out very strongly from the interviews about their leadership practices revealed that their leadership was influenced by limited staffing in their schools. Principals highlighted insufficient staff as a major problem in small schools in the context of deprivation. Due to the post-provisioning norms, small schools were allocated a few staff members, making it challenging to effectively lead teaching and learning. This is how Principal B explained it:

We don’t have sufficient staffing here, which means that we are expected to do quite a lot of work using the very few numbers of educators. We are managing a lot of work out of a limited resource.

Sharing this view, Principal A commented that the nature of small schools made it challenging to lead teaching and learning. Principal A added that due to governmental policies on teacher allocations, small schools were always allocated an insufficient number of educators which caused some subjects to be taught by out-of-field educators. To some extent, this compromised the quality of leading teaching and learning in such schools. Principal A explained:

In the small school, you will find that there are few teachers to teach but the number of subjects remain the same. Teachers will also teach subjects that they are not qualified to teach.

Principal A, who led a secondary school, explained that staff shortages meant there were too few educators to cover the required subjects for effective teaching and learning. The school therefore had to focus more on the Further Education and Training (FET) phase to place qualified educators into the subjects offered. Even this was insufficient, leaving some General

Education and Training (GET) phase subjects without any qualified educators. Principal A explained:

In FET there are seven subjects and in GET there are nine subjects, so in a small school like mine where then the PPN says five. You find that teachers are not enough to teach in the FET band as well as the senior phase. So, subject in the GET tends therefore to be filler subjects to their main qualifications. So how do expect justice to those subjects, if then they are teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach.

Adding to the conversations, Principal E who led a primary school highlighted that the challenge of insufficient staff in small schools affected the number of educators teaching specific grades therefore forcing the school to use a multigrading system. Principal E stated:

Inani lezingane esikoleni ilona elenza kube nzima kakhulu ukusebenza ngoba inani lezingane ilona olisho inani lotihsha okufanele babe khona esikoleni. Inani lezingane lithatha isikole lisibeke ku-multigrading. Ukuba khona kothisha abancane kwenza umsebenzi ube mukhulu kakhulu. [The enrolment at school makes it very difficult to work because the enrolment determines the number of educators that are supposed to be at school. The enrolment also put the school into multigrading.]

Principal E further explained that she was leading a school with only three staff members who were expected to effectively teach all the grades at school. This is what she said: *There are only three educators here at school, two Post Level 1 educators and one principal. As a principal, I have about 24 periods per week.* Principal F shared the same frustration stating that due to the limited number of staff, the school was forced to combine multiple grades for teaching and learning to take place which was abnormal. Principal F said,

Ibanga laka R asinalo ngoba kuthiwa abafundi okungenani kumele babe ishumi. Uthisha webanga 1 ufundisa ibanga 1 no R kanyekanye, uthisha omunye wesilisa wenzisa ibanga 2 no 3. Omunye uthisha wenzisa ibanga 4, 5 no 6. Mina ngenzise ibanga 7. Uyabona leyo nto ukuthi ayijwayelekile. [We don't have Grade R because they (DBE) say at least there must be 10 learners. Grade 1 educator is teaching Grade 1 and R combined. Another male educator is teaching Grade 2 and 3. Other educator is teaching Grade 4, 5 and 6 combined. I am teaching Grade 7. You can see that is abnormal].

It emerged from the response of Principal D that because of limited staff in small schools, especially the administrative personnel, principals needed to juggle many tasks because of the lack of support staff. Principal D explained: *The case here at school, we do not have the administrative clerk, so it means I have to do all things myself, that is why I need to carry the load myself as a leader of a school.* The same view was echoed by Principal F: *I am a manager; you have to manage the school as it is, and that includes curriculum, infrastructure and administration as well. I don't have a clerk.* According to Principal B, because there was no

administrative clerk at the school, the principal was forced to do the administrative work at home. Principal B explained:

To be just honest with you, I'm working even at home. That car you are seeing there is my office because I just take other files, going home and do all those activities that need to be done.

Principal A further raised the concern that due to the non-availability of administrative clerks in small schools, principals had to compromise between their teaching and learning, management and administrative duties which hindered the effective leadership of teaching and learning. This what Principal A said:

In a small school you have to have a load of an educator over and above that you have your administrative work, over and above that you have your management work that you need therefore to consider. So that is where then the teaching and learning get compromised if you are a principal in a small school. There is no administrative clerk, you see everything yourself. That is a very big disadvantage of a small school.

The account provided by Principal B suggests that insufficient staffing is a major problem in small schools in the context of deprivation because of the PPN, where small schools are allocated a fewer staff members compared to big schools. Insufficient staffing in small schools in contexts of deprivation makes it challenging to effectively lead teaching and learning.

The finding is consistent with the literature as evidenced in the literature review section of this study. School size influences the allocation of educators to schools (Diwan, 2015; Lingam et al., 2014; Makori & Onderi, 2014). In Section 2.9, Lowe (2006) argued that many small rural schools face the problem of inadequate teacher supply. Small rural schools are located in areas that are considered hard to staff. Therefore, many small rural schools district experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. Another study by Mansor et al. (2022) raised challenges in managing small schools, and the finding demonstrate that small schools are faced with the challenge of a lack of human resources. Insufficient staffing in small, deprived schools hinders the delivery of effective leadership of teaching and learning.

As noted in Section 2.9, Salmon and Sayed (2016) explain that in South Africa, educator distribution is determined by the PPM, which allocates teachers to public schools based on learner enrolment. In terms of this model, small schools receive a lesser allocation when compared to the larger schools. Buthelezi and Makhoba (2020) believe that the PPM is far from its intended goal of equal and just distribution of educator resources. Veriava (2017) concurs

and argues that the PPM is unable to redress the imbalances of the past education system, since it still seems to favour larger schools with high learner enrolments.

The data from the response of Principal A, a secondary school principal, suggests that the insufficient number of educators allocated to small schools forced some subjects to be taught by out-of-field educators. Due to insufficient educators, secondary school tends to place qualified educators in the FET phase and the GET phase is left with subjects taught by unqualified educators. This is supported by the literature in Section 2.9 which suggests that a lack of qualified teachers is seen as posing considerable challenges for the leadership in deprived schools (Hlalele, 2012; Lingam, 2014; Preston et al., 2013). The study by Preston et al. (2013) suggests that educators are one of the most important resources in any deprived schools compared to privileged schools. However, deprived schools tend to encounter greater challenges in recruiting highly qualified educators. Unqualified or under-qualified educators are more inclined to have a negative impact on all children at school. Another study by Shikalepo (2020) highlights challenges facing teaching in deprived schools and argues that adequate training of competent educators for quality teaching is an important factor for learners' achievement in schools. Inadequate training of educators results in incompetence, as the inability of the teacher therefore results in poor-quality teaching. The insufficient staffing in small, deprived schools seriously undermines the ability of such schools to provide quality teaching and learning. A key insight from participants is that staffing shortages in small, deprived schools lead to prioritising the FET phase, often at the expense of the GET phase. The quality of teaching and learning in small, deprived schools is compromised in the lower grades in the secondary schools.

The data further revealed that the leadership of teaching and learning is equally affected by insufficient staffing in primary schools and the secondary schools in small, deprived schools. Principal E, who leads a primary school, noted that staff shortages reduced the number of educators available for specific grades, forcing the school to use multigrade teaching. The view of Principal E is aligned with the literature in Section 2.9. In Section 2.9, Joyce (2014) argues that multigrading is common in small deprived schools where there are not enough learners and educators to justify separate classes, therefore learners in multiple grades are taught in one classroom simultaneously. Another study by Quail and Smyth (2014) concurs, suggesting that multigrade classes ensued from challenges associated with small school size. Teaching multigrade classes makes it more demanding because of the widely varying needs of children of different ages ((Hyry-Beihammer et al., 2015).

5.3.1.4 Unhelpful departmental policies

The responses from the principals of small, deprived schools revealed that departmental policies were not helpful in their endeavours to lead teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation. All the principals suggested that the departmental policies on leading teaching and learning did not take into consideration the diverse nature of different schools, especially the small and deprived schools. Principal C, for instance, suggested that the policies of the DBE treated all schools as if they operated in the same context and environment. Principal C explained:

The policies are good on paper, and for me they are good in a normal school. It goes back to the policymakers, they are using the blanket system treating schools as they are same, they operate on the same contexts and environment but that is not the case.

Sharing the same view, Principal A stated that the policies of the DBE did not address the unique issues of schools that were small and deprived. The principal argued that departmental policies were only good for schools with both good physical and human resources. Principal A stated:

They (policies) are not working in a sense that they do not cater for schools that are deprived or disadvantaged. Policies may be well structured, but do not actually address the challenges and address the issues of small schools that we find ourselves in. The policies are good for schools that have all the personnel, that is, physical as well as human resources.

Principal C added that the demands of different schools were not the same and therefore sometimes the policies of the DBE were impractical. Principal C argued:

Policies are impractical but we are trying, nevertheless. As I say, the enrolment does not mean that because you have few learners now everything changes, it is the same thing, the demands are the same.

Principal H suggested that policymakers did not take into consideration the workloads of principals leading teaching and learning in small schools. The principal argued that the standardised compliance requirements of policy implementation involved the same responses from all schools, irrespective of size or location. The principals stated that given the time principals of small schools spent in the classroom, it was sometimes challenging for them to implement all the policies as expected by the department. This compromised their leadership of teaching and learning. Principal H explained:

It's a bit challenging because our department measures our work in the same way, whether you are in the small or large school. When the department Officials visit the

school, they want to see all the departmental policies in place and being implemented but when it comes to a smaller school it becomes a challenge.

However, it is worth noting that not all participants believed that DBE policies were not helpful. At least one principal appreciated the reality and suggested that the implementation of departmental policies in leading teaching and learning in small schools was not all negative. Principal E suggested that departmental policies were helpful as they were guiding documents. Principal E suggested:

They are helpful, they are helpful because we cannot divert from them, and they are guiding us and it compulsory to those policies as we are all guided by SASA (South African Schools Act).

From the participants' responses, it was clear that the context of being a small and a deprived school had a major influence on the way they led teaching and learning. Leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts came with a unique set of context-specific challenges because of their distinctive characteristics and complex nature. Principals' efforts to lead teaching and learning in small, deprived schools were hindered by heavy workloads that kept them in the classroom and left too little time for managerial duties, including monitoring educators' work. There were limited staff, and this meant more work for principals who led them to sometimes working after school hours. There was little in the way of administrative support, but they were required to lead teaching and learning like all other principals even without the additional support. These factors suggest that the contexts in which these principals found themselves influenced the way they led teaching and learning. Principals sometimes compromise between their teaching duties and managerial duties as it is very difficult to balance the different aspects. Speaking of balancing the teaching and managerial duties, Principal A said the following about trying to balance between different aspect of leadership in small and deprived schools:

You will find that you will try and perfect one aspect while the other aspect is left unperfected because of the limited resources, because of the limited time resources and in terms of the physical resources as well as human resources. Compromised leadership of teaching and learning is due to the workload (teaching, administrative and management load) of the principal.

Echoing the same sentiment, Principal H propounded:

Yes, it does interfere. As a leader of the school, my time should be shared among teaching, management and administrative duties but most of the time I had to do the teaching duties and that is caused by the fact that the school is small.

These findings align with Diwan (2015), who reported on small deprived schools in India. The findings of this study suggest that small schools in deprived (rural) contexts are faced with multiple challenges and continue to struggle with limited physical, financial and human resources, low learner enrolment and ill qualified teachers. These schools have been unable to fulfil the needs of their stakeholders. Diwan (2015) further argues that the absence of policy on small schools exacerbated challenges encountered in small schools; therefore, they are left out in the education system as a result of these multiple challenges.

Small schools in deprived school contexts are different from their big and urban counterparts; they face many challenges that require careful and specific considerations. One-size-fits-all policies fall short in small, deprived schools which have their own unique characteristics that set them apart from other schools. These findings have implications for policymakers working to create an environment where effective leadership is realised regardless of the context of the school. There is a need for greater attention to be paid to small school leadership.

5.3.2 Principals' Understanding of Leadership

Before discussing the leadership for teaching and learning practices in small, deprived school contexts of deprivation, I first solicited principals about their understanding of the concept of leadership.

During the interviews with the principals, three major understandings of the concept emerged. These included leadership being viewed as a group activity and occurring in a group context, leadership as a process of influencing others towards a particular direction and leadership as involving activities such as planning, organising and controlling. These three emerging meanings are discussed in detail in the next sub-sections.

5.3.2.1 Leadership as a group activity

The understanding of leadership depicted by three of the eight principals interviewed in this study involved leadership as occurring in a group context. According to these principals, leadership is about leading a group of people to attain the goals of an organisation. Therefore, principals see leadership involving working with a group of individuals in school who have a common purpose, providing necessary support to those groups of individuals, and taking responsibility and accountability for everything as a leader in a school. Principal H understood leadership as an action of leading a group of people in a school context and supporting all the stakeholders in a school. A school comprises different groups of individuals who work together

to achieve a common purpose. These groups of individuals include educators, learners, parents and school governing bodies. The view of Principal H suggests that leadership is about leading these different groups in a school. Principal H said:

Leadership is about leading a group of people, in a school context you are leading your educators, you are leading your non-educators, you are leading learners and you are leading parents whom the SGB represents.

Principal B described leadership as a process of leading a group of people, adding that leadership is about taking responsibility and being accountable for everything in an organisation. Principal B explained:

Leadership, the way I understand, is the action of leading the group of people, leading the organisation like this one, also is taking the role of being an accounting officer in a school, also taking the responsibility of the things from whole school.

Principal E understood leadership as occurring in a group context. The principal acknowledged that leadership is not for one person in an organisation but requires contributions from other members of the group. By valuing others' views, leaders enable more effective work, highlighting that leadership requires listening to group members and critically analysing their input. That would ensure that the group worked effectively, thus enhancing the leadership of teaching and learning. Principal E shared that:

It [leadership] means listening to other people and take their views or effort, analyses them in order to benefit. I always share my views with my colleagues so that we work effectively.

The understandings of leadership depicted by the three principals above are supported by literature in Section 2.3. Various scholars (Northouse, 2016; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Platow et al., 2015) assert that one critical perspective of leadership is that it occurs in a group context, as it is essentially a process of group-based social influence. Maringe and Moletsane (2015) in Section 2.3 argue that leadership involves working with others in a group and through others to achieve the goals of an organisation. As noted in the literature by Thomas et al. (2013), leadership always occurs within the context of a group, therefore leaders cannot operate without group members and group members cannot be effective without leaders.

5.3.2.2 Leadership as influence

The data revealed that other principals understood leadership as involving a process of influence. The assumption is that leadership involves a process whereby one person who is leading has the power of influence over other people in a group. Leadership is the ability to

influence others in a group to follow a certain path or direction in order to achieve a desired outcome or a common vision. It transpired that leadership is about having a vision and to have the personal power to enact influence over other members to achieve that vision. For example, this is evident from the response of Principal C who views leadership as the ability to influence people to follow a certain path. The leader sets the vision and influences others to follow that vision. Principal C articulated:

For me, I want to quote from scholars, but I like the definition of leadership from John C Maxwell. He is saying leadership is about influence, leadership is influence. You influence people to follow a given path in the form of a vision.

Principal D's understanding was no different from that of Principal C. The principal understood the concept of leadership to be about a leader having a vision and a mission for an organisation and ensuring that these are accomplished by influencing other members in the organisation to follow. This is what Principal D had to say: *Leadership is about visionary person; you must have a vision, and leadership is about mission being accomplished.* Principal E added that leadership involved giving direction to an organisation and setting clear, attainable goals. The leader sets organisational goals and is able to influence people to take a given direction to attain those goals. Principal E said:

I would say leadership is about giving a good direction in the institution. Leadership is what a leader displays that follower can learn from him. Leader has a clear direction to those he leads. He sets clear and attainable goals.

As evidenced in the literature in Section 2.3, the view of Silva (2016) appears to resonate with the participants who defined leadership as the process of influencing a group toward goal setting and achievement. According to Silva (2016), leadership is not just an individual quality but a process of influence on others people. Similarly, Lunenburg (2012) contends that leaders are able to influence others because of the formal power associated with the position they hold. Therefore, according to these scholars, leadership is a process of influencing others in an organisation.

Taylor et al. (2014) argue that leadership involves creating a clear organisational vision and influencing people to achieve it, defining leadership as the ability to articulate direction and purpose. Lord et al. (2017), state that leadership is about articulating a vision and working with others to transform that vision into reality. The noticeable aspects of these definitions include that leadership is conceived as creating an organisational vision in which all members are motivated toward achieving it. Wanasika and Krahnke (2016) argue that a clear vision supports

organisational success by motivating members, strengthening shared norms and values and guiding collective goal achievement. Taylor et al. (2014) concurs that when the vision is not well-articulated, people do not act and spent most of their time trying to find which direction to go in.

5.3.2.3 Leadership as planning, organising and controlling

From the interviews with the participants, it emerged that two of the principals' understanding of leadership seemed to involve the process of planning, organising and controlling as activities that aimed to facilitate effective teaching and learning. For instance, Principal A understood leadership as involving the processes of planning and organising activities. In order to achieve the desired results, planning is considered to be the central function of leadership for a school to achieve desired results and to decide which tasks must be done to reach those results. Principal A had this to say:

I understand leadership as what needs to be done by a principal to manage the processes and activities in the school. I also understand it [leadership] as planning for whatever needs to be done at school, because without planning there won't be any result.

Principal A further explained that leadership is about organising activities that will ensure school functionality and the achievement of set goals. The principal, as the school manager needs to make certain all activities that will lead to the realisation of the desired results are organised and managed effectively, thus turning a plan into action. Principal A explained,

I also understand leadership as also organising. The manager of the school needs to organise activities that are supposed to happen in the school and see to it that those activities are managed in the way that are going to bear fruits and results.

Principal G perceived leadership as involving activities including planning and organising but further added controlling as another activity to affirm effective teaching and learning. According to Principal A, leadership is about planning, organising and controlling all the activities in a school environment. This is what Principal G said: *A leader must plan all the things that he or she is doing. A leader must organise. A leader must control.*

The understanding of leadership emerging from two principals demonstrates characteristics consistence with managerial aspects of leadership. The activities described by principals which includes planning, organising and controlling are in line with the definition of management by McCartney and Campbell (2006) as suggested in the literature review section of this study. In Section 2.4 of this study, management was defined as a series of activities such as planning,

decision-making, organising, leading and controlling undertaken to achieving organisational goals in a productive manner (McCartney & Campbell, 2006). These activities are the tools to attain the organisational goals.

Two principals viewed leadership and management as overlapping concepts. In Section 2.5, Mabrouk (2018) argues that although there are clear distinctions between management and leadership as expressed by many scholars, the two constructs overlap. When principals are influencing others in a school to achieve school goals, they are doing leadership, and, when they are doing planning, organising, staffing, they are involved in management. Shonubi (2012) therefore argues that, when school principals are performing their everyday work, they are hardly aware of whether they are leading or managing – they simply execute their work as principals.

