

# **Identities of Principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts: A narrative inquiry**

**By**

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**Date Submitted:**

## **Supervisor's declaration**

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.



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Dr BNCK Mkhize: Supervisor

30/04/2019

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Date

# Student's Declaration

I, Sihle Siyabonga Ngidi declare that:

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*Mbonge uJehova mphefumula wami, konke okuphakathi kwami akubonge igama lakhe.* With these words I thank God for all that he has done for me. He has been with me from day one. I thank him for giving me the gift of life so I could live to see this day. Glory is His!

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my one and only lovely son, **Vuyolwethu Hlelolwenkosi Siyabulela (VHS) Ngidi**. For the time I should have spent with you but I could not because I was working on this project. I hope you will grow up and read this one.

I also dedicate this work to:

*Izinyanya zonke zakoHlomuka*

*Mlalazi kaNoxhaka*

*Dlokwe leNdlovu*

*Vela kaLethwa*

*Mazinga!*

*oGogo noMkhulu*. For the protection, guidance and everything. I know you are always around me, giving me wisdom all the time.

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Lastly, and most importantly I dedicate this to **God** almighty. The God above other gods. For the life you have given me up to this far. *Ukuba ubungenami ngabe angikho lapha*. Thank you Lord!

## **ABSTRACT**

This is a qualitative study that explored the identities of principals that are leading successful schools in deprived contexts. The study comprised of three principals from three education district of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The participants were purposefully selected due to meeting the requirements of the study. The schools from which the principals lead were rural schools and one township school, which are laden with various deprivations. These schools regardless of the deprived contexts are successful.

The aims of the study were two-fold. Firstly, it aimed at discovering the identities that are common and those that are exclusive to individual participants (Principals) leading successful schools in deprived contexts. Secondly, it sought to establish how these identities intersect and shape the leadership of the Principals in the study.

The study adopted the qualitative research design. Narrative Inquiry was used as a methodology. In line with Narrative Inquiry methodology, the study employed three methods of generating field texts (data), namely: conversational interviews, narrative posters and letter writing. The analysis was done at two levels. First level is the retelling of narratives (narrative analysis) and the second level is the identification of emerging identities from the narratives (analysis of narratives). As a theoretical framework, the study adopted the intersectionality theory as a primary frame and social identity theory as a subsidiary frame to aid in the analysis.

Some of the findings from the study confirm the existing literature on identities of principals. However, it does also presents ‘fresh’ perspectives on the phenomenon under study. This study has shown that the principals that are leading successful schools in deprived contexts are: 1. Visionary leaders, 2. Time conscious, 3. Team players, and 4. problem solvers. From this inquiry, I also learned that leadership position shapes the principal’s identity as much as identity influences the leadership practice. The new contribution the study is making to the body of knowledge is that: 1. experience which can either be negative or positive can shape someone’s identity. The negative experience can result in a positive identity.

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### **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ANC	African National Congress
BEC	Branch Executive Committee
CoP	Community/Communities of Practice
IIT	Integrative Identity Theory
IRP	Independent Research Project
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LTSM	Learner & Teacher Support Material
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PHD	Doctor of Philosophy
PL 1	Post Level 1
PLC	Professional Learning Community/Communities
PPN	Post Provisioning Norm
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PSL	Premier Soccer League
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SA	South Africa
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
TV	Television

UFS	University of Free State
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa

## CHAPTER 1

### THE JOURNEY BEGINS: ORIENTATION TO THE INQUIRY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Leadership is one of the concepts in the Social Sciences that is often used (Antonakis & Day, 2017) and sometimes misused. Despite this prominent use of the concept leadership in the everyday life, there is no one universal definition of this concept (Antonakis & Day, 2017; Bush & Middlewood, 2005). As much as there are diverging views on what leadership means, there are common elements among many of the definitions that have been given by various scholars. Some scholars agree that at the heart of leadership is the ability and power to influence others (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Grace, 1995; Ni, Yan & Pounder, 2018; Sergiovanni, 2001). Bush and Middlewood (2005) further assert that leadership is also about being able to effect change in a particular organisation or institution. This change can only be possible and successful if the leader possesses a particular identity, an identity of being influential.

Furthermore, some scholars have posited that leadership is also about being visionary (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Goldberg, 2006; Goleman, 2017). However, Sergiovanni (2001) raises some concerns about this ‘visionary identity’ of leaders. Sergiovanni (2001) believes that the idea of leaders setting visions is obsolete; instead he suggests that vision should be negotiated and agreed upon by all stakeholders. It should not be the sole responsibility of a leader. This consultative culture that is needed in organisation or institutions, according to Sergiovanni (2001) should result in all stakeholders coming together to work as a single unit. It is not only about the leader extending the invitation to the followers but it also about the follower’s willingness and readiness to participate (Grace, 1995).

In this inquiry (study), I seek to explore the *identities of Principals that are leading successful schools in deprived school contexts*. Below I discharge my motivation for the focus on Principals. There are many leaders in the school but the Principal is probably the most important figure in the school leadership (Mkhize, 2012). This is due to the positional power accorded to them. The Principal is the one that is responsible for the day to day running of the school, hence the influence. This emphasis on the importance of Principal do not in any way seek to undermine the role that other stakeholders play in the functioning of the school. It is indeed true that the Principal cannot lead the school effectively alone (Harris, 2004; Le Fevre, & Robinson, 2015). Harris (2004) further asserts that the Principal needs to share the leadership with others. That being said, the principal must always make sure he/she remains in control



even after delegating some of his/her duties. After all, the principal is the accounting officer at a school level. Whatever happens in the school premises, he/she will be held responsible. It is the responsibility of the Principal to ascertain that the school is managed efficiently and in accordance with all educational legislations (Bush, 2011).

With the said importance of Principals, this inquiry sought to explore the *Identities of Principals that are leading in successful schools*. The inquiry focused on the schools in deprived contexts, which is an area that has not been inquired adequately. Narrative inquiry was utilised as the methodology, and as such the narrative methods of generating field texts were employed. This first chapter of this dissertation serves as the orientation to the whole inquiry. This will be done by firstly highlighting the location, the problem statement, background, purpose and rationale of the inquiry. Further to that, the objectives and the key research puzzles (questions) will be presented in this chapter. The overview of the research design and methodology is also presented. This chapter will also present a strong argument for the need of this inquiry. This chapter will also give a sneak preview of the whole dissertation.

## **1.2 Location of the inquiry**

This inquiry was conducted among the three principals from three schools in various districts. The schools in question are from a deprived school context in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The districts concerned are the Pinetown district (two schools) and iLembe district (one school). The first school (in the Pinetown district) is located in a township area, the second one is located in a rural area. The school in the iLembe district is located in a rural community. The schools in this inquiry are diversely deprived because of their contexts. As much as deprivations differ from one school to another, there are those deprivations that are common in all the schools. Firstly, the communities in which these schools are located have a high unemployment rate. The majority of the parents cannot afford to adequately support their children financially. Further to that, these schools are serving learners, some of which are from child-headed families. They (learners) have to play a role of being children during the day and ‘adults’ when they go back home in the afternoon/evenings. These schools are also affected by an endless list of other deprivations and challenges that exclusively affect each school.

### **1.3 The problem statement**

South Africa is a highly unequal society (Bloch, 2009; Christie, 2008; Lumby, 2015; Mestry, 2014). Bloch (2009) asserts that our country's education system is not immune to these inequalities. There are schools that are well resourced and the schools that are poorly resourced (Bloch, 2009). Most affluent schools achieve excellent results in the Grade 12 examination (Mestry, 2014). Despite this common trend, some poorly resourced schools are able to excel despite the deprivations they have (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015). Chikoko et al. (2015) further posit that some of these schools (in deprived contexts) are able to outdo in their performance some well-resourced school, with close to no deprivations. The major question that arises is, how is this possible? Why do some schools as deprived as they may be, but they are able to produce good quality results? Has it got something to do with leadership at the helm of the schools? Literature seems to point out to among many things, to leadership being agents of success in some of these schools (Bloch, 2009; Maringe, Masinire & Nkambule, 2015). If indeed it is about leadership, the other question would then be: what is it that is special about this leadership that is able to achieve success despite the odds? This inquiry then seeks to explore the identities of principals that 'fuel' success in deprived schools.

### **1.4 The concept of identity**

At the core of this study, is the concept of identity. This is a study of identities of Principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts. This section then serves to unpack the meaning of identity in the context of this inquiry (study). Like any other concept in sociology, there is no universal understanding of the concept of identity (Crow et al., 2017; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). Flum and Kaplan (2012) explain that the term identity captures a variety of meanings. Hence, here I present the understanding of this concept within the parameters of this study.

Identity is essentially the subjective understanding of self (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004; Crow et al., 2017; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). Identity in this context can also be understood to mean an interplay between one's understanding of him/herself by themselves or by others around (Crow, Day & Moller, 2016; Lumby & English, 2009). This can happen at many different levels starting from within (personal), social (interaction and relationship with others) and professional (at school and work) (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Tubin, 2017). One has to

constantly construct and reconstruct identities, sometimes without even noticing (Eubanks, Brown & Ybema, 2012; Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Ybema, 2010).

As asserted that this understanding of self can happen at many levels or in many forms. It can occur at individual, social and professional level. The individual level of self-understanding is normally referred to as personal identity. Any living human being needs to understand themselves as individuals first, before they can figure out how to live with 'other-selves'. In the interaction with others we develop other forms of identity (Crow et al, 2017; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). For example, as the principal is interacting with the learners, the teachers, the authorities and many other stakeholders, they are in the process extending their identities. This process is known as identity formation. At a social and professional level, it is called social identity and professional identity respectively. Brewer and Hewstone (2004) posit that identity is about the connection between the individual and the society in which the individual finds themselves.

Identity bridges the gap between the past, the present and the future (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Scribner & Crow, 2012). This suggest that what you were as a person in the past, informs who you are today and who you will be in the future (Mpungose, 2010). In the context of this study this implies that we need not only focus on the identities of participants during their tenure as Principals. It may be useful to look into their 'old selves', the selves before they became the Principals.

Furthermore, identity formation is embedded in context (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017). I therefore contend that it is important to understand how Principals construct and continually re-construct/de-construct their identities in their everyday depiction of leadership in a deprived context. Eubanks et al. (2012) correctly point out that, "Understanding the relationship between identity and leadership can help us to understand individual's development and future behaviours as a leader". Furthermore, Scribner and Crow (2012) postulate that identity can help us understand what influences a leader's conduct, what informs their willingness and ability (or lack of) to perform a leadership task.

In the context of this study, identities will be separated into three categories. These categories being personal identity, social identity and professional identity. In the upcoming paragraphs, I attend to each category of identity or identities starting with personal identity.

### **1.4.1 Personal identity**

Personal identity is arguably the first level of one self's understanding (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Murakami & Tornsen, 2017). Personal identity is that identity that one has, just by being him/herself (Mpungose, 2010). This form of identity cannot be contested. It is mostly about the persons themselves defining themselves with no and/or little external influence. Here a person has a liberty to choose the characteristics he/she favours. Obviously, a person can never be completely neutral from the external influences (Johnson & Crow, 2017). Hence, the existence of professional identity and social identity as unpacked below.

### **1.4.2 Professional identity**

From a personal identity one develops other forms of identities. Johnson and Crow (2017) assert that the professional identity emanates from both the individual-self (personal identity) and relationship with others (social identity). Professional identity is someone's identity as a result of their professional role (Mpungose, 2010). Before one can identify themselves in relation to their position in an organisation, they first need to have a solid understanding of who they are as persons (Mpungose, 2010). Johnson and Crow (2017) further posit that one will need to from time to time 'redefine' their professional identities as they move from one position to another. This is confirmed by Bush (2018) in his assertion that the teacher identity will need to change when a teacher becomes a principal. This change is partly due to the idea that roles that people play can influence their identity (Burker & Stets, 2009). Drawing from the above, it is safe to conclude that a professional identity is an identity that one has by virtue of their profession and/or position at that point in time (Mpungose, 2010).

### **1.4.3 Social identity**

Social identity is that aspect of identity that is socially constructed (Johnson & Crow, 2017). This form of identity is characterised by ambiguity as it is dependent on various factors (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Social identity emanates from the various groups that people associate themselves with (Stets & Burke, 2000). One person may belong to many groups at once, which result in multiple identities emanating from this various group membership. In these various groups the person plays varying roles and sometimes contrasting roles. Principals, besides being principals (which is a professional identity) but they have other groups in which they belong beside the school where they serve as principals. Now the question is how the principals

manage to reconcile all these identities. How do the identities that emanates from all these various groups and various roles in those groups impact on the manner in which they enact leadership in a school in deprived context? In light of this, it is inevitable that there will be identity conflict as people belong to various social groupings at the same time.

In concluding this section, it is important to note that most studies of principal's identities adopt a one-dimensional and 'facilistic' view of identity. With the focus of most recent studies on this subject, elevating professional identity as opposed to other forms of identities (e.g. Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Bush, 2018; Cho & Jimerson, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017). However, in this study I adopt a multi-dimensional view of identities which acknowledges the intricate and intersecting relationship among different forms of identities. I attend to all forms of identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts, as they emerged from the narratives.

### **1.5 The deprived school context**

Everyone has a right to quality basic education as espoused by the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The access to this right however, can sometimes be hindered by different factors. One of those factors is the deprivations that one finds themselves in. It is very unfortunate that South Africa is a country that is still characterised by inequalities (Bloch, 2009; Christie, 2008). There exist schools which are affluent and also those that are in deprived contexts. Deprivations in this context refers to factors that limit one's development or development of a group of people (Maringe, Masinire, & Nkambule, 2015). Maringe et al. (2015) further postulate that these deprivations jeopardise the quality of people's lives.

Lumby (2015) defines deprivation as a lack of dignity, health and other chances to emancipate oneself or the society at large. Deprivations can be as a result of poverty (Lumby, 2015; Maringe et al., 2015). Lumby (2015) goes on to give an important distinction between poverty and deprivation, when he asserts that the two concepts are not synonymous. However, it should be noted that there is a relationship. Deprivations are a product of the different indicators of poverty (Maringe et al., 2015), although poverty does not always guarantee deprivation (Lumby, 2015). Another concept that is often confused with the concept of 'deprived context' is the concept of 'challenging context' (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). The two concepts differ greatly in a sense that a deprived context is measurable and a challenging context is not measurable (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Maringe et al., 2015). Nonetheless in this study I adopt

the Bhengu and Myende (2016) position of using the two concepts interchangeably as they both have a negative impact on the provision of education.

The four dimensions of deprivation may include: (a) income and material deprivation; (b) employment deprivation; (c) educational deprivation; and (d) living environment deprivation (Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Chikoko et al., 2015; Maringe et al., 2015). The three school Principals purposively chosen for this study are Principals leading schools that are characterised by a combination of these deprivations. This is what scholars refer to as multiple deprivations (Chikoko et al., 2015; Maringe et al., 2015). Bhengu and Myende (2016) suggest that leadership in deprived school context is under-researched. In the quest to try and contribute to the scholarship on leadership in deprived school, this study seeks to understand the identities of principals leading in this context. As per the postulation of Maringe et al. (2015) it is likely to be more challenging to lead in a school with multiple deprivations. This study is seeking to understand the identities that helps the Principals in this study to navigate the multiple deprivations and have their schools thrive regardless of the conditions.

## **1.6 Background to the inquiry**

This section presents a background to this inquiry. This is done through a brief critical reviewing of literature on principal leadership and identities. A more detailed review of literature will be presented in chapter two.

Maringe and Moletsane (2015) correctly note that interest among scholars on studying the phenomenon of educational leadership in deprived context has recently heightened. We have seen an avalanche of studies seeking to explore this phenomenon in a deprived school context (e.g. Ahumada, Galdames & Clarke, 2016; Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Lumby, 2015). Despite the proliferation in research on this subject, a lot remains unknown about it (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). The plethora of studies that have been conducted seem to have focused on three aspects only. These are: the features and challenges in schools that are multiple deprived (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Maringe et al., 2015; Moletsane, Juan, Prinsloo & Reddy, 2015), the nature of leadership practices and approaches that work in areas of multiple deprivations (Mestry & Bodalina, 2015) and to a lesser extent on the plight of women leading such schools that are characterised by deprivations (Faulkner, 2015; Lumby, 2015).

Literature on leadership further suggests that leadership is among the top influencers of school effectiveness (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). At the helm of that school leadership is the principal as the head of the school (Bush, 2011; Mendels, 2012; Norviewu-Mortty, 2012;

Rice, 2010; Supovitz, Sirindes & May, 2010). In previous inquiries, the following four points have emerged as points of convergence on what characterises successful principals. Successful principals tend to be the ones that adopt instructional leadership (Leigh-Sanzo, Sherman & Clayton, 2011; Supovitz et al., 2010), they share leadership (decentralise) responsibilities and lead openly (Leigh-Sanzo et al., 2011), they recruit and retain good teachers (Rice, 2010), and they are visionary and are able to buy the support of all the stakeholders into their vision (Bush, 2011). It is worth noting though that this is not by any chance, an exhaustive list of what constitutes successful principals.

All the four points mentioned above, either directly or indirectly speak to the identity of principals leading. Studies (e.g. Johnson & Crow, 2017; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Showunmi, Atewologun & Bebbington, 2016) have shown an intersection between identity of a leader and the way in which that leader enacts leadership. It is very imperative to note at this stage that identity is not static but something that is fluid, is constructed, and reconstructed from time to time (Onorato & Turner, 2004). Identity is a complicated concept; this is due to the multiplicity of meanings that are attached to it (Flum & Kaplan, 2012). Loosely defined, identity can be understood to mean an interplay between one's understanding of oneself by themselves or others around (Crow, Day & Moller, 2016; Lumby & English, 2009). This process is known as identity formation. DeRue and Ashford (2010) and Tubin (2017) assert that this can happen at many different levels starting from within (personal), social (interaction and relationship with others) and professional (at school, work etc.). I, however contend that trying to box identities into types or levels is ingenious as identities can mostly overlap. Further to that, it should be noted that identity formation is a lifelong process, and not just an event. One has to constantly construct and reconstruct it, sometimes without even noticing (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Ybema, 2010). Furthermore, identity formation is embedded in context (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017).

Identity is not time bound (Scribner & Crow, 2012), it links the past with the present and future (Mpungose, 2010; Ybema, 2010). It can then be beneficial to the training and professional support of principals to understand how they construct and continually re-construct/deconstruct their identities in their everyday depiction of leadership (Scribner & Crow, 2012; Tubin, 2017) especially those Principals that are leading deprived schools. Eubanks, Brown, and Ybema (2012) correctly point out that, the understanding of the intersection between identity and leadership assist in understanding a person's development and future conduct as a leader. Some studies that have confirmed the importance of identity on educational leadership

enactment are studies by Barr and Saltmarsh (2014), Crow et al. (2016), Crow et al. (2017), Mpungose, (2010). Crow et al. (2017) put forth two motives as to why identity is significant in leadership. They posit that:

- Identity can cause a person to take on and perform a role (leadership role in this instance).
- Identity also influences decision making.

This inquiry then seeks to address the ‘how’ part of the above points in a deprived school context. How does identity/identities impact on the manner in which principals perform their leadership roles in deprived school context? In line with this, Scribner and Crow (2012) also postulate that identity can help us understand what influences a leader’s conduct; what informs their willingness and ability (or lack of) to perform a leadership task.

## **1.7 Purpose and rationale of the inquiry**

This sub-section of this dissertation outlines the purpose and the rationale of this inquiry. My motivation to conduct this inquiry has got three facets. The first facet is my personal justification. It is a tradition in the narrative inquiry that an inquirer must start by stating the personal justification of the study (Blose, 2018). The second facet is a practical one, where I reflect on my experience as both an educator and a leader in the schooling system in the past eight years of my service at the education department. Finally, this inquiry was necessitated by my engagement with literature on principal leadership in general and particularly in deprived school contexts. That forms part of the third facet, the social justification.

### **1.7.1 Personal justification**

At a personal level, the inquirer explains the significance of the study to him/herself as an individual (Blose, 2018). Here goes my story. My parents did not get an opportunity to be educated. As a result of that, my siblings and I grew under unsavoury conditions. My parents could not get decent jobs, due to them being illiterate. We depended on our grandparent’s grant in order to survive. Seeing the situation at home, made me to be motivated to push even though it was hard. I became the first person at home to matriculate. I went on to become a first graduate at home.

It took me much longer than the record time to attain my first undergraduate degree. As a result, I became demotivated and thought it will be proper to stop studying as soon as I get my first degree. However, one evening I heard the news that Mr (at the time) Phumlani Myende was



due to graduate with his PHD from the UFS. Mr P. Myende was one of the youngest lecturers that lectured me at UKZN when I was an undergraduate student. Upon hearing the news, I decided to enrol for honours in education. I did honours degree from 2015 and completed it in 2016. Co-incidentally Dr P. Myende lectured me in one of the modules for my honours and also supervised me for my Independent Research Project (IRP). He motivated me to carry on after finishing honours and enrol for Masters, which I did.

In essence, I firstly did Masters with the aim of being the first one in the family to attain it. Secondly, I have ambitions of ending up working at a university and Master's degree is the key to open such doors. Thirdly, I want to see myself one day coming up with creative and innovative ideas to improve our education system. These ideas must be supported by research. After I complete my Masters in education, I plan to read for my PhD.