5.3.3 Principals' Understanding of Leadership for Teaching and Learning

Principals leading in small, deprived school contexts were asked about their understanding of the concept of leadership for teaching and learning. During the interviews with the principals, five major understandings of the concept emerged. Principals described leadership for teaching and learning as instructional leadership, creating supportive conditions, leading by example, monitoring learner and educator work and sharing leadership responsibilities. These five emerging meanings are discussed in detail in the next sub-sections.

5.3.3.1 Instructional-focused leadership

The understanding of leadership for teaching and learning depicted by three of the eight principals in this study involved leadership for teaching and learning as instructionally focused leadership. Principals therefore shared the common view that leadership for teaching and learning is about ensuring that teaching and learning, as core function of the school, are always placed at the centre. For instance, Principal C understood leadership for teaching and learning as principals who are instructional leaders, leaders that view teaching and learning as a centre of focus in schools. Principal C said: *A principal is an instructional leader. Our main function is teaching and learning.* Principal G affirmed that leadership for teaching and learning involved giving priority to teaching and learning. This included crafting a school culture that facilitated successful learning for students, ensuring that their achievements remained a central focus. The principal acknowledged that any decision taken at school or any stated priorities must be based on learner achievement. Here is what Principal G said:

Leadership of teaching and learning to me means are those leaders who put teaching and learning at the top of their priorities, promote the culture of learning and using evidence on learner achievement to make decisions and set priorities.

Principal B expressed a similar view. The principal understood leadership for teaching and learning as making sure that effective teaching and learning was taking place at school at all times so as to ensure an improvement in learner performance. The direct meaning is that leadership for teaching and learning is the foremost concern that always put learner achievement on top. This is what Principal B had to say:

If we talk about leadership of teaching and learning, we are referring to ensure that effective teaching is taking place, to ensure that there is learner achievement or there is improvement in learner achievement.

Principals' view of leadership for teaching and learning as keeping the school's core function at the centre aligns with the concept of instructional leadership discussed in Section 2.6. In Section 2.6.3, instructional leadership refers to school leadership that focuses on learners and their learning as the primary purpose of a school (Sofu et al., 2012). It provides improved learning opportunities for learners by developing a conducive school climate and it influences educator behaviour. Instructional leadership, as explained by Bush and Glover (2014) suggests the primary focus is the educators' behaviour as they perform their tasks that directly affect learner growth.

The above understanding indicates that the goal of instructional leaders is to facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning at school. Therefore, principals who are instructional leaders focus their attention on effective teaching and learning as a core purpose of the school. However, Munna (2023) further explains that instructional leaders in small schools are more directly involved compared to principals in larger schools where they focus on building the leadership capacity of other staff.

5.3.3.2 Leadership that creates conditions favourable to teaching and learning

The understanding of leadership for teaching and learning that emerged from one principal's response in this study involved leadership that sought to create favourable conditions for teaching and learning. According to Principal C, leadership of teaching and learning is about making sure that teachers and learners are provided with all the necessary resources. This includes providing resources for educators to assist them in carrying out their teaching duties and also covers learner resources such as stationery and textbooks to assist in their learning.

To ensure that the school has timetable that is respected by everyone at school. Principal C explained:

As a principal you must ensure that one teacher have the resources like LTSM, which will assist him in executing duties, learners have LTSM stationery and textbooks which will assist them in their learning. To ensure that the school has a composite timetable, where all the subjects and their notional times are respected, that timetable is followed to the latter, meaning there must be no educator who is sited down there in the staffroom while she or he knows that he's supposed to be in class.

The understanding of leadership for learning from the responses of Principal C above demonstrates characteristics of instructional leadership. The view of Taylor and Gordon (2015) that instructional leadership is about developing a culture that creates high expectations for educators and learners and provides them with resources resonates well with the view of the participants. The principal's provision of resources to educators and learners at school, ensuring that the timetable and contact time are respected, creates a condition favourable for quality education.

From the response that has been presented by the principal above, it appears that the view is in line with the second principle of leadership for learning, which is that leadership creates conditions favourable for learning (Macbeath, 2006). The second principle refers to the conditions in the school which is one of the necessities for a focus on learning (Macbeath, 2006). Coenen et al. (2021) argue that the principal considers the creation of strong, trusting and vibrant learning conditions as indispensable for school performance and improvement. This means that school leadership must always strive to create conditions at school that will sustain a supportive environment for learning. Leadership creates conditions favourable for learning.

5.3.3.3 Leadership for teaching and learning as leading by example

Data from two of the principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning seemed to involve leading with exemplary behaviour or actions. These two principals thus understood leadership for teaching learning as leading by example. They appreciated that leaders must model the way and set a good example for their educators and learners. They believe in leaders' ability to influence other peoples' behaviour through exemplary behaviour. For instance, Principal A stated that leaders must show direction by leading from the front. Whatever the leader said must be done by others, the leader must be seen doing it first and model the way. Principal A stated,

I understand the leadership of teaching and learning wherein I have to lead from the front. To me it says what I say to the teachers to be what is important and to be what is supposed to be done, I have to be seen to be doing it first, so if therefore means to be in class on time, I have to make sure that I am in class on time.

Similarly, Principal E affirms the view of Principal A that leadership for teaching and learning is about leading a school by an example, stating that followers always follow in the footsteps and actions of a leader. Principal E reiterated,

To me, leadership for teaching and learning means to lead my school with good example, to lead my learners by any means during teaching. My learners are following my steps, actions and instructions.

A critical deduction that can be made from the participants' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning expressed above is that principals leading by example demonstrate commitment for both their educators and learners. They see principals' action as a means to influence both educators' and learners' behaviour through their own exemplary behaviour, thus inspiring them to be committed and take ownership of their work. This understanding of leadership for teaching and learning by these principals is aligned with transformational leadership as evidence in the literature in Section 2.6.

Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) in Section 2.6 stated that transformational leadership improves the performance of individual by applying different strategies which include being the role model for other members, to motivate them to take ownership of their work. Bush and Glover (2014) argue that transformational leadership is primarily about how leaders inspire change by motivating the members of an organisation to be committed to achieve the organisational goals.

Correspondingly, O'Shea and Zuckerman (2022) argue that leading by example as a leadership approach is a means of motivating educators for school improvement. According to O'Shea and Zuckerman (2022), leading by example inspires educators to emulate the principal's efforts and contributes to learners' learning.

5.3.3.4. Leadership that prioritises monitoring

Two of the principals in this study highlighted the activities performed by principals, such as monitoring and controlling, in their understanding of leadership for teaching and learning. The activities described by Principal H, for instance included monitoring the delivery of curriculum and conducting class visits. This is how Principal H put it:

Leadership for teaching and learning in general means monitoring curriculum delivery. So as a leader or as a principal this means monitoring your DH. I also see leadership for teaching and learning as involving doing class visits.

Principal B shared this view but further stated that leadership for teaching and learning included monitoring of educators and learners' work. Principal B said: *When we talk about leadership of teaching and learning, we talk about controlling and monitoring educator and learners.*

Principals' views of leadership for learning including the monitoring of educator and learners' work and curriculum delivery are foregrounded in the instructional leadership approach discussed in Section 2.6. In Section 2.6.3, Ismail et al. (2018) view instructional leadership as associated with roles of a principal such as coordinating and supervising curriculum delivery, setting school aims, encouraging learning and promoting the professional development of educators. The understanding of leadership for learning by the two principals in this study is therefore consistent with managing the instructional programme which is the most important feature of an instructional leadership approach.

5.3.3.5 Leadership for teaching and learning as sharing of leadership

While most principals viewed leadership for teaching and learning as the principal's responsibility, one participant offered a different perspective. Principal C argued that teaching and learning cannot rest on a single person and instead requires shared, collaborative leadership that includes classroom educators as leaders. Principal C stated:

According to my own understanding leadership for teaching and learning is a set of roles bundles with motivation to inspire educational change and move beyond the status quo in collaborative ways. Teacher leaders lead alongside others, not from the front. They have their feet firmly planted in the classroom and their eyes on what is possible for all.

The view by Principal C that leadership for learning is a shared responsibility is aligned with distributed leadership for learning and as supported by literature. Spillane (2015) argues that distributed leadership recognises that leadership is shared among many individuals – not only the principal – but also other formal leaders and informal contributors such as educators and parents. Bush (2013) concurs, stating that leadership may arise anywhere in the organisation and is not confined to formal leadership. According to the advocates of distributed leadership, unlike other approaches that emphasise formal leadership, especially of the principal as the only one with the power of influence, distributed leadership recognises both formally and informally designated leadership.

Therefore, the participants' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning is related to the involvement of multiple individuals in leadership activities. It is the responsibility of multiple individuals as leaders in a school, rather than the responsibility of one individual leader with expertise, knowledge and experience (Goksoy, 2016). Bush and Glover (2014) add that schools with the highest learner achievements attribute this to the leadership influence from all leaders that exist in a school.

In small, deprived schools, where there are challenges, especially limited staffing; leadership should be open to everyone, including educators in class. This view aligns with distributed leadership, which Bush (2013) explains may emerge anywhere in the organisation – not only from formal leaders – unlike approaches that position the principal as the sole source of influence. Distributed leadership recognises both formally and informally designated leadership. Lumby (2013) suggests that the principle of shared leadership is that leadership is open to everyone with relevant expertise in a school.

The findings above suggested all principals understood leadership for teaching and learning as a concept. Creating a school climate that supports quality teaching and learning by providing all necessary resources for both teachers and learners at school, monitors curriculum delivery and protects teaching contact time is a fundamental requirement.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter presented the principals meanings of leadership and leadership for teaching and learning. The findings revealed three major meanings of leadership. These include leadership as a group activity, as influence and as involving planning, organising and controlling. The findings further revealed that the principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning was about ensuring that teaching and learning, as the core function of the school, was needed to ensure learner achievement. This included promoting a school culture that prioritised learner achievement and creating a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning by providing the necessary resources for teachers and learners. It transpired that the context of small and deprived schools had a significant impact on how the principals of these schools carried out their leadership of teaching and learning. They adopted leadership for teaching and learning approaches that responded to the unique context of their schools. Later in the chapter, principals identified heavy workloads, limited time, staff shortages, excessive demands and biased departmental policies as key factors constraining their ability to lead teaching and learning effectively in small, deprived schools. The following chapter presents the perspectives

of principals with regard to how they lead teaching and learning in small schools in the contexts of deprivation, and why they lead teaching and learning the way they do.

CHAPTER 6

LEADERSHIP FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL SCHOOLS: PRINCIPALS' PRACTICES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presented the analysis of the first sub-question on how principals in small, deprived schools understood leadership in general and leadership for teaching and learning in particular. Chapter 6 continues the discussion of findings, focusing on the second and third sub-questions – how these principals lead teaching and learning and why they lead in the ways they do. It is important to note that in this chapter I will combine and discuss the findings of these two questions simultaneously. During the interviews, the principals answered these questions together and hence they could not be separated for analysis as it would mean repeating the same data.

As explained in Chapter 5, pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the participants and their schools. No original names are used in reference to any responses. Therefore, the codes, Principal A-H, are allocated to participants as their identity based on the schedule of interviews conducted.

6.2 LEADERSHIP FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

When principals leading in small, deprived school contexts were asked about the ways they enact leadership of teaching and learning in their schools, several approaches emerged from their responses.

Nine broad themes are used to present and discuss the data in relation to how leadership for teaching and learning is enacted. These themes are: (1) Leading with and through departmental heads and educators; (2) working beyond school hours; (3) using personal resources; (4) collaboration with other schools; (5) involving outside stakeholders in school; (6) educator motivation; (7) developing staff capacity; (8) inspiring commitment to a shared vision; and (9) prioritisation of resource.

6.2.1 Leading with and Through Departmental Heads and Educators

During the interviews, participating principals were asked how they lead teaching and learning in their schools. However, out of eight principals interviewed, only two schools had

departmental heads appointed at their schools. For instance, Principal B, who is leading a secondary school, said that he used two departmental heads in leading teaching and learning, with each departmental head being responsible for particular departments. Principal B said:

We are having the SMT (principal and two departmental heads) structure. Each departmental head is allocated to more than one department, they monitor their departments and the challenges they have in their departments.

Principal H, who led a primary school, shared the sentiment that the school has the principal and only one departmental head in its school management team. Therefore, the principal led teaching and learning with the departmental head. The departmental head was responsible for monitoring curriculum delivery for all PL1 educators. According to the principal, he sometimes assisted in monitoring the work at school. Principal H shared: *Monitoring is done by departmental head. The principal also assists to monitor the work of educators.*

Interviews revealed that many small schools did not have departmental heads, leading principals to delegate aspects of teaching and learning leadership to senior educators. Principal A for example, suggested that he led teaching and learning with a senior educator in the school. The principal and the senior educator divided the monitoring of work amongst themselves. Principal A explained:

We do not have the departmental head at school, which is why I decided to use the senior educator to other educators to help me in trying to monitor the work. In that case, we divided the work. I monitor the FET classes and she monitors the senior phase classes.

It emerged from the responses of some participating principals that they used Post Level 1 educators to assist them with the leadership of teaching and learning as their schools did not have departmental heads or even senior educators. For instance, Principal C co-opted two Post Level 1 educators to function as phase coordinators in assisting in the leadership of teaching and learning. These two co-opted educators were used to monitor the work of other educators and learners. This is what Principal C said:

In terms of staffing, sir, (referring to the me [researcher]), I am alone [there are no other school management team members] and I end up working with PL1 educators, not that they are DHs, but I referred to them as coordinators of phases. We have a coordinator for GET, which is Grade 8 and 9, and the coordinator for FET. So, we work together to drive teaching and learning.

It further emerged that some principals used PL1 educators as peer monitors in order to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning in their schools. Principal F used these educators

as peer monitors in monitoring each other's work. She provided training to PL1 educators for them to be effective in their duties. Principal F explained:

I cannot do everything by myself, so we have chosen each other, to monitor each other. So, mine is to give them the forms that we need to follow. I have trained them that we can monitor each other so that when it comes back, we share there is a lack or whoever needs a workshop or whatever, but it is not like my job, as much as it is but we have given each other the opportunity of monitoring each other.

Sharing the same view as Principal F, was Principal D who stated that in the absence of Departmental Heads and Senior Educators on their staff, he did not have a choice but to lead with PL1 educators as peer monitors. Principal D stated:

The school does not have the departmental head or senior educator so everyone must be well versed about the curriculum and assessment monitoring because it's not only me who can assess or moderate the paper.

The data further revealed that in smaller schools with even fewer educators, the principals did not have a choice but to monitor the work on their own. Principal E, who led a primary school with only two educators, suggested that because of the small number of educators at school, owing to low enrolment, she did the leadership of teaching and learning alone. Principal E stated: *At my school, we have low enrolment which is determined by the PPN as one principal and only two educators. The duty of the DH becomes the load of the principal.*

When principals were asked why they led teaching and learning the way they did, across all participating principals, it emerged that in terms of staffing in small, deprived schools there were limited management portfolios. It emerged that in all small schools in these deprived contexts there were no deputy principals, and they used departmental heads, senior educators and sometimes PL1 educators to assist them in leading teaching and learning. In schools where there were departmental heads, principals led with departmental heads, while in schools where there were no departmental heads, they shared leadership with senior educators. Similarly, in schools with limited departmental heads and senior educators, even PL1 educators were included in the leadership of teaching and learning. For example, Principal B did not have a deputy principal and worked with two departmental heads. Principal B said: *We are having the SMT (principal and two departmental heads) structure.* Principal H shared the same sentiment. There was only one departmental head for the entire school, which meant the school did not have a deputy principal. Principal H shared: *There's only one DH for whole school, monitoring.*

It emerged that because some of these small schools did not have departmental heads, principals sometimes worked with PL1 educators. For instance, Principal A worked with the senior educator because the school did not have a departmental head. Principal A stated:

We do not have the departmental head at school, which is why I decided to use the senior educator to other educators, because we don't have the departmental head.

As an extension to leading with departmental heads and educators, the data revealed another interesting fact regarding the leadership of teaching and learning practices in small, deprived schools. Three of the eight participating principals interviewed in this study cited sharing not only leadership duties but also administrative responsibilities with other members of staff, as one of the leadership practices. Principal E, who led a small primary school with only three educators, relied on the sharing of duties and responsibilities with these educators in trying to ensure effective teaching and learning is realised. Principal E said, in IsiZulu:

Enye into eyenza ukuthi sikwazi ukusebenza, ukuhlukaniselana imisebenzi, njengomphathi wesikole anginalo isekela futhi anginayo I nhloko yomnyango, okusho ukuthi idlela elula ukuhlukaniselana imisebenzi kuthina sobathathu [Another thing that make us to be able to work is to share duties, as the principal, I don't have the Deputy and I don't have the departmental head, therefore the simple way is to share duties amongst the three of us].

The other two principals responded in the same way as Principal E but emphasised delegating duties to other educators to empower them in the process. For example, Principal D said: *I do the delegation in my school to empower them (educators) and then after delegating them I then have to monitor and evaluate them.* Principal C added that delegation is essential in small, deprived schools because it supports effective leadership while empowering staff to develop new skills. Principal C said:

At my school, I do the delegation because it is one skill that the leader must have. It also assists a delegated educator to get new skills and at the same time assist in leading the school.

The data revealed a few ways these principal shared responsibilities. The principals sometimes used educators to assist with administration matters. For instance, Principal C used educators to handle the admission of learners at the beginning of the year. Principal C had this to say:

I do the delegation in a number of ways. For example, when the year begins, I delegate two colleagues to deal with the admission of learners; they form a committee which I am part of. We have one educator who is coordinating that process. Come in to support, to control and to monitor.

Principal C cited leadership succession as another reason to use other educators in his leadership approach. Principal C stated that sometimes educators were delegated to attend principals' meetings on their behalf when they were occupied with other equally important matters. Principal C further said:

I am a strong believer in leadership succession, my school do not have a departmental head, if there are circuit or district meetings, I sometimes delegate colleagues to go on my behalf. However sometimes it is impossible to do it because they will need money to go there and there is no money.

Principal D shared a similar response, echoing Principal C. Principal D delegated other educators to attend some meetings. Principal D had this to say:

When there is a meeting that need to be attended and clashes with the other meeting, I delegate another educator to attend one meeting and I attend the other one. That is the distribution of tasks.

From the responses of Principals C and D, there is a suggestion that sometimes principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts have to attend various activities scheduled at the same time. These principals do not have the privilege of sharing the responsibilities with other members. These principals therefore relied on PL1 educators to share leadership responsibilities.

They used this approach to try to respond to challenges in small, deprived schools which include limited staff, limited time and educator work overload as discussed in Chapter 5. Principal C, for example, stated:

Due to time constraints, I am facing in this small school; I am no longer able to monitor the whole school's performance and curriculum coverage.

In the same vein, Principal F explained that in small schools, because of the amount of work for principals, there was sometimes not enough time to do management and monitoring efficiently. This is how Principal F explicitly put it:

Anginaso nami isikhathe esanele sokwenza imanagement noma ukubheka umsebenzi, nami ngisuke ngisekilasini ngizama ukuthi nami njalo ngiqhube ukuze ngikwazi ukuqeda umsebenzi kwezami izifundo kwezami izifundo. [I don't have enough time to do the management and monitoring because I am also always in my class trying to push to cover the curriculum in my subjects.]

Principal B cited the issue of limited staff, stating that small schools are allocated few staff members, making it challenging to effectively lead teaching and learning. This is how Principal B explained it:

We don't have sufficient staffing here, which means that we are expected to do quite a lot of work using the very few numbers of educators. We are managing a lot of work out of a limited resource.

The findings presented above indicate that small, deprived schools did not have deputy principals and very few of these small schools had departmental heads in their school management teams. It emerged that in those schools with the departmental heads, they were assigned the responsibility for the leadership of teaching and learning, where they focused on the monitoring of curriculum delivery. It emerged as a way of working that gave the principal the space to focus on management and administrative duties. In small schools without departmental heads, principals often delegate curriculum monitoring to senior educators and, at times, to PL1 educators who conduct peer monitoring when senior staff are unavailable. The reason that the principals leading small, deprived school contexts adopt this approach is because of the limited management portfolios caused by the limited resources associated with the characteristics of small schools in the deprived contexts. The PPN certificates of all schools reviewed corroborated the utterances of principals.

By delegating leadership tasks to senior educators and PL1 educators, the principals extended leadership beyond formal roles such as departmental heads to include staff without formal designation. This leadership practice resonates well with the distributive leadership approach discussed in chapter two of this study. In Section 2.6.4 of this study, Bush and Glover (2012) define distributed leadership as leadership roles beyond those in formal leadership positions. Chapter 2 (Section 2.6.4) notes that principals who adopt distributed leadership recognise that, while they play a key role, leadership comes from other sources within the school (Bush, 2013; Harris, 2011; Lumby, 2013; Spillane, 2015). In such schools, leadership is not centralised in the formal position of the principal but extends to other individuals such as departmental heads (formal leadership) and PL1 educators (informal leadership). Lumby (2013) suggests that the principle of shared leadership is that leadership is open to everyone with relevant expertise in a school, arguing that the skills and experiences of diverse people are necessary to create a successful leadership.

In a study by Chikoko et al. (2015) on school leadership practices that work in areas of multiple deprivations in South Africa, it is revealed that one seasoned principal leading a school in a deprived context reported involving even student leaders in extra tuition and monitoring the afternoon study periods. This example illustrates that leadership in schools can be widely distributed amongst various members including those in informal leadership positions. In this

study, principals used a distributed leadership approach not by choice but because the context of small, deprived schools required them to rely on others. The principals in small, deprived school contexts adopted this approach because of the limited management portfolios, caused by the limited resources associated with the characteristics of small schools in deprived contexts. Leadership roles and responsibilities in these small, deprived school contexts were shared with different individuals at school. Therefore, in such schools, leadership was more widely shared and spread among multiple leaders within the school.

6.2.2 Working Beyond School Hours

It emerged from the interviews with principals that sometimes they worked beyond normal school times to do their administrative duties to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning. This is what Principal A had to say:

So, you will understand that in a week the school have 27.5 and as the Principal I have 22.5, so you can see that that is full load. There is only one period free and that is the period that I have to use to look at my admin work, to look at my management work. If then I can't finish that then I will see that after the notional time. And that actually means I have to stay behind and push some administrative work or management work so that I can therefore be in par with the office work.

Similarly, Principal B shared the view that he took some of the administrative work and did it at home. This administrative work included activities such as filing, updating of information and writing of reports. Principal B further stated that he used his car as an office to do the administrative work. Principal B shared:

To be just honest with you, I'm working even at home because some of the things that need to be done here at school, just like writing or filling some form, updating the information that need to be updated. That car you are seeing there is my office because I just take other files, going home and do all those activities that need to be done.

Principal D echoed the sentiment and stated that he worked during his spare time at home or even went to the library to do the administrative work. According to Principal D, administrative activities such as checking of educator files and the work of learners were done beyond normal school hours. Principal D explained,

Sometimes I don't deal with files of educators and exercise books for learners. I sometimes take this (educators' files and learners' exercise books) and do it during my spare time, sometimes I do this at home or in the library, which is a challenge and which is not accepted because what if these documents get lost out there, I will be in trouble, big trouble.

For Principal F, to lead teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts means principals must work until late at night trying to make sure that everything is done. Principal F said:

You can work until 10 at night trying to make sure everything happens because you don't have a reason, you can't tell them, but I don't have a clerk, but I don't have this. If you are a principal, you are supposed to be given few hours of being a teacher but now when you are a full-time teacher, so it means you can't do the admin work, you will only look at the admin work after the learners are gone.

Upon further probing, the principals shared why they worked after school hours. Most participants indicated that principals in small, deprived schools struggled to lead teaching and learning due to heavy teaching loads and limited staff. Due to such challenges, principals sometimes struggled to find time to do the administrative and management work during normal school time. However, it was important for them to come up with ways to manage those challenges so that the leadership of teaching and learning was not affected. Principal A, for instance, revealed that because of the nature of small schools in contexts of deprivation, principals had to juggle their work between management, administration and class teaching which made it difficult to do everything during normal school hours. Principal A said:

As a principal having my workload of teaching in class, I have to juggle around my work to see to it that I also monitor teachers' work. It makes it therefore not possible to check and monitor the teachers work the way you would want to.

Principal H shared this opinion, stating that the heavy-duty load did not give him sufficient time to do everything. Principal H explained: *I am in the classroom most of the time, so the duty load that I carry doesn't allow me to do that.*

These findings show that insufficient time, heavy teaching loads and limited human resources made leading small, deprived schools particularly challenging, requiring principals to respond in varied ways. Principals reported that their full-day teaching duties left little time for management, administration or monitoring educators' work, forcing them to complete these tasks after school hours, in the evenings or on weekends. The lack of support staff, such as administrative clerks, further intensified these pressures, as principals had to juggle all administrative and leadership responsibilities alongside full-time teaching. The review of minute book where the duty loads of educators was discussed aligns with the data from principals.

The account provided by participating principals in this study is consistent with the literature as evidenced in Section 2.10 of this study. It is argued in Section 2.10 that small schools are characterised by a dual role for principals where they are often teachers who teach a full load due to insufficient staffing. They are expected to be school leaders responsible for both management and administration as well, which is compounded by the absence of administrative assistance (Ewington et al., 2008; Clark & Steven, 2009; Daryl, 2009). Another related study on principals' instructional leadership in small schools in Malaysia, conducted by Medina et al. (2018) argues that principals leading with a myriad of tasks on a daily basis, similar to their colleagues leading large schools work extra hard. They have to be positive people in all circumstances, motivating a small group of educators to work as a team to improve the school despite the size of the school. The conflicting role demands on principals in small, deprived schools create tension because they are pulled in many directions and do not have enough time to do all their tasks well. Thus, heavy workloads, limited staff and insufficient time stretch principals in small schools to their limits and force them to work beyond normal school hours.

The literature in Section 2.9 of this study suggests there is a relationship that exists between the context and leadership, especially with regards to school leadership. Endrissat and von Arx (2013) say that leadership and context are two sides of the same coin. Leadership does not take place in a vacuum; it is always influenced by a certain context. The contexts of small, deprived schools in this instance influence the way principals leading these schools enacted their leadership to respond to the school context. It is therefore understandable that principals in small, deprived schools work beyond normal hours to manage administrative tasks and respond to their school contexts. During the day they spend most of their time in class teaching and dedicate their own spare time after working hours to doing the administrative and management tasks to ensure that they are always on par with their management duties. In doing so, they are ensuring that leading teaching and learning is not compromised. Small school contexts require special leadership strategies, different from those applied by principals leading schools in another context. The principals leading small, deprived schools, unlike their counterparts in large, privileged schools, plan their activities to stretch even beyond normal school time. Working beyond school times is their way of adapting to the contexts of their schools to lead teaching and learning.

6.2.3 Using Personal Resources

The findings revealed that principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts sometimes used their personal resources to lead teaching and learning. Principal E shared that their school received a minimal financial allocation, according to the Norms and Standards to fulfil the budget needs of the school. The allocated finances were exhausted quickly, and the principal then used her personal financial resources to sustain the school until the end of the financial year when it received the next financial allocation. Principal E had this to share,

Sithola imali encane esingakwazi ukugcina izidingo ngokehlelo lwesikole. Mhlawumpe kumele kube no-ink kusukela kuThemu yokuqala kuya kweyesine, uyaphela September nemali nayo isuke seyiphelile sekugcina ukuthi uthishomkhulu sekufanele akhiphe ephaketheni lakhe akwazi ukuthayisela lokho okumbalwa okusuke sekushoda [You find that we receive little finances that we cannot meet the budget needs of the school. Maybe we need to have printer ink from term I to term 4, by September the money is finished, and principal then is supposed to take from own's pockets to supplement]

Principal B shared the same view as Principal E. The utterances from Principal B suggest that due to the insufficient allocation of norms and standard given to small schools, principals sometimes led teaching and learning using money from their own pockets. Principal B shared:

The norms and standards that the department are supplying to the school are insufficient. I end up using my own pocket; even now I am owed about +/- R4000 for ink and stationery.

Principal C further revealed that in small schools, sometimes it meant maintaining schools by principals using their own finances to ensure a conducive environment for the effective leadership of teaching and learning. The principals sometimes bought repair materials for maintaining schools and even paid for some services rendered by personnel at school owing to an insufficient allocation from the norms and standards. Principal C explained:

At times, because of challenges in the school norms and standards, I even buy items like padlocks and even doors using my own money. I hire a person to fix a broken window or a door and paid for that person because we do not have a handyman or handy lady at school and the school does not have money to pay for this person.

Principal D shared the sentiment, suggesting that some services such as grass-cutting and machine repairs are paid for from their pockets. Principal D explained:

In the school that I am leading, the norms and standards are insufficient, for grass-cutting, it comes from my own pocket because if I ask somebody to come, a lot of

money I pay to that person. People think the school has money and they charge the large amount of money. I pay for it. If the machine is broken and I call a person to come and fix it, then I have to pay but the wheel must keep on moving.

The data from participating principals shows that principals leading small schools in a context of deprivation used their own money to pay for travelling allowances to make submissions to the district offices and attending meetings and workshops. The principals from small schools sometimes could not claim for travel allowances like other principals in big schools with large financial allocations. Principal C shared:

I don't know how many times I had to drive to the meetings, and even to the district offices which is Port Shepstone and back which is 200 km to submit just two-page documents and paying for the fuel and using my own car. There is no claiming back and there is no allowance that I get from school because there is no money.

It came out from the interviews that not only do principals leading small, deprived schools sometimes use their personal finances to lead teaching and learning, but sometimes they use their personal physical resources such as printers. Principal C explained that he used his personal printer at school. Principal C explained:

We are using a printer, and the printer is not for the school, it's my printer. The school does not have physical resources like photocopiers, printers. I am using my own printer for the school to print documents; I buy toners and ink for my printer. Out of ten, I do just one document for me, the rest is for the school.

Principal C explained that to support Grade 12 learners to achieve their level best, he used his own car to transport learners to venues outside the school. He explained:

The small car that I have, we have Grade 12, toward the end of the year in August they normally attend orals in languages. Each school has to bring 4 or 5 learners represent the entire Grade 12 group. I am using my own car to transport these learners to those venues and back to school and on top of that I buy them something to eat.

Principals commonly explained that they sometimes used personal resources because small, deprived schools lacked sufficient physical and financial resources, requiring them to supplement what the school could not provide. Principal B for instance shared: *The norms and standards that the department are supplying to the school are insufficient. There are more expenses and less money provided.* This view is shared by Principal D: *The challenges that we have in the small school is financial allocation, the money that we get from the department, is not that enough.*

Principal C further explained that principals of small schools in deprived context sometimes used their personal resources because of the limited budget and because things that were ordered from the department were not delivered to schools. Principal C explained:

We are a small school with a very limited budget in terms of allocation of norms and standards and there are sections that are not given to us in terms of financial management. We do not have function C, so we requisite things centrally. I must say sir, sometimes what we requisite, we don't get and there is no recourse in terms of making follow-ups.

Through the principals' voices above, we learn that principals leading small schools sometimes used their personal resources to supplement the financial and physical resources at their school. The financial allocation certificates for school were used to triangulate data from principals. Across all schools, the financial allocation ranges from R30 000- R50 000. As noted in Section 2.9, Klocko and Justis (2019) found that leadership in deprived schools is hindered by financial constraints and limited physical resources, yet these schools face the same accountability demands as more privileged schools. According to du Plessis and Mestry (2018), due to financial constraints, provincial governments are unable to provide deprived schools with adequate financial support. The lack of resources in small, deprived schools places a heavy burden on principals, who must ensure effective teaching and learning while meeting the same accountability standards as larger, well-resourced schools. It is therefore unsurprising that principals in this study sometimes relied on their own financial and physical resources to sustain quality education.

The use of personal resources for the leadership of teaching and learning is form of self-exploitation. Principals leading teaching and learning in small deprived schools exploit themselves by using their personal finances and physical resources for the benefit of their schools. Regardless of individual occupational particularities, self-exploitation is understood as a socioeconomic device employed by workers to increase their labour market competitiveness by depreciating their labour power (Vieira, 2023). In the school context, principals depreciate their financial powers to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning. The action of using their financial and physical resources to lead effective teaching and learning in their schools is also consistent with situational leadership as discussed in Section 2.6. In Section 2.6.5, it was argued that situational leadership proposes that effective leadership requires a rational understanding of the situation and an appropriate response (McCleskey, 2014). Nawaz and Khan (2016) posit that there is no universally acceptable way to lead, arguing that different internal and external contextual aspect require leaders to adopt a

leadership approach that will respond to that particular situation. Principals who use situational leadership do not rely on a single approach but adapt their style to the needs of each situation. In this study, principals of small, deprived schools understood their contexts and adjusted their leadership accordingly. Rosch and Anthony (2012) state that leaders who use situational approaches recognise that different situations require different leadership styles, therefore they must always be flexible. Therefore, principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools are able to bring about sustained improvement in their schools by adapting their leadership styles to fit the school context.

6.2.4 Collaboration with Other Schools

Developing a collaborative culture with other schools emerged as one of the approaches adopted by principals leading in small, deprived schools. From the data, it came out that principals of these schools sometimes used collaborative strategies with the neighbouring schools in their leadership of teaching and learning. Principal C for instance suggested that to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning, their school had formed a working collaboration with three neighbouring high schools that are considered to be big schools in the area. This collaboration included exchanging of resources and expertise. Principal C explained,

At School C, we work with three secondary schools and are like our sister schools. Those schools are they assist us because they are big schools with an enrolment of 1200 or more and there is no section that does not have a teacher. They assist us in terms of administrative part of the work. These schools are in our proximity, and they have resources.

Principal E, who leads a small primary school without a deputy principal or departmental head, echoed Principal C's view, explaining that she built working relationships with neighbouring schools – particularly with their departmental heads and deputy principals – to support effective leadership of teaching and learning. Principal E stated:

Okunye okusisebenzelayo futhi ukusebenzisana nezinye izikole ezingomakhelwane ezinezinhloko zeminyango (departmental heads) namasekela othisha omkhulu njengoba thina singenabo esikoleni. [Other thing is work with neighbouring schools with departmental heads and deputy principals that we don't have here at school.]

In the same vein, Principal F explained that one strategy is to work with other schools to share the resources that are available in their schools. Principal F said: *We work together with sister schools with colleagues whereby we share resources.* While sharing similar views with other participating principals about developing a collaborative approach with neighbouring schools as a way of effectively leading teaching and learning. Principal D, however, unlike other

principals, preferred collaborating with other small, deprived schools to share ideas and exchange resources. Principal D shared:

If the school is in this situation (small and deprived) it does not mean that is school is dead, as a leader I must make it alive like networking with other schools and also visit the schools of the same size with my school to check the gaps that we are having so that everything is going to be smooth.

When asked how this collaboration worked, principals explained that small, deprived schools partnered with neighbouring schools by sharing ideas, skills, physical resources such as photocopiers and, at times, human resources like educators. The data from interviews with principals suggest that some principals sometimes go to neighbouring schools with resources to use their resources which are not readily available in their own schools. The data revealed that the small school principals sometimes go to neighbouring schools to use their photocopying machines for the duplication of papers. Principal C shared that they do not have a photocopying machine; therefore, they go to the neighbouring sister schools to make copies for the school assessment tasks and examination papers. This was evidenced by comment made by Principal C.

Being a small school, we have a lot of resources that we lack, for example we do not have a photocopier and for us to duplicate copies we need to go down to the Kingsburg library, but this school because they have resources, they accommodate us in terms of making copies for assessment tasks and sometimes for examinations.

In the same vein, the Principal D suggests that because they are allocated very little in terms of the norms and standards principles and are unable to buy the photocopying machines and duplicating papers, they use the resources of neighbouring schools. Principal D suggested that this approach of establishing friendships with neighbouring schools assists their school to continue functioning normally, regardless of the lack of resources. Principal D said,

Like the issue of photocopying machine and papers because of the norms and standards are too little, we go to other schools if we have shortages. We need to make that friendship so that it will be easy for us to continue working normally. This is an issue of assisting one another.

It emerged from the data that some principals of small schools networked with neighbouring schools to share documents. Principal E, a primary school principal without a departmental head stated that she relied on collaboration with big schools that had departmental heads and or deputy principals to share the monitoring tools. Principal E explained:

Okuningi sisizakala ezikoleni ezingomakhelwane lezi ezinezinhlolo zeminyango (departmental heads) ukuze sikwazi ukuthola izinsiza zokuhlola umsebenzi.(Mostly we

get assistance from neighbouring schools with Departmental heads for moderation tools.)

Principal E held the same view on sharing documents. Principal F indicated that they formed a WhatsApp group with the neighbouring schools to share the documents. Principal F shared,

We use the WhatsApp group so that we share the documents and sometimes asked for assistance. Ask what you have and what do I have and then we share resources.

Principal F further stated that the collaboration with neighbouring school is a mutual benefit where both schools benefit from the relationship as opposed to only receiving assistance which is a one-way benefit. Principal F stated,

Sharing is a vice versa thing, sometimes you have the resource that the other school doesn't have, and for example we were once a big school. Maybe I may have extra textbook that the other school might need and that how we share the resources. And I asked for what I don't have.