### **1.7.2 Practical justification**

I have been exposed to different kinds of schools; both as a learner and as an educator. My personal experience stems from being a learner at a deep rural primary and high school. It also extends to township and urban schools, in which I was exposed to as a student educator. I am currently a practising educator in an under-resourced township high school. As much as my personal and professional experience with the schooling system is diverse, I think it is worth noting that a greater percentage of my experience has been in the rural and township poorly-resourced schools. The schools I have been exposed to mostly are in deprived contexts. These schools are subjected to many socio-economic challenges.

Despite the long and endless list of challenges and deprivations that my current school and many others are facing, it has been my interesting observation that they are able to produce good results regardless of the deprivations. Some of them to my surprise, are able to perform better than some well-resourced schools. This begs the question of how and why are these schools able to overcome the deprivations and perform exceptionally well. What I have personally observed is that in such schools that Fleisch and Christie (2004) refer to as resilient schools, at the helm of School Management Teams (SMT's) of these schools, are Principals who contribute immensely to their success. I have had a privilege of learning and working at such schools with Principals that can be considered as effective and successful leaders. An effective leader according to McLeskey and Waldron (2015) is a leader who is inclusive in his/her leadership approach and is able to lead in a manner that uplifts the led. These principals have the influence that goes beyond the perimeters and parameters of the schools. The

Principals in question goes and does what is beyond the scope of their duty to make sure that their schools thrive despite the challenges they face.

In light of all the above assertions, this inquiry sought to explore the identities of such Principals and how they influence the manner in which they enact their leadership. As much as there are studies (Crow et al.,2017; Mpungose, 2010; Scribner & Crow, 2012) that have sought to explore this phenomenon, my study presents a fresh perspective in a sense that it will be done in a different context from other studies (i.e. the deprived school contexts).

On the professional front, I have had the privilege of serving in various leadership structures within the schools. I have led my union as a site steward, served in the school governing body, served in the subject committees to count just the few. In the above structures I worked closely with various Principals and this spiked an interest in me to study the phenomenon of Principal leadership. The findings of the study have the potential to develop me professionally as an educational leader in a deprived school context.

### **1.7.3 Social justification**

The social justification of this inquiry mainly emanates from a scholarship gap that I saw when I engaged with the literature. The literature aspect of my motivation to conduct the study will thus be outlined at length in chapter two, which deals mainly with the literature review of this dissertation.

## **1.8 Objectives**

The aim of this inquiry is to explore the identities of Principals that are leading successful schools in a deprived context. In line with the above aim, the objectives are as follows:

- To determine the identities that are common and also those that are exclusive to individual Principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts.
- To explore how the identities, intersect and shape leadership practices of Principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts.

## **1.9 Research puzzles**

Puzzles are what is called questions in other research traditions. In keeping with the traditions of narrative inquiry, it will be referred to here as puzzles. At the heart of this inquiry is the main puzzle of, what are the identities of the Principals that are able to lead effectively and successfully in school contexts that are laden with deprivations. Guided by this main puzzle and in line with the objectives, this study sought to solve these two critical puzzles:

- What are identities that are common and also those that are exclusive to individual Principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts?
- How do the identities intersect and shape leadership practices of Principals who lead successful school in deprived contexts?

## **1.10 An overview of research design and methodology**

This qualitative inquiry is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Opie (2004) defines a paradigm as the way of looking at knowledge and knowledge generation process. An interpretivist paradigm was used to understand the narratives of Principals who are leading successful schools in a deprived context. A narrative is a story (Merriam, 2009). These narratives sought to present the identities of these Principals. Narratives (or stories) can be presented in various formats. In this study, the narratives were told in a form of collage/ narrative posters, letter writing and conversational interviews.

## **1.11 Limitations of the inquiry**

Problems and limitations are inevitable in research (Vithal & Jansen, 2012). There is no amount of effort or care that can possibly make a research process to be problem-free or limitations-free. However, a researcher must always attempt to minimise the limitations or their impact thereof. As Simon and Goes (2013) assert limitations are those factors that affect the study negatively and they are normally beyond researcher's control. Vithal and Jansen (2012) assert that studies can be limited by time, resources, access, availability and credibility of data. Limited time to conduct this inquiry was a major limitation. Narrative research by its nature requires a long time to conduct, as the researcher needs time to understand the participants. In addressing the issue of time constraint, I limited my study to small number of participants which was manageable within the short time that I had for the project. Another limitation is that my inquiry draws on the lived experiences of three Principals leading successful schools in deprived school contexts. It is thus limited in that no generalisations could be made in respect

of identities of all principals leading in schools. Whilst one may see this as a limitation, it is worth mentioning though that my intention was not to generalise the findings but rather to illuminate identities that are common and also those that are exclusive to Principals who lead successfully in deprived school contexts.

## **1.12 The structure of the dissertation**

This section outlines the structure of the dissertation that reports on the inquiry about the identities of Principals who are leading in successful schools in deprived contexts. This dissertation is divided into six chapters and below is a brief preview of the content of each chapter. Each and every chapter in this dissertation deals with a different aspect of the research process.

### **Chapter one**

This chapter serves as an overview of the inquiry. It orientates the reader(s). It does this by firstly explaining the location of the inquiry. It then gives the problem statement, so as to make it clearer as to what is the problem that the researcher is trying to address by conducting this inquiry. It also provides the background, purpose and rationale, of which they are all meant to clarify as to why there was a need for such an inquiry. The two objectives and research puzzles guiding the inquiry are also highlighted. Further to that, it also provides a sneak preview of the literature that was reviewed in preparation for the research.

### **Chapter two**

This chapter thoroughly and thematically reviews literature on leadership in schools with the main focus on Principal leadership, as the Principals are a unit of analysis in this inquiry. Further to that, I review literature on identities with a primary focus on Principal identities and how such identities influence the manner in which they (the Principals) enact leadership on daily basis. Literature reviewed is local, national and international literature. Within the literature review I also explain the key concepts in the study in this chapter. This chapter also presents a theoretical framework guiding this inquiry.

### **Chapter three**

This chapter presents a detailed explanation of the research design, methods and procedures that were followed in conducting this inquiry, and research instruments that were utilised for generating field texts for this research. Each and every methodological choice that is made with regard to the above-mentioned things is also justified in this chapter. This chapter also touches base on sampling and ethical issues considered throughout the research process.

## **Chapter four**

This chapter presents the field texts that was generated through the collages/narrative posters, letter writing and conversational interviews that were conducted at the field text generation stage. Firstly, the profiles of the principals studied are given as an introduction to this chapter. Thereafter, the narratives generated from the interviews are retold. In retelling the stories, the language and content of the narratives is preserved. The letters written by participants are presented in this chapter as they are. After each narrative, I present a table that summarises the identities emerging from the narratives as told by participants. These identities are later discussed in chapter five.

## **Chapter five**

In this chapter the field text is discussed and the emerging themes from the narratives are presented and discussed employing the theoretical framework, analytic framework and related literature. Firstly, I looked for themes that are similar in all/ most of the participants and also those that are exclusive to individual participants. It is in this chapter, where I attempt to solve the puzzles guiding this inquiry. This chapter further presents a synthesis of the key findings of the research.

## **Chapter six**

This chapter serves to summarise the whole inquiry. This chapter seeks to solve the second research puzzle. It also highlights the lessons learnt from this inquiry. Towards the end of this chapter, recommendations for improvement and further research are made informed by the findings.

### **1.13 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a sneak preview of the inquiry. It familiarised the reader(s) with what they can anticipate in this dissertation. The following headings guided the content of this chapter: location of the inquiry, problem statement, background, purpose and rationale, research objectives and research questions(puzzles) guiding the inquiry. Further to that, it also provided a brief discussion of the literature that was reviewed in preparation for the research. This chapter also conceptualised the concept that is central to this study, identity. One of the main aims of this chapter was to convince the audience of the need for the inquiry.

The next chapter, builds on the foundation laid in chapter one. It provides a heavy, thematic and thorough review of literature that is relevant to this inquiry. This chapter will also explain in detail the theoretical framework guiding this inquiry.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ROADMAP: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines relevant literature on identities of school Principals in deprived contexts. The review presents both the international literature as well as local literature. This literature review outlines what is already known about the topic under scrutiny. It also points to what ought to be known, thus establishing the scholarship gap that this study seeks to ‘close’. This chapter also familiarise the readers of this dissertation with the theoretical framework that is employed in this study and also its relevance and application to the study. As reflected in the title, this study seeks to understand the *Identities of Principals of successful schools that are in deprived contexts*.

In generating the data for this literature review a wide range of journal articles, books, theses and other relevant readings were utilised. To provide a fresh perspective, the effort has been made to consult the most recent literature. At times though it became relevant to consult seminal sources as a way of mapping the history of the concept and/or idea. To set the scene, this chapter starts by giving the global perspective on the identities of Principals. This is done in an effort to locate the South African conception of Principalship in relation with the rest of the world. This is followed by zooming into the Principalship in a South Africa context. School Principals across the world are expected to act as both managers and leaders of their respective schools. To avoid the confusion on the use of the concepts of leadership and management, the conceptualisation of the two terms is outlined drawing from well-established scholars.

The thematic review of literature that relates to identities of principals of successful school is then presented. This thematic review of literature employs both the concept-centric and author-centric approaches to review of literature. Every section of the review builds up from the concept and/or ideas that emanate from the preceding sections. This does not in any way serves as an exhaustive review of literature on identities of Principals of successful schools. However, it is hoped that this review captures the gist of the literature relevant to this study. It is further hoped that the literature reviewed is adequate to explain the importance and need for this study. The literature review has also been useful in identifying the theoretical framework within which this study will be located.

Owing to the intersecting property of identities (Pugach, Gomez-Najarro & Matewos, 2018) and their complicatedness, this study employs the Intersectionality Theory as a primary theory. To supplement this theory, this study also adopts Social identity theory as a subsidiary theory which will be used as a framework of analysis. Both these theories and the justifications of their use are discussed in detail towards the end of this chapter.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

### **2.2.1 Setting the scene: The international perspective on principalship**

This section provides a brief overview of the state of Principalship in the world. It summarises the findings that emerged in the studies conducted in many different countries that relates to the importance of Principals and their roles. In the existing literature, there seems to be a lot of similarities and also a lot of differences as far as the Principalship is concerned in various countries of the world (Arlestig, Day & Johansson, 2016). This section serves to set the scene for the subsequent sections, which will focus on the Principalship in a South African context.

Arlestig et al. (2016) in their book, *A decade of research on school principals* present research cases from 24 different countries. What is interesting about cases presented in this book is that they are representative of various contexts. One of the important conclusions they (Arlestig et al., 2016) draw out of their review of literature from across the globe, is the agreement on the importance of Principals. In a review of literature conducted in India, Saravanabhavan, Pushpanagham and Saravanabhavan (2016) assert that a Principal is a key educational leadership figure in this country. Beckmann and Bipath (2016) also confirm the centrality of principal as a leader in a school context. Principal leadership can impact on the teaching practice at a school and ultimately on the student's outcome (Gurr & Drysdale, 2016). This emanated in a review of literature from Australia. Hitt and Player (2018) posit that leadership in a school has the potential of causing the teachers to be effective. Much of the school's success and failure is dependent on the Principal teacher (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2018).

From the few cases quoted here, it can be seen that there is some kind of consensus on the significance of school Principals. In emphasising the significance of the school Principalship, it should however be noted that the roles of Principals differ according to geographic location of the school and the context (Hardwick-Franco, 2018). The identity of the Principal needed in an affluent school is not the same as the identity of Principal needed in a deprived school context. This is because the challenges in these schools are not the same. The body of literature that looks at Principals in deprived school context is growing. However, there are still aspects

of this phenomenon that has not been explored. Hence, my study is attempting to contribute in reducing that gap in scholarship.

There is also a global concern about the training and development (or lack thereof) of Principals (Saravanabhavan et al., 2016). Countries like Brazil, India, Australia and others have reported a lack or non-existence of Principal training programs (Arlestig et al., 2016). Hardwick-Franco (2018) advises that besides the training and preparation, Principals also require the professional development on how to be leaders of instruction. In a study conducted by Hardwick-Franco (2018) it emanated also that the professional development of Principals is more effective if the Principals are actively involved in determining the nature of these professional developments. This study was conducted in the rural schools of Australia.

Another world-wide concern about Principalship is the changes in the roles (be it perceived or real change) and demands in the job of a Principal (Arlestig et al., 2016; Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2018). Ganon-Shilon and Schechter (2018) point out that education reforms have added a burden on the work of Principals. This emerged in a study that was conducted among the high school Principals in Israel. In a review of literature in Finland, Risku and Pulkkinen (2016) pointed out that there has been a major change in the role of Principals in the past 20 years. These changes in the role of the Principal brings with it the new demands, challenges and expansion in the duties (Risku & Pulkkinen, 2016). Saravanabhavan et al. (2016) also report the similar shift in the role of a school Principal. The school Principal in India was in the past mostly expected to have managerial competencies, whereas the current expectation is for a principal to be more of a leader as opposed to a manager (Saravanabhavan et al., 2016).

In summary, the principals all over the world face many different challenges in executing their duties (Hardwick-Franco, 2018). With this in mind, Hardwick-Franco (2016) advises that the support given to Principals by the authorities has to be tailor-made to the needs and context of the school and broader environment in which the school is located. In line with the above assertion, Hutton (2018) suggests that in judging the effectiveness of Principals it is important to take into cognisance the context in which they operate and *also the personal characteristics* (identities).



### **2.2.2 Mapping the landscape of Principalship in South Africa**

In the past three decades of democracy in South Africa many things have changed. In the changes that have happened, education has not been immune (Mathews & Crow, 2003; Williams, 2011). Mathews and Crow (2003) further assert that in the education sector one of the notable changes that have taken place is in the role of the school Principal. The government has sought to redefine the role of a school Principal. The changes that came with the fall of apartheid and rise of democracy in this country, have complicated the job of the school Principal (Christie, 2010; Mathews & Crow, 2003; Williams, 2011). I attend to these complications later on in this section. The job of the principal has shifted from one of being more of a manager to one of being more of a leader (Bush & Glover, 2014; Christie, 2010; Van der Vyver, Van der Westhuizen & Meyer, 2013). Beside the shift from a school Principal being perceived as a manager to being perceived as a leader, a lot of other things have also changed about the principal's role (Mathews & Crow, 2003; Ng & Szeto, 2015; Van der Vyver et al., 2013). In the past, the Principals were expected to plan, organise, lead and control (Van der Vyver et al., 2013). At this point it should be noted that all the above roles of a Principal as they were in the past, forms part of what is called the management functions. This confirms the managerial incline of Principalship in the past. Leadership was just one aspect of it but recently it has emerged to be the main aspect (Christie, 2010). Leadership is now arguably the main role of the principal. However, Christie (2010) posits that principals actually needs a combination of both leadership and management skills to lead schools effectively. There is none between the two that should take precedence. The two are both equally important in their own right.

With the ongoing political and legislative changes (Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017), more is still to change as far as the position of the principal is concerned. Regardless of all the changes that have taken place and those that are still going to take place, one thing remains unchanged. That is the importance of a Principal in a school (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hill & Player, 2018; Ng & Szeto, 2015). Ng and Szeto (2015) even liken the job of the principal to one of a Chief Executive Officer in a company. Literature on leadership has shown that leadership (in general) is the second-most important determinant of learner's success in a school (Bush & Glover, 2014; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). At the helm of this leadership is the Principal who serves as the glue that stick together the different parts of the leadership puzzle in a school (Bush, 2011; Mendels, 2012; Norviewu-Mortty, 2012; Rice, 2010). Supovitz, Sirinides and May (2010) posit that principals remain central to the functioning and ultimately the success

of the school. Belle (2018) concurs with the position of Supovitz et al. (2010) regarding the Principal being a central figure in the running of the school.

In this paragraph I attend to the question of what makes an effective Principal in a successful school. There is certainly no universal agreement on this, however there are things that have emerged in the literature more often than others. In most studies, the following three points have emerged as point of convergence on what characterises principals that lead successful schools: They tend to be ones that adopt instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2013; Leigh-Sanzo, Sherman & Clayton, 2011; Supovitz et al., 2010); they recruit and retain good teachers (Grissom & Loeb, 2009; Rice, 2010); and they are visionary and are able to buy the support of all the stakeholders into their vision (Bush, 2011). In a study that was conducted by Ngotngamwon (2018) it became apparent that poor leadership in a school can be responsible for the loss of good teachers. This emphasis on the importance of Principals does not in any way seek to negate the role of other stakeholders.

Literature has also shown that for a school to be effective, leadership need to be shared and distributed (Bush & Glover, 2014; Leigh-Sanzo et al., 2011). As much as the distribution of leadership is envisaged, Williams (2011) is concerned about the state of distributed leadership in South Africa. Williams (2011) claims that in practise distributed leadership has not been achieved in the manner in which it is anticipated in policy transcripts. Williams (2011) posits that for the successful implementation of distributed leadership, the schools will need to have a cohort of educators that are equipped with skills, willingness and knowledge to actively participate in leadership. I zoom into the concept of distributed leadership in the later sections of this chapter. The findings of a study by Ngotngamwong (2018) that was conducted in Thailand confirms that a participative style of leadership has a positive impact on teacher retention. Williams (2011) further put forth the following as the hindrances to the effective implementation of distributed leadership. Firstly, the misunderstanding of the concept of leadership by Principals. Some Principals still view leadership as something that is attached to a formal position. Secondly, the School Management Teams disregarding the decisions of the School Governing Bodies because they claim they have better understanding of what is best for the school. Nonetheless, Principals need to share leadership with other teachers, the learners, the parents and many other parties that may have an interest in the running of the school (Christie, 2010; Williams, 2011).

The above-mentioned practices of Principals that are leading successful schools makes it clear that the identity of a person has an influence on his/her success as the leader. Davids (2018) frankly asserts that identity informs leadership practices. All the practices noted above either directly or indirectly speak to a specific identity of the principal leading the school. For one to be able to effectively share and distribute leadership in an organisation, they must possess a particular identity. An identity that is inviting to other stakeholders to partake in the leadership of the school.

In their conceptualisation of leadership, Bush and Glover (2003) assert that one of the tasks of successful leaders is to develop the vision of the school that reflect their personal and professional values. This speaks to the leaders being able to infuse their identities to what eventual will be the identity of the school. This does then show that an identity of a leader is very significant in any institution as it may determine the direction that the institution is to take. Ultimately it will determine the success or the failing of the institution (the school). It is this importance of leader's identity or identities that necessitated this study. However, Bush and Glover (2014) do also caution that as much as principals have an opportunity of determining the school's vision but that must be within the prescripts of the legislation. This suggest that the values that are more dominant in the school are those of the government of the time (Bush & Glover, 2014).

With all the changes that are taking place in the country and more specifically in the schools there two important implications for such changes. Firstly, the persona of the person who can lead a school successfully currently is different from the persona of the person who might have been able to do the same job 20 or 30 years ago (Van de Vyver et al.,2013). I contend that, identities of the principals who can effectively lead the schools during a period of such turbulent change is different and continuously changing as the times are. We currently need a special breed of leadership (principals) that will be able to take our schools past this significant transition. This is even more significant for schools in deprived school contexts. In deprived school contexts, leadership that is needed is not only the leadership that can cope with the changes but also leadership that can keep up with the multiple deprivations. Ng and Szeto (2015) posit that the principals are expected to lead with success the schools despite the many challenges that they face. Among those challenges is the inequality that exists in our education system (Christie, 2010; Lumby, 2015; Mestry, 2014). Some schools are located in highly deprived contexts. They (Ng & Szeto, 2015) further posit that the principals in most African countries have to keep up with amongst many things, the parents who cannot pay the school

fees, inadequate teaching and learning resources and other socio-economic challenges. Mathews and Crow (2003) propose that among the many identities that can make principals to be effective during this time of change, the most important one is that of being a learner. A principal at all times should seek ways of learning new ways of doing things. This suggests that a principal need to be a flexible person.

The second implications that comes with the many changes that are taking place in our education system is that the role of principal is becoming increasingly more complicated (Christie, 2010). This complicatedness arises from multiple dimensions. One of those dimensions is in the fact that in the South African context there is no formal training programme for principals, before they become principals (Bush & Glover, 2014). It is unlike in countries like Hong Kong, where they have made it compulsory for aspirant principals to undergo some form of formal training before they are recruited to principalship (Ng & Szeto, 2015). The second dimension is the one of the multiple and sometimes contradicting expectations that is attached to the principal's job by various stakeholders (Christie, 2010; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017). The third dimension is in the differences in contexts in which the schools are situated. As Lumby (2015) correctly points out, the job of the principal is context-bound. The fourth dimension is in the increasing responsibilities and duties of the principal. Christie (2010) posit that duties such as handling of finances, staffing and others has been given to schools. Previously these duties fell within the scope of the department of education to do most of these duties. This increases the 'duty load' of the school principal. Despite the increase in duties, there are also no platforms to train and prepare the principals for these 'new' roles. The fifth dimension is the lack of discipline particularly in high schools. Belle (2018) claims that the challenge of learner ill-discipline is a common one in many countries. It is not exclusive to the South African context only. One of the aggravating factors in this instance is that the principal has been stripped off the power to discipline learners.

### **2.2.3 Setting 'boundaries' between leadership and management**

This section seeks to conceptualise the two most important concepts in this study. These are leadership and management. Here I will attempt to give the meanings of these two concepts. This will be done by comparing and contrasting them. This is done with the purpose of establishing if there are any clear distinctions between them. In most cases they are used interchangeable as if they mean the same thing (Algahtani, 2014; Chikoko, Naicker &

Mthiyane, 2015; Christie, 2010; Smit, Cronje, Brevis & Vbra, 2013). But do they really mean the same thing?