What came out from the utterances of participants is that principals leading small, deprived school, especially high schools, use collaboration with other neighbouring schools to share human resources. As noted in Chapter 5, amongst the challenges of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools is the issue of insufficient educators. Due to government policies on educator allocation, small schools are usually allocated an insufficient number of educators which led to some subjects being taught by unqualified educators. Principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools therefore sometimes seek assistance from big schools with enough qualified educators on their staff to come and help in their schools. Principal C stated that they sometimes ask neighbouring school educators who are subject specialists to help with the moderation of subjects that are taught by an unqualified educator. Principal C stated:

At our school we work with three secondary schools and are like our sister schools. Those schools are they assist us because they are big schools with an enrolment of 1200 or more and there is no section that does not have a teacher. They assist us in terms of administrative part of the work, pre and post moderation of the subjects that in our school do not have someone who is a specialist. These schools are in our proximity, and they have resources.

Principal C further stated that this collaboration with sister schools includes inviting educators from sister schools to come and share ideas and skills through team teaching. According to Principal C, this allows the school to fill the gaps in those subjects and this is done through a consultative process. This consultative process is reflected in the minute book where the decision to work with neighbouring schools was adopted. Principal C said,

The educators from these schools (sister schools) they sometimes come over to do team teaching with the educators I am working with. This is a well consulted process, and no one is imposing. We discuss it in our meetings when we formulated our strategies and academic improvement plans. They assist us in terms of filling in the gaps in gateway subjects in particular. That makes my work of leading this school much easier because of this strategy of collaboration.

They explained that collaboration with neighbouring schools allows them to exchange resources, expertise and skills that their own schools lack. Principal A cited the challenge of small schools having educators teaching subject they are not qualified for. Therefore, for these schools, a sharing of human resources through collaborating with other school becomes the only option. Principal A explained:

In the small school, you will find that there are few educators to teach yet the number of subjects will remain the same. Educators also will teach subjects that they are not qualified to teach because they have therefore to fill in the gaps that are there in terms of the number of periods.

Principal C further reveals that collaboration with other schools assists by sharing expert educators to assist in those subjects without specialist educators. Principal C stated,

Those schools (sister schools) assist us it terms pre and post moderation of the subjects that in our school do not have someone who is a specialist. These schools are in our proximity, and they have resources.

Another reason that emerged from the data is that principals of small schools in deprived contexts collaborate with other schools to share resources that are not readily available in their schools. Because of the limited resources available in these small schools, principals have to share resources with neighbouring schools. Principal F stated: *Sometimes you have to share the resource that we don't have with other schools.*

The above findings on how the participating principals leading small, deprived schools used a collaborative approach with other schools suggests they aimed at enhancing the capacity of their schools and educators by providing quality learning opportunities for the learners. In Section 2.8 the study argues that small schools have their unique and special characteristics that appear to set them apart from large schools and these may include limited resources and outdated facilities, difficulty to attract and retain teachers, an absence of administrative assistance, work intensification and role multiplicity and inadequate funding (Lowe, 2006; Ewington et al., 2008; Starr & White, 2008; Ndlovu, 2012, du Plessis, 2017). Du Plessis (2017) in Section 2.9 further argues that the deprived school context creates additional challenges for school leaders, and these challenges impede them from carrying out their roles effectively. It

is therefore not surprising that the principals leading small, deprived schools adopt a collaborative approach with other neighbouring schools to try to work together to overcome the challenges faced by individual schools. The collaborative approach is not unique to small deprived schools, it can be expected of any other school, big or small. The difference in the current study is that the principals leading teaching and learning in small deprived school contexts adopt this approach not by choice but were forced to work with other school due to the context of their schools. The collaborative approach to leadership used by principals allows the neighbouring schools to share and have access to the resources and expertise that may not have been available if they were working as individual schools. This collaborative approach of sharing resources and expertise in small, deprived school contexts therefore allowed for improving the capacity of their individual schools and educators.

Heck and Hallinger (2010) refer to school improvement capacity as the conditions that support teaching and learning, enable the professional learning of the staff, and provide a means for implementing strategic action aimed at continuous improvement. The findings from the six case studies conducted by Ainscow et al. (2006) conclude that collaboration between different schools is a powerful approach in strengthening school capacity to address the challenges they encounter. More specifically, it suggests that collaboration can help schools to meet the needs of their learners by improving their learning opportunities. Principals leading small schools in the deprived contexts of this study adopted a similar collaborative approach with neighbouring schools to address and overcome the challenges they faced in their individual schools and widened the student learning opportunities. The collaborative approach adopted by principals of these schools with neighbouring schools in the area allowed for the sharing of resources such as educators with expertise to assist in schools with a shortage of qualified educators. This result in these schools strengthening their capacity to provide quality teaching and learning opportunities.

Principal C suggested that the collaboration with other schools was done through a consultative process with educators in a meeting to formulate academic improvement strategies rather than imposing a decision. This was done to ensure the ownership of the decision by all educators at school. DeWitt (2016) emphasises that successful collaborative leadership must be based on trust, transparency, honesty and trustworthiness as grounds for working relationship.

6.2.5 Involving Outside Stakeholders in School

Involving different stakeholders is one of the leaderships of teaching and learning practices used by principals in small, deprived contexts. The data from participating principals suggests that they encouraged the participation of various stakeholders, in varying degrees in school matters to ensure quality leadership of teaching and learning in their schools. It transpired from the interviews with the principals that in their leadership of teaching and learning they sometimes involved volunteer, unemployed educator graduates from the local areas to come and assist at school. This is evident from the excerpts below from two principals:

Okunye noma sinabo laba othisha abathathu siyabasebenzisa nothisha abavolontiyayo, abanye sebegogodile kodwa abakakawutholi umsebenzi basshleli emakhaya, ngakho bayakwazi ukuthi bafike basisize. [The other thing is that even we have these three educators, but we also use the volunteer educators. Some of them are qualified and waiting to be employed but unfortunately, they are still at sitting at home. So, they come and assist]- Principal E

Indlela engenza ngayo ukuthi ngabiza umhlangano ngakhuluma nabazali ngathi othisha bayakhala. Yagcine ISGB ithe asivele sicele nalezi ezinye izingane ezingaqashiwe ukuthi zisisize. Kunezingane la eziwu-2 ezinamajazi ezisisizaya la esikoleni ezingakaqasheki zakhona. [What I did is that I called the parents meeting and told parents about the concerns of educators. The SGB took a resolution to request the unemployed educators in the area to come and assist. We have two unemployed graduates here at school assisting.] Principal F

Principal F shared the same view: *Sometimes we had to ask for assistance outside school, we sometimes invite local previous learners who are at the tertiary to come and assist.*

The principals suggested that they used these volunteer educators in varying degrees from marking of learners' work to monitoring learners while educators were teaching. Principal F for instance suggests:

Since we are a small school and multigrading, educators are also overloaded, they also need that assistant do that maybe there will be able to execute all the tasks that needs to be done. So sometimes you have to find assistants for them this way. This is a matter of supporting them. You need to support them maybe in marking, monitoring some work. You teach and then you leave them to monitor the work for you.

Principal E on the other hand, tells that they used volunteer educators as assistants to permanently employed, state-paid educators. Permanent educators supervise all the activities of volunteer educators and sometimes provide mentorship to them. Principal E said,

Ngesikhathi umuntu efika sibe sesimnikeza uthisha oqahswe ngokuphelele. Ube esesebenza ngaphansi kalowo thisha osuke ekhona, okusho ukuthi ngamanye amazwi

abe umsihi kathisha oqashwe ngokuphelele [When the volunteer educators come, they are assigned to the permanent educator and become an assistant to that educator. Therefore, the permanent educator becomes a mentor and a supervisor of the volunteer educator.]

Principal F further revealed that sometimes they used their families and neighbours to assist with some administrative tasks such as typing of documents. Principal F had this to say:

Sometimes maybe use your children, your cousins or neighbours. In terms of management, maybe someone is doing computer, then maybe I would ask to them to do some typing for documents that need to be submitted. I draft something and then request them to type for me, I then just proofread and then submit.

It emerged from one participating principal in the study that they involve parents of learners and the community in their leadership. Principal E indicated that they involved parents and learners in their fundraising campaigns. They encouraged the parents to give learners money to buy chips and snacks at school. That way, the money collected could be used to supplement the insufficient allocation they receive from the Department of Education. Principal E suggested:

Siye sithi ukuze sikwazi ukuqhuba nje mhlawumbe kudayiswe omachips oma snaks lezo zinto ezincanyana bese siphinde sidayise amapeni.[so that we can be able to operate, we sometimes sell chip, snaks and pens at school].

Principal F promotes the participation of the community to ensure the safety of the school to protect the already insufficient resources that the school has. Principal F stated,

The other thing that works for us is involving the school stakeholders when you have challenges. For example, since this load shedding, there is crime as well. In that case you need to involve the stakeholders like traditional leadership in the close community so that they would keep an eye on the school. We need to know that when we have resources, they are kept safe, so you involve stakeholders.

Lastly, Principal F cited that in their school they work closely with the local businesses. Principal F argued that she requested donations from local businesses to provide items such as food packages, uniforms for vulnerable learners at school and even paints to paint the school. This is because the departmental allocation is insufficient to fulfil the school's needs. The donations of food packages such as bread for learners to have a morning meal indirectly assist the school to combat late coming as learners ensure they come early to have a slice of bread in the morning. Principal F stated,

Sometimes we request sponsorships. Our community has a high unemployment, there are orphaned and vulnerable children, so I write letters requesting for food packages, things like breads so the learners can come in the morning and have bread, and this

encourages early coming because now they know that if I don't come early therefore that means I will miss those two slices of bread with peanut butter.

Principal F further stated that they work with local businesses to provide the resources necessary for the provision of quality education to learners. Principal F stated,

I would also ask sponsorship with the uniforms, paints and everything. Even now I have written letters asking for Grade R resources that will help them to learn. We have asked for equipment like clay dough, balls, holler hoops, drawing books and toys.

The account of involving outside people to assist revealed the limited staff resources as a cause. Principal A argued that the allocation of educators in small schools is insufficient to fulfil school needs. Principal A argued:

I can say one of the challenges facing small schools in the deprived contexts is the educator allocation. In small school, you find that there few educators to teach but the number of subjects yet remain the same as all other schools.

Principal B shared the same view, stating that in small schools in deprived contexts there is a challenge of insufficient staff expected to do a lot of work. This is how Principal B put it,

To be in a small and a deprived school is a problem. We do not have sufficient staffing her, which means we are expected to do a lot of work using very few numbers of educators.

This sentiment is shared by Principal F which suggests that the small numbers of educators allocated to small schools in deprived contexts contributes to the work being too much to handle for educators in these schools. Principal F shared: *Ukuba khona kothisha abancane kwenza umsebnzi ube mukhulu kakhulu. [Having few educators makes the work to be too much].*

It emerged that sometimes principals work with outside stakeholders such as local businesses because of the limited financial allocations that are insufficient to meet all the needs of the school. Principal F stated that their school requested sponsorship from local businesses for resources that would supplement what they could not get from the department's allocation as it is insufficient Principal F stated: *The departmental allocation is not enough, sometimes there are things that we need but can't get them.* The view of Principal F is shared by Principal D who shared: *The challenges that we have in the small school is financial allocation, the money that we get from the department, is not that enough.*

The principals' actions of involving different stakeholders and seeking support from outside the school are influenced by challenges they face as a result of the uniqueness of their school

contexts. Section 2.7 noted that leadership in small schools is shaped by more context-specific pressures than those faced by larger schools in similar deprived settings, due to factors such as limited resources and outdated facilities, difficulty attracting and retaining teachers, lack of administrative support, intensified workloads, role multiplicity and inadequate funding (Lowe, 2006; Ewington et al., 2008; Starr & White, 2008; Ndlovu, 2012; du Plessis, 2017). Leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools is therefore especially challenging. The context of being small and deprived in this study influenced the school leaders in terms of how they enact their leadership of teaching and learning to respond to the school context. Leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts requires special leadership strategies, different from those applied in another context. It is therefore reasonable for principals in small, deprived schools to involve various stakeholders and seek external support to strengthen their capacity to provide quality teaching and learning. The shortage of educators and the absence of administrative assistance in small schools in a deprived context forced principals to invite local, former learners who are at tertiary institutions to come and assist in school.

The principals' approach of involving different stakeholders and seeking support from outside is also aligned with establishing critical friendship. Critical friendship refers to seeking external support for school leadership and it contributes to enhanced learning and school improvement in different contexts (Swaffield, 2004). The principals leading these small schools sometimes establish friendships with people from outside the school for their support in their leadership of teaching and learning. For example, Principal F established a friendship with local traditional leadership to protect the school resources and establish friendship with local businesses to gain sponsorship.

6.2.6 Educator Motivation

The data from participants revealed educator motivation as another approach adopted by principals. Acknowledging an educators' effort creates an environment whereby educators are happy and encouraged to work harder, regardless of the context of the school. For example, Principal E noted that educators in small, deprived schools are often stressed by heavy workloads, so principals must continually motivate them to cope with these conditions. Principal E suggested:

Ugcine ukhathele unengcindezi ungazi ukuthi uzoyikwenza kanjani yonke lento kodwa uma uwumphathi walezi zikole kumele uhlale ubagqugquzela othisha ukuthi bamelane nalo msebenzi ngokuthi nawe wenze kuqala. [You end up tired and stressed but as leaders of these schools we must encourage educators by doing it first].

Principal D concurs with the statement made by Principal E. Principal D suggests that the conditions in small, deprived schools are not conducive for the health of educators, and as a leader, he therefore must motivate educators by always appreciating the effort made by educators. Principal D suggested,

I appraised them like appreciate the effort that they are doing regularly because it happened that they come to the school, and I mustn't push them to the limit and mustn't be so tense in the school. They seem to be sick; the situation (being small and deprived) is not good for their health.

Principal A shared the same sentiments, emphasising the importance of motivating educators by appreciating their work. Principal A shared that by appreciating the educators, you are acknowledging the work that the educators are doing. Principal A shared,

Yah, one of the thinks that as a leader you should do, it is then to be able therefore to draw in the skills of educators and to appreciate what educators are doing. By so doing you are recognising the work they are doing. So, I started then by praising that particular educator was doing and acknowledging that he or she was doing very well.

The data revealed various practices these principals use to motivate the educators in their schools. Principal C for example, shared that sometimes he uses the morning briefings to pray with educators and share scriptures from the Bible with them. Sometimes they even take time to share some good stories and practices of other schools to inspire them. Principal C explained:

We have sessions in the morning when I do briefing, we just take one to three minutes before we go to the assembly to pray and read the scripture together, we share good stories; we share successes of other organisations or schools that we know and achieve something great. I am doing this because I want to inspire them. I make a point that I know their bad days.

Principal C further shared that sometimes he rewards his educators during an awards ceremony. He sometimes takes them outside the school to have lunch with his staff as a means of showing his appreciation to his staff for the work they do at school. Sometimes he even invites people to come and motivate educators. Principal C shared,

When we have good results then during the awards ceremony, I also award them to keep them motivated. At times I take them out using my own funds just to have lunch and be together. I involve people from outside to come and motive colleagues and motivate learners.

It came out from two of the participating principals that in their leadership of teaching and learning, they sometimes go beyond being the principal to being a father, providing pastoral

care for educators as a form of motivating them. For example, Principal D sometimes provides counselling to his educators when they have personal crises. Principal D had this to say,

As a principal, there is a time that I am not principal, I must be the father to them, and I must be the counsellor and a motivator. Assist them when there is a need and also think about the issue that will make them not to be stressed so much.

On the other hand, Principal C suggested that he shows interest in the personal and family lives of his educators, to always make them feel loved by their leader. By doing so, educators feel motivated and inspired to do more. Principal C said,

It is my philosophy that when I greet them, I ask them about their families as how is their family keeping because that in itself shows that I am not just concerned about the work, but I am also concerned about their personal and family lives. As a result, I think that also assist me in terms of making them motivated.

What came out strongly from some of the participants' responses as another approach to motivate educators in their schools was leading from the front. Leading from the front, for these principals, emphasises their presence as leaders of school, providing the direction for the rest of the educators. The principals reported that their portfolio as leaders in small, deprived schools demands that whatever activity is happening in schools, they are part of it. Principal A, for instance, states that whatever he says is important and must be done, he is the first one to do it. Principal A said: *For me, I understand the leadership of teaching and learning wherein I have to lead from the front.* Principal C echoed this, stating that he demonstrates first what is supposed to be done at school. Principal c explained:

If there is something that must be done, I don't demonstrate but I do it first after discussing with them and then they follow and then step aside and let them continue.

Principal E who led a multigrade primary school suggested that leaders in small, deprived schools should model the way to motivate educators to keep going. This is what Principal E said:

Kukona konke umsebenzi wethu esinawo njenganesikole esincane, udinga umuntu onentshisekelo, futhi owaziyo ukuthi uzeleni emsebenzini ngoba ngeke uze ukhona ukukwenza ngoba ngesikhathi usathi usenza okunye nakhu okunye kuyakudinga futhi. Ugcine ukhathele unengcindezi ungazi ukuthi uzoyikwenza kanjani yonke lento kodwa uma uwumphathi walezi zikole kumele uhlale ubagququzela othisha ukuthi bamelane nalo msebenzi ngokuthi nawe wenze kuqala. [All in all, our work in small schools, need someone to have interest, who knows why here she came to work because you juggle around a lot of things. You end up tired and stressed but as leaders of these schools we must encourage educators by doing it first].

When probing further about how they enacted leadership from the front, and in support of their views, the participating principals mentioned several techniques they use to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning in their schools. Principal A, for instance, enforced punctuality and commitment to class teaching by always being in class teaching and on time during the lesson periods. This, according to Principal A encouraged other educators to be on time for classes as well. This is how Principal A put it:

So, if therefore means to be in class on time, I have to make sure that I am in class on time. That is leadership, therefore everyone is going to see that there is no point of staying behind or going to class late yet as a Principal I am always in class in time, and I am always on task. So, they are also seeing that to me or from me that is what leadership or leading your subject is.

For Principal C, leading in a small, deprived school is about dealing with challenges in a positive manner so that educators must have courage to keep going despite the challenges that exist because they copy from their leader. Principal C said this to illustrate his point:

When they talk about challenges in class they talk about class where I also teach. When I am in class, I am no longer the principal, but I am the subject teacher, I am facing the challenges that they are facing but I must show them that I am the leader of the school. As I am leading them, I must not cry like them even though I feel the pain.

Principal C emphasise that as a leader, he is the first person to implement the resolutions taken in the meetings. Principal C said,

We have our own staff meetings and take resolutions, for example we take a resolution and say we need to control the issue of late coming of learners. Even though in the meetings we delegate colleagues to work with Representative Council of Learners (RCL) to control the late coming, the following day I am the first one on the gate to do that task because we agreed in the previous meeting. When I say next week, we are checking files and must be submitted, my files will be there first.

Principal D, who led a small school without support staff promoted the family values of caring for learners by his staff by demonstrating it first. Principal D explained that working with small children at a primary school demanded cleaning up after them, so when he saw any incident, he did not call an educator but attended to it himself. In support of leading from front, Principal D gave this illustration:

In our schools, support staff is a challenge, I am working with small kids so when a child from Grade 1 or Grade R messed himself or herself, I work that thing out first because we become parents in that situation and do not push educators when you can do it and also teach the educators that this is the second family and demonstrate first.

When asked about the reasons they lead the way they do, the responses suggested that principals leading small, deprived schools believed that to lead teaching and learning effectively they must model the way. Principal A said: *To me what I then say to the teachers to be what is important and to be what is supposed to be done I have to be seen to be doing it first.* Principal C further suggested that there were many challenges in small, deprived schools that educators faced, including pressures from the community, Department of Education and even from themselves as leaders to produce good results. This caused educator burnout when trying to respond to those pressures. So, as leaders of small, deprived schools trying to keep the educators going, they must be seen to be part of them and feel their pain. This is what Principal C had to say,

It is a fact that most colleagues in many small schools they suffer from burn out because of the nature and pressure of the work, particularly high schools. There is lot of pressure from the department, from the communities where the school is, from us as leaders of schools that educators must produce. This result in educators being burnt out, so to motivate them, whatever activity that is happening I am part of it.

This leadership practice of educator motivation has an affinity with the transformational leadership approach discussed in Section 2.6 of this study. In Section 2.6.1 of this study, Bush (2014) defines transformational leadership as a type of leadership approach that places focus on the capabilities and commitment of members in an organisation. The level of commitment and the capacity of members towards achieving the organisational goal results in greater production. Transformational leaders therefore focus on the performance of group members and motivate them towards achieving a common organisational goal. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013), state that transformational leadership enhances the motivation by employing various inspired educators and challenging them to take ownership of their work. Principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation use educator motivation as another approach to influence the delivery of quality teaching and learning for both educators and learners. By adopting educator motivation in their leadership strategies, principals ensure that all educators have a high level of commitment to their work which enables them to work collectively to achieve the common goal. Leithwood and Sun (2012) view the aim of transformational leadership as motivating others to work toward achieving organisational goals instead of personal interests.

The findings suggest that they enact leadership by example as a source of inspiration for educators. They lead by example in fostering ethical behaviours and actions among their educators (AlShehhi et al., 2020). Therefore, in order for the principals to motivate their

educators, in this study they inspire them by modelling the way. Hattke and Hattke (2019) suggest that the leader's ethical behaviour influences the follower's ethical behaviours. For example, Principal A enforces punctuality and commitment to class teaching by modelling the way, being always in class teaching and therefore he encourages other educators to copy this ethical behaviour and be punctual as well.

6.2.7 Developing Staff Capacity

Some of the participating principals in the study cited the development of staff capacity as another approach they use in their leadership.

It was however, noted from the interviews with the principals leading small, deprived schools that the approaches they use in developing staff capacity in their schools varied. Principal A, for example, in order to capacitate educators in his school, ensures that they all attend the subject workshops organised by the DBE. He invited subject advisors to come to the school and provide capacity-building for educators to ensure that they were able to provide quality teaching. Principal A had this to say:

To make sure that this educator is competent with the subject, there are workshops that are organised by the department which then the educator has to attend in order to capacitate the educator. Over and above that I would ask the subject advisors to come and take through the educator on the subject so that the educator is capacitated in that particular subject. When the subject advisor goes, the educator is left with me.

Principal C, on the other hand shared what they practised internally within the school to develop one another on different matters supporting the quality delivery of the curriculum. Principal C revealed that they use Professional Learning Committees (PLC) in different subjects within the school to conduct developmental sessions where they capacitate each other on matters such as the presentation of lessons, teaching methodologies, assessment activities and even management. Principal C shared their practices:

It is expected that as a school we have sessions where we develop one another in terms of teaching, in terms of assessing, in terms of management etc. However, staff development is somehow compromised in a small school because you don't get time of engaging in such activities hence, we use the PLCs for educators in those subjects to develop one another but as a leader or an instructional leader I have to come on board to develop educators in terms of administration of their work, in terms of new teaching methodologies.

It emerged from the discussion with Principal C that they sometimes asked expert educators from their sister schools to come and provide development for those educators who required

assistance. It is worth noting that not only educators receive development – the principal himself works with the principals of these (sister schools) schools to develop himself in various management areas. Principal C further shared:

On that same breath it is these school that we collaborate with that assist us in terms of development because bringing one educator from our sister school to come over in a way he or she develops the staff. The reason is that I cannot be the jack of all trade being leading the small schools however it calls that we import knowledge from educators that work in these sister schools so that they can develop our educators. In fact, it is not the educators that are developed; I am also working with the leaders of these schools. I go to them just to check what it that they are doing is and what I can learn from them or sometimes they come to me to assist me. I learn a lot in terms of financial management, case management because these schools have systems in place.

The data revealed that principals of small, deprived schools emphasise staff development in their approach to leading teaching and learning because of its importance in ensuring the effective delivery of quality education. For instance, Principal C argued that staff development is a critical area of leadership and when disregarded in can have a negative impact on a school. Principal C said: *The issue of staff development. Staff development is one of the critical areas that when it is disregarded, it paralyses the organisation.* This sentiment of the importance of staff development in schools, especially small, deprived schools, is shared by Principal D who shared: *Staff development is very important in the school.*

Principal A explained that staff development is to ensure that educators are competent in teaching their subjects in school. Principal A had this to say: Principal D spoke about the development of the SGB so that they are able to understand the school situation, thus enabling them to execute their functions effectively. Principal D explained:

Even the SGB component need to be developed because as the school is a multigrading school, so all of us need to know that this school the situations and then have plans to develop everybody in the school so as to function properly.

The principals' utterances in this theme suggest that owing to a lack of skilled and qualified educators, developing educator capacity is important to enhance the delivery of quality education. A lack of qualified educators is one of the unique challenges associated with small, deprived schools. This view is reflected in the workshop circulars stored in the principals' file. The view expressed by the participating principal in this theme is consistence with what was reviewed in Section 2.9 in the literature review of this study. The literature review suggests that a lack of qualified teachers is seen as posing considerable challenges for leadership in the deprived schools. In Section 2.9, Lingam et al (2014) posits that the data from developing

context such as Africa suggests that there is a large proportion of rural teachers who lack adequate training and qualification. Kooymans (2013) similarly argues that educators are vital resources in deprived schools, yet principals in these settings face greater challenges attracting highly qualified teachers than those in privileged schools. Unqualified or under-qualified educators have a negative impact on all children at school. Principals therefore emphasised the importance of staff development as a mechanism to raise staff capacity to deliver quality teaching.

This approach to educator development is consistent with another related study by Donaldson (2011) titled *Principals' Approaches to Developing Teacher Quality*. Donaldson (2011) suggests that professional development is one of the most important methods to raise educator quality. The majority of principals interviewed noted the importance of professional development in terms of a series of workshops.

In another study by Jepketer et al. (2015), it was found that educator capacity development influences and contributes to enhanced learner performance. The findings of the study suggest that educator professional development strengthened and promoted educator professional growth and enhanced learners' academic achievement. Jepketer et al. (2015) posits that quality teaching and learning depends on educator skills, knowledge and attitude acquired through training and professional development.

6.2.8 Inspiring Commitment to a Shared Vision

The data from three of the participating principals revealed the leadership approach that inspires commitment to a shared vision in a collaborative way supports their manoeuvres to enact their leadership. Principal C said that as a leader must set the vision and influence others to follow that vision. Principal C articulated: *You influence people to follow a given path in the form of a vision*. Principal C concurs, stating that a leader must have a vision and a mission for an organisation, and ensure that these are accomplished by influencing other members in the organisation to follow. This is what Principal D had to say: *Leadership is about visionary person; you must have a vision, and leadership is about mission being accomplished*. Principal E suggested the same thing, arguing that there must be a shared vision and an effort to make sure that educators adopt that vision as the common vision. Principal E stated:

Another thing is the sharing of the vision, if you share, it is important for educators to adopt that vision. For example, our common vision is that we know that we came here

(at school) to teach these learners. At the end of the day, these learners must leave with something.

When asked how to make sure that the vision become a shared vision that is common to everyone, Principal E emphasised the importance of collaboration through a consultative process. Principal E shared:

Sihlala phansi emhlanganweni esiban nayo. Njengoba sivula siyaxoxa ukuthi kumele senze lokhu nalokhu, kodwa hhayi ukuthi ngisuke ngibaphoqa. [We sat down and discussed in the meeting that we always have. Since we opened, we discussed that we are going to do this and that, but I don't impose.]

The response of Principal A suggests that the parents of learners in schools in contexts of deprivation are mostly illiterate; therefore, it is important to enlighten them about the importance of their children's education. Principal A suggested:

You will find that parents in those areas are not that much enlightened with education, so you still then had to start your work with the parents, bringing up your vision of what education is all about so then you actually win the parents.

What transpired from the data is that the rationale behind the importance of a shared vision is to develop sense of commitment and ownership from both educators and the community. Principal A suggested the importance of involving parents when developing a vision for the school to ensure that parents owned and shared the common vision. Principal A stated:

In a small school, you will find that parent's involvement in the school is not as much as the parent involvement in a bigger school. You will find that parents are not enlightened much because most of the time you will find that most of the times these small schools are in the peripheral of the city and also in the rural areas. Winning the parents meaning therefore also winning the learners in a school

The findings indicate that small, deprived schools face unique challenges that can hinder progress, so principals must inspire educators and parents to commit to a shared vision through collaborative processes. The school vision and mission statement are clearly visible in the office, therefore corroborated the utterances of the principals. The principals working with educators and parents in developing the school vision demonstrate characteristics consistent with a transformational leadership style as discussed in Section 2.6 of this study. Anderson (2017) in Section 2.6.1 posits that in transformational leadership, a leader works with others to identify areas that need change in the organisation, by developing and implementing a vision to guide the change. Shared vision highly influences the sense of ownership of both educators and the entire school community. A study by Mkhize (2017) affirms that the school principals, who develop well-articulated visions and goals, develop collaborative cultures where educators

collectively improve teaching and learning. Gurley et al. (2015) argue that a well-articulated vision is the cornerstone for effective schools, as a means of achieving a more inclusive and equitable schools and creating more positive change in the school's improvement efforts.

In Section 2.9 of this study, it was argued that in deprived school contexts, the key agent in enabling change remains the school principal, because of the power vested in his/her role as a leader (Chikoko, 2015; Preston & Barnes, 2018). However, leaders of schools in deprived contexts have to deal with multiple challenges related to deprivation compared to their colleagues leading privileged schools (du Plessis, 2017). Lumby (2017) concurs, pointing out that leading schools in deprived contexts may offer qualitatively different constraints to leading schools in more privileged locations. It was further discussed in Section 2.10 that leadership in small schools faces context-specific challenges in addition to those commonly experienced in schools in the context of deprivation because of their distinctive characteristics (Starr & White, 2008). Starr and White (2008) argue that beyond the challenges of multiple deprivations, leaders of small schools face additional, unique complexities that distinguish their circumstances from those of larger schools in similar contexts. The principals leading in small, deprived school contexts therefore adopted this approach to give direction by developing a shared vision and sense of commitment and ownership from both educators and the community.

6.2.9 Prioritisation of Resources

The response of one of the participating principals suggested the prioritisation of resources and activities as another leadership approach they adopt. The response from Principal E revealed that this school prioritised the essential activities necessary to achieve effective leadership of teaching and learning. Principal E stated that they prioritised purchasing teacher and learner support materials which included photocopying machines and maintenance of the school as top priorities. Principal E said,

Siqale sibheke izinto eziyizinsiza kufundisa zothisha njengemishini yokugaya amaphepha, siphinde sibhekele ukugcina indawo ikulungele ukuthi abantwana bakwazi ukufunda ngokugcina indawo ihlanzekile. Sibuye siqikelele ukuthi izinto zokudla kwabantwana azishodi. [We first consider teacher and learner support equipment such as photocopying machines and also ensure the environment is conducive for learners by prioritising the maintenance of school grounds. Lastly, to ensure that nutrition for learners is enough].

Principal E explained that prioritisation was essential because the school's small size and low enrolment result in limited departmental funding. With insufficient resources to meet all needs, she must focus only on the activities most critical to effective teaching and learning. Principal E had this to say:

Njengoba isikole sisincane singenazo izimali, siyaye siqinisekise ukuthi sibeka izinto ngokubaluleka. [Since the school is small and do not have enough financial allocation, we ensure to prioritise those things that are important].

In the findings above, it emerged that principals had to prioritise how they use the limited resources in their school to fulfil all the needs of the school for quality curriculum delivery. This is consistent with what was reviewed in Section 2.9 in the literature review of this study. The literature shows that leading deprived schools is hindered by limited resources and financial constraints, which affect principals' ability to lead teaching and learning effectively (du Plessis, 2014; du Plessis & Mestry, 2018; Starr & White, 2008). As noted earlier and in Section 2.9, Klocko and Justis (2019) add that principals in deprived schools face these constraints while still being held to the same accountability standards as those in privileged schools. In another study, du Plessis and Mestry (2018) argue that Provincial Departments of Education struggle to support schools because of financial limitations. It therefore makes sense in this study that the principals interviewed first prioritised the activities and purchased the resources, that were essential to teaching and learning.

All public schools in South Africa receive funding in terms of NNSSF policy. According to NNSSF policy, schools in Quintile 1 to 3 are not allowed to collect school fees from learners and they are dependent on the funding from the DBE. Small schools in a context of deprivation fall within these categories; therefore, they can only depend on state funding. The budget allocated to small schools is usually inadequate to support effective teaching and learning. Inadequate budget allocation means inadequate additional resources. According to Ndhlovu (2012), the NNSSF policy has not realised its good intentions. Schools with lower learner enrolments are allocated less funding than those schools with high enrolments. The state has introduced the policy to redress past imbalances and to provide quality education for all. However, smaller schools tend to struggle to provide quality education with insufficient funding.

6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the principals' voices on how they lead teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The findings revealed different approaches adopted by principals in their endeavours to enact leadership. The findings revealed that principals adopted leadership approaches that responded to the unique contexts of their small schools. The leadership approaches that the principals used included leading with DH and PL1 educators to assist them in leading teaching and learning. Sometimes principals leading small schools in deprived contexts were working after school hours to do the administrative and management work. They sometimes used their personal physical and financial resources to supplement the lack of resources at their schools and they collaborate with other schools to share both physical and human resources. These principals emphasised educator motivation, developing staff capacity and inspiring commitment through developing a shared vision to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning. The following chapter presents a summary of findings and the recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 7

LEARNING FROM THE FINDINGS: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters, I presented and discussed findings related to the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. The focus in Chapter 5 was to present the data analysis of the first sub-question on how the principals leading teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts understand the concepts of leadership and leadership for teaching. Chapter 6 discussed the findings related to the second and third sub-questions – how principals enacted their leadership of teaching and learning and why they led in the ways they did.

This chapter presents a discussion on what I learned from the findings. This chapter is presented in seven sections. First, I look back and provide a summary of the study. The next section discusses what I learned from the data related to the findings. I do this by restating the research questions and summarising how these questions have been answered. I then present both the theoretical and methodological reflections. Finally, the contribution and the implications of the study are presented and the recommendations for further research are made.

7.2 LOOKING BACK: STUDY SUMMARY

In this section, I refresh the reader on the contents of this thesis. I do that by taking a glimpse back, providing a summary of each chapter presented in this study. In the orientation of the study in Chapter 1, I presented the overview of the thesis. This was done by providing the background of the study and the statement of the problem. I argued that leadership in small schools faces context-specific challenges in addition to those commonly experienced in schools in the context of deprivation, due to their distinctive characteristics. I argued in this chapter that the complex nature of leading small schools in deprived contexts leaves one with no doubt that it requires a special set of leadership capabilities and styles. I presented the research questions as well as the objectives of the study. I provided the personal and professional rationale that motivated me to conduct this study. I explained that my desire to conduct the study was motivated by the theoretical gap in literature on leadership in deprived schools, especially in the South African context. I argued that, while research on leadership in the context of deprivation is well documented, very little focus has been paid to leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation, especially in the South

African context. Most research on the phenomenon is from international studies. Further, I provided the clarification of key concepts on the leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. Lastly, I outlined the structure of the study.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature on leadership for teaching and learning. In this literature exploration, I drew from both the local and international debates on leadership of teaching and learning, especially in small, deprived school contexts. I first looked at how the concept of deprivation is perceived by different scholars, especially in education. I argued in this chapter that the literature analysis shows that different scholars have different understandings of the concept of deprivation, especially in challenging contexts. Some scholars such as Myende and Bhengu (2016) make no distinction between the concepts of multiple deprivations and challenging contexts, arguing that both arise from challenging conditions that compromise quality education. By contrast, Maringe and Moletsane (2015) argue that deprivation and challenging contexts have distinct meanings: deprivation was developed to enable comparisons between communities, whereas challenging contexts do not lend themselves to such measurement.

I further discussed the dimensions of deprivation and how they each negatively affect education. Here, I argued that most school leaders in deprived contexts are confronted by challenges caused by a poor environment characterised by high levels of social deprivation. Therefore, leadership of teaching and learning is negatively affected. In the same chapter, I looked at how different scholars view or understand the concept of leadership and how the concept of leadership relates to that of management. I argued that this study will use the words management and leadership with some degree of overlap. I then presented literature on different leadership approaches for leading teaching and learning and analysed the key principles of each. The discussion continued to look at the relationship that exists between the context and leadership, especially with regards to school leadership. This was done to gain insights into the influence that context has on the leadership of schools. I argued that there is a strong connection between the context and leadership. While school context influences the principal's leadership style, the principal's leadership style reciprocally shapes the school context. Therefore, it is important that school leaders acknowledge the complexity of their school's context and be flexible in their strategies to respond to emerging and existing challenges. Further, I examined the concept of small schools, with international studies revealing the inconsistencies in defining small schools. For example, in Australia, small schools have 70 or fewer learners (Ewington et al., 2008); in India a small school has 160 learners or

fewer (Diwan, 2015); in the United States of America the limit for a small school is 600 learners (Schwartz et al., 2013); and in Kenya it is 100 or less (Makori & Onderi, 2014). Lastly, I discussed the challenges of leading deprived schools as well as leading small schools. I argued that the challenges of leading teaching and learning in both small and deprived schools include low learner enrolment, limited resources, role multiplicity, work overload and inadequate funding, amongst others. I argued that these challenges exert a significant influence on the leaders' experiences.

The discussion of theories that were adopted to form a theoretical framework for this study was presented in Chapter 3. I argued in this chapter that the study adopted a two-pronged theoretical framework which draws from leadership for learning and contingency leadership theory. I discussed these two theories and illustrated their appropriateness for the study. I argued that understanding principals' leadership for teaching and learning requires drawing first on leadership for learning theory (Hallinger, 2011) and then on contingency leadership theory (Fiedler), to explain how small school contexts and deprivation shape their leadership practices. In the latter section of the chapter, I integrated the two theories to provide a framework for the study. I concluded the chapter by sharing a diagrammatic representation showing how these two theories were used as a theoretical lens in this study.