I strongly believe that leadership and management are two different and distinct concepts (Algahtani, 2014). They should not be used interchangeably. However, as much as the two concepts are distinct, they are in real life inseparable (Algahtani, 2014; Chikoko et al., 2015; Ekman, Lindgren & Packendorff (2018); Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017). Christie (2010) suggests that it is important to draw distinctions between these two concepts while keeping in mind their interconnectedness. It is my conviction that good and effective leaders need management skills to enact their leadership with success (Chikoko et al., 2015; Ekman et al., 2018). The opposite of that is also applicable. Managers to be effective and successful need proper leadership skills to facilitate the success in carrying out their management tasks (Chikoko et al., 2015). As Mpungose and Ngwenya (2017) nicely put it, 'leadership in the public sector is an important component of good management'. It is then my strongest contention that principals need to balance leadership and management in their identity and ultimately in their practices. To illustrate this point further, I borrow from Bush & Glover. They assert that management that lacks vision can be considered to be managerialist and vision without a proper strategy is equally useless, and it may result in frustration (Bush & Glover, 2014). Vision is more often than not associated with leadership and not management (Ekman et al., 2018; Goleman, 2017; Smit et al., 2013). Smit et al. (2013) further posit that management is normally associated with goals (Algahtani, 2014) that are normally pre-set for someone to implement. To this effect, Bush and Glover (2014) believe, that a balanced combination of management and leadership skills is necessary for principals to be successful in their job.

Christie (2010) differentiates between the two in terms of their 'location'. She asserts that one of the major differences between the two is in their reach (Christie, 2010). Management is found within formal structures (i.e. organisations) whereas leadership has a reach that goes beyond just the organisation (Christie, 2010). This suggests that management has a boundary, yet leadership has no boundaries. What limits management to the boundaries of the organisation is that it is tied up to formal position (Christie, 2010).

Another difference the two concepts possess is in the type of relationship they have with people. Algahtani (2014) argues that leaders have followers contrary to managers who just have workers working for them. Followers are people who willingly choose to subscribe to the vision of the leader (Smit et al., 2013). This is as a result of influence that a leader has over the

followers (Belle, 2018; Mkhize, 2012; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017). Belle (2018) claims that the principal's task is not to accept things as they are but to exert influence on the followers to do what needs to be done. By influence, it means to cause people to willingly do the job with little or sometimes no supervision (Smit et al., 2013). Nonetheless they both have people as the common factor (Algahtani, 2014).

Leadership is about getting your followers to believe in your vision about the organisation thus taking self-ownership of the said vision (Bush & Glover, 2014; Goleman, 2017; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). After which they voluntarily implement it without coercion (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Bush and Glover (2014) add that vision is an important element of effective leadership. Ngotngamwong's (2018) study confirmed that when teachers are involved in the decision-making process they take ownership of the decision. This ownership of the decision results in high compliance and productivity in an organisation (Bush and Glover, 2014). On the other hand, management is very administrative in its approach. It seeks to maintain the status quo (Algahtani, 2014; Chikoko et al., 2015). It is more about making sure that all tasks are completed regardless of the situation. This can sometimes be done at the expense of the people's well-being. This is obviously because management is task orientated and has little concern for the people (Algahtani, 2014). However, Leadership is people focused. It acknowledges the value of humans as a resource in an organisation. As Ngotngamwong (2018) asserts, teachers as a human resource are the backbone of the school. The Principal in school has a mammoth and challenging task of balancing the two. While they must ensure that tasks are completed on time but they must also be considerate of the teacher's, learners and other stakeholder's well-being. This emphasises my position that the two go well together. It is actually complementary (Chikoko et al., 2015).

Leaders acknowledge that running an institution like a school is not a one man show (Ekman et al., 2018; Le fevre & Robinson, 2015), but it can only be a success if there is a team effort. Principals must understand that they are leading teams and also lead through teams. While a manager has to plan, organise and coordinate, the leader motivates and inspire others. It is the position of this dissertation that, Principals requires both set of skills to run their schools successfully. As posited earlier on in this dissertation, management and leadership are not easily separated (Chikoko et al., 2015). They are like two sides of the same coin. A combination of effective leadership and good management is bound to yield best results for an organisation.

Drawing from the above discussion I make the following deductions. Firstly, leadership and management are two separate concepts (Ekman et al., 2018). Secondly, despite the differences that exist between the two they are however interrelated (Chikoko et al., 2015; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017). In an ideal situation and in practice they should always co-exist. The boundaries as clear as they maybe in theory but in practise they are blurred (Algahtani, 2014). In concluding this section, it also important to note that the conceptualisations presented here are not universally agreed upon conceptualisations (Algahtani, 2014; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017). Algahtani (2014) adds that management and leadership have been used by many different people in different ways. Provided here is the working conceptualisations for this study and they should be understood in that context. In conclusion, Chikoko et al. (2015) suggest that leadership is about serving others (Servant leadership) and further suggest that leadership is very crucial in a context that is laden with deprivations.

#### **2.2.4 Various Leadership Models**

The section below presents the conceptualisation of various leadership approaches. These leadership approaches are distributed leadership, instructional leadership and servant leadership. The following approaches have been chosen because they have emerged in literature as the most prominent approaches used by Principals of successful schools.

##### **2.2.4.1 Conceptualising Distributed Leadership**

The conception of leadership in this study is that of leadership being an act of influencing others (Bush & Glover, 2014; Liu, Bellibas & Printy, 2018). Following this line of thinking, leadership is therefore not attached to formal positions of authority only (Mathews & Crow, 2003). The danger with limiting leadership to formal position is at losing out on the expertise that can be provided by those who do not hold formal positions in the workplace. A Principal of school needs to recognise that he/she cannot be an expert in everything. Where he/she lacks expertise, it can always be sourced out from the other staff members and stakeholders. Distributed leadership provides a conducive environment for such. There are many different and sometimes contradicting conceptions of distributed leadership (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Liu et al., 2018; Tian, Risku & Collin, 2015). Distributed leadership can ease the burden of leadership from the Principal, however it should not be confused with delegation (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). Distributed leadership calls for the capacitation and the activation of others to play leadership roles (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Woods & Roberts,

2016). One of the benefits of distributed leadership is that it gives rise to teacher leadership (Bush & Glover, 2014; Liu et al., 2018).

Leadership is about influence as asserted earlier on, then the Principal needs to appreciate that there are multiple sources of influence that exist within and outside the school (Mathews & Crow, 2003). This influence can even spring from the learners. In a distributed approach to leadership, even learners are recognised as equal partners just like any partner (Belle, 2018). In a study conducted by Belle (2018), it emerged that distributed leadership can be beneficial in curbing learner ill-discipline. As learners are empowered and involved in decision making, that increased the compliance rate. Therefore, distributed leadership is about providing leadership platform for all the interested stakeholders especially those with willingness and skills. I suggest this because, in an organisation it not every person who will be in a position to actively and effectively participate in distributed leadership. As Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) correctly assert that it not every teacher that is equipped with skills and have willingness to lead. I note however, that there are pre-requisites for effective implementation of distributed leadership. The first one being that the environment in the school should be conducive for it to flourish (Liu et al., 2018). Liu et al. (2018) further posit that leadership is a contextual exercise. If proper structures are not created, distributed leadership will not be a success (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016). It is thus the duty of the principal to create conditions that render the school distributed-leadership friendly. Secondly, to reap the maximum benefits of distributed leadership it has to be managed properly. It is not an automatic thing. It has to be made to happen. Woods and Roberts (2016) posit distributed leadership as an interactive process whereby positive relationship are built across all the stakeholders in an organisation.

This approach to leadership can enhance the professional growth of teachers, ultimately impacting positively on the student's outcomes and/or achievements (Bush and Glover, 2014). Bush and Glover (2014) caution of the use/misuse of distributed leadership other than that of growing other and advancing the organisations goals. They (Bush & Glover, 2014) assert that it may be used by principals to reduce their workload. This is because principals are central to the implementation of distributed leadership in their respective schools (Bush & Glover, 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2015). Liu et al. (2018) further argue that the identity of the principal impacts on the amount and form of leadership distribution that takes place in a school.



#### **2.2.4.2 Conceptualising Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership is multi-dimensional (Belle, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2014). It requires the Principal to take many roles (Carraway & Young, 2014). It also requires that the Principal be someone who can smoothly manoeuvre from one role to another and sometimes perform all of them simultaneously. In essence, instructional leadership is about Principals/any other leader focusing on the core function of the school (Belle, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2014; Mathews & Crow, 2003). Bush and Glover (2014) also mention that in other parts of the world the alternative term for instructional leadership is ‘learning-centred leadership’. This is actually more preferred as it emphasises learning. It is unlike instructional leadership which places more emphasise on the teaching part only. The core function of any school should be learning and teaching (Bush & Glover, 2014). To be a successful and effective instructional leader, the Principal must possess in him/her certain skills (Carraway & Young, 2014). The Principal must have particular identity or identities that are in line with being the leader of instruction.

Being an instructional leader is no easy task. Primarily, this is due to many skills needed but that the Principals in a South African context are not trained on (Carraway & Young, 2014). The second challenge is with the fact that, as asserted earlier on, the Principal is not an expert in everything (Bush & Glover, 2014). It is for this motive that some scholars (Bush & Glover, 2014) have suggested that instructional leadership goes well with distributed leadership. In that way the principal is able to source out from the teachers some of the skills/expertise that he/she might not have. Carraway and Young (2014) also suggest that there are various duties that are competing for the Principal’s attention. This takes away the time that Principals needs to focus on what happens in class.

In instructional leadership the Principal amongst other things is expected to set a clear vision for the school (Al-Mahdy, Emam & Hallinger, 2017; Belle, 2018). After setting such a vision, the principal should be in a position to communicate it clearly and effectively to all the stakeholders. If the Principals lacks the ability to sell the vision, it as good as the non-existing vision. This then suggest that to be a successful instructional leader you need to possess a certain type of identity. An identity of being articulate. Further to that, the Principal is also required to manage the curriculum (Al-Mahdy et al., 2017; Bush & Glover, 2014; Mathews & Crow, 2003). This implies that the principal has to be someone who is knowledgeable. As asserted in the earlier sections, the Principal must be a life-long learner (Mathews & Crow, 2003).

The Principals are not solo players when it comes to management of curriculum. They do this with the help of deputy Principals and Departmental Heads (Al-Mahdy et al., 2017). Hence, the need to marry instructional leadership with distributed leadership as posited earlier on. Al-Mahdy et al. (2017) strongly believe that while the Principal is at the centre of determining the vision, the deputy Principal and Departmental Heads are the ones responsible for its implementation. The Principal then needs to ensure that the staff members are effectively trained and continually developed for the effective implementation of instructional leadership (Carraway & Young, 2014).

The Principal needs to have good and positive working relationships with all the people in the leadership of the school. Mathews and Crow (2003) suggest that even the post level one educators are or can be instructional leaders. The Principal will have to embrace that. This demands the Principal to recognise and acknowledge that he/she is a leader of leaders and not just a leader of followers (Mathews & Crow, 2003). Belle (2018) further posits that in instructional leadership, the principal is expected to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The Principal can do this by amongst other things, providing and/or making available the resources (Belle, 2018) and maintaining discipline amongst all in the school. There are many benefits of instructional leadership in schools. According to Al-Mahdy, et al. (2017) this leadership has been in some cases associated with positive student outcomes. However, Mathews and Crow (2003) caution that just like any other leadership approach it is not a one size fit all kind of leadership approach. They (Mathews & Crow, 2003) further argue that it is ‘context-dependent’. And instructional leadership is not effective if it is rigidly applied in isolation of the other leadership approaches.

#### **2.2.4.3 Conceptualising Servant Leadership**

Chikoko et al. (2015) propose that servant leadership is one of the leadership approaches that can be useful for leading in a deprived school context. Their study was conducted among the five Principals of schools leading schools in a multiple deprived context in South Africa. At the heart of servant leadership is the quest to serve others (Chikoko et al., 2015; Dodd, Achen & Lumpkin, 2018; Madavana, 2015; Wong, Liu, Wang & Tjosvold, 2018). Dodd et al. (2015) posit that servant leaders possess in them the drive and high level of commitment to serve others. In servant leadership serving comes before anything else (Dodd et al., 2015).

Madavana (2015) further states that a servant leader focuses his/her energies to the employees. In a study conducted among the 432 teachers in India, it emanated that servant leadership has a positive correlation with job satisfaction amongst the teachers. This was also confirmed by a study conducted by Von Fischer and De Jong (2017) in the United State of America among 76 teachers. Job-satisfied educators are postulated to perform better than those that are not (Von Fischer & De Jong, 2017). This job satisfaction which in turn has a potential to yield organisational success (Dodd et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2018). Wong et al. (2018) suggest that servant leadership encourages quality relationship in an organisation.

The following is identified as characteristics(identities) of a servant leader: listening; empathy; healing; foresight; conceptualisation; persuasiveness; awareness; stewardship; commitment to growth of people; and valuing people (Dodd et al.,2015; Von Fischer & De Jong,2017; Forde,2010; Wong et al., 2018). However, Von Fischer and De Jong (2017) caution that servant leadership covers a wide spectrum of characteristics than the ones that are listed here. Madavana (2015) partly echoes the above as characteristics of servant leader. She asserts that, servant leadership are generally trusted by their followers because of the amount of empathy they offer their followers. This emanates from a leader being aware of their follower's needs (Madavana, 2015). Hence their concern for the well-being of their followers (Dodd et al., 2015).

Wong et al. (2018) also assert that servant leadership is good because as the leader at the top serve the followers, they in turn learn to serve each other and the wider community. In a context of a school this implies that if the principal practices servant leadership, it can result in teachers emulating the same behaviour and then practising it in their interaction with students (and with each other). This culture of serving one another builds trust amongst the teachers and also between teachers and students (Dodd et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2018).

### **2.2.5 Identity and leadership: What do we know?**

Identity is a complex concept (Schwartz, Vignoles, & Luyckx, 2011). As asserted earlier on in chapter one (see page 3, section 1.4), various scholars conceptualise it differently (Crow et al., 2017; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). In connection and in concurring with the above postulation, Lumby and English (2009) posit that identity is “understood in multiple ways” (p.98). Nonetheless, the previous chapter (see page 3) has sought to set the parameters of this concept in this study. The purpose now of this section is to link identity with leadership in general and more specifically with Principalship. It is however necessary at this juncture to emphasise that

the conception of identity in this study is that of identity as something that can be discovered and also socially constructed at the same time (Lumby & English, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2011).

Petriglieri and Stein (2012) suggest that an identity of a leader will influence the identity of the follower, which in turn they (the followers) can project it back to the leader or to the third party. This is because the leader and a follower role are connected (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011; Hogg & Martin, 2003). If the identity in question is not a good one, this may result in conflict in an organisation (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012). Conflict is when there is hostility, disruptions and unhealthy disagreements in an organisation (Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge & Ngcobo, 2008). Relating this to a school context, this would imply that if a principal project a negative identity to the staff (the teachers mostly), the staff can either project it back to the principal or even worse pass it to the learners and/or parents. It is then very important for a principal to be mindful of the type of identity he/she projects. The negative identity has a possibility of creating a toxic school culture (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012), thus hindering the school's effectiveness.

Identity of a person informs the behaviour of that person (Burke & Stets, 2009). Likewise, the identity of a person will impact on how that person performs as a leader, subsequently this comes down to the performance of the organisation. At the same time, as people through their behaviours and practices make an organisation, also the organisation influences the people within it (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). To put it using the exact words of Haslam and Ellemers, "Organisations make us who we are, and who we are determines the type of organisations that we make" (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011; 715). This implies that there is some reciprocal-kind of relationship between organisations and individuals. Following this line of thinking, we can then deduce that the principal in a school would influence the school's identity and the school will in return influence the principal's identity. It is this complex intersection, between the school and principal in deprived context that this study seeks to establish.

#### **2.2.6 School Principal's Identity**

The identity of a leader is important for various reasons. In this dissertation, I am however, only presenting and/or interested in two significances. Firstly, identity of a leader influences the identity of the follower (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012). In the context of this study, I postulate that the identity of a principal has a profound impact on the identity of the teachers, learners, parents and other school's stakeholders. This will ultimately shape the identity of the school as the organisation. Secondly, identity informs behaviour (Burke & Stets, 2009; Mpungose, 2010;

Tubin, 2017) and ultimately the practice (Johnson & Crow, 2017). Hence, my position is that to a certain extent the success of the school depends on the identity or identities of the principal (Tubin, 2017), and of course the rest of the leadership. Bush (2018) posits that leadership is widely recognised and accepted as having an influence on the success of the school. He further argues that if leadership is as important as the literature shows it to be in schools we then need to be concerned about how school leaders are prepared (Bush, 2018).

Johnson and Crow (2017) believe that understanding the process by which educational leaders develop their identity can inform leadership preparation and practice. In the same vein, Bush (2018) notes the lack of proper preparation of school principals and continuing professional development. He suggests that when one moves from being a teacher to becoming a principal, there has to be a major shift in the identity (Bush, 2018). The identity needed to be successful and effective as a teacher is different from the identity that is needed for a successful and effective principal (Bush, 2018).

In a study conducted by Tubin (2017) among the four successful school Principals in Israel, the following findings emerged. It emanated that identity is about relationship(s) one has with others. In this study, it appeared that the success of the Principal partly relies on the followers granting the principal their leadership identity (Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017). This confirms the claim by Johnson and Crow (2017) that identity is sometimes socially constructed. Tubin (2017) drawing from his study further argues that if the leadership identity is not granted by the followers this may result in a negative school climate and cause conflicts.

As much as Bush (2018) correctly asserts that the teacher's job is very different from that of principal, the experience as a teacher does however impact on the type of Principal one becomes. Mpungose (2010) conducted a study among the Principals in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In this study the principals reported that their socialisation to the teaching profession impacted their identities as principals. This is in line with the earlier claim that identity links the past to the present and also the future. This study also reported that to cope with the changes that are taking place, Principals need to change the view of their role as 'bosses' to viewing it as 'leadership'. This is in a way in line with the findings of the study reported above, conducted by Tubin.

### **2.2.7 Principal as a leader of learning**

Naidu et al. (2008) proclaim that one of the many challenges that faces Principals is that one of creating a school culture that enables effective teaching and learning. A Principal is or is supposed to be a leader of curriculum and learning in his/her school. Mathews and Crow (2003) posit that historically, the concept of Principalship was connected to teaching before it became a separate role. As much as some (if not most) Principals do not do the classroom teaching but their job is highly linked to what happens in the classroom (Hitt & Player, 2017). Naidu et al. (2008) further posit that this is a multi-dimensional role (leader of learning role), and it consist of the following: 1. communicating the school's mission and vision, 2. managing the curriculum, 3. and promoting a positive learning environment (Chen & Laksana, 2016). Naidu et al. (2008) also suggest that this role of a Principal is in line with the prescripts of instructional leadership. In the next paragraphs I unpack the identities expected in a Principal as a leader of learning in terms of the above presented dimensions.

As asserted earlier on, the Principal is not the only instructional leader in a school. Hence, the proposition made earlier that Principals must share and distribute leadership with other stakeholders is once again emphasised. For a Principal to be an effective leader of learning he/she needs to work in collaboration with all the stakeholders in the school. To substantiate the above point let me borrow from Hitt and Player (2017). They assert that, “principals largely work through others to influence student's achievement” (Hitt & Player, 2017:3). Chen and Laksana (2016) also suggest that for principals to be effective leaders of curriculum they need to be ‘knowers and experts’ .For a principal to lead curriculum with success they must be familiar with the ins and outs of the curriculum. They must be well versed with the curriculum more than anyone in the school.

Mathews and Crow (2003) posit that vision is very much important as it creates a link between the present and the future. A vision gives the school the sense of direction as to where it is supposed to go, what it aims to achieve going into the future (Hitt & Player, 2017; Naidu et al., 2008). A well-articulated vision is a motivation to the teachers and all the stakeholders (Mathews & Crow, 2003). Naidu et al. (2008) advise that a culture of teaching can only thrive in a school if the members of staff feels that they own the vision. And to achieve that sense of ownership, a principal need to involve all in the building of the vision (Hitt & Player, 2017). This is what Mathews and Crow (2003) refer to as a school's collective vision. Hitt and Player

(2017) assert that leaders must consistently engage in activities that seek to ensure the fulfilment of the school's vision.

As a curriculum manager, the principal must know how to create a collaborative learning culture for all in the school (Chen & Laksana, 2016). Chen and Laksana (2016) propose that this can be done through establishing professional learning communities (PLC). A professional learning community is a platform where teachers meet regularly. They meet with the purpose of reflecting and developing their instructional practice (Hitt & Player, 2017; Mathews & Crow, 2003), thus improving the student's achievement. As pointed out by Balyer, Karatas and Alci (2015), establishing professional learning communities ensures that teachers improve their practise and also impact positively on the students' outcomes.

However, they (Balyer et al., 2015) note with concern that the principals do not adequately establish the professional learning communities. This emanated from a study that was conducted amongst 12 principals. Although not attempting to refute these findings, it should however be noted that the sample in the said study was too small to have conclusive findings for the principals in general. The principal as a leader of learning must ensure that such platforms exist in a school and are properly managed. By having these platforms, teachers acquire skills and support that would have been impossible to achieve when working alone in isolation (Balyer et al., 2015). Hitt and Player (2017) correctly assert that for leaders to positively impact on student outcomes they need to develop teachers and also themselves.