In Chapter 4, I provided the wide methodological orientation of the study and endeavoured to clarify key aspects in the research design and methods. I began the chapter by describing the research paradigm adopted by this study i.e. the interpretive paradigm. I discussed the interpretive paradigm by focusing on ontology, epistemology and methodology and argued why it was considered to be most appropriate for this study. I argued that, to explore leadership of teaching and learning in small schools facing multiple deprivations, a qualitative research design was most appropriate. I then gave a detailed rationale why I considered this approach to be most suitable for this study. This was followed by an in-depth account of how the purposeful sampling technique was used to select the research sites and participants for the study. Eight principals were purposefully selected as the unit of analysis for this study. I further detailed my personal experiences of negotiating and gaining access to the research sites. I explained all the steps taken during the journey, all the challenges I encountered, and how I overcame those challenges. This was then followed by a presentation of the methods adopted to generate data. Based on the ontological position, epistemological stance and methodological approach that this research adopted, I employed two data-generation methods, namely, interviews and document reviews. Lastly, I outlined how the issues of credibility,

dependability, conformability and transferability were addressed in this qualitative study to establish the trustworthiness of the research. I then concluded the chapter by explaining how I adhered to research ethics and observed all ethical principles in conducting this study.

This was followed by two chapters dedicated to the presentation of the data collected in the study. In these chapters, I provided a thick analysis of data collected from eight principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. In Chapter 5, I presented the data analysis of the first sub-question: *How do the principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning?* From the onset, I presented the profiles of all eight schools that were selected as research sites and the principals who led them. This was then followed by the presentation of data collected from participants during the interviews. The three broad themes used to present and discuss the data were: Working in Small Deprived Schools: Principals' Meanings, Principals' Understanding of Leadership and Principals' Understanding of Leadership for Teaching and Learning. The findings indicate three major understandings of leadership as a concept which include participants viewing leadership as a group activity, as influence, and as involving planning, organising and controlling. The findings in this chapter further revealed five major understandings of leadership for teaching and learning by the participants. These understandings include viewing leadership for teaching and learning as instructional leadership, creating supportive conditions, leading by example, monitoring learners' and educators' work and sharing leadership responsibilities.

Chapter 6 focused on responding to the second and third research questions. The second question is, *How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning?* And the third question is, *Why do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning in the way they do?* In this chapter, I combined and discussed the findings of these two questions simultaneously as the two questions were related, since the third question provides reasons for what principals do, as addressed in the second question. Nine broad themes were used to present and discuss the data on how leadership for teaching and learning is enacted and to account for why it was enacted that way. These themes were: leading with and through departmental heads and educators; working beyond school hours; using personal resources; collaboration with other schools; involving outside stakeholders in school; educator motivation; developing staff capacity; inspiring commitment to a shared vision; and prioritisation of resources.

7.3 LEARNING FROM THE FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings of the study presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The study's aim was to explore the principals' experiences regarding the leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts. To achieve the aim of the study, the study thus posed three research questions:

1. How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning?
2. How do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning?
3. Why do principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning in the way they do?

I use these key questions to present the summary of key findings in this study in the following section.

7.3.1 Research Question 1: How Do Principals in Small Schools in Deprived Contexts Understand Leadership for Teaching and Learning?

In Chapter 5, through the principals' voices, I responded to the question of how the principals understood leadership for teaching and learning. First, I solicited the principals' understanding of the concept of leadership. The intent of this first question was to explore their understanding of the concept of leadership in general before I went deeper into their understanding of leadership for teaching and learning as it relates to their work as principals. Therefore, two themes are used to present and discuss findings from this research question. The two themes are unpacking the concept of leadership, and leadership for teaching and learning.

7.3.1.1 Unpacking the concept of leadership

The findings from the data revealed numerous understandings of the concept of leadership by principals. The differences in understanding the concept of leadership may be influenced by leader's personal characteristics. In particular, it suggests that leader's personal values, beliefs, knowledge and experience are sources of varying leadership practices (Hallinger, 2011). The understanding of the concept of leadership by principals included: (1) leadership as a collaborative exercise and (2) leadership and management as an overlapping concept.

7.3.1.1.1 Leadership as a collaborative exercise

The theme that emerged prominently was that leadership was viewed and understood by principals as a collaborative exercise. Principals acknowledged that leadership is not an individual process but can be viewed as happening in collaboration with others. These participants acknowledged that they could not lead teaching and learning alone and therefore they relied on collaborating with other educators in the school to provide support. Therefore, they viewed leadership as people working together as a group to achieve a shared goal. This was evident when Principal B said: *Leadership is the action of leading the group of people.* This belief was clearly articulated by Principal E when he said: *Leadership means listening to other people and take their views or effort, analyses them to benefit.*

The understanding of leadership as a collaborative exercise by the participants is consistent with the principles of Hallinger's theory of leadership for learning. The third principle of leadership for learning states that dialogue is central to leadership for learning. According to Coenen et al. (2021), this principle emphasises the importance of continuous dialogue in leadership and learning within the school. This principle stresses the importance of dialogue and places it at the centre of leadership for learning. Participants' view of leadership as listening to others positions dialogue at the centre of their practice and supports shared responsibility within the school. Van Loon and van Dijk (2015), state that without effective dialogue, there cannot be an effective exchange of ideas or the development of a shared understanding among the group members.

The view of leadership as a collaborative exercise is consistent with the fourth principle of leadership for learning. The fourth leadership for learning principle is that educational leadership is a collaborative process of shared responsibility. Dempster (2009) states that the principle stresses those leaders cannot work alone in schools; they can only achieve the school's moral purpose through the sharing of leadership with other members of the school community. The understanding of leadership as working with and within a group indicates that participants considered that leadership requires sharing responsibilities with other members of the group. On the other hand, the participants' understanding of leadership as a collective exercise resonates well with the contingency leadership theory. Contingency leadership provides an alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of the school context and adapting leadership styles to a particular situation (Bush, 2007). McAdam et al. (2019) argue that contingency leadership theory suggests that the effectiveness of an organisation is as a

result of fitting contingency strategies that reflects the situation of the organisation. The participants' views indicate that their understanding of leadership is context driven. Their understanding is driven by the facts that their school context has few educators, and it forces them to share leadership or to view leadership as a collective exercise.

7.3.1.1.2 Leadership and management as overlapping concepts

Another theme that emerged viewed leadership and management as interchangeable, or having some degree of overlap (Lopez, 2014). The participants viewed leadership as involving a set of management activities including the process of planning, organising and controlling as activities to ensure the effective leadership of teaching and learning. Lopez (2014) argues that leadership and management are concepts that overlap and complement each other within individuals and organisations. According to Lopez (2014), complementing leadership with management can facilitate organisations to achieving sustainable goals. The participants' views indicate that they perceive the management activities as complementary to their leadership. For example, when Principal A and Principal G described leadership, Principal A emphasised organising activities to ensure school functionality and the achievement of set goals, while Principal G highlighted planning and controlling as activities to facilitate teaching and learning. In both cases, they framed their understanding of leadership through the lens of management activities. The participants therefore understood leadership as synonymous with management, or as overlapping constructs.

Wajdi (2017) argues that leadership and management overlap in that both involve influence, working with people and working to achieve a common goal. Another notion of overlap between leadership and management is confirmed by Mabrouk (2018) who argues that although there are clear distinctions between management and leadership as expressed by many scholars, the two concepts overlap. When principals are influencing others in a group to achieve school goals, that is leadership, and, on the other hand, when they are doing planning, organising, staffing and controlling, that is management (Mabrouk, 2018).

Understanding leadership as involving a set of management activities, including planning, organising, controlling and monitoring of work, resonates with the first principle of leadership for learning. Coenen et al. (2021) stress the importance of maintaining a focus on learning, stating that everyone in the school should be allowed an opportunity to learn and to take responsibility for the learning of others. Planning, controlling and monitoring of work indicates that principals viewed leadership as making learning a priority. This indicates that their

understanding is focused on learning and ensures that educators take responsibility for the learning of their learners in school. Hallinger's (2011) model of leadership for learning suggests that leadership does not directly impact learning in school, but the impact of learning is moderated by school processes and conditions.

7.3.1.2 Unpacking leadership for teaching and learning

In the preceding section, I explored what I had learned from the data about the principals' understanding of the concept of leadership. In this section, the study goes deeper into the principals' understanding of the concept of leadership for teaching and learning.

The findings revealed numerous understandings of the concept of leadership for teaching and learning by principals in small, deprived school contexts. I further observed that the principals' understanding of the concept of leadership for teaching and learning is moderated by their personal characteristics such as values, beliefs, knowledge and experience (Hallinger, 2011). The principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning encompassed both a learning-focused approach and the idea that leadership for teaching and learning is a collaborative effort.

7.3.1.2.1 Leadership for teaching and learning as learning-focused-leadership

The lesson from the findings suggests that principals understood leadership for teaching and learning as leadership that explicitly focuses on learning. The study found that they believe in leadership that gives learners the best chance to learn, with teachers taking full responsibility for student learning in schools. The beliefs and values of the principals in this study were articulated in various ways. For example, Principal C saw leadership for teaching and learning as putting teaching and learning at the centre of what schools do. This belief was articulated by Principal B, who expressed a similar understanding of leadership for teaching and learning as making sure that effective teaching and learning are always taking place to ensure the improvement in learner performance. This understanding of leadership for learning by these participating principals indicates that they all viewed leadership for teaching and learning as something that prioritises learning. This view of leadership for teaching and learning amongst principals aligns with the leadership for learning theory. According to Hallinger's first principle of leadership for learning theory, leadership that prioritises learning emphasises the need to maintain a clear and consistent focus on learning. It suggests that everyone in the school should have the opportunity to learn and support the learning of others (Coenen et al., 2021).

The findings suggest that the principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning emphasises the importance of leadership in creating favourable conditions for effective teaching and learning. They view leadership of teaching and learning as about making sure that teachers and learners are provided with all necessary resources for teaching and learning. This includes providing resources for educators to assist them in carrying out their teaching duties, and learner resources such as stationery and textbooks to assist in their learning. These principals believed that providing resources to educators and learners at school created a favourable condition for effective teaching and learning as the central focus in schools. This understanding by principals is in line with the second principle of leadership for learning (Macbeath, 2006). The principle refers to the conducive conditions of the school, which is one of the necessities for a focus on learning (Macbeath, 2006). The lessons from the principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning suggest that they consider that leadership should always strive to create conditions at school that will sustain a supportive environment for learning. The principals acknowledged the unique challenges associated with small and deprived schools, such as limited physical, human and financial resources that combine to impede school functionality. They therefore believe leadership will skilfully navigate through these challenges and adopt approaches that allow meaningful progress towards creating a school climate that provides favourable condition for teaching and learning.

Lastly, the understanding of leadership for teaching and learning as a learning focus by principals is articulated by their prioritisation of the monitoring of work in schools. The principals' understanding of monitoring educators' and learners' work, as well as curriculum delivery, to ensure a focus on learning, highlights instructional leadership as a key aspect of the leadership for learning theory. Ismail et al. (2018) suggest that instructional leadership is associated with principals' roles and duties, like coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating teachers' classroom instruction, and encouraging students to learn. This understanding is further in line with the fifth principle of leadership for learning that stresses accountability. The views of participating principals in this study emphasises that leadership for teaching and learning seeks accountability from educators and learners through the monitoring of their work.

7.3.1.2.2 Leadership for teaching and learning - a collaborative activity

Another finding that emerged from the participating principals in this study was that they understood the concept of leadership for teaching and learning as a collaborative activity. For

instance, understanding leadership for teaching and learning, according to Principal C, was that teaching and learning could not be the responsibility of a single person, namely, the principal, but extended to educators in the classroom as leaders. Therefore, this understanding of leadership for teaching and learning suggests that it is viewed as a collaborative activity with a shared responsibility. This understanding is aligned with distributive leadership, which is one of the prominent features of leadership for learning theory used as a lens in this study (Goksoy, 2015). Bush (2013) states that leadership may arise anywhere in the organisation and is not confined to formal leadership. Distributed leadership therefore differs from traditional approaches by recognising both formal and informal leadership roles, rather than concentrating authority solely in the principal. Therefore, the principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning in this study acknowledges both the formal leadership of principals in the school and informal leadership of educators in the classroom as envisaged in the leadership for learning theory. This view, which supports educator leadership, reflects the reality that principals in small, deprived schools often work alone or with only one departmental head, making it necessary to share leadership responsibilities with other educators. This is indicative of the principals' acknowledgement of the impact of the school context on their leadership. The understanding of leadership for teaching and learning as a collaborative and shared responsibility echoes the contingency leadership theory. Contingency leadership theory postulates that the leadership style adopted by leaders depends on the current context, therefore the best leadership approach will practically depend on the factors surrounding the context (Osondu, 2012).

7.3.2 Research Question 2: How Do Principals in Small Schools in Deprived Contexts Lead Teaching and Learning?

The findings indicate that principals practice leadership of teaching and learning by adopting various leadership approaches. It was found that the context in small, deprived schools played an important role in influencing leadership approaches adopted by principals. Contingency theory as applied in this study posits an approach that acknowledges the diverse nature of school contexts and adopting an appropriate leadership approaches to specific situations, rather than adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Bush, 2007). Yun et al. (2006) argue that there is no universally appropriate leadership approach that can be applied to all situations. They posit that one type of leadership approach can be appropriate in one situation and be inappropriate in another situation. The principals leading teaching and learning in this study assert that they apply leadership contingencies that are appropriate to the contexts of their school. As

Marishane (2016) suggests, there is always a strong connection between leadership approaches adopted by school leaders and the school context in which the leaders operate.

Hallinger's theory of leadership for learning first emphasises that leadership operates in an open system that consists not only of the community, but also the institutional system and social culture. Second, it suggests that the exercise of leadership is influenced by the leader's personal characteristics, therefore, it emphasises that leaders' personal values, beliefs, knowledge and experience are a source of varying leadership practices (Hallinger, 2011). The two theories assume that leadership is linked to both organisational context and environmental context, therefore leadership, to be effective, needs to acknowledge the organisational and environmental context. Consequently, both the nature of individual school contexts and the personal characteristics such as beliefs, values, knowledge and experience of principals played a pivotal role in the choices of their leadership approaches.

Upon closer analysis of data, the study identified three dominant leadership practices: Sharing leadership with others, leadership involving personal sacrifices, and resource improvisation.

7.3.2.1 Sharing leadership with others

A recurring theme that emerged is that principals used collective leadership to lead teaching and learning in their schools. The participating principals acknowledged that leading teaching and learning was not an individual process but believed it to be a collective responsibility extended to all stakeholders in the school. The prevailing view is that the small, deprived school context – marked by limited management posts and staff shortages due to PPN restrictions – prevents principals from leading teaching and learning alone, leading them to rely on collective leadership and collaborate with educators and other stakeholders inside and outside the school. These collective leadership beliefs were common in all eight schools involved in this study, but principals differed in their approach.

7.3.2.1.1. *Sharing leadership with other educators*

The findings extracted from the data indicate, for example, that principals in small schools in deprived contexts lead teaching and learning with and through departmental heads and educators. The data suggests that all small schools located in contexts of deprivation do not have deputy principals and very few of these small schools have departmental heads in their school management teams. At times, principals are the only formal managers in their schools. However, in those schools with the departmental heads, they shared the leadership of teaching

and learning collectively. In schools without departmental heads, the responsibility was shared with senior educators and sometimes even with the PL1 educators. This approach is linked to how principals understood leadership. The leadership practices of the participants resonate well with leadership for learning theory that suggests leadership practice require shared leadership. The leadership for learning theory is grounded on the principle that leadership is open to all (McBeath & Dempster, 2009). The principle stresses that leaders cannot work and achieve the schools' purpose alone, but can only do so through leadership that is shared with other educators in the school. The findings suggest that leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived school contexts is a shared responsibility and is open to everyone. This leadership approach indicates that the principals in small schools in deprived contexts acknowledge the school context in relation to their leadership. Contingency leadership theory suggests that leaders must master a repertoire of leadership practices in responding to the circumstances that confront them (Naicker, 2020). Due to the contextual reality of small schools where there are few educators and limited management portfolios, the principal acknowledges that he/she cannot lead alone, and hence considers other educators to co-lead with him/her or provide support.

7.3.2.1.2. Drawing from other schools to lead teaching and learning

It emerged that leadership in small, deprived school contexts is not only confined to one school, but sometimes principals drew from other schools to lead teaching and learning. For example, principals developed a collaborative culture with neighbouring schools to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning. This collaboration was developed by the creation of working relationships with neighbouring schools. The collaboration with neighbouring schools included interchanges of both human and physical resources as well as expertise and skills that were not available in individual schools. As a result of PPN, small schools are usually allocated only a few educators to teach all the subjects. Few educators in small schools in deprived contexts meant that some educators taught subjects that they were not qualified for. Principals of small schools in deprived contexts therefore sometimes collaborated with other neighbouring schools with qualified educators to come and assist in their schools. The assistance by neighbouring school educators included sharing of ideas and skills through team teaching and sometimes the moderation of subjects. Due to NNSSF, sometimes small schools receive a limited financial allocation from the DBE insufficient to fulfil all the needs of the school. Principals therefore sometimes collaborate with neighbouring school through sharing photocopying machines and duplication paper. This collaborative approach of sharing

resources and expertise therefore allowed for improving the capacity of their individual schools and educators and ensured the provision of quality learning opportunities for the learners.

7.3.2.1.3. Encourage participation of outside stakeholders

The data from participating principals indicated that they encouraged the participation of various outside stakeholders, in varying degree, in school matters. For example, principals involved unemployed local graduates as volunteers, engaged the community to help safeguard the school's limited resources and partnered with local businesses to secure essential support. The principals responded to their contexts by adopting collective leadership approaches that extended to outside stakeholders which included local communities and businesses. They both acknowledged the constraints within their school contexts and identified the opportunities available in the surrounding communities to shape their leadership of teaching and learning. Leadership for learning suggests that effective leadership is influenced by both constraints and opportunities in schools and the surrounding environment (Hallinger, 2011). This leadership approach aligns with contingency leadership theory. Contingency leadership suggests that leadership style and leadership effectiveness is moderated by situational control (Miller et al, 2004). Principals leading in small, deprived school contexts recognised that different situations called for different leadership approaches, therefore they maintained flexibility in displaying concern for tasks (Rosch & Anthony, 2012).

7.3.2.2 Leadership involving personal sacrifices.

Contingency leadership theory suggests a leadership approach that acknowledges the diverse nature of school contexts and adopts a leadership approach that is appropriate to that situation, instead of adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Yun et al., 2006; Bush, 2007; McAdam et al., 2019). The study found that the leadership approaches adopted by principals were influenced by their acknowledgement of the contexts of their schools that were associated with both the lack of human and financial resources. In responding to the contexts of their schools, the principals adopted a leadership approach that involved personal sacrifices in their leadership endeavours. Clarke and Stevens (2009) argue that principals in small schools are often teachers who teach a full load and are expected to be school leaders, dealing with administration and management. These principals spend most of their time teaching in the classroom or attending to their role as school managers and administrators. The principals worked beyond the normal school hours to do their management and administrative work because during the day, they spent most of their time teaching in the classroom. These

principals worked after school till late, worked at home at night, worked over the weekends and even worked during the holidays to ensure that their management and administration were in order.

It emerged from the findings that principals even led teaching and learning by using their personal resources. These principals sometimes used their own physical resources, such as personal laptops, printers and paper, or their own money to maintain the school, purchase teaching and learning materials or cover costs for staff and themselves to attend workshops and meetings.

It further emerged that instead of principals mourning the lack of resources in their schools, they sought assistance from outside stakeholders. The principals sometimes involved external stakeholders such as local businesses to obtain the additional resources for the school. They sought donations and funding from local businesses to improve the infrastructure of their schools and to buy resources to improve teaching and learning.

This leadership approach by the principals demonstrated their understanding of their school context, and they adopted a style that suited the context. This approach aligns with leadership for learning theory. Hallinger (2011) argues that principals need to understand the context of their schools and then develop appropriate leadership strategies that will respond to that context. Leadership does not operate in a vacuum and therefore cannot be divorced from the context in which it operates (Lord et al, 2013; Marishane, 2016). Working beyond the normal school hours to do management and administrative work, utilising their personal resources, and seeking funding elsewhere, indicates the principal understands of their school contexts. Therefore, their leadership approaches were influenced by their acknowledgement of the contexts of their schools that were associated with the lack of both human and financial resources.

7.3.2.3 Resource improvisation

The data indicated that the lack of resources associated with small schools in deprived contexts necessitated a contingency leadership approach to improvise the resources to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning.

The findings indicate principals prioritised resource management in their schools because of the limited resources available in small schools, and the insufficient financial allocation from the DBE to meet all the requirements for quality teaching and learning. They prioritised the

activities and purchasing of resources that were essential to teaching and learning to ensure that there was a conducive environment for quality teaching and learning. This included purchasing teacher and learner support materials, maintaining photocopying machines, and maintaining school grounds and infrastructure as a top priority to ensure a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. The improvisation of resources by principals in their leadership of teaching and learning indicates their deep understanding of their school context, which is consistent with leadership for learning theory. Therefore, the lack of resources influenced the principals to come up with contingency strategies. Miller et al. (2004) postulate that, in terms of contingency leadership theory, the relationship between the effectiveness of a leader and the leadership approach adopted is mediated by the leader's situational control and contributes to the effectiveness of an organisation. The effectiveness of the leadership approaches adopted by principals in this study is attributed to their awareness of their school contexts. Further, the resource improvisation by principals in their schools was influenced by their knowledge and experiences of leading in small schools in deprived contexts. This is consistent with leadership for learning theory which emphasises the role of knowledge, experience, values and beliefs of principals in shaping their leadership.

7.3.3 Research Question 3: Why Do Principals in Small Schools in Deprived Contexts Lead Teaching and Learning in the Way They Do?

What the study found as the reasons for the principals adopting certain ways of leadership is that the context drives what happens in these schools. For example, School A had an enrolment of 126, with only four educators, including the principal. There was no support staff, such as an administrative clerk. School B had an enrolment of 185, consisting of five educators with two departmental heads, and no administrative clerk. School C had 108 learners, four educators and no administrative clerk. School D had 149 learner enrolments, four educators and no clerk. School E had only 75 learners and only three educators, including the principal and no administrative clerk. School F had an enrolment of 141, being four educators and no clerk. School G had 57 learners and only two educators in their PPN, including the principal. Lastly, School H had an enrolment of 278 learners, with eight educators, including the principal and one departmental head. These small schools in deprived contexts are characterised by a lack of resources in terms of human resources, physical resources and financial resources. Therefore, these contextual characteristics pushed the principals to lead teaching and learning the way they did.

7.3.3.1 Lack of human resources

In terms of staffing in the schools, the context indicates that the PPN of all the schools in this study was six or below, except for one primary school. None of the schools had deputy principals. Out of the eight schools, only one secondary school had two departmental heads, and only one school had one departmental head.

The context in small, deprived schools is characterised by lack of human resources caused by limited staffing resource allocation due to the PPN. The lack of human resources resulted in both principals and educators being overloaded with work. In high schools, the principals had to allocate more educators to higher grades (Grade 10, 11, and 12) in schools, leaving lower grades (Grade 8 and 9) without sufficient educators to teach those grades. Sometimes, subjects in these lower grades were taught by out-of-field educators. Primary schools sometimes had to combine the grades which were taught by one educator, a concept called multigrade teaching (Joyce, 2014). For the principal to deal with the lack of educator resources, they adopted a collaborative approach with neighbouring schools to share different types of resources such as office supplies, furniture and human resources. In primary schools, principals sometimes invited unemployed, qualified educators from local communities to come and work as educator assistants to ensure that quality teaching and learning was realised.

The lack of human resources in small schools in deprived contexts resulted in limited management teams. Across all participating schools, none had deputy principals; few had departmental heads, and most had none, leaving the principal as the only management portfolio-holder. This made it challenging for principals in such contexts to effectively lead teaching and learning. Therefore, these principals widely shared the leadership roles and responsibilities with other educators within the school. In these schools, leadership roles and responsibilities were extended even to educators without formally designated leadership roles such as senior educators, and even Post Level 1 educators. I learned, therefore that leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts is shared with everyone within the school and even extended to individuals in neighbouring schools.

The context further indicated that, out of eight schools, only one had an administrative clerk responsible for office administration in the school. The absence of an administrative clerk in these schools therefore suggests that the principals leading these schools had no choice but to do the administrative work themselves or delegate those duties to already overloaded educators.

The principals worked beyond the normal school hours to do their administrative work because during the day they spent most of their time teaching in class.

7.3.3.2 Lack of financial resources

I found that the leadership approaches adopted by principals is influenced by the context that is associated with a lack of financial resources. Out of eight schools in this study, only two schools had an enrolment of over 150 learners.

In chapter 1 of this study, I discussed that all public schools in South Africa receive funding in terms of NNSSF policy. The state introduced the policy to redress past imbalances and to provide quality education for all. Schools with low learner enrolments are allocated less funds than those schools with higher enrolments. All small schools in deprived contexts are designated Quintile 1 to 3 and are no-fee schools and cannot collect school fees from learners. Therefore, they depend on the funding they receive from the DBE to function. The budget allocated to small schools is usually inadequate to support effective teaching and learning. Inadequate budget allocations result in inadequate additional resources for the schools to meet their needs for the effective delivery of quality teaching and learning. Various leadership approaches were used by the principals to respond to the lack of financial resources associated with such schools.

As noted earlier, some principals used their own physical and financial resources to compensate for limited school funding and to keep their schools operating until the next allocation arrives.

Lastly, the principals sometimes worked with outside stakeholders such as local businesses to obtain the additional resources to supplement the lack of resources in their schools. These principals sought donations and funding from local businesses to improve the infrastructure of their schools and to buy resources to support the delivery of quality teaching and learning.

The findings suggest that all principals exhibited a contingency leadership style in their approach to leadership of teaching and learning in their schools. The leadership behaviour adopted by principals was moderated by internal and external contextual factors that existed in their schools. They demonstrated an awareness of their school contexts and adjusted their leadership behaviours by applying contingency strategies and cultures that reflected the situation of their schools (McAdam et al., 2019).

I therefore argue that leadership of small, deprived schools is challenging as a result of their unique characteristics. Langa (2013) identifies these contextual factors as socioeconomic conditions, parental characteristics, poverty, infrastructure, resource availability, rural culture and values, the quality and training of educators, curriculum, leadership and management. The principals were aware of these contextual factors that hindered effective leadership of teaching and learning and the delivery of qualitative education. They courageously responded and confronted it. Moreover, the relationship between their leadership styles and effectiveness was moderated by their situational control.

The principals responded to these contextual variations that hindered school effectiveness by adopting various contingency strategies. The context in small, deprived schools is characterised by limited management teams caused by the limited staffing resources allocation. This made it challenging for principals in such contexts to effectively lead teaching and learning. Therefore, the leadership roles and responsibilities in such schools were more widely shared and spread among multiple leaders within the school. Across all participating schools, none had deputy principals and most had no departmental heads, leaving principals as the only management post-holders. In this context, principals shared and extended leadership for teaching and learning to both formal leaders and educators without formal roles, including senior educators and PL1 teachers.

The principals acknowledged the context in which schools were impacted by fiscal limitations due to their school receiving very little financial allocation from the DBE to meet the budget needs of the school. These fiscal limitations in these small, deprived schools placed a severe burden on school leaders who were required to ensure that effective leadership of teaching and learning took place. The allocated finances were often exhausted early, and the principal then used various contingency leadership approaches to respond to such situations. They sometimes used their personal finances and even their own physical resources to supplement the lack of resources at their school to ensure effective leadership of teaching and learning and that learners always received quality education. That sometimes meant maintaining schools using their own finances to ensure a conducive environment for effective leadership of teaching and learning. They used their own money to pay for travelling allowances to do submissions to the district offices, attend meetings and workshops. They used their personal physical resources such as printers and even transported learners to venues outside the school. They developed a collaborative culture with other schools to allow for the interchange of resources that might not have been available in their schools. They further involved parents and learners in their

fundraising campaigns. That way, the money collected was used to supplement the insufficient allocation they received from the DBE. Lastly, they partnered with local businesses to request donations for items needed to support teaching and learning that could not be funded through the school's limited departmental allocation.

Lastly, the findings indicate that limited time, heavy teaching workloads for principals, and a shortage of human resources – due to the small number of educators in these schools – were key contextual factors that made leadership challenging. As a result, principals often had to adapt their approaches to address these challenges effectively. The principals displayed contingency leadership in responding to these challenges. Because these principals taught full-time, they often lacked sufficient time for management, administration and effective monitoring of educators' work. For the principals to respond to these challenges and effectively lead teaching and learning at the same time, they worked after school hours in the afternoons, evenings and during weekends to do some of their management and administrative work.

7.4. THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

This study adopted two theories as a framework to understand the principals' experiences in leading teaching and learning in small schools in a context of deprivation. First, to understand the nature of principals' leadership for teaching and learning, the study adopted the leadership for learning theory. Leadership for learning theory highlights personal values, beliefs, knowledge, and experience of leaders as sources of variation in leadership practices (Hallinger, 2011). Therefore, leadership for learning theory suggests that leadership is influenced by leaders' personal characteristics, thus emphasising the role of values, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences of leaders in shaping their leadership behaviour (Hallinger, 2011).

Leadership for learning theory highlights that leadership operates in an open system that not only consists of the community, but also includes the institutional system and social culture (Hallinger, 2011). According to Hallinger (2011), effective leadership is both shaped by and responds to the constraints and opportunities extant in the school organisation and its environment. Lord et al. (2013) argue that leadership does not happen in a vacuum but must be understood in a social context. Leadership cannot be divorced from the context in which it operates; therefore, there is always a strong relationship between the context and leadership style of a leader (Marishane, 2016). Further, this theory suggests that leadership for learning does not impact on learning directly, but its impact is moderated by school processes and conditions.

First, leadership for learning theory allowed me to understand how the personal values, beliefs, knowledge, and experience of principals shaped their meaning and understanding of the concept of leadership and leadership for learning, particularly in small schools in deprived contexts. The principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning as a collaborative activity with a shared responsibility was informed by their knowledge and experience of working in small schools which are characterised by limited management portfolios. They acknowledge that in small schools in deprived contexts, principals are alone; therefore, they consider other educators to share leadership responsibilities. Similarly, the various leadership practices they demonstrated were informed by their different personal knowledge, experiences and beliefs. For example, sharing leadership with other educators is inspired by their contextual understanding that small schools in deprived contexts have few educators, therefore they acknowledge they cannot lead alone but must consider others as leaders as well. In the same vein, drawing from other schools to lead teaching and learning by interchanging both human and physical resources, is their acknowledgement of the constraints within their school contexts.

Second, leadership for learning helped me understand how principals in small, deprived schools enact their leadership of teaching and learning, particularly how they use opportunities in their wider environment. For example, they involved unemployed qualified graduates as volunteer educators, encouraged community participation to improve school safety and partnered with local businesses to secure resources for quality education. This acknowledged the constraints within their schools and identified opportunities available in the surrounding communities. Therefore, their leadership approaches responded to the constraints of their school contexts. Lastly, the theory shed light on how the school level processes such as shared responsibilities indirectly impacted on their leadership of teaching and learning as well as learner outcomes. For example, leadership for learning highlights the features of distributed leadership. In normal schools, distributed leadership is the acknowledgement that there are multiple leaders within the school; therefore, leadership is not located within the role of the principal only but can be distributed to other educators such as DHs. In small schools in deprived contexts, there is an element of distributed leadership. However, the difference revealed in this study is that distributed leadership is not by choice but is forced because of the unique nature of the context. Due to limited human resources in terms of educators available in small schools in deprived contexts, principals have no choice but to share the role of

leadership for teaching and learning to other educators. Therefore, the distributed leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts is not by choice but is forced.

The contingency leadership theory was used as a lens to understand how the context of small schools and deprivation influences the way principals lead teaching and learning. Contingency leadership theory acknowledges the diverse nature of school contexts in adopting the leadership contingencies that are appropriate to their particular situation, rather than adopting a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Bush, 2007). According to McAdam et al. (2019), contingency leadership theory suggests that organisational effectiveness results from fitting contingencies that reflect and respond to the situation of the organisation. From this perspective, I was able to understand how the leadership behaviours adopted by principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts was moderated by contextual factors that existed in their schools. For example, the contextual acknowledgement by participating principals was evident in their contingency leadership style in their approach to leadership of teaching and learning in their schools. They demonstrated an acknowledgement of the school contexts and adjusted their leadership styles by applying contingency strategies that reflected the situation in their schools. Therefore, their leadership effectiveness was moderated by their contextual awareness and control.

7.5 THE BLIND SPOTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

In Chapter 3 of this study, I presented and discussed two theories that were adopted to form a theoretical framework for this study. I argued that they were suitable for use as lenses to understand the phenomenon investigated in this study. Leadership for learning and contingency leadership theories were combined to understand the nature of principals' leadership and to make sense of how the context of small schools and deprivation influenced the way principals led teaching and learning. Integrating these two theories provided a robust theoretical framework for understanding leadership in teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts.

While the framework captured some aspects of teaching and learning leadership in this study, it had limitations in addressing features unique to small, deprived schools, especially in the South African context. The theoretical framework used in this study considers schools as shared spaces with common challenges. However, the findings suggest that certain aspects specific to small schools in deprived contexts are relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. For example, the findings show that limited time, heavy teaching loads for

principals and staff shortages were major contextual factors that made leadership difficult in small, deprived schools. Because principals taught full-time, they often lacked the time needed for management, administration and effective monitoring of educators' work. For the principals to respond to these challenges and effectively lead teaching and learning at the same time, they worked after school hours in the afternoons, evenings and during weekends to do some of their management and administrative work. Additionally, the framework views instructional leadership as a role exclusive to school principals within a single institution. In contrast, this study reveals that instructional leadership is not limited to principals as school leaders within one school but can be extended to other educators. In the same vein, the study revealed leadership that involves inter-school collaborations. Leadership for learning theory could not make these provisions for small schools in deprived contexts. Small schools' contexts have their unique characteristics which set them apart from other normal schools, these unique characteristics of small school contexts are not envisaged in the leadership for learning theory as we know it.

In considering the aspects discussed above, theories are crucial for the development of a contextually specific, relevant framework for small, deprived schools, particularly in the South African context.

7.6 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

In this section, I discuss the methodological reflections. My intention is to reflect on how the research was carried out to provide readers with confidence on how I arrived at my conclusions (Anney, 2014). The reflection ensures transparency of the research processes as it is crucial for the integrity of the findings (Connelly, 2016).

My first step was to request permission from relevant authorities to conduct my study. Upon obtaining approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal HSSREC and KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct this study, I then sought permission from the Circuit Manager in charge to access the selected schools and to interview principals of those schools. The permission was granted.

I selected ten school principals using convenience sampling as they were located within the district where I worked and were easily accessible. However, accessing the original sample of participants was not as simple and straightforward as I thought it would be. In line with the principle of voluntary participation in research, I noted that not all intended participants were

prepared to participate in the study. The reluctance to participate in the study by the some of the originally sampled participants arose from their being very busy. They argued that being a small school principal, they were always in class, teaching or busy with their management and administrative tasks. I learned that it is important to respect the participants' concerns. Looking into the future, relying solely on convenience sampling, and easy-to-reach participants, may limit a sample population. It may be productive strategy to consider wider population, even those that are hard-to-reach (Gross & Gelman, 2025). As an alternative plan, I visited other schools that were not initially selected as replacements for those where the principals were reluctant to participate in the study. Finally, eight principals agreed to participate in the study. Their participation was driven by their desire to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon and their belief that their voices would finally be heard.

Sileyew (2019) argues that the choice of the research approach to be adopted for a study is the most significant decision in the research design process since it determines how the data will be obtained. Therefore, to determine the principals' experiences of the leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts, I adopted a qualitative research design as I believed it was the most appropriate for this study. The choice of qualitative design proved to be suitable for this study as it allowed me to get an in-depth understanding of the participants' world by learning about the meaning they made of their social circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories (Ritchie et al., 2014). Using a qualitative research design provided me with an opportunity to gain more insight into an in-depth account of principals' experiences and interpretations of the context in which they enact their leadership of teaching and learning.

I used semi-structured interviews to generate data from participants. I initially intended to include observation as another data-generation method for this study; however, given the participants' concerns over time constraints and the unreliability of their own schedules, it was not used. Participants argued that observation could take a long time compared to interviews and could disrupt their already busy and hectic environments even further. For principals in small schools, conducting observation might not be a trustworthy instrument. It might be challenging to observe their day-to-day activities because of their unreliable schedules and time constraints, and since they are not stationed in their schools at all times. Subsequently, the participating principals only agreed to provide me with an opportunity to conduct interviews but could not offer me an opportunity for observation. The participants and I agreed to increase a number of interview sessions to make up for the observations. The justification for increasing the number of interview sessions was two-fold. First, it would allow a space to fill the gaps in

the data that could have been completely missed during the initial interview, therefore allowing for deeper insight into the phenomenon. Second, the flexibility of conducting interviews anywhere and at any time which was convenient for both the participant and me as the researcher proved valuable.