Promotion of positive and conducive learning environment is one of the dimensions of principal's role as a leader of learning (Naidu et al., 2008; Chen & Laksana, 2016). Mathews and Crow (2003) strongly believe that a principal who want to positively transform the school, need to start by understanding the school's existing culture. And from there, he/she can be able to change it to be the one that is conducive to learning and teaching. A culture is created by activities and behaviours (Mathews & Crow, 2003). A conducive learning environment and/or culture can among many things be created through a fair distribution of resources (Mathews & Crow, 2003).

To sum up this section that addresses the Principal as the leader of learning, the following points should be emphasised. The Principal is the important figure in a school. Although the Principal is not the sole leader in a school but much of leadership and management of the school rests with the Principal. Principals are or should be leaders of learning. Much of school's success or failure is dependent in the manner in which they enact their leadership. Amongst the

many things that shape the Principal's enactment of leadership is the Principal's personal identities (Hallinger, 2016).

### **2.2.8 Principals in Deprived School Context**

Leadership of schools in deprived context is under-researched (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). Despite the scarcity of scholarship in this area of leadership, Ahumada et al. (2016) note that this aspect of leadership has since gained currency in the past decade. This suggests there is a lot that still need to be studied about leadership in schools laden with deprivations. And one of those aspects that has not yet been given adequate attention, is the identities of principal of successful schools which are in challenging context. With many of the schools in South Africa being located in deprived areas (Lumby, 2015; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015), it is important to try and figure out what aspects of leadership can be able to save those schools drowning in deprivations. Most of these schools are the public schools which in most cases cater for the poor (Ahumada et al., 2016).

Bhengu and Myende (2016) conducted a study to find out as to how do principals in deprived contexts cope with policy changes in South African schools. This study produced a number of interesting findings. They found that principals involved in their study coped by: (a) being flexible and continuously adapting their leadership approaches; (b) adapting the policies imposed by the authorities to the local context of the school; (c) studying the society in which they lead (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). These findings confirm the claim by Ahumada et al. (2016) that the schools in deprived contexts require different leadership techniques from those that are needed in affluent context. Ahumada et al. (2016) further posit that principals need to be aware of the school's needs, which is still in line with Bhengu and Myende's (2016) findings.

Chapman and Harris also conducted a study in this terrain focusing on the schools in the United Kingdom. Their study focused on strategies for improving schools in deprived context. This study found out that leaders of schools in deprived contexts succeeded by: (a) tailor-making the strategies to the context; and (b) using different approaches from those employed by principals in normal situations (Chapman & Harris, 2004). Both these findings are confirmed by a study conducted by Bhengu and Myende (2016). In their (Chapman & Harris, 2004) concluding remarks of their paper they even propose that government must free schools from policy prescriptions that are generic and does not cater specifically for schools in the contexts full of challenges. Agreeing with the above assertion, Bhengu and Myende (2016) propose



what they call ‘adaptive leadership’ for the schools in deprived contexts. This is leadership that is able to take the policy imposed on them and make it relevant for their school’s context.

In another study of leadership in deprived context, Chikoko et al. (2015) studied the principals of five high schools that they consider to be resilient schools. In their paper, they also emphasise that there is still a need for more research looking at the leadership that works in deprived school context of South Africa (Chikoko et al., 2015). The findings of this study suggest that these principals succeeded because they adopted an asset-based approach in terms of looking for solutions to their problems (Chikoko et al., 2015). Asset based approaches is about a school looking at their staff as important resources that are capable before going for the outside help. Chikoko et al. (2015) further postulate that the schools in deprivations needs to move out of the victimhood zone and deficit way of thinking in order to thrive. In the concluding paragraph they suggest that the principals in the study adopted the servant leadership style for them to be successful.

Jacky Lumby also conducted a study about leading schools in deprived school contexts. Her study looks specifically at women principals in the South African context. The basis for her study is that leadership is influenced by many factors, in this case she zooms into the complexities of gender and context and how it impacts on one’s leadership (Lumby, 2015). Lumby (2015)’s study reveals that nurturing personality of women principals can be a useful identity in leading schools in deprived context to success. The intersection of gender, context and leadership that emanated in this study is well explained using the ‘intersectionality theory’, which is a theoretical framework of this study.

In conclusion, despite the growth in recent years in studies seeking to explore the phenomenon of educational leadership in deprived context (e.g. Ahumada et al., 2016; Bhengu & Myende, 2016; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Lumby, 2015), there remains a huge gap that need to be filled (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). The studies that have been conducted seem to have focused on three areas mostly, that is: the features and challenges in schools that are multiple deprived (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015; Maringe et al., 2015; Moletsane et al., 2015); the nature of leadership practices and approaches that work in areas of multiple deprivations (Mestry & Bodalina, 2015); and to a lesser extent, the plight of women leading in such schools that are characterised by deprivations (Faulkner, 2015; Lumby, 2015). There seem to be fewer studies that examine the role of identities of principals in successful schools in multiple deprived contexts (Scribner & Crow, 2012). Even those few studies, they adopt a one-dimensional approach to identities.

By one-dimensional approach I mean they focus on one type/form of identity. This I find very limiting as the identities by their very nature they intersect (Lumby, 2015; Moorossi, 2014).

### **2.2.9 Power as an identity**

One important aspect of leadership and management is the possession of power. Power is the ability to *influence* others to do something or what you want them to do (Alapo, 2018; Alveson & Blom, 2018; Smit et al., 2013). Choi and Schnurr (2016) assert that power is about the relationship between two or more parties. From this definition of power, one can deduce that power is intricately linked to leadership (Alveson & Blom, 2018). Earlier on in this chapter, leadership was also conceptualised as process of *influence* (Alveson & Blom, 2018; Belle, 2018; Mkhize, 2012; Mpungose & Ngwenya, 2017; Smit et al., 2013). Similarly, to leadership, power is not always tied to formal hierarchal position (Choi & Schnurr, 2016).

Nonetheless in the context of this study, I look at power as possessed by the principal which is a position in the hierarchy of school. To successfully execute their job, the leader and/or manager must have different forms of power. However, Alveson and Blom (2018) caution that in the process of acknowledging the relationship between leadership/management and power we must not end up treating these as synonymous concepts. Choi and Schnurr (2016) also position power as a ‘characteristic’. If the position of Choi and Schnurr (2016) is anything to go by, then power can also be equated to an ‘identity’. Gagnon and Collinson (2014) confirm that power is inseparably linked to identity.

There are various forms or bases of power. These are: legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, referent power, and expert power (Alapo, 2018; Smit et al., 2013). Different forms of power are needed and useful in different contexts. But an effective leader should possess a combination of relatively all the power bases. It is important though for a leader to understand as to when to use each power base.

Legitimate power is that power that a leader has by virtue of their position in an organisation (Alapo, 2018; Smit et al., 2013). In the context of a school, the principals have legitimate power that is accorded to them by virtue of them being the principal. This form of power has its own limitations as it is embedded in the hierarchical positions. Once you step out of the formal position, you lose it. The teachers may comply with the principal’s orders just because he/she has authority but this does not guarantee the commitment of the teachers to the school’s goals (Alapo, 2018).

Reward power on the other hand is the ability of the leader/manager to grant rewards (Alapo, 2018; Smit et al., 2013). This may be useful in motivating and encouraging the employees to do a better job and thus increasing the productivity of the organisation. This is another important power base for principals in general, and even more important in a deprived context. This is because in a deprived context there is normally a short supply of either physical and/or human resources. Being able to influence teachers to do more than what they ought to do may sometimes be necessary. Alapo (2018) further asserts that the reward can either be in a form of physical or sometimes immaterial rewards.

Expert power is that form of power that one possesses by virtue of having expert knowledge of a particular subject that other members consider important and do not have (Alapo, 2018; Smit et al., 2013). This may create a dependence –kind of relationship to the member of the organisation that possesses that ‘significant expertise knowledge’. As asserted in the preceding paragraphs, this form of power does not always rest on formal positions (Choi & Schnurr, 2016). In a school context, even a teacher who does not hold any specific position in the organogram of the school may possess this form of power (Smit et al., 2013). As the principal cannot be an expert in everything, he/she then needs to have a strategy of tapping to the expertise of other teachers. Smit et al. (2013) postulate that a leader who has this kind of power has a ‘special power’ over those who need it, yet do not have it. This then implies that if a leader wants to maximise his/her influence in an organisation, they must seek to always have expert knowledge. They can gain this knowledge by continually developing themselves through workshops, studying further etc.

Referent power is the ability of a leader to influence the followers to voluntarily follow a leader without feeling obliged to do so (Alapo, 2018; Smit et al., 2013). Alapo (2018) associates this power base with charismatic leaders. Smit et al. (2013) assert that in a case of referent power, the followers just like the leader because of their characteristics. The principal can also possess this kind of power.

The last power base that is not an ideal one for school principals or any other leader is the coercive power. This power base involves influencing other through fear (Smit et al., 2013). This is not ideal because it has a potential to cause the employees to lose commitment to the goals of the organisation and also develop ‘job-dissatisfaction’ (Alapo, 2018). A principal should tap to this power base as the last resort after all has failed. Alvesson and Blom (2018) caution that power should be exercised with some level of intelligence at all times. The use of

‘wrong’ power base, the failure to balance the power bases adequately and misuse of power may cause conflict in an organisation. And conflict is not an ideal phenomenon in an organisation; it should be avoided at all cost.

#### **2.2.10 Literature review summary**

This chapter has outlined the literature on Principalship in general and literature on identities in particular. A number of points that forms the basis of this study has emerged from the review of literature in this chapter, the summary of which is given below.

The first section of this chapter presents the global overview of the state of Principalship. From the literature that is reviewed in this section it safe to conclude that, there are a lot of similarities as much as there are a lot of differences as far as the state of Principalship is concerned across the globe (Arlestig et al., 2016). This review then narrows down, and explores the state of school principals in a South African context. From the review of Principalship in South Africa the following significant points emanated. Firstly, the role of Principal has changed from what it was and it is continually changing (Mathews & Crow, 2003; Williams, 2011). Secondly, Instructional leadership, distributed leadership and servant leadership have emerged as some of the most favoured leadership approaches by effective and successful Principal in a South African context (Belle, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2014; Chikoko et al., 2015).

This review of literature also zooms into the phenomenon of identity which is central to this study. In the review it became clear that identities are a complex phenomenon (Crow et al., 2017; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). One person possesses many intersecting identities at any point in time. Identity has been deduced to be context embedded (Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017). Most studies (e.g. Johnson & Crow, 2017; Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017) that have sought to study this phenomenon have adopted a one-dimensional approach, downplaying the intersecting nature of identities. Most importantly, the literature has established an intricate link and connection between leadership enactment and identity of a leader (Burke & Stets, 2009; Petriglieri & Stein, 2012).

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

This sub-section of chapter two presents the theoretical framework utilised in this study. The framework used here can be broadly categorised into two categories. Intersectionality theory (IT) has been used as a primary theory to frame (inform) this study. Further to that, I adopted a subsidiary framework, which was used as framework of analysis. The subsidiary theory for this study is Social identity theory (SIT).

A theoretical framework is a set of well-developed and logical ideas that are able to explain the phenomena. Bell (2010) argues that a theoretical framework is a set of ideas that are able to explain the human affairs and the social world at large. I, however contend that a single theory may sometimes be not enough to adequately explain the phenomena under study. A particular cause of that in this case is the multi-disciplinary nature of the study. In such cases, it may then be necessary to have a subsidiary theory. A subsidiary theory was used to complement the primary theory. In this study, intersectionality theory could not explain all the findings of the study. Hence, the need for analytic subsidiary theory. Holness (2015) posits that an analytic theory is a theory that is employed in a study solely for the purpose of analysing the findings.

Broadly speaking, a theoretical framework helps us with the lenses of viewing the reality (Silverman, 2013). The next section explains in detail the theoretical framework used in this research. In the discussion, I present the relevance of the theoretical framework chosen in this study. As Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) posit, a theoretical framework must be chosen for its relevance to the subject being studied. Furthermore, I will outline which aspects of each theoretical framework I am adopting in this study. This is in adherence to the advice given by Holness (2015). Cilliers et al. (2014) further assert that the theoretical framework is useful as it helps the researcher to set the parameters of the research. Cilliers et al. (2014) elaborate on the above point by asserting that a theoretical framework: provide the focus of the study, provide a perspective of viewing the phenomena being studied, and guides how the study is conducted. The latter speaks to the choices to be made when it comes to method(s) and tools of analysis. Finally, Bell (2010) puts forth another two usefulness of a theoretical framework in a research. Firstly, it is useful for practitioners who may want to implement the findings to know what theory guided the study. Secondly, it is useful to other researchers who may want to further explore the subject. This is because a theoretical framework links the findings of the study with the broader body of knowledge (Bell, 2010).

### **2.3.1 Intersectionality theory**

Intersectionality theory is the main theory guiding this whole study. Intersectionality is a sociological theory describing a situation where an individual's identities overlap with each other (Hancock, 2007; Pugach et al., 2018). The privileges we enjoy and the challenges we face are a product of our unique combination of identities and positioning in society (Hancock, 2007; Moorosi, 2014). Pugach et al. (2018) further assert that, intersectionality gives us a way to understand the challenges and difficulties that people face because of their intersecting multiple identities.

As much as this theory is informing the whole study but it was particularly useful in analysing the findings to the second research puzzle. The puzzle was: How do the identities intersect and shape leadership practices of principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts? Pugach et al. (2018:7) assert that "identities are relational, complex and fluid". Intersectionality theory was able to help us understand and explain that complexity, relationship and fluidity.

Further to that, intersectionality claims that identities are mutually dependent and intersecting in nature (Hancock, 2007). Drawing from the above assertion, one can conclude that it is very limiting to try and understand a particular identity or category of identities in isolations as it is the trend in some studies (Hancock, 2007). In fact, Dhamoon (2011) insists that at all times more than one category of difference(identity) should be analysed. According to Pugach et al. (2018) identities can only be better understood in relation to other identities.

Historically intersectionality has been applied to women of colour, however a person of any gender may be affected by this phenomenon of overlapping identities. While Crenshaw's conception of intersectionality focused on the intersection of race and gender, other scholars after her has since broadened this theory to cover many other categories of difference. The concept of intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989(Dhamoon, 2011; Pugach et al., 2018). It has been in existence for close to three decades now. This theory was developed in the legal studies discipline and was later adopted for use in many other disciplines in the social sciences. It is now a mainstream concept (Dhamoon, 2011). What facilitated its use in other disciplines is its flexibility. As Schmidt & Mestry (2014) correctly assert, intersectionality is flexible, it can be used in almost any context of inquiry. This is one of the main motives why I chose to utilise it in this study. It is multi-disciplinary. Hence its relevance

in this study which is 'bi-disciplinary'. It is bi-disciplinary as it touches on the subjects of identity and principalship which emanates from psychology and leadership disciplines respectively. The usefulness of intersectionality has caused other scholars (Dhamoon, 2011; Hancock, 2007) to advocate for it to be used as a research paradigm. But in this study, it is used as a theoretical framework.

The analytic power of intersectionality is valuable here because it will allow us to understand an intersection of multiple identities that the principals possess. These identities range from personal, professional and social identities. Further to that, this theory will assist in making sense of the intersection and relationship not only between the identities with each other but also with the context in which the principals enact their leadership (Dhamoon, 2011). This is supported by Pugach et al. (2018) as they claim that intersectionality can be used to explain the intersection of identities with the institutional factors. In this context, the institution being the school. Thus, the usefulness of this theory also arises from the 'holistic approach' property of it. The 'holistic property' of this theory is seen in its applicability to both individuals and institutions (Hancock, 2007). At this stage it should be noted that this was a study of identities and it not only individuals (people) that have identities but also organisations and institutions. This theory will then be helpful in analysing both the identities of individuals (principals) as well as institutions (schools) and the intersection between the two (Pugach et al., 2018). However, intersectionality is not just helpful for understanding only how different identities or categories of identities exist simultaneously in shaping the principal's leadership experiences in their respective school (Dhamoon, 2011). Importantly, it also helps us to realise that what some may consider as distinct and separate identities is in fact mutually dependent and cannot exist independent of one another.

Intersectionality views identity as being multidimensional (Porter & Maddox, 2014). Each and every person possesses in them multiple identities that co-exist within them (Pugach et al., 2018). Also, central to this theory is the notion that human action is as a result of intersection of these various experiences and multiple identities that form the whole that is different from the components that make it (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Taking that into consideration, it is my contention that the manner in which the principals conduct themselves and/or enact their leadership is a result of their intersecting identities. It is then the objective of this study to find out how that takes place in a deprived context.

Richardson and Loubier (2008) posit that this theory is useful in understanding complex social situations as this one being studied in this study. Intersectionality is also able to provide us with the lenses to view the connection between identity and power (Crenshaw, 2015; Schmidt & Mestry, 2014). This makes this theory even more useful as it will be able to assist in understanding the connection the identities of principals have with power of principals.

Hancock (2007) presents more properties of intersectionality theory some of which are discussed below. Firstly, as asserted above Hancock (2007) confirms that this theory is multidisciplinary. Secondly, she suggests that according to this theory categories of differences matter in the same way. Thirdly, she suggests that there is an interaction between individuals and institutions in which they find themselves in and this interaction is unique for each and every individual. In the next section, I discuss the social identity theory and its usefulness in this study as a subsidiary theory. This theory will be particularly useful in analysing the first research puzzle.

### **2.3.2 Social Identity Theory**

This theory was originally introduced by Hanri Tajfel in the 70's and was later developed by Tajfel and his student, Jonh Turner (David, 2015; McLeod, 2008). Social Identity Theory is concerned about the relationship between personal identities and social identities in a person (McLeod, 2008). In essence, social identity as espoused in Social Identity Theory is a sense of who you are as shaped by your group memberships. At the heart of this theory is the notion that, a group is capable of influencing one's identity or part of it (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). People by their very nature belong to various groupings, which makes them possess multiple identities at the same time. Tajfel (1979) outlines the idea behind Social Identity Theory into three stages. These stages are: social categorisation, social identification and social comparison. At social categorisation stage is a stage where one is assigned a group (Ellemers, Haslam, Platow & Knippenberg, 2011; Turner & Tajfel, 1986). A social group will be something like so and so is a student, black, educated etc. At social identification stage is a stage where one starts adopting the identity of the group (Ellemers et al., 2011; Turner & Tajfel, 1986). They start doing things as per the 'norms' of that particular group they belong in. After this stage, one progresses to social comparison. This is where one starts comparing themselves with other groups (out group) (Ellemers et al., 2011; Turner & Tajfel, 1986). Out-group being the group that a person does not belong to, as opposed to the group that one belongs to (the in-



group). For the purpose of this study I am only interested in the first two categories, namely: social categorisation and social identification. The last category is not employed in this study.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed relevant literature as far as this study is concerned. This study is about *Identities of Principals of successful schools that are in deprived contexts*. In line with the project title, this chapter has sought to present the relevant literature that speaks to Principals in South Africa and abroad. As much as the literature reviewed here is global but particular attention has been paid to South African literature. The literature has clearly shown the ‘gap’ that this study seeks to fill. This chapter also discussed in depth the two theories that forms the theoretical framework that was used in this study and also shows how these theories are relevant and applicable to the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter (Chapter two) the literature that is relevant to the inquiry was explored. In addition to the literature, the theoretical framework was also discussed. In this chapter, I outline the research design and methodology used in the study. This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm, which is explained in detail in sub-section 3.2 of this chapter. Thereafter I elaborate on the research design namely, qualitative research design. Further to that I discuss the methodology used in this study, and its relevance. In line and in connection to the narrative inquiry methodology I also outline the three data (field texts) generation methods utilised in the exploration of identities and how they complement one another. The data generating methods utilised here are (in no particular order); conversational interviews, collage and/or narrative posters, and letter writing. Towards the end of the chapter I look closely at the data analysis process, in doing that I also explain how trustworthiness of the data and findings was ensured. A number of ethical issues were observed before and during the study. This is detailed in the latter sections of this chapter.

#### **3.2 Interpretivist Paradigm**

The researcher in this study worked within the interpretivism paradigm. A paradigm in research is what other scholars refers to as the research traditions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is particularly common in qualitative research. Knowing a paradigm within which one is operating is imperative as it makes the research process close to being ‘smooth’. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), a research paradigm is useful for two motives; it guides the researcher on what questions to ask, and it also assist the researcher with the ‘correct manner’ (methods) in which those questions should be answered to be considered acceptable. In essence, the research paradigm guides the researcher on what is acceptable and not acceptable in that particular research tradition.

In what appears to be a confirmation of Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) assertions, Thanh and Thanh (2015) put forth three elements of the research paradigm. These elements are: “a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity” (Thanh & Thanh, 2015, 24). A belief of what constitutes knowledge (Thanh & Thanh, 2015) will impact on the type of questions that the researcher asks (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The manner in which the questions are answered will in a way impact on the validity of the findings. It is for the aforementioned

motives that I assert that Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) and Thanh and Thanh (2015) are in agreement.

As posited earlier on, this study is located in the interpretivist paradigm/ tradition. This paradigm is mainly about the researcher trying to understand the experience of human beings (Hartley, 2010; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). As was the case in this study, the researcher here attempted to understand the identities of Principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts. Further to that the researcher also sought to understand as to how the identities intersect and shape the leadership practice of principals in question. At the heart of this paradigm is the notion that there is no absolute truth (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). In rejecting the notion of single absolute truth, the interpretivist embraces multiple-realities as constructed by individuals (Hartley, 2010; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). This emanates from the understanding that human beings by their very nature are different and continuously changing (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this study I acknowledged that Principals are unique and continuously-changing beings.

The interpretive paradigm is based on the premise that reality is fluid and negotiable (Merriam, 2009). This paradigm is suitable for this study because it emphasises the interpretations that people give to their experiences. The experiences of my participants were core to my understanding of identities that are common and also those that are exclusive to individual principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts. The interpretive paradigm helped me to understand the uniqueness of these principals and the contexts they find themselves in, noting that there are multiple interpretations and perspectives on single events and situations. I was able to make meanings of the different experiences and views held by my participants about their identities in deprived school contexts.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research**

This study adopted a qualitative research design. This is in line with the methodology used, which is the Narrative Inquiry (Lewis, 2015). It is also in keeping with the traditions of the interpretivist researchers (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). In this section the properties of qualitative research as they apply in this study are outlined. As the term suggests, qualitative research is about exploring the qualities of a research phenomenon. The ‘qualities’ explored in this study were the identities of school Principals in deprived school contexts. In a qualitative study, the data that is generated is normally in a form of texts. Hence the terms data and field texts are used interchangeable in this study. As Rudestam and Newton (2015) state, qualitative research

is the one where: data generated is in a form of words and pictures. The participants in this study were interviewed, which yielded the data in a form of words. The Principals were also asked to design either a narrative poster or collage, and this contained both words and pictures that they choose to define their identities.

Rudestam and Newton (2015) further posit that in qualitative research subjectivity is embraced in the research process. In this type of research there is no absolute truth. The participants were allowed to 'create' their multiple realities (Noble & Smith, 2015). The study sought to understand the identities of Principals from their point of view (Noble & Smith, 2015; O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). Whatever the Principals made of their situations, it was taken as a 'reality' for their respective contexts. In qualitative research, the context is of utmost importance and it is valued in the process of data generation and analysis (O'Brien et al., 2015). In this study, the context was a deprived school context. Despite that, all the Principals in this study are leading in deprived contexts, but their contexts differ according to form and extent of deprivations that they face.

The other aspect of subjectivity in this form of research, is due to the researcher having to re-tell the stories at some point in the process. The researcher brings his own biases to the inquiry as he will be actively involved (Noble & Smith, 2015). At some point the researcher was responsible for retelling the narratives of the Principals. The researcher in a qualitative study is a key research instrument himself. To capture the identities of Principals I listened to the narratives (stories) and analysed the collages/narrative posters and also the letters by the Principals.

The use of qualitative approach enabled the researcher to interact with the participants in an effort to generate rich textual data with the intention of developing an understanding of identities of Principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts. The emphasis was on the quality and depth of information that was gathered from the participants and not on the breadth of the information provided as in quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). The aim of this study was not to generalise the findings beyond the specified or similar context from the one it was generated in.

### **3.4 Narrative Inquiry**

This qualitative research study was conducted employing Narrative Inquiry as the methodology. There is a variation in meanings attached to this methodology by various scholars (Clandinin, 2006; Smith, 2007). However, this is not the platform to entertain those variations. Here, the only conceptualisation that is presented is the one that this study subscribes to. Narrative Inquiry is an ancient practice; however, it is relatively new as a research methodology (Clandinin, 2006). In this context, Narrative Inquiry is used to mean an umbrella of various data generating methods that are about participants sharing stories about their life experiences (Smith, 2007). Hence, the interchangeable use of narrative and story in this dissertation.

The participants in this study shared the stories about the identities that inform their success as Principals of schools in deprived contexts. The participants, which were the Principals, shared their experiences as to how their identities are created and what informs their identities. As Clandinin (2006) asserts, the narrative inquirer study human experiences, those experiences which inform an identity of a person. Smith (2007) also posits that narratives are useful in the process of self and identity construction. The Principals were given a chance to share how their various identities intersect with one another to make them the people that they are. Loosely defined, it can be said that narratives are stories and stories can be told in many various forms. As the Principals told their stories, I was able to construct their identities from those stories. Further to that, the narratives are the best way in which narrators can be able to make sense of their experiences (Merriam, 2009).

The Principals told their stories using various methods within the Narrative Inquiry methodology. In the first phase of the study, the participants used short biographies to 'introduce' themselves to the researcher. In the second phase, the Principals had a choice between a collage and narrative poster to further reflect on their identities and how they shape their leadership practices. In the last phase, the principals connected to their 'old selves' by writing letters to their 'old selves' narrating how they have transformed and what has caused that transformation. Clough (2002) suggests that narratives are very important in educational research because they exposed us to the stories and experiences that would probably have not been told, had we been using the 'traditional' tools of generating data.

This study was conducted within a particular context, which is a deprived school context. Part of the study was to try and understand how the context impacts on the identities of the

Principals. Narrative Inquiry is then a suitable methodology as it is mindful of the context and/or situations in which the participants live their lives. The use of Narrative Inquiry in this study was also informed by the paradigm within which this study is located. The Principals were given a chance to ‘interpret’ their lived experiences, after which the researcher also interpreted it. This is in line with the interpretivist paradigm.

### **3.5 Sampling of participants**

This section details the sampling of participants that were part of this study. I start by unpacking the concept ‘sample’, as to what it means and what it entails. Further to that, I specify the form of sampling adopted in this study. I also justify my choice for the form of sampling. In conclusion, I explain why the sampled participants are the most suitable to be used in this study. The population in this study were all the Principals that lead successful schools that are in deprived school contexts. The concept of population means all the individuals and/or things that are a target group in a study (Davis, 2014; Pascoe, 2014). From this population, I then sampled a few individuals to use as representatives of the population. As Pascoe (2014) further posits, there is a difference between a target population and the accessible population. As much as the target population for the study is all the Principals in deprived school contexts but I could not have access to all of them. So, from the target population I needed to narrow down to the Principals that I could be able to get (accessible population). Even the accessible population for this study is too wide (Pascoe, 2014), I then further needed to narrow down to what was manageable.

Sampling is the process by which a researcher chooses the participants to use or not to use in a study among the accessible population (Merriam, 2009; Pascoe, 2014). This can be done using many forms of sampling that are appropriate to the nature of the study. In choosing the sampling method, Pascoe (2014) notes the following two important points to consider. Whatever sampling method that is employed one must ensure that; a sample is a subset of the accessible population, and the sample must be representative of the population. In adhering to the above advice, the form of sampling used in this study was purposive sampling. Some other scholars refer to this form of sampling as purposeful sampling (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015).

Purposive sampling is when the sample is chosen on purpose whereby the researcher uses his or her judgement as to who can provide the best and rich information to achieve the objectives of the study (Merriam, 2009; Opie, 2004; Palinkas et al., 2015; Pascoe, 2014). Palinkas et al.

(2015) further posit that purposeful sampling is useful when one wants to choose the most information-rich sample as was the case in this study. This study involved three Principals, all of whom met the criteria set by the researcher. All the Principals in this study are leading schools that are deemed to be in deprived school contexts. This is per the criteria explained in chapter two, of what makes a deprived school context. Further to that, the schools in question are also considered to be successful as per the criteria which is also detailed out in the literature review section. Beside the above two requirements, the Principals were willing and available to be part of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). This is good for convenience purposes. So the sampling strategy used here can be said to combine both purposeful sampling and also convenience sampling (Pascoe, 2014).

### **3.6 Data Generating Methods**

In line with the Narrative Inquiry adopted for this study, a variety of data generation techniques were used. This study was done in three phases. In the first phase, the participants were asked to provide some biographical details. O'Hara et al. (2011) advise that it is important to have biographical details of participants. The participants were provided with the template (see appendix E) that they used to write their details. This assisted the researcher in getting to know the participants better.

#### **3.6.1 Narrative Poster**

In the second phase, the Principals that participated in the study were asked to create a collage or narrative poster (one of the two). Further instructions on the creation of the collage/poster were provided to participants. The copy of the instructions given to Principals is provided in annexure (appendix E) at the end.

#### **3.6.2 Letter Writing**

In the third phase of the study, the participants were asked to write a letter to their 'old selves' telling the 'old self' how their identities have changed and the causes for such changes. Further instructions on the writing of the letter were provided to participants. The copy of the instructions given to Principals is also given in annexure (appendix E) at the end of this report.

### **3.6.3 Conversational Interview(s)**

In between the three phases, I requested conversational interviews with the participants when I deemed necessary. These conversational interviews were in a form of one-on-one interviews. Conversational interviews are advantageous because they are flexible (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher does not ask rigid pre-determined questions (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The advantage of this type of interview is in that the interviewer can always adjust the direction of the interviews and probe for more if there is a need (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). These interviews were audio recorded and I personally transcribed it. These methods were all chosen due to their suitability and alignment to the qualitative and narrative nature of the study.

## **3.7 Data Analysis**

The data in this study was analysed at two levels. The first level is narrative analysis (re-telling of narratives) and the second level is analysis of narratives. The data in this study was generated using various methods, namely; narrative posters, conversational interviews and letter writing.

### **3.7.1 Narrative analysis**

This is the first level of analysis that I engaged in. At this juncture it is worth noting that narrative analysis is open and diverse (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). There are many ways of conducting it (Earthy & Cronin, 2008; Robert & Shenhav, 2014; Smit, 2016). In this dissertation I adopted the 'holistic-content analysis' approach to narrative analysis (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). In this approach the focus is on two things. Firstly, the focus is on how different parts of the narrative fits to the rest of the narrative. Secondly, the focus is on what is said (content) as opposed to how it is said. At this level of analysis, I combined the stories from various phases of the data generation into one coherent and developmental narrative for each participant (Polkinghorne, 1995). At this level of analysis, the stories must be compiled into a single chronological narrative (Emden, 1998; Khuzwayo, 2018). In synthesising the narratives, I captured the three aspects of participants lives, namely: personal, professional and social lives. I captured these aspects in relation to time and contexts in which they took place. As much as I re-told the narratives at this level, I also tried to keep the stories intact (Smit, 2016).



### **3.7.2 Analysis of narratives**

The narratives produced from the first level of analysis (narrative analysis) were further analysed. At the second level of analysis is where I was looking for themes as they emerged from the narratives. The themes were drawn from the narratives itself, employing inductive analysis. Inductive analysis means that the researcher approached the data with an open mind, with no pre-conceived ideas (Thomas,2006). At this level of analysis, I used the re-storied narratives (from the previous level of analysis) as opposed to the original field texts (Blose,2018).

#### **3.7.3 a) *Conversational interviews***

As asserted in the section on data generation, the conversational interviews were all audio recorded. In total, each participant was interviewed three times at the close of each phase. These three interviews (per participants) were transcribed by the researcher himself. This complies to the advice by O'Hara et al. (2011) that the first step in analysing data is transcribing any data that may have been recorded.

#### **b) *Narrative posters***

After the participant has done a poster, they were asked to do a brief presentation which covered the content of the poster. This was followed immediately by the second conversational interview(s). The narrative posters were analysed concurrently with the narratives from the interviews.

#### **c) *Letters***

After the participant had written a letter, they were asked to briefly present the narrative in the letter and that was recorded. This went hand in glove with the final conversational interview. For each participant, this was transcribed.

#### **d) *Consolidation of the stories***

At the end, each participant had three separate but related stories from the three phases of the study. As asserted above, the various stories were synthesised into one narrative per participant through a process called 'narrative analysis'. After the narrative analysis phase, the narratives were sent to respective participants. This was done to confirm with the participants if the narratives were reflective of their stories.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a concept used in interpretivist research which refers to the way in which the researcher can convince the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is reliable and of high quality (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen et al., 2011). Trustworthiness in a qualitative research comprises of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Koonin, 2014).

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

According to Clandinin (2007), credibility deals with the question of congruency between the findings and reality. To ensure credibility in this study I retold the narratives of all the participants. In doing so I made sure that the ‘re-told’ stories resembles the stories of participants as close as possible. I gave the ‘re-told’ stories back to the participants to read in order to ensure that I had not altered what they had divulged to me and to see that the story still remains authentic. Even when I did the analysis I had as much verbatim quotes as possible as evidence of my conclusions. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) also advise that credibility can be enhanced by using mechanical means of recording data. Narratives were all audio recorded as one way of enhancing credibility. Koonin (2014) points out that credibility can also be enhanced by triangulation, that is why in this study multiple methods of generating data were used i.e. interviews, poster and letter writing.

#### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the findings being worthwhile to be applied in another similar situation and yielding the similar outcomes (Koonin, 2014). I took steps to build trustworthiness and more particularly transferability into my research by doing an audit trail. Audit trail refers to the high level of transparency as far as data generation and data analysis is concerned (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This was done so that other researchers who might want to do the same study can use them to replicate the study in other similar contexts. This is in line with the assertion by Elo and Kyngas (2007) that to facilitate transferability, the researcher should give a clear description of the context, selection and characteristics of participants, data generation and process of analysis.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

In order to ensure that my study is dependable, I described in detail the entire process through which the research was carried out so that others can decide the extent to which findings from my research are generalisable to different situations (Koonin, 2014). At each stage I made certain that the research processes that I engaged in is verified by giving my work to my research supervisor for critique.

### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the study's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Clandinin, 2007; Koonin, 2014). To ensure that the findings are reflective of the data that I had generated, I engaged the services of a critical reader to read my report. Further to that I gave the draft of my report to all the participants so they could confirm that it was a true depiction of what they shared with me.

## **3.9 Ethical issues**

In research that involves human beings, ethics are of paramount importance (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Bertram and Christiansen (2014) put forth three ethical principles and these are: Autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence. Artal and Rubenfeld (2017) goes on to add the fourth one, which they call 'justice'. Nonetheless they (Artal & Rubenfeld, 2017) confirm the three put forth by Bertram and Christiansen (2014). Ethical issues are there to protect the participants and also give credibility to the findings (Artal & Rubenfeld, 2017).

### **3.9.1 Autonomy**

To address the principle of autonomy in this study, the participants were informed that they have a right to informed consent. They were also made aware that they can pull out at any time should they wish to do so. As Artal and Rubenfeld (2017) posit, the participants should and indeed were given autonomy. The study was explained to all the participants and they knew exactly what was expected of them before they even embarked on this inquiry.

### **3.9.2 Beneficence**

The study must be beneficial to either the participants or the broader public (Artal & Rubenfeld, 2017; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To address the issue of beneficence, the findings and recommendations of the study were shared with the participants. This had a potential of assisting the participants in improving their practice. Besides that, the research process itself was reflective and that should benefit the participants in reviewing and improving their practice.

### **3.9.3 Non-Maleficence**

To address the principle of non-maleficence, the identities of the participants were protected at all times. It is only known to me as a researcher and to the supervisor. All the data generated is stored in a safe place where no one else has access to and it was given to the supervisor at the end of the study for safe keeping. The data will be kept for five years from the submission of this dissertation. At the lapse of the five years it will be destroyed accordingly. As per the assertion of Artal and Rubenfeld (2017), research must never do harm to the participants, their dignity or those related to them.

Moreover, ethical clearance was sought from the research office of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix A). Further to that, I secured the permission to conduct research from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Appendix B). The gatekeepers (the Principals) of schools also granted me the permission to conduct the study in their schools. All these documents are attached as annexures at the end of this dissertation.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

The main focus of this chapter was to discharge the methodology and design of the study. This chapter located this study within the interpretive paradigm, for the reasons that were presented in sub-section 3.2. In this chapter the whole research process was unpacked, starting from the sampling of participants up to the analysis of data that was generated. In essence, this chapter served to give a ‘comprehensive outline’ of the study.

It was noted that the findings of the study cannot be generalised owing to the qualitative nature of the study and also the uniqueness of the contexts in our schools. Nevertheless, the findings of the study as presented in the upcoming three chapters are very useful. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the ethical issues observed during the study were also presented in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PROFILES OF PRINCIPALS AND RE-STORIED NARRATIVES**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology of this inquiry. It highlighted the interpretivist paradigm as the paradigm within which this inquiry is located. Further to that the qualitative design, the Narrative Inquiry methodology and text generating methods were foregrounded. In the same chapter I discussed the sampling techniques employed in this inquiry. I also detailed how the field texts generated using various methods were analysed. This analysis happened in two layers, the first one being the re-telling of narratives (narrative analysis) which is captured in this chapter (Chapter 4) and the second layer is the analysis of narratives (see next chapters, Chapter 5 & Chapter 6).

As asserted above, this chapter presents the first layer of analysis. Through the re-told narratives, the chapter unpacks the various identities of Principals leading in deprived school contexts. These identities were later ‘packaged’ into various forms and elaborated on in the upcoming chapters. The re-told narratives are preceded by the profiles of all the participants so as to put them into context. The profiles were developed mainly using the biographical details as provided by the principals themselves. These re-storied(re-told) narratives provide the missing pieces of the two research puzzles (see chapter, page 12) underpinning this inquiry. The narratives are presented in no particular order.

There was no specific criteria that was used in naming the participants. They were named with random names that the researcher could think of.

## 4.2 Profiles of Participating Principals

### 4.2.1 A Profile of Mr Mild of President High School

The first participant will be known as Mr Mild and the name of his school will be President High School. The names used here are not real; this is done to protect the participating Principals and their respective schools. Mr. Mild is a married adult male with children. He and his family live in a township, just a few kilometers from where his school is situated. He has just turned 45 years a few months ago (in 2018). He was born and bred in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal (South Coast).

He started his tertiary education at the former University of Durban-Westville (now known as University of KwaZulu-Natal. He graduated with B. Paed (science in education) in 1995. He then pursued Bachelor of Education (Honors) from the same university, which he finished in 1997. He went on to pursue a Master of Education degree, specializing in educational management (UKZN). He finished his masters in the year 2000.

He has been working as an educator for the past 19 years now. He started his career in a township school (School A) where he worked as a Post Level (PL) 1 educator for 5 years. He then transferred to another school (School B) in an affluent area, where he also worked as a PL 1 educator for 02 years. He then returned to his old school (School A) to serve as the Departmental Head. This position he held for 6 years. It is in the same school where Mr. Mild was later appointed as the Deputy –Principal, the position he served in for 4 years before being promoted to Principalship. He has been serving as a Principal for 2 years now. Outside the school he has held and still holds several leadership positions. He served in many structures as a student at university, at church, in social movements etc. He is a church goer and Christian by faith.

His favorite sports include soccer, cricket and also swimming. He is a diehard supporter of a prominent PSL soccer team. He also enjoys watching TV and listening to radio, especially the current affairs shows. He is also a member of multiple social clubs e.g. stokvels. In his work experience, he has also worked as a tutor and later a junior lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Under his leadership the school has produced good matric (Grade 12) results. In 2016 the school attained 95.5% and in 2017 the school got 97 % Pass rate in grade 12. The school also excels in choral music, soccer and cultural activities.

#### **4.2.2 A Profile of Mr Chilli of Rural Combined School**

The second participant will be known as Mr. Chilli and the name of his school will be Rural Combined School. The names used here are not real; this is done to protect the participating Principals and their respective schools. Mr. Chilli is also a married adult male with children. Some of his children are in tertiary now. He and his family live in a township, just a few kilometers from where his school is situated. He has just turned 45 years a few months ago (in 2018). He was born and bred in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal in the South coast of the province also.

He started his tertiary education at the Springfield College of education. This is where he attained a higher educational diploma in 1999. He then pursued Advanced Certificate in Education at NMMU majoring in Mathematical Literacy, which he finished in 2007. He went on to pursue a Bachelor of Education (honors), specializing in educational leadership and management (UKZN). He finished his honors degree in the year 2018.

He has been working as an educator for the past 17 years now. He started his career in a rural school (School A) where he worked as a Post Level (PL) 1 educator for 11 years. He then transferred to another school (School B) which is also in a rural area, where he worked as a PL 2 for 3 years. He was then promoted to the position of a Principal in Rural Combined School. He has been serving as a Principal for 3 years now.

Outside the school he has held and still holds several leadership positions. He at some point served as the Site Steward of school B. He did not end there, he also served his union as the Deputy Chairperson at branch level. He has also served as a Cluster Coordinator in his cluster for the grade 12 educators. As a grade 12 educator, he has also been a Lead Educator. Outside school Mr. Chilli is a very politically active person. He has served as the Secretary of African National Congress (ANC) for 7 years in his branch.

His favorite sport is soccer. He also enjoys to engage in political debates. Mr. Chilli is in his own words, a ‘very cultural person’. Under his leadership the school has produced good matric (Grade 12) results. In 2016 the school attained 76% and in 2017 the school got 75% Pass rate in grade 12. His school also has several sporting awards.



### 4.2.3 A Profile of Mr Hot of Township High School

The third participant will be known as Mr. Hot and the name of his school will be Township High School. The names used here are not real; this is done to protect the participating principals and their respective schools. Mr. Hot is an adult male with children, but not yet married. He and his family live in a township, just a few kilometers from where his school is situated. He has just turned 40 years early this year (in 2018). He was born and bred in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Their family then relocated to one of the biggest townships in the province, which is where he currently resides.

He started his tertiary education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He graduated with Bachelor of Education in the year 2000. He then studied for the Bachelor of Education (Honors) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), which he finished in 2016. He is currently pursuing a Master of Education, specializing in educational management (UNISA).

He has been working as an educator for the past 18 years now. He started his career in a township school (School A) where he worked as a Post Level (PL) 1 educator for 5 years. He was then promoted to a post level 2(HOD), the position he held for 3 years. It is in the same school where Mr. Hot was later appointed as the Deputy –Principal, the position he served in for 5 years before being promoted to a Principal post. He has been serving as a Principal for 5 years now. Outside the school he has held and still holds several leadership positions. He served in many structures as a student at university, at church, in social movements etc. He is a church goer and Christian by faith. To highlight, he is a Public Relations Officer (PRO) of his church.

He is a sport fanatic, with swimming as of his favorite sports. He is a diehard supporter of a prominent PSL soccer team. He is also very politically active. Under his leadership the school has produced good matric (Grade 12) results. In 2016 the school attained 85 % and in 2017 the school got 90.12% Pass rate in grade 12.

### **4.3 Re-storied/re-told narratives**

#### **4.3.1 Narrative of Mr Mild**

##### **Introduction**

First and foremost, let me say that it gives me a great pleasure to get this opportunity to tell you the story of my life. I am Mr. Mild, a principal of President high school. Before being a principal, I am a family man. I love and value my family. I also hold various leadership positions in the community. For example, at church I am being groomed to be a deacon. My school is a very big school, with an enrolment of over a thousand learners. Just like all the principals, I started off as a post level one educator. I have worked my way through various levels of the profession.

##### **The old self**

Before I became a principal, I was an irresponsible person, who used to come to work late, take early leave, misuse money by buying unnecessary things and lacked direction in life. I used to mind my own business but now that is no longer the case. There are people who depend on me for a number of things. I remember that I used to be the last to submit my work to the Departmental Head, but now that has changed. I am now very prompt when it comes to submission both to the circuit and district.

##### **The changed self**

Being a principal has taught me to be a responsible person who leads by example. I have acquired a number of skills that a progressive manager requires in order to manage successfully. I have learnt to listen a lot and to remain humble at all times. I have developed a lot of respect for all persons under my care. To be a principal is very much different from any other post level within a school. That is why I needed to change certain things when I became the principal. As a principal, everyone at school is looking up to you. I am now very disciplined because I believe that a manager that lacks discipline is doomed to fail in its endeavours. I have learnt that more often than not hard work pays off. That is why every day I am at work even if I am not feeling well. I am always punctual at work so that I start my day on a high note and as an organized person.

### **Mr. Mild -The visionary**

As a leader I have to give direction and guidance. I am a visionary leader who gives support to both teachers and learners. For example, if one of the teachers or learners are experiencing personal problems, they confide in me with the hope that I would be able to come up with solutions. That is exactly what I do when they come to me. I try by all means to help them to solve their problems. I set goals and standards for myself every week. I also make sure I stay focused all the time. I believe that is why the school is successful. I network with other principals and share good practice with successful schools in and around our circuit. I also ensure that we always work as a team because I believe that alone I can go fast but collaboratively, we can go far. I want this school to be a model of excellence in this area.

### **Passion for education**

I am now a person who believes in acquiring skills, knowledge and information by reading books, manuals and by doing research. I have developed a deep commitment to education and to ensuring that a black child succeeds in life. I also subscribe to the words of Tata Nelson Mandela, when he said that the only weapon one can use to break the cycle of poverty is education. I am passionate about education. I see myself as someone who is supposed to hold a child's hand all the time. And try to bring out the best in that child. By ensuring that I go to class prepared if I am given that opportunity. If there is a learner who needs some assistance, I must be there for that learner.

### **The motivator**

As a principal, I take it as my obligation to inspire and motivate everyone in the school. I do that almost every day, every chance I get. Even if there is one or two people, I try by all means to give a motivational talk. Acknowledging whatever work that the person has done, no matter how small it may seem. To me it very important to acknowledge and appreciate all that my staff is doing. I acknowledge and appreciate their efforts. I appreciate everything that they do in order to make our school a better place. I believe that humility is one of the most important traits that a person should possess. That is why I say, if you are chosen as a leader or you have been given that opportunity to serve. You must serve with dignity and you must always humble yourself, so that people can listen to you.

### **Family -school link**

The work that one is doing is very challenging. I take my workplace as my second home, and the learners and teachers as my second family. There is a significant link between home and the school. I believe that I need to teach my kids (at home) the core values as well as the valuable life lessons. I teach them about respect and honesty, trustworthiness etc. That prepares me to be able to do the same when I come to school. What I do at home or what I practice at home, is what I do as well here at school.

### **Team Player**

I believe in team work. I believe that if you work as a team you are destined to succeed. For example, at school I believe that if we work as a team, we will definitely achieve quality education. I cannot do everything alone. This is not a one man's show. I believe in team effort, as well as consultation. I believe that it is my responsibility as a leader to create a conducive learning environment for my learners. That (is) why in most cases I do not sit in the office, I go around moving from class to class. I go visit the toilets. I check the grounds and the condition of the school in general. This is all due to passion that I have for my job. Clean environment improves learning. As a leader I have to make sure that the environment is clean for both learners as well as teachers, because that improves productivity and also results in effective teaching and learning.

### **The listener**

I am a listener. I listen to other people's ideas. I value other people's opinions. I believe that sometimes I must lead from behind. I must involve all other stakeholders in decision making, SGB's, parent component, the learners as well as teacher component, and the non-teaching staff. Because I believe that at the end of the day we must all strive for the same goal. We have to make sure that all those that are under our care (learners), they all succeed one day so that they can contribute positively towards the economy of the country. I believe in instilling good behavior and discipline in my learners or in our learners. I believe I am here at school to make sure that all learners get the best education. I am here to bring about change. I am here to uplift the community through education.

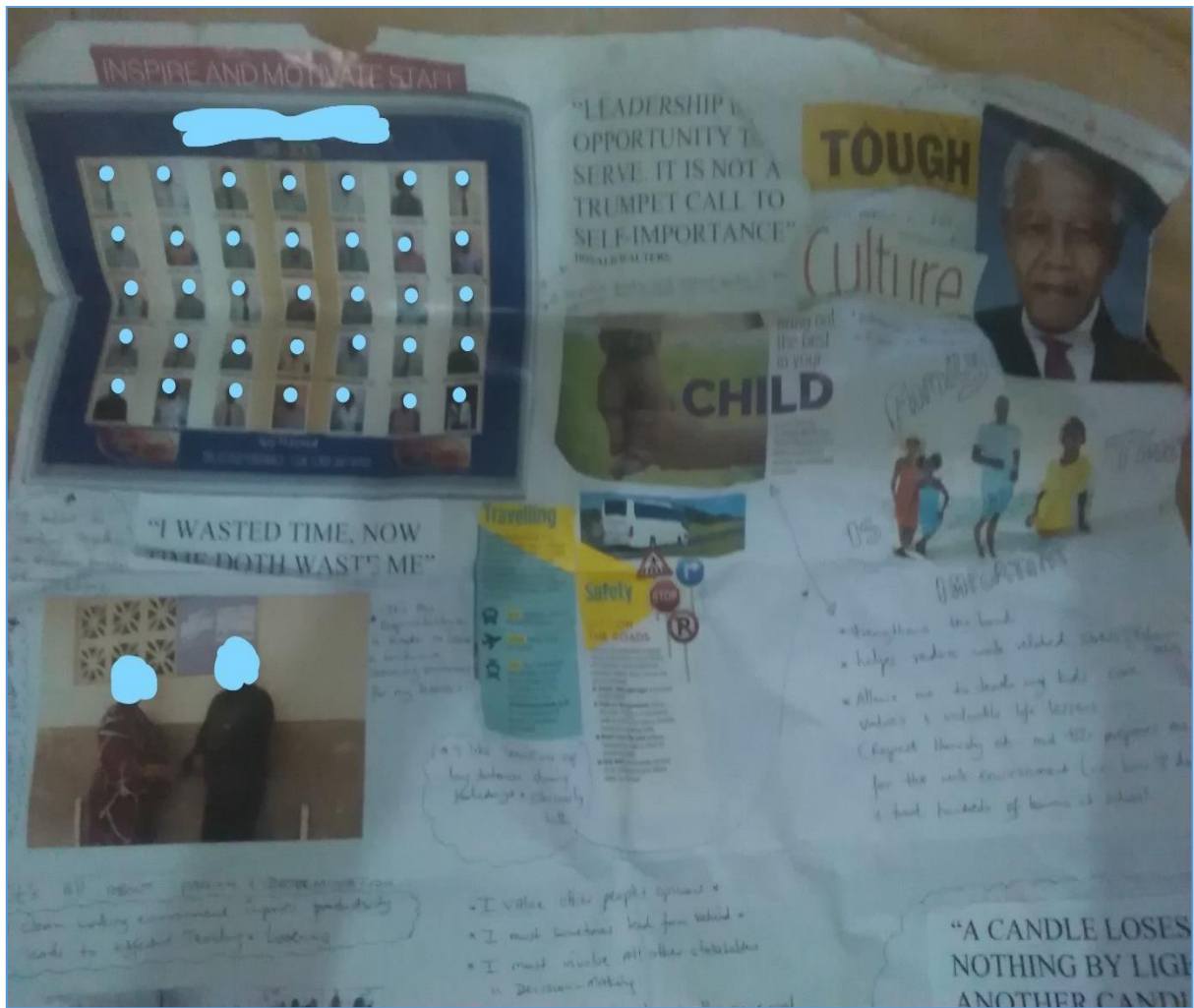
As I mentioned earlier on that I also serve at a church as one of the leaders. Church has taught me many things. It has molded me to be the person I am today. Amongst many things I have learnt from church, is the importance of listening. Church has also taught me humility when I

deal with different people at church, and that helps me when I come here at school to have a manner of approach when it comes to addressing the employees. I am also able to listen to them because at church in most cases, you listen to the problems of the members of the church. Some of them go to an extent of confiding in you. They tell you their serious problems. Now being a leader at church you must listen, you listen to their problems. Try and come up with a solution.

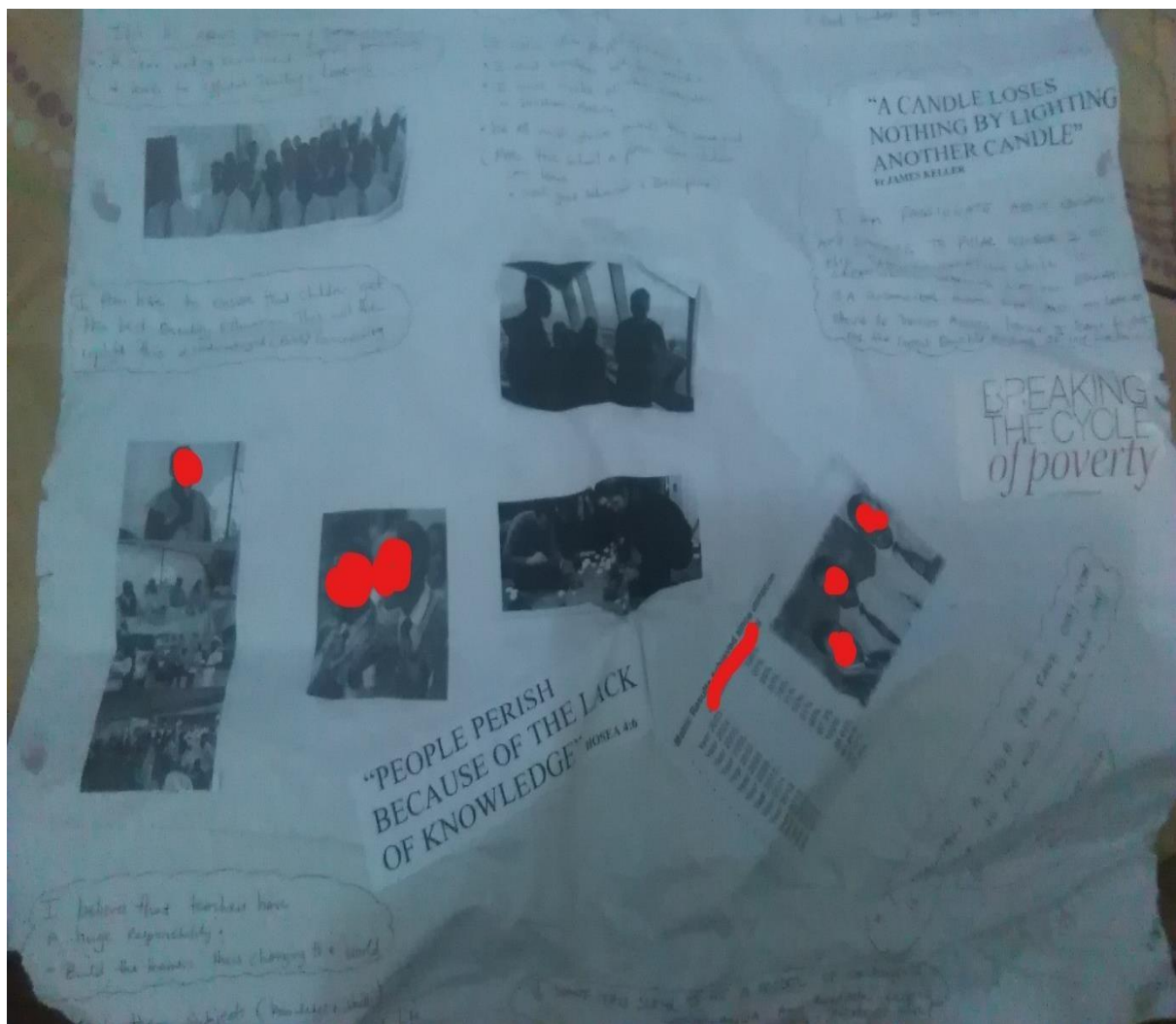
I welcome criticism, for as long as it is constructive. It makes you grow as a person. Because sometimes you may not be aware of certain things that are taking place in the school. But if you are a leader that is prepared to be led, that listens.... That take opinions from colleagues. I think you stand good chances to be successful and ultimately the school will be successful.

### **The conclusion**

There are things I left behind when I assumed this new task. Because it was compulsory to leave such things behind. I am now a very punctual-being, but I use to be very late in almost everything. I use to be late like three or four times a week at school. When I assumed my new responsibility as a manager, I had to change my attitude towards time. I am now probably one of the early birds of the school. Secondly, non-co-operation, I remember I used to be very poor when it comes to meeting deadlines, submission of work and tasks to immediate supervisor. I would fail to abide by the management plan. But then I had to change. I am now a changed person. What I can say has been useful in this regard is starting holding other position before becoming the Principal. I can say it moulded me to be the person that I am today.



Picture 4.1: Mr Mild's poster (Part 1)-Above



Picture 4.2: Mr Mild's poster (Part 2)-Above

### **4.3.2 Narrative of Mr Chilli**

#### **Introduction**

Let me start by introducing myself. I am Mr Chilli, a principal of Rural high school. Being a principal is a very challenging job, but I like it anyway. I grew up here in this environment. So, I know the ins and outs of this community. I am actively involved in many other community structures. I am currently the chairperson of the ANC in this branch. Well this assist me in a big way when it comes to my job as the principal. Because I am leading the ANC and also the ward councillor is an ANC member. So as a principal I work well with local leadership. The parents of the learners that are here at school are the same parents that I am also leading outside the school. Well in that regard I can say that it helps me a lot. So, it makes my job a bit easy. As much as I like the person I am now I do sometimes miss my old self. Growing up has taught me a number of useful lessons and skills. I can safely say that I am now a better person than the one that I was many years ago. My school is very poor yet well performing. My school has got very limited resources. What complicates things even further is that my school is a combined school.

#### **My inspiration to be a principal**

Maybe I should start by explaining as to what inspired me to become a principal? Because initially that was not my ultimate aim. In my early career as a teacher I have taught two subjects, that is Mathematical Literacy and Biology at Grade 12 Level. For both these subjects I became the Coordinator of my cluster. For maths lit in particular, I led the cluster. I was setting the papers and doing everything for my cluster. The Subject Advisor saw the potential in me. When I applied for marking position at some point, I was instead to my surprise appointed as a Deputy Chief Marker. Then it started from there. I was managing the whole centre for mathematical literacy. Then I realised that if I can manage the provincial marking centre, then why can't I manage the school? So, it came from there. I realised that when I become the principal I will be capable of monitoring and supervising the school, because I am tried and tested.

#### **The new me**

In the old days, I used to be very social and outgoing. But now there is no time for all that. I used to go clubbing and stuff, but now I am much disciplined and busy. I must focus at all times. I have a huge responsibility on my shoulders. As much as I do not socialise as much I



would love to but I remain an approachable person. That is a very important attribute if you are in my position. As I asserted earlier on, being a Principal is very challenging especially of a deprived school like this one. I have learnt to be a hard worker, there is no time for playing. I have to be at school before everyone and again be the last one to leave the school premises. There are lot of assignments that I need to go through every day, hence it is very important to learn to prioritise if you are a principal. I face different challenges each and every day.

I used to be very irresponsible. I am now very responsible and punctual, unlike in the old days. Being a member of many different structures in the community has moulded me into a much-organised person. I take care of the kids here at school as my own. As I have mentioned earlier on, it is very difficult to be in my shoes but with the courage that I have I am able to go through each and every day. It is also sad that being a principal has costed me certain things that I used to like the most. I am a strong supporter of SADTU, however after becoming a Principal I have to tone down my involvement in the union activities. I have worked at a school that is 100 % SADTU. I led SADTU there at site, as well as branch level. I knew no other organisation or union other than SADTU. But then when I came here, I found out that it is mixed. About four staff members were BEC members of the other union, NATU. I had to learn how to relate with teachers from other unions. And I had to adjust from being more of a unionist and focus mostly on being a Principal. Hence, I have gotten rid of my SADTU regalia. Since I realised that it not proper for me to be seen in SADTU regalia while at work. Because I want teachers to see me as a Principal not a unionist. I did this because I wanted all the teachers to feel welcomed here at my school. I want to be a unifying figure.

### **Life-long learner**

Due to various challenges I come across every day, I have decided to be a lifelong learner. I continuously try to develop myself. I read a lot. I watch informative shows on TV. I attend various workshops and seminars. I am an alumnus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This university has shaped my understanding of leadership. I studied my Bachelor of Education (honours) there majoring or specialising in leadership and management. I also like their slogan, which says: Inspiring greatness. Indeed, they have inspired greatness in me. And I believe that as a Principal I must inspire greatness in my learners and the staff. Leadership is about inspiring, motivating and encouraging the people you are leading all the time. I also believe that it is important to be exemplary.

### **Mr Chilli –The sport fanatic**

I am a huge fan of the team Kaizer Chiefs and sport in general. I like Bobby (the manager of Kaizer Chiefs). I like Bobby because he is not afraid to speak his mind. He is fearless. As a Principal, you must be fearless. You must be prepared to stand your ground even if that will make you have some enemies. Bobby does that all the time. Well I like Kaizer chiefs because it (is) a top team. That is what I aspire my school to be. I also like Kaizer Chiefs because they play soccer, which is a team sport. Soccer has taught me the importance of teamwork. In my leadership I lead teams and I lead through teams. I am a team player and a team leader.

### **Teacher -doctor analogy**

I do believe that as teachers we are like Doctors. We give ‘medicine’ to our learners, that ‘medicine’ heals them from the disease of not knowing. As a doctor you must always make sure that you give out the correct medication. For example, you cannot give someone suffering from headache some medicine for running stomach. That person will not be healed. Thus, it is important to be very careful in your dealings with the learners. You must know them, understand them beyond the classroom. You must know their backgrounds. This will help you in understanding their behaviour. It my obligation to keep learners and teachers happy all the time. If you give them the right ‘medicine’ they will remain happy all the time.

### **Positive relationship with all stakeholders**

As a Principal now, it is also important to create a positive relationship between all the stakeholders, especially the parents and the community at large. They should be involved in the learning of their children. The things we do at this school are abnormal to an extent that we sometimes ‘cross night’ with the learners. You cannot do that if the parents do not have a trust in the school itself. The parents are also illiterate; hence some do not realise the importance of education. They prioritize other things than education. Hence, we needed to win them over first. For example, if we say there is a study until 10:00 pm the parents must come and accompany their children. As a Principal, one needs to distribute leadership. You cannot do everything by yourself.

### **Attributes central to Mr Chilli’s leadership (principalship)**

Leadership is also about subscribing to some values. The values (or attributes) of leadership that I believe in are as follows: 1. Firstly, a leader must be intelligent. Remember, everyone at a school always run to you when there are problems. You must never come across as clueless.

For one to be intelligent, it means that you must read, study, research, consult etc. The second one is about being 'honest'. I try to be honest all the time to my people. Because if you are dishonest, people will lose trust in you. Being a leader in a poor school like this one also calls for one to be creative. Have creative ways to deal with shortages of resources. Have creative ways of dealing with many other various challenges facing the school due to its location. You must also be confident, driven and have courage.

### **Visionary leadership**

As a leader you must also be visionary. Have a vision for the school and be able to sell it to others. I also believe that respecting time is also imperative when you are a leader. I am time conscious. I value time, and I try to be punctual in everything I do.

### **The improviser**

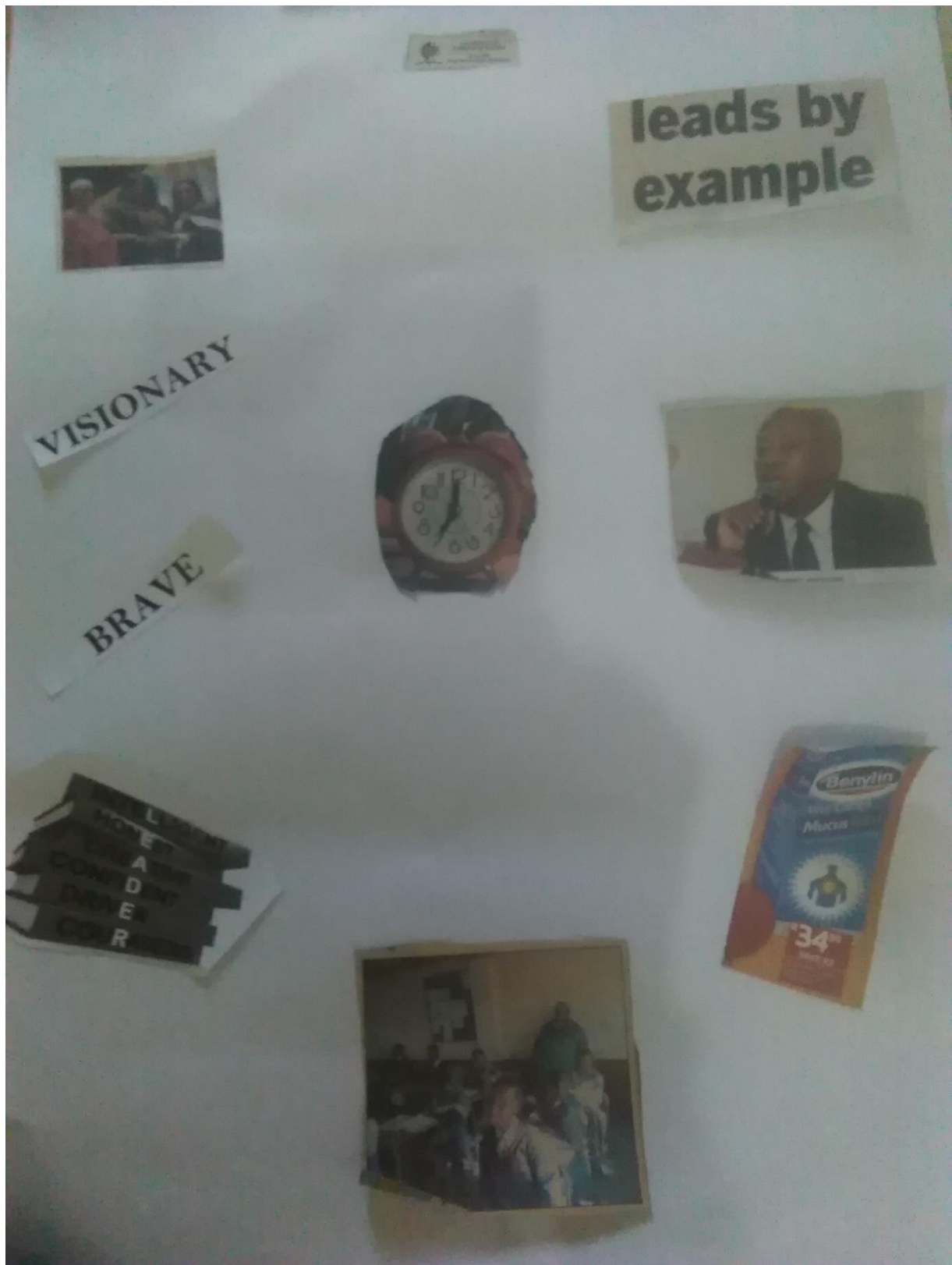
Our school is challenged when it comes to resources, but thanks to our dedicated staff the school is successful regardless. Educators are the most important resources. However, it does count how well trained is that educator. As an old teacher who also happened to teach the science subjects, I knew that as a teacher I had to improvise in certain instances. Improvising entails being able to make a learner to be able to imagine a beaker without seeing it. I would take something else that resembles a beaker (e.g. a glass) and use it as a beaker. But if you have got all the science materials but you do not have a teacher, you cannot do anything with it.

### **Risk-taker**

Let me now speak to policies. As a principal I sometimes need to appropriate some of the policies for the success of the school. Like that one policy of PPN. I am coming from a school that starts from grade R to 7. I was a Principal there. But there were 3 teachers and I was the fourth one. Hence, that tells you that at any given time there would be classes that are not attended. The department does not like multi-grade teaching also. I would then take graduates that are not employed. I would take them on a voluntary basis. I know very well that is not allowed by the department. I had to break the rule anyway. I was prepared to account for whatever that may happen due to my action of bringing in volunteers to the school. The other issue is the issue of corporal punishment, it still being used in our school. The alternatives to corporal punishment are a punishment to teachers. They themselves can be dangerous to the children. If you detain a learner until late, the learner has to walk in the forest alone. If something happens to that learner, you will still be called to account.

## **The conclusion**

As teachers, we do all what we do for the betterment of our students. All we want to see is our students going higher and higher in life. Being a Principal has reshaped me a lot. One major thing that I needed to adjust on, was the fact that I was very much of a ‘social giant’. I was very flexible. I liked joking with everyone about everything all the time. I was a people’s person. But when I assumed this duty, I have realised that it not all the people that you can joke with. Some people are anti-social by nature. You may think that you are joking with someone, and they decide to capitalise on that joke. Hence, one has to learn to be well behaving and strict. And this thing of ethics, I happen to be a very traditional someone. But one had to learn to embrace those who think differently. I used to talk bad about Christianity but now I am accommodative to everybody.



Picture 4.3: Mr Chilli's poster

### **4.3.3 Narrative of Mr Hot**

#### **Introduction**

I have an interest in informing you about my development in the education fraternity since my appointment as a school Principal. I manage and lead Township High school. I would like to take you through a journey of great experience. I head a quintile two ranking school which is deprived in many ways. The school is located in a multiple deprived context with many social ills that affect our learners. We have an enrolment of approximately 1022 learners and I lead and manage a staff of 38 educators which includes members of the management team. Although the school is multiple deprived it is producing very good results.

#### **My background**

I grew up in a deprived community like this one. I will start from my family. I grew up in a deprived home. My father was a general worker and my mother was a domestic worker. My granny was a domestic worker too. We did not have much of anything that is luxury for us. My family was deprived and the only thing that we were taught is to go to school to be better people. So, that motivated me and triggered the value of education in me. That also encouraged me to become a leader and to aspire to be a manager as I am a manager at this point in time.

I started leading even when I was not in a strategic leadership position. I ensured that everything was in order at school. I would communicate with the School Management Team (SMT). I would also communicate with the School Governing Body (SGB) and the educators of the school. I would motivate learners. I would design programmes which enhanced learning. I would communicate with other stakeholders from all walks of life, in universities and all tertiary institutions. I also communicated with the private sector, businesses, Non-Profit Organisations (NPO's) and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO's) in order for me to be able to make my school a successful school.

#### **Wider –community involvement**

Other than being a principal, I have many other structural positions in the community. These positions equipped me with and enhance my leadership skills and qualities which I utilize while leading and managing the school that I am serving in. I serve as a Public Relations Officer (PRO) at my church. In that I have gained skills and I have also acquired some knowledge of understanding how to deal with the community and how to deal with people. I also serve in the BEC of the ANC in my community. That also equips me with the understanding of different

problems of the community or the society in which I serve. I am able to understand where these kids come from, which are in my school. I am able to sympathise and empathise with them and also, I am able to identify their problems and deal with those problems. So, serving in the community, it helps me a lot in understanding how to lead and manage the school which is placed in a multiple deprived context. It enables me to gain resources from other stakeholders and not only rely on the department of basic education to give me the norms and standards but also to go out to look for sponsorships and other resources which are going to assist our school.

### **The new me**

I am now a much-matured person. I have developed in many spheres that contribute immensely to the way I professionally lead and manage the school. I am now able to solve difficult problems that I come across on a daily basis. I have been exposed to many educational policies which I knew before I became a school principal through formal education doing my teaching qualification, these educational legislation and policies have enabled me to understand human resources, labor and operational matters. These statutes have empowered me because I am able to efficiently manage the school. I have also been developed through meetings, workshops and seminars conducted and initiated by the Department of Basic Education. These programs have sharpened my leadership skills and qualities. These seminars and workshops have capacitated me to be able to provide staff development in the school so in return professionalism and ethical conduct are always maintained by my staff.

### **Life- long learning**

I have also decided to further my studies, as I speak I am reading for my Masters. I have also joined a group of successful principals in the district where we have formed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CoPs) to be able to share our experiences, challenges, accolades and attributes in which we reflect on these experiences and shape our own practices when carrying our duties and responsibilities in our schools. I have also developed a good working relationship with other stakeholders, community leaders, non-government organizations including the private sector in which I gain assistance in number of resources which benefits our impoverished school.

## **Exemplary leadership**

A leader is someone who *demonstrates* what is possible. The key here word is ‘demonstrates’, because for me that is a very important identity of a leader. You must never expect your followers or the people you are leading to do things that you yourself have failed to do. Before you ask or expect others to do something, start by showing them how it is done. If I say to my teachers I want a file done this way, I show them my file. In essence what I am saying is that as a leader you must lead by example. In most cases you must lead from the front, show the teachers and learners the way. You cannot preach about punctuality but as a principal you are never punctual. When you are a leader, the people are more likely to replicate what you do and not what you say.

## **Mentoring**

As much as I said as a leader you must lead from the front most of the times but sometimes it becomes necessary to lead from the back. You must have that flexibility. Sometimes you must take a step back and let your followers walk before you. See how well they implement your teachings with you by the side or at the back. Sometimes you need to capacitate the people under your leadership to be able to lead also, when you eventually hand over the baton. You do that by giving them the practice while you are still there and available to mentor and guide them. Real leaders create other leaders. There must be a growth in the school.

## **Inspirational**

Further to that, ‘a good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill the love of learning’. I consider my job to be that of an inspirer. When I address the kids and the teachers, they must find inspiration in the things that I say. I must make them visualise the vision I have for the school. Most importantly I must make them love being here. When they come to the premises of the school hopeless, they must leave full of hope because of the things I say and do. That is what I call being a leader.

## **Passionate**

I love my job. I love being a teacher. I love being a principal. Actually, it more than just loving it. I am passionate about touching the lives of the young ones. They say, if you love what you are doing ....you will never feel for a moment as if you are working. Yeah, because you are doing what you love. As much it is a job, it pays you at the end of the month. But the greatest reward in our job is in making a positive difference, one learner at a time.



## **Life lessons from swimming**

I am not only a workaholic but I am also a sport fanatic. More particularly, I like swimming. At an early age growing up in the rural area, me and my friends we used to go down in the rivers and dams to swim. While growing up we used to race during the swimming process and most of the times I would become the winner. I grew up liking the idea of swimming. When I was in high school I took up swimming lessons. I got acquainted with this sport. One thing that I have learnt from this sport is that you are supposed to be disciplined. Because our coaches there, they value time. When we talk about swimming, one thing that it has taught me is time management. That you have to be on time. Because when you race in swimming they give you a certain amount of time which you have to be able to finish. Swimming has taught me discipline and time management.

## **Conclusion**

I believe leading or being a principal is like driving a car on a freeway. As much as it is called a freeway, you are never free in the full sense of the word free. You must still be considerate of other people with whom you are sharing the road. You can still anticipate accidents that are going to stop you or slow you down as you drive or that may even make you change the direction. You must always be prepared for all those eventualities. I take the school as my household. The people in the school, I take them as my family members. My brothers, sisters, children etc. I ensure that I listen to them. I listen to whatever issues that they have and I address them. I support them in all and whatever they do. Because as I mentioned before that we are working in a multiple deprived context; it is very difficult for us to function in that environment. We need to work as a team. We need to support each other. We need to complement each other's leadership qualities and management styles. It is very important for us to work together, also to take decisions together. I am collegial in my approach whenever we have challenges or encounter problems.



Picture 4.4: Mr. Hot's poster (part 1)



**Picture 4.5: Mr. Hot's Poster (Part 2)**

#### 4.4 Salient points from all the narratives

The table below highlights the salient points that emerged from the narratives of all the principals. These salient points were used (in chapter 5) to ‘construct’ the identities of the principals as discussed in the next chapter. They are organised here in the form of a table for easy reference.

No.	Mr Mild	Mr Chilli	Mr Hot
1.	Deacon (at church)	ANC Chairperson	PRO at church (effective communicator)
2.	Prompt (punctual)	Punctual	Time management
3.	Responsible	Responsible	Collegial
4.	Exemplary	Hard worker	Exemplary leader
5.	Listener	Approachable	Listener
6.	Humble	Motivational	ANC BEC member
7.	disciplined	Disciplined	Disciplined
8.	Visionary leader	Visionary	Visionary (capacitate others)
9.	Team player	Team player	Collegial
10.	Life long-learner	Life long-learner	Life long-learner
11.	Motivator	Distributive leader	Inspirational
12.	Problem solver	Exemplary	Problem solver
13.	Caring	Risk taker (Problem solver)	Supportive
14.	Servant	Improviser (Problem solver)	Considerate

**Table 4.1: Table of salient points that emerged from the narratives**

## **4.5 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the re-told narratives of the Principals. The re-told narratives portray the identities of the Principals inside and outside of their role as the Principals. It further shows how various forms of identities intersect with each other, and how they shape the leadership practices of the respective Principals. These narratives among other things captures who they are in church, school, at home and in the community in general. As it might have been expected, these Principals showed multiple array of identities.

The next chapter presents the second layer of analysis of the narratives. It will put the missing pieces of the puzzles where I believe it should be. Hence, I will be deliberating on the identities that emanated in the narratives presented in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

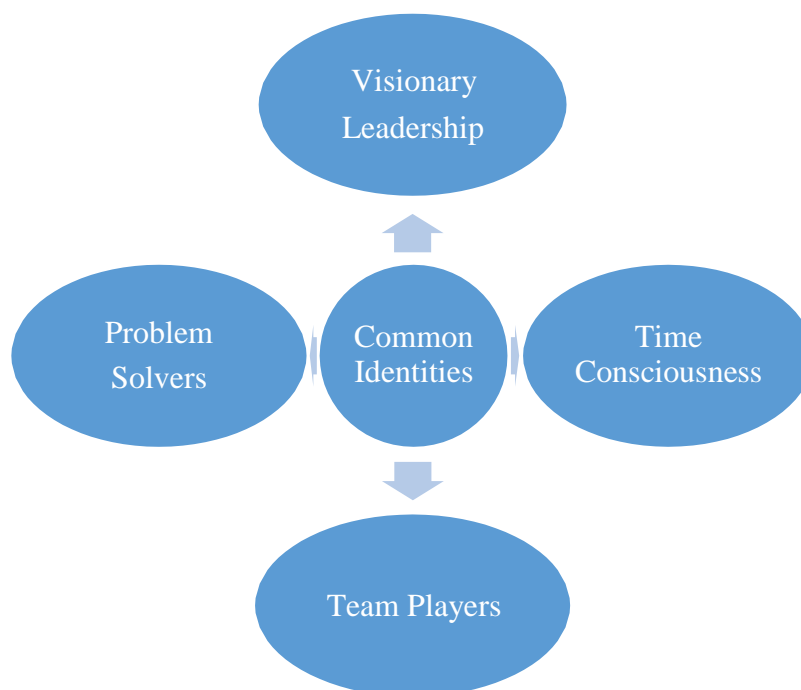
### **DISCUSSION OF IDENTITIES AS EMANATING FROM THE NARRATIVES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided the first layer of analysis (narrative analysis) for the identities of principals who participated in this inquiry in a form of re-told narratives. The chapter mainly sought to partly answer the first research puzzle, which is about the identities that are common and those that are exclusive to individual principals. This chapter further seeks to intensely answer the first research puzzle. An in-depth discussion of the second research puzzle will feature in the next chapter.

After that an intense discussion of the identities that are common in all the participants and those that are exclusive to individual participants follows. In the discussion I employ the intersectionality theory (see chapter 2, page 39) and the social identity theory (see chapter 2, page 41) for analysis as detailed in chapter 2.

The following section presents findings to the first research puzzle, which is as follows: What are identities that are common and also those that are exclusive to individual principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts? As it can be seen that this research puzzle is two-fold, likewise the findings are presented in two folds. Sub-section 5.3 presents the identities that are common amongst all the participants. While, subsections 5.4 to 5.6 presents findings that are exclusive to individual principals.



**Diagram 5.1: Identities that are common among school principals in deprived context**

The diagram above depicts the identities that are common in all the Principals that participated in the study. It shows the identities that are useful in all the schools (in the study), despite the differences in contexts in which these Principals are operating. Further discussion of each identity is given below.

## **5.2 Discussion of Common Identities**

### **5.2.1 Visionary Leadership**

Visionary leadership has emerged from the narratives of all the participants in this inquiry. All the participants have emphasised having a vision for the school as one of the important identities that a principal leading in a deprived school context has to possess. In line with this, Bush (2011) asserts that possessing a vision has consistently surfaced as a much needed element of effective leadership in the leadership scholarship. It then come as no surprise that

these school principals that are leading successful schools in deprived contexts claim it as one of their ‘ingredients’ for success. It is however worth noting that not all the participants have made a direct reference to the concept of vision in their narratives but nonetheless they all speak to it either direct or indirect. For some participants one had to dissect the narratives to lay bare the visionary leadership identity in some parts of their identities. To borrow from Mr Hot, this is what he said:

*Sometimes you need to capacitate the people under your leadership to be able to lead also, when you eventually hand over the baton. You do that by giving them the practice while you are still there and available to mentor and guide them. Real leaders create other leaders. There must be a growth in the school.*

The above assertion depicts Mr Hot as a visionary leader. He does not think in the present tense but rather thinks for the future. He imagines where he wants the school to be in the future even after his tenure as the principal. He has a vision of where he wants to see the school when he ‘hands over the baton’. As Rossow and Warner (2000) correctly put it, visionary leadership is partly about being able to project the future. Rossow and Warner (2000) further posit that visionary principals are also characterised as people who embrace the culture of learning in a school. This is evident in Mr Hot’s narrative as he claims that he is preparing the people he is working with to lead. He is making sure that they ‘learn’ how to lead while he is there to guide them. In the very same extract, Mr Hot is portraying himself as a servant leader. As mentioned in chapter, servant leaders have foresight and commitment to growth of others in an organisation (Dodd et al.,2015; Forde,2010). As per the central claims of intersectionality and social identity theory, Mr Hot appears to possess multiple identities and these identities are overlapping (Hancock,2007; Pugach et al., 2018). It is relatively impossible to cage Mr Hot as either a visionary leader or servant leader as he seems to have identities for both. Mr Hot further posit that:

*When I address the kids and the teachers, they must find inspiration in the things that I say. I must make them visualize the **vision** I have for the school. Most importantly, I must make them love being here.*

In this portion from his narrative, Mr Hot is making a direct reference to possessing a vision for the school. He does not only keep the vision to himself but also sells it to the school community. Sterling and Davidoff (2000) point out that it is the job of a leader to build the vision for the school. However, it is important to note that as much as the vision building is the



task of the leader, it must be shared (Bush, 2011; Sterling and Davidoff, 2000). The only way to making other stakeholders to share your vision is by communicating it to them. The vision must be articulated clearly to the teachers, learners, parents and all other interested parties in the school. In the words of Smit et al. (2013), "...to lead the organisation to success in the future it needs an inspiring vision that everybody in the organisation –and external stakeholders –shares in and is excited about".

I now borrow from Mr Chilli's narrative. He asserts:

*As a leader you must also be **visionary**. Have a **vision** for the school and be able to sell it to others.*

In his narrative, Mr Chilli makes a direct reference to the identity of being a visionary. The success of vision depends on how well it is sold to all the people involved in the organisation (Smit et al., 2013). It is not useful to be visionary as a leader if you cannot effectively and convincingly communicate it to others. I reckon that these principals are succeeding in being visionary leaders because they are also able to communicate well and effective. As per the claims in intersectionality theory, here there is evidence that the identity of being a visionary cannot be isolated from other identities, like the one of being an effective communicator (Pugach et al. ,2018).

Effective communicator identity is in a way resulting in a successful visionary leadership. The two identities can then be said to be intersecting with one another which is in line with the claims of intersectionality theory (Pugach, 2018). Effective communication gives rise to successful visionary leadership. From Mr Hot's narrative it is also clear that he was not born an effective communicator, rather he acquired this skill from serving in the church as the PRO (Public Relations Officer). In Mr Hot's narrative we see being a PRO (professional identity) giving rise to effective communicator (social identity) and eventual to a visionary leader (personal identity).

Mr Mild also made several references to visionary leadership in different parts of his narrative. At some point, he asserts:

*I am a visionary leader who gives support to both teachers and learners.*

As closing remarks, Bush (2011) notes that vision has a potential to develop schools. With all this, this dissertation argues that these principals are thriving because they are among many identities, visionary leaders.

### 5.2.2 Time Consciousness

Another identity that emerged from the narratives of all the participants in this inquiry, is the identity of time consciousness. For the purpose of this dissertation, time consciousness comprises three things. It comprises punctuality, spending longer than expected time at school and effective time management. On this identity, Mr. Hot has got this to say:

*While growing up we used to race during the swimming process and most of the times I would become the winner. I grew up liking the idea of swimming. When I was in high school I took up swimming lessons. I got acquainted with this sport. One thing that I have learnt from this sport is that you are supposed to be disciplined. Because our coaches there, they **value time**. When we talk about swimming, one thing that it has taught me is **time management**.*

In the above texts, Mr Hot speaks to the aspect of time management. He posits that swimming is a competitive sport where as they swam they were allocated time to finish. From that exercise he developed a skill of utilising time wisely. In this narrative we see Mr Hot, the swimmer shaping Mr Hot, the principal. Once again, we seeing various forms of identities linking, overlapping and intersecting (Hancock, 2007; Pugach et al., 2018). We seeing the identity of being a swimmer shaping positively the leadership practices of Mr Hot as the principal of a school. Thus, further confirming the theory of intersectionality.

In Mr Chilli's narrative time consciousness also features predominantly. During the poster presentation he mentioned that:

*I am time conscious. I value time, and I try to be punctual in everything I do.*

As it may be seen from the above extract, Mr Chilli speaks to punctuality aspect of time consciousness. In the letter to 'old self' he also makes mention of the time. He says:

*I have learnt to be a hard worker, there is no time for playing. I have to be at school before everyone and again be the one to leave the school premises last. There are lot of assignments that I need to go through every day, hence it is very important to learn to prioritise if you are a principal.*

This extract touches on two aspects of time consciousness, which are: spending more time at school than what is expected and also time management. Time consciousness is also evident when he posits:

*Things we do at this school they are abnormal to an extent that we sometimes 'cross night' with the learners.*

Mr Mild has got this to say about time consciousness:

*I am always punctual at work so that I start my day on a high note and as an organized person.*

From the above assertion, one can deduce that it is the belief of Mr Mild that being punctual and being organized is linked. In the letter to the 'old self' he (Mr Mild) further states that:

*You remember that I used to be the last to submit my work to the HOD, but now that has changed. I am very prompt when it comes to submission both to the circuit and district.*

In the above extract, Mr. Mild is making a point about punctuality when it comes to submission. One can deduct from this assertion that Mr. Mild has been influenced by the role of being a principal to the extent that he has changed some of his identities. As per the claims of social identity theory, here the role(principal) is seen influencing the identity of Mr Mild. He got rid of certain identities in order to 'fit' into the role of being a principal of a school in deprived context. Hence, in line with intersectionality some of Mr Mild's identities can only be understood in relation to the position of being a principal (Pugach et al.,2018).

### **5.2.3 Problem Solver(s)**

Problem solving identity became apparent as one of the fundamental identities for principals thriving in deprived school contexts. This is more so because beside the 'normal' problems that one can expect in any school environment, schools in deprived contexts have additional problems by virtue of being located where they are. The deprived context presents to these schools more problems than in any of the other schools. Mr Mild acquired his problem solver identity from being a member of the church, which he was a member of before becoming a principal. He explains:

*... at church in most case you listen to the problems of the members of the church. Some of them go to an extent of confiding in you. They tell you their serious problems. Now being a leader at church you must listen, you listen to their problems. Try and come up with a solution.*

There are two vital things that can be deduced from the above extract about identities of Mr Mild. Firstly, it is the notion that identities are intricately linked and interdependent (Hancock, 2007). Mr Mild hails himself as a problem solver which is an identity. That identity of being a problem solver is closely linked with another one of being a listener. For one to be able to solve

a problem, one must first listen to the narration of the problem carefully. The first step in a systematic problem solving model is identifying the problem (Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2011), which in this case is identified through listening. Further to that Mr Mild is finding himself having to solve problems because he is a leader (Deacon) at church which is some form identity. Once again, one form of identity is giving rise to another form of identity. This is again another confirmation of the central claims of the intersectionality theory that at some point certain identities need to co-exist (Pugach et al., 2018). This means that at any given moment an individual will possess multiple identities (Moorosi, 2014; Pugach et al., 2018). This problem solver identity is not only useful for Mr Mild in a church setup, but it goes to be useful to him on another role (Principalship). As he posits below:

*That also helps me when I come here at school to have a manner of approach when it comes to addressing the employees.*

Church leadership has shaped the identity of Mr Mild as a school leader(principal). Because of the identities he attained in the church, he is now able to succeed in his role as the principal. In his letter to ‘old self’ Mr Mild goes on to emphasise this problem solver identity:

*There are people who depend on me for a number of things. For example, if one of the teachers or learners are experiencing personal problems, they confide in me with the hope that I would be able to come up with solutions. That is exactly what I do when they come to me, i.e. try by all means to solve their problems.*

Mr. Hot also defines himself as a problem solver. He has got this to say in this regard:

*I also serve in the BEC of the ANC in my community. That also equips me with the understanding of different problems of the community or the society in which I serve. I am able to understand where these kids come from, which are in my school. I am able to sympathise and empathise with them and also, I am able to identify their problems and deal with those problems.*

In the above extract from Mr Hot’s narrative there are two fundamental things we are learning about his identity/Identities as the principal of a deprived school. Firstly, same as Mr Mild his identity as the principal is partly shaped and influenced by his involvement with the community he is serving as a principal. He does not only deal with learners as just the members of the school community but rather as the members of the wider community. He has an understanding that the problems that the learners have at school may be problems that emanate from the

external environment. Mr Hot here is also showing an appreciation of the community –context, in this case which is a deprived context. He seems to show the appreciation to the notion that leadership is context dependent (Bush, 2011). Mr Hot further postulates:

*I have developed in many spheres that contribute immensely to the way I professionally lead and manage the school. I am now able to solve difficult problems that I come across on a daily basis.*

Here we see the role (professional) identity shaping a personal identity (problem solver). Mr. Hot claims that he is now able to solve difficult problems because of being a principal of a deprived school.

#### **5.2.4 Team Player(s)**

When you are a principal you lead teams and through team. Thus, it is important to be a good team player. The participants in this inquiry all perceive themselves as team players. It is evident from their narratives that they believe that their team player identity is elementary in their success as principals of schools in deprived contexts. Mr Mild has this to say:

*I also ensure that we always work as a team because I believe that alone I can go fast but collaboratively, we can go far.*

Mr Chilli also considers himself as a team player, as he asserts:

*Well I like Kaizer Chiefs because it (is) a top team. That what I aspire my school to be. I also like Kaizer Chiefs because they play soccer, which is a team sport. Soccer has taught me the importance of teamwork. And in my leadership, I lead teams and I lead through teams. I am a team player.*

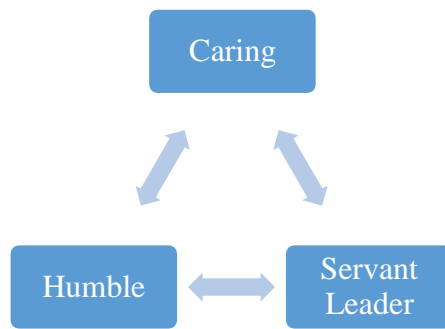
From the above extract, it is clear that Mr Chilli's sense of self as a team player is emanating from his support of soccer in general and particularly from being a supporter of Kaizer Chiefs football club. He believes that Kaizer Chiefs is a top team, and he aspires his school to be a top school also. In Mr Chilli's mind his team is not just a sport team but some kind of motivation.

Mr Hot's identification as a team player emanate from working in a deprived context of the school. In this narrative we see the context dictating the identity of the principal. He asserts:

*... as I mentioned before that we are working in a multiple deprived context; it very difficult for us to function in that environment. We need to work as a team. We need to support each other. We need to complement each other's leadership qualities and management styles. t is*

*very important for us to work together, also to take decisions together. I am collegial in my approach whenever we have challenges or encounter problems.*

Mr Hot postulates that it is difficult to operate in the context of his school, thus the need to co-operate with others in order to succeed. Mr Hot also claims that he is collegial in his approach when there are challenges and problems. Collegial leadership encompasses all those theories that emphasise sharing of power and decision-making (Bush, 2011). Bush (2011) further posits that in collegial approach to leadership decisions are reached through a participative process. Further to that, research has shown that employees are more likely to support the decisions in which they were involved in the process of making (Smit et al., 2013). This will then result in job satisfaction and consequently productivity. The three leadership approaches that have links to this collegial model of leadership are transformational, participative and distributed leadership (Bush, 2011).



**Diagram 5.2: Depicting identities that are exclusive to Mr Mild**

The diagram above shows identities that are exclusive to Mr. Mild. Only the three were taken out of the many that emerged. The ones taken here are the most prominent ones. The two way arrows depict the intricate relationship between the identities. For example, ‘humble’ can inform ‘servant leadership’ and vice versa.

### **5.3 Identities exclusive to Mr Mild**

#### **5.3.1 Caring**

Mr. Mild considers himself to be a caring self. Blose (2018) suggest that care is a fundamental need for school principals as they deal with people on a daily basis. Caring leadership is particularly needed in schools that are in deprived contexts (Blose, 2018). In his own words Mr. Mild posits that:

*If there is a learner who needs some assistance, I must be there for that learner.*

This extract shows that Mr. Mild has deep concern for the needs of his learners. He is always willing to give a helping hand because he cares about them. To lay bare his caring identity Mr. Mild further states that:

*I believe that it is my responsibility as a leader to create a conducive learning environment for my learners.*

This caring identity of Mr. Mild has given rise to the below identity. Mr. Mild also appear to be possessing many attributes of a servant leader, of which ‘caring for the others’ is one of them. Thus, it will be very limiting to try and understand the ‘caring’ aspect of Mr Mild isolation (Hancock,2007). In the intersectionality there is insistence on always trying to understand an identity in relation to another one (Dhamoon, 2011). This is because identities are interdependent.

### 5.3.2 Servant Leader

Mr. Mild strongly considers himself to be a servant leader, as he asserts:

*... If you are chosen as a leader or you have been given that opportunity to serve. You must serve with dignity and you must always humble yourself, so that people can listen to you.*

Servant leadership is people centered kind of leadership (Dodd, Achen & Lumpkin, 2018). In this kind of leadership, the leader seeks to put the people and the community needs first before his or hers. This is evident from the narrative of Mr. Mild as he posits that the success of his school is not entirely because of him. Dodd et al. (2018) further posit that servant leaders prioritises serving over leading. This identity gels well with the previous one. Servant leaders are caring people, they care about the wellbeing of the people they lead more than theirs.

### 5.3.3 Humble

Humility is one of the identities that Mr. Mild believes that he possesses. This is apparent when he claims that:

*...if you are chosen as a leader or you have been given that opportunity to serve. You must serve with dignity and you must always humble yourself, so that people can listen to you.*

Somewhere else in his narrative he also posits that:

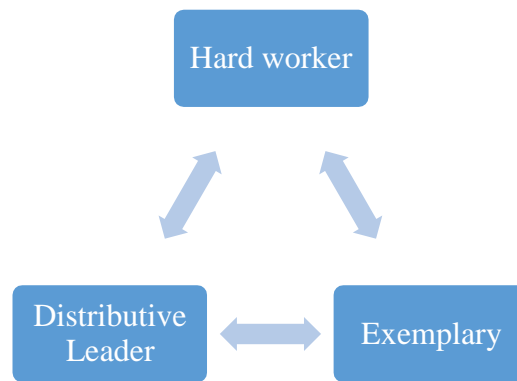
*I have learnt to listen a lot and to remain humble at all times. I have developed a lot of respect for all persons under my care.*

This identity seems to feature predominantly in Mr Mild's narrative. Somewhere else in his narrative he also makes mention of it. He says:

*Church has taught me a lot of things. The manner in which I relate with the other members of the church has taught me humility when I deal with different people at church, and that helps me when I come here at school to have a manner of approach when it comes to addressing the employees.*

Two important assertions are made in the above extract. Firstly, he indicates that he learnt being humble as a result of being a member of the church. Secondly, he indicates that this is helpful for him when he is now dealing with the people at school. From the story of Mr Mild one can deduce that the church has played a huge role in making him the person he is now.





**Diagram 5.3: Depicting identities that are exclusive to Mr Chilli**

The diagram above shows identities that are exclusive to Mr. Chilli. Only the three were taken out of the many that emerged. The ones taken here are the most prominent ones. The two way arrows depict the intricate relationship between the identities. For example, ‘distributive leader’ may come before being ‘exemplary’ but also ‘exemplary’ identity may come before ‘distributive leader’ identity.

## **5.4 Identities exclusive to Mr Chilli**

### **5.4.1 Hard worker**

Mr Chilli considers himself to be a hard worker. He posits:

*I have learnt to be a hard worker, there is no time for playing.*

To further illustrate his hard-working character, he says:

*I have to be at school before everyone and again be the last one to leave the school premises.*

*There are lot of assignments that I need to go through every day...*

From the above extract, Mr Chilli depicts himself as a person who goes beyond the call of duty.

### **5.4.2 Distributive Leader**

Mr Chilli considers himself a distributive leader. As he posits in the extract below:

*As a principal, one needs to distribute leadership. You cannot do everything by yourself.*

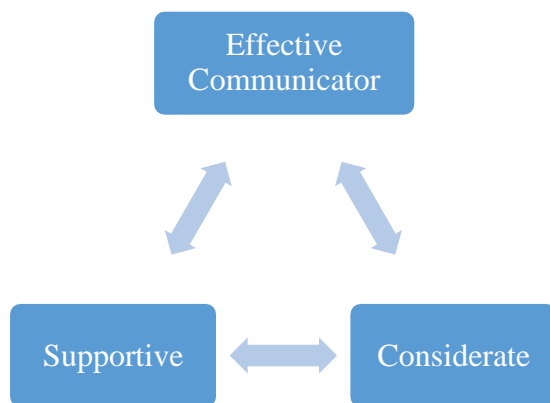
He seems to believe that all other stakeholders have a role to play in the leadership of the school, hence the distribution of leadership duties to others. At the heart of distributed leadership is the notion that leadership should not only be limited to individuals with formal positions (Harris & DeFlamis, 2016; Liu et al., 2018). Harris and DeFlamis (2016) go on however to warn that distributed leadership should not be confused with the concept of delegation.

### **5.4.3 Exemplary**

Mr Chilli also comes across as someone who models the good behaviour that he expects from the people that are under his leadership. He points out that:

*I also believe that it is important to be exemplary.*

Sider and Jean-Marie (2014) postulate that leadership starts with the character (identity) of a leader. This suggests that a leader must be what he/she anticipates the followers to be. The exemplary leaders have a tendency of doing what they expect others to do (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). This has a potential to encourage the followers to follow suit.



**Diagram 5.4: Depicting identities that are exclusive to Mr Hot**

The diagram above shows identities that are exclusive to Mr. Hot. Only the top three were taken out of the many that emerged. The ones taken here are the most prominent ones. The two-way arrows depict the intricate relationship between the identities. For example, ‘supportive’ can inform ‘considerate’ and vice versa.

## **5.5 Identities exclusive to Mr Hot**

### **5.5.1 Effective Communicator**

Communication is an important aspect of any organisation or institution. Mr Hot perceives himself as a good communicator. Here he explains:

*... I am able to talk to all the stakeholders in the school. I am able to communicate well. So, those are one of the attributes or accolades that I have gained serving in the community.*

He attributes his ‘effective communication’ skills to him being the member of the church and serving as its PRO (Public Relations Officer). One can safely posit that his ‘effective communicator’ identity was moulded by his other identity, that of serving in the church structure. Dimpleby and Burton (1994) posit that effective communication involves the sender of the message understanding and having consideration of the other person. Effective communication is not necessarily about getting things done your way; you must consider people’s input as well. On the other hand, Cleary (2010) considers communication to be effective if the message or idea is received as it was intended. This surely takes someone with a special skill to do.

### 5.5.2 Supportive

In his understanding, Mr Hot is also a supportive individual. He expands:

*I ensure that I support them. ... I ensure that I listen to them. I listen to whatever issues that they have and I address them with them. I support them in all and whatever they do.*

Mr Hot explains that he is supportive of his School Management Team, particularly the Departmental Heads. In his narrative he further posits that he finds it easy to support the Departmental Heads because he was once in their position. He has a better understanding of the challenges they come across, since he has been there and done that. Listening also emerges as another ‘twin identity’ that is inseparable from the supportive identity.

### 5.5.3 Considerate

Being considerate can include many things. It can involve being sympathetic, respectful, and understanding to count the few. Mr Hot comes across as someone who embraces most features of someone who is considerate.

*I am able to understand where these kids come from, which are at my school. I am able to sympathise and empathise with them and also, I am able to identify their problems and deal with those problems.*

Mr Hot is able to understand the background of the children at his school for two motives. Firstly, he is an active member of the community and he explain in his words that:

*... I serve in the BEC of the ANC in my community. That also equips me with the understanding of different problems of the community or the society in which I serve.*

Further to that, he also grew up in a similar context. Hence his understanding and consideration to the needs of the community:

*What also comes in handy for me is the fact that I grew up in a deprived community like this one. I will start from my family. I grew up in a deprived home.*

## 5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and discussed the identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived school contexts. The chapter has presented personal, professional and social identities as emerging from the narratives of the participating principals. This is in an attempt to solve the first research puzzle. In line with the findings of Blose (2018), in his study this chapter has demonstrated the interconnectedness and overlapping of personal, social and professional identities. The participants have some identities in common, however they have identities that are exclusive to individual selves.

The next chapter seeks to solve the second research puzzle, *“How do the identities intersect and shape leadership practices of principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts?”* It also summarises the whole inquiry, consolidates the lessons and provides some recommendations as informed by the inquiry.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORTH: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter offered the second layer of analysis, which is the analysis of narratives. Hence, the personal, professional and social identities of the participating principals were dealt with. The current chapter is an extension of the previous as it seeks to respond to the second research puzzle. In solving this research puzzle, I focus on two things. Firstly, I look closely at how the intersection of identities of principals in deprived contexts happens. Secondly, I look at how the identities of the participants shape the leadership practice.

The current chapter also seeks to highlight the lessons that can be learnt from this inquiry. The lessons precede the recommendations which are categorised into three categories. These categories are recommendations to other researchers, to other principals in deprived contexts and finally to the Department of Education as the recruiters of principals. At the end of the chapter I then summarise the whole study.

The following section presents findings to the second research puzzle, which is as follows: How do the identities intersect and shape the leadership practices of principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts? As it can be seen that this research puzzle is also two-fold, likewise the findings are presented in two folds. Sub-section 6.2 presents the intersectionality element of the identities of the participants. While, subsections 6.3 presents findings that speaks to the question of how identities impact on the practices of principals leading in deprived school contexts.

## 6.2 Intersection of Identities

This section builds up on chapter 5. Previous studies (Pugach et al., 2018) have already established that there is an intersection of identities in every single individual. The purpose of this dissertation is to attend to the ‘how’ aspect of it for the principals leading in deprived contexts. In chapter 5, I provided some ways in which this happens. Here I am providing further examples. I draw the first example from Mr Mild, as he says:

*Church has taught me many things. It has molded me to be the person I am today. ... church has taught me humility when I deal with different people at church, and that helps me when I come here at school...*

From the extract above, it can be deduced that being a church member (identity) has caused him to be humble (another identity) at school. His membership at church is impacting on his membership at school.



**Diagram 6.1: Diagrammatical representation of intersection of some of the identities of Mr Mild**

The above diagram shows how various forms of identities can intersect and give rise to each other. The diagram shows that there is no clear starting point and precise end point. Before the ‘first’ identity (church member) there is an arrow which shows that there are other identities that come before it. Also, after the ‘last’ identity (Principal), the arrow continues to show that there are other identities that follow.

I draw the second example from Mr Chilli’s story. He asserts:

*Maybe as an old teacher who also happens to teach the science subjects, we knew that as teachers we had to improvise in certain instances. Improvising entails being able to make a learner to be able to imagine a beaker without seeing it. Or maybe take something else that resembles a beaker (e.g. a glass) and use it as a beaker.*

Mr Chilli before becoming a Principal was a science teacher in a school with limited resources to perform experiments that has taught him the skill of improvising. This seems to be the identity that he carried with himself to Principalship. So, this is evidence of another intersection of many identities. Note that at the ‘last’ identity the arrow is still pointing forward which suggest that this process does not end. It goes on and on, until infinity.



**Diagram 6.2: Diagrammatical representation of identities intersection in Mr Chilli's life**

The above diagram (6.2) serves the same purpose as diagram 6.1; it just uses examples from different participants. It shows how various forms of identities can intersect and give rise to each other. The diagram shows that there is no clear starting point and precise end point. Before the ‘first’ identity (science teacher) there is an arrow which shows that there are other identities that come before it. Also, after the ‘last’ identity (Principal), the arrow continues to show that there are other identities that follow.

### 6.3 From Identities to Leadership Practice

Identity of a person informs their practices in general and particularly their leadership practices (Burke & Stets, 2009). Further to that, it has also been established in this study and others before it that identity is also to a certain extent shaped by context (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Mpungose, 2010; Tubin, 2017). The contribution of this study is then that there is an intricate interplay between the three phenomena. At this juncture, let us draw from Mr Hot's narrative.

*I grew up in a deprived community like this one. I will start from my family. I grew up in a deprived home. My father was a general worker and my mother was a domestic worker. My granny was also a domestic worker.*

From the above extract, we see the context that is deprived. Because of this context that is deprived, Mr Hot was:

*...motivated and triggered the value of education in me. That also encouraged me to become a and to aspire to be a manager as I am a manager at this point in time.*



Context here informs the ‘future’ identity of Mr Hot. He wanted to become a teacher because of the context. He goes on to mention that as a teacher he worked hard to teach the African children who are as deprived as he was. This is now evidence of identity informing practice, leadership practice. He reckons that he was a leader before he got a formal position. As a post level one educator he performed some leadership duties. He elaborates:

*I led even when I was not in a strategic leadership position. I ensured that everything was in order at school. I would communicate with the School Management Team (SMT). I would motivate learners. I would design programmes which enhanced learning.*

There are many other examples of such intricate relationship between identity, context and practice. This dissertation then concludes that a Principal (Leader) is influenced by at least three things: context, identity and the practices. As intricate as the relationship between these three is but below I attempt to simplify it in the form of a diagram. At the centre where all the three circles overlap is where a leader is ‘located’. That the point that defines the leadership approach of any leader. I must however acknowledge that the below diagram is too simplistic to adequately depicts the complicate interaction of the three phenomena.



**Diagram 6.3: diagrammatical representation of interface between identity, context and practice**

## **6.4 Lessons from the Inquiry**

Many lessons have emerged out of this inquiry with the school principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts. However, here I am presenting only four of the many which for me are the most vital ones. These lessons are hereby presented in no particular order. These lessons are:

### **6.4.1 Leadership positions can shape someone's identity**

It became apparent in this study that leadership positions are able to influence sometimes identity for the better. This is evident from all the participants in this study. For example, Mr