Conducting interviews with the participants was not straightforward and simple. I sometimes struggled to secure a scheduled appointment with some principals as they were either busy at school or not at school at all. At times, I drove for more than 20 kilometres to school for an appointment only to find that the principal was busy and did not have time for me. I had to find ways to overcome this challenge of time constraints on the side of the participants. Occasionally, I had to reschedule some of my appointments with them for after work, or over weekends and for some I even had to wait for school holidays when they were less busy, especially for high school principals. I once had to reschedule a telephonic interview at night as there was no way I would be able to secure a face-to-face interview during the day. I therefore argue that researching principals in small schools, especially those who have no one next to them in their schools, requires flexibility in terms of time and location when conducting interviews.

I chose semi-structured interview with open-ended questions over structured interviews to elicit the views and opinions of the participants of the study. Szombatová (2016) maintains that the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that they are flexible and therefore the interviewer does not rigidly follow the interview schedule but can improvise and ask new questions during the interview. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allowed for the participants of this study freedom to respond without any limitations and gave space for me to ask follow-up questions for clarification and to gain more insight as the interview progressed. Ruslin et al. (2022) suggest that good interviews usually consist of a balance between main questions, follow-ups and probes. Developing the interview schedule was challenging, as it required me to reflect on my Master's work and engage with additional literature on designing effective interview tools.

Another challenge that I encountered during the interview process was to ensure that I generated rich data from participants. This required that I develop strong interviewing skills to conduct interviews effectively and efficiently, ensuring a reasonable level of quality. This was particularly important for semi-structured interviews, which are open-ended and require the ability to ask follow-up questions and probe for deeper insight when necessary. As Ruslin et

al. (2022) suggests, conducting a qualitative interview requires strong interviewing skills wherein the interviewer can effectively structure questions, determine how to ask them, and simultaneously process the information provided by the interviewee. This involves interpreting both verbal and non-verbal cues, retaining and absorbing key details, identifying areas for probing and follow-up, and taking notes whenever possible. Through extensive planning and preparation during the pre-interview stage, I built confidence in managing the interview process. After receiving consent from participants to record the interviews, I used audio recordings and field notes to capture every detail of the interviews to ensure the authenticity of the data during the analysis stage.

7.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This section presents the original contribution made by the study to the existing knowledge base. This study makes a context-specific contribution to the application of leadership for learning in small schools in deprived contexts. There are very few, if any, studies that applied to leadership for learning in the context of small schools, especially in the South African context. Many of the studies about leadership in small schools in the context of deprivation are from Australia (Gillet et al., 2016; Clarke & Steven, 2009; Ewington et al. 2008; Starr & White, 2008; Clarke & Wildy, 2005) and Europe (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022; Smit et al. 2015; Jones, 2009) with few studies in the South African context (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Lumby, 2011). Looking at the existing studies, most work was mainly on the challenges of leading teaching and learning in small schools in a context of deprivation and only focus on the role of teaching principals in these contexts. Studies by Lumby (2015) and Taole (2022), amongst others, do not explore the in-depth lived experiences of school principals in leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived South African contexts.

The findings from the study therefore provided new insights into the body of knowledge by bringing to the fore the voices of principals on their experiences of the leadership of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. This study provided deep insight into how they enacted leadership of teaching and learning and the contextual factors that influenced their reasons to lead teaching and learning the way they did. The literature suggests that leadership in small schools in deprived contexts encounters challenges specific to their context, alongside the common difficulties faced by schools in deprived areas, because of their unique characteristics (Starr & White, 2008). Amongst the challenges of leading small schools, their special characteristics are inadequate funding (Ndhlovu, 2012), limited resources and outdated

facilities (du Plessis, 2017), inadequate staffing (Lowe, 2006), an absence of administrative assistance (Ewington et al., 2008), an excessive workload and role multiplicity (Starr & White, 2008). This study has shown that the principals' understanding of leadership for teaching and learning in small schools in deprived context is influenced by individual beliefs, values, knowledge and experiences. This study has shown that the context of small and deprived schools played a significant role in influencing the type of leadership practices adopted by principals leading teaching and learning in these schools. It has shown that the contexts of small, deprived schools played a significant role in the effectiveness of principals' leadership of teaching and learning in their schools.

This study, therefore, asserts that the contextual challenges faced by principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived areas are significantly more complex than those encountered by their counterparts in either large deprived or privileged schools. As a result, these challenges require urgent and specialised attention from policymakers.

This study makes a theoretical contribution to leadership for teaching and learning, drawing especially from the context of small, deprived schools in South Africa. The theory assumes that leadership is linked to both organisational context and environment (Hallinger, 2011). The study asserts that personal convictions, beliefs, values, knowledge and experiences contribute to leading teaching and learning in small, deprived schools in South Africa. The school principals as leaders must therefore always acknowledge the contexts of their schools, understand themselves as leaders and apply leadership that relevant and fit for the school context.

This study contributes by suggesting that leadership for learning should not be viewed solely through the lens of a single, isolated organisation, but rather as a phenomenon that operates across multiple organisational contexts. Because small, deprived schools have few educators and limited funding, principals adopted collaborative approaches, working with neighbouring schools to share human and physical resources in response to contextual constraints. I argue that this collaborative practice strengthened the capacity of these schools and their educators to provide quality learning opportunities for learners. While Hallinger's theory applies to leadership within a single organisation, this study suggests that leadership for learning can be extended to inter-school contexts.

7.8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings from the study have several implications for education policy, educational practice and further research and I discuss each respectively below.

7.8.1 Implications for Education Policy

The findings suggest the need for education policies that acknowledge small schools located in deprived contexts. Given the context-specific challenges of small, deprived schools – including inadequate funding, limited resources, work intensification and role multiplicity – these factors significantly shape leadership and the delivery of teaching and learning. The unique nature and the distinct characteristics of small schools in deprived contexts need policies that will acknowledge and reflect the context of such schools.

First, because of the limited physical resources in small schools in deprived contexts, resulting from the implementation of PPN, this policy affects the curriculum delivery in schools. South Africa uses a PPN to allocate educators to public schools based on a learner enrolment (Sayed, 2016). In terms of the PPN, small schools receive a smaller educator allocation than larger schools. The policy is far from its intended goal of equal and just distribution of educator resources, and is inadequate in redressing the past imbalances in the education sector since it still seems to favour large schools (Buthelezi & Makhoba, 2020; Veriava, 2017). Small schools in deprived contexts have few educators to teach all the subjects offered, which results in educators teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach, especially in high schools where multigrading is impossible. Teaching of subjects by unqualified educators negatively affects the delivery of quality education in small schools in deprived contexts. Having fewer educators in small schools in deprived contexts affects the leadership of teaching and learning. These schools are often characterised by limited management portfolios. All small schools do not have deputy principals, and very few have either departmental heads or administrative personnel. This results in principals of these schools being forced to perform multiple roles as full-time educators in class, performing management and administrative duties, as well as being expected to monitor curriculum delivery. The findings corroborate what Mdlalose (2003) suggests, that, because of the PPN, principals are subjected to role conflict and are tempted to concentrate on one aspect of their duties at the expense of other aspects. For example, if they are to do their management and administration well, their teaching suffers and vice versa. Consequently, this interferes with the provision of quality leadership of teaching and learning.

This research sees the need for the policy to prescribe the allocation of departmental heads to all schools, regardless of size, to focus on the leadership of curriculum management as the core function of the school. Furthermore, it is recommended that all schools be allocated administrative personnel to focus on the administrative duties in the school. This will provide principals with the opportunity to focus on performing their management duties without being stretched by a myriad of roles that cannot be effectively executed.

Second, all the public schools in South Africa receive funding in terms of NNSSF policy. The NNSSF policy was introduced as a strategic mechanism to redress past imbalances and to provide quality education. In Chapter 1, I indicated that the NNSSF policy stipulates that all Quintile 1 to 3 schools to be declared no-fee-paying schools (Department of Education [DOE], 1998). According to NNSSF policy, no schools in Quintile 1 to 3 are allowed to charge school fees from learners and they are dependent on the funding from the DBE (White & Van Dyk, 2019). According to the policy, the DBE calculates and determines school allocations based on a school's learner enrolment (Department of Education [DoE], 1998). The policy uses learner enrolment to fund schools which leaves small schools in deprived contexts negatively affected because they have low learner enrolments. However, the policy has not realised its good intentions, as schools with low learner enrolments are allocated fewer funds than those schools with high enrolments (Ndhlovu, 2012). The allocated budget to small schools is usually inadequate to fulfil the needs required to provide quality education. Due to inadequate funding, small schools in deprived contexts are unable to get adequate resources that will support effective teaching and learning, when compared to schools with large learner enrolments.

Further, the policy clearly stipulates how the school may use the school allocation. According to the NNSSF policy, the school may use the school allocation for books, computer hardware and software, televisions, science laboratory equipment, cleaning and sporting equipment, audit fees, transport, photocopying, electricity repairs and maintenance (Department of Education [DoE], 1998). The limited funding associated with these schools has a negative impact on leaders in their endeavours to enact effective leadership of teaching and learning. The findings suggest the complexity of challenges associated with the distinct characteristics of small schools in deprived contexts requires policies that will resonate well with their characteristics. The study recommends the NNSSF policy to be reviewed and be structured to address context of small schools.

7.8.2. Recommendations for Further Research

The aim of this study was to explore the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. Though the study engaged in a rigorous process of studying this phenomenon, it focused on only eight principals. This study provided only a glimpse into the lived experiences of principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. Future studies could involve a larger group of principals leading teaching and learning in similar schools, offering more detailed insights into the phenomenon, beyond those provided in this study.

Literature on the leadership of teaching and learning in small school in deprived contexts is still very limited especially in the South African context. Additional research exploring experiences of principals through multiple methodological approaches is still needed to provide an even deeper understanding of their experiences.

Another recommendation for future research relates to exploring the experiences of educators and learners of teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. This study was based on principals' experiences in leading teaching and learning in small schools. As such it was only limited to the perspective of the principals. Unfortunately, the experiences of educators and learners as other important members in the school were excluded. The voices of educators and learners may provide some additional insight into the complexity of leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. Therefore, this gap in the study may have implications for future research.

Another recommendation for future research is a comprehensive study on how education policies could be revised to account for the diverse nature of schools, particularly small schools in deprived contexts. This study has illustrated the complexities experienced by principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. This emanates partly from the findings that suggest that education policies do not take into account the diverse nature of different schools, especially the complex nature of small schools in deprived contexts. This would ensure that policies are planned in such a way that they allow these small schools in deprived contexts to provide quality education.

7.9. FINAL WORDS

This chapter provided the conclusions and recommendations of the study from the findings of the previous two chapters, where I presented and discussed data related to the findings from

the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning small schools in deprived contexts. The discussion was guided by three research questions. The first question sought to understand how the principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts understand leadership for teaching and learning. The second question sought to understand the leadership practices of principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts. Lastly, the third question sought to uncover why principals leading teaching and learning in these schools lead teaching and learning the way they do.

Firstly, the findings shows that principals leading teaching and learning in small schools in deprived contexts have numerous understandings of the concept of leadership and leadership for teaching and learning. Their varying understandings of the concepts were moderated by their personal characteristics such as their personal values, beliefs, knowledge and experiences. Secondly, the study shows that principals in small schools in deprived contexts, practice leadership of teaching and learning by adopting various leadership approaches. The study found that the context played a significant role in influencing the type of leadership approaches adopted by principals in leading teaching and learning in these schools. The study identified sharing leadership, leadership involving personal sacrifices and resource improvisation as the most dominant leadership approaches in small schools in deprived contexts. Thirdly, the study found limited time, heavy teaching workloads for principals, insufficient educators, limited management portfolios, an absence of administrative clerks and insufficient financial resources as the reasons for principals in small schools in deprived context adopting certain leadership approaches.

This study has implications for policy, practice and for future research. The study concluded that the unique nature and the distinct characteristics of small schools in deprived contexts need policies that will reflect the contexts of such schools. The study concluded that small, deprived school contexts have their own unique characteristics which set them apart from other schools, therefore it advocates for policies that may resonate well with such contexts. The study highlighted the PPN and NNSSF as some of the policies that could be amended to take into account the diverse nature of schools, especially the small schools in deprived contexts. The study recommends that the PPN policy to prescribe the allocation of departmental heads to all schools, regardless of size, to focus on the leadership of curriculum management as the core function of the school. Further, all schools should be allocated administrative personnel to focus on the administrative duties in the school. In addition, the NNSSF should require all Quintile 1 to 3 schools to be granted Section 21(c) functions so they can manage their finances

autonomously and negotiate better prices for learner support materials, thereby strengthening the core function of teaching and learning.

Although this study rigorously explored leadership of teaching and learning in small, deprived schools, it focused on only eight principals. As a qualitative study, its findings reflect their specific experiences. Further research involving a larger group of principals in similar contexts is recommended to provide deeper insight into the phenomenon.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



07 June 2022

Rudolph Ntuthuko Sibisi (220108410)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear RN Sibisi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004270/2022

Project title: Leading Teaching and Learning in Small Schools in the context of Deprivation: A Qualitative Study of Principals' Experiences.

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 18 May 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 07 June 2023.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH (DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION)



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1063

Email: Phindle.duma@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Phindle Duma
Mr RN Sibisi

Ref.2/4/8/1783



Dear Mr Sibisi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF DEPRIVATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES"**, 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 30 July 2021 to 31 August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindle Duma 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.

UGU DISTRICT



Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 02 August 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION FROM THE CIRCUIT MANAGER



1 July 2022

The Circuit Manager

Umkhomazi/Dududu Circuit

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study as a fulfillment for this degree. I therefore humbly request permission to conduct research in ten schools at your circuit. My research title is: **Leading Teaching and Learning in Small Schools in the Context of Deprivation: A Qualitative Study of Principals experiences.**

The aim of the research study is to explore the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation, therefore understand how they lead teaching and learning and look into the reasons that account for the way they enact leadership of teaching and learning the way they do. As part of my research, I will have to conduct interviews with the principals of the selected schools. Document review and observation will also be other methods of collecting data.

In anticipation, I hope my request will receive your favorable consideration. Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully



Sibisi Rudolph Ntuthuko



Email: [REDACTED] OR 220108410@Stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor's Details

Dr Phumlani Myende

Faculty of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal – School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Tel. No. 031-260 3965/ 031-260 5291

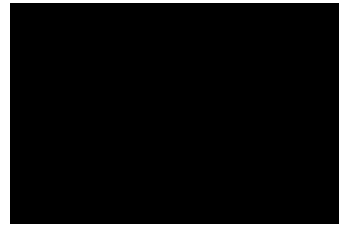
Email: myendep@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Ethics Office

Tel. No. 031-2604557

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS



12 July 2022

Dear Participant

RE: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Sibisi Rudolph Ntuthuko. In pursuit of my continuing professional development, I have enrolled for a Philosophy in Education Degree in the field of Leadership and Management, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of the prescribed procedures for completing this degree, I am required to conduct a research project. My research topic is: **Leading Teaching and Learning in Small Schools in the Context of Deprivation: A Qualitative Study of Principals experiences**. This letter thus seeks to request you to participate in the study.

The aim of the research study is to explore the principals' experiences of leading teaching and learning in small schools in the context of deprivation, therefore understand how they lead teaching and learning and look into the reasons that account for the way they enact leadership of teaching and learning the way they do. My study will involve interviewing sample of ten principals. Interviews will be recorded and take up to a maximum of 45 minutes. An interview schedule will be semi-structured and be made available to you before the interview.

In addition, please take note of the following regarding your participation:

- There will be neither financial rewards nor costs for participating in the research project; it is purely on a voluntary basis.
- Your identity will under no circumstances be disclosed during and post the study.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used only for research purposes.
- Your choice to participate is only voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage and there will be no negative consequences thereof.

- Transcripts of all sessions will be made available to you, and you are allowed to withdraw some of the information you will provide in the case of second thoughts.
- The information gathered in this study will be kept for five years in a secured and safe place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

For any further questions or concerns that you may have regarding the study, I have enclosed the contact details of my supervisor.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted Signature]

Sibisi Rudolph Ntuthuko

[Redacted Address]

Email: [Redacted Email] OR 220108410@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor's Details

Prof. Phumlani Myende

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Tel. No. 031-2603965/031-260 5291

Email: myendep@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Ethics Office

Tel. No. 031-2604557

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

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

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:	YES	NO
Audio-record my interview		
Furthermore, I understand that:		
No financial rewards or costs will be incurred for my participation		
My identity will not be disclosed during and post the study		
My participation will be voluntary throughout the study		
Information given cannot be used against me during and post the study		

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

APPENDIX E: TURNITIN SIMILARITY INDEX

LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF DEPRIVATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%

SIMILARITY INDEX

8%

INTERNET SOURCES

5%

PUBLICATIONS

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STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

researchspace.ukzn.ac.za

Internet Source

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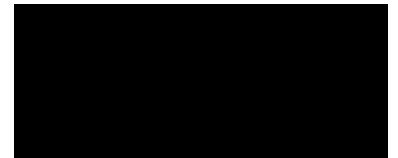
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APPENDIX F: CONFIRMATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING

N. E. Avery

Education Consultant



20/11/2025

Rudolph Ntuthuko Sibisi

LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF DEPRIVATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES

Dear Mr Sibisi

This letter serves as confirmation that I conducted a language edit of the abovementioned PhD Dissertation, as requested by you on 10 November 2025. In accordance with the request, the editorial process was limited to an English language edit and limited formatting of the Dissertation and I made no intentional substantive changes to the content. As usual in an editorial process, I indicate that you are at liberty to accept or reject the proposed changes to ensure that no unintended modifications have been made to the original manuscript.

I have enjoyed working with you and congratulate you on completing this substantial piece of work.

Yours faithfully



N. E. Avery



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1 December 2025

Declaration of editing

**LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SMALL SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF DEPRIVATION: A
QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PRINCIPALS' EXPERIENCES**

By

Rudolph Ntuthuko Sibisi

I declare that I have edited and proofread this thesis. The editing was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency, technical formatting and formatting the references.

I am qualified to have done such editing, being in possession of a Bachelor's degree with a major in English, having taught English to matriculation, and having a Certificate in Copy Editing from the University of Cape Town. I have edited more than 600 Masters and Doctoral theses, as well as articles, books and reports.

As the copy editor,

- I am not responsible for detecting, or removing, passages in the document that closely resemble other texts and could thus be viewed as plagiarism.
- I am not responsible for editing AI generated text.
- I am not accountable for any changes made to this document by the author or any other party subsequent to the date of this declaration.

Sincerely,



Dr J Baumgardt

UNISA: D. Ed. Education Management

University of Cape Town: Certificate in Copy Editing

University of Cape Town: Certificate in Corporate Coaching



Jacqui Baumgardt
Full Member

Membership number: BAU001
Membership year: March 2025 to February 2026

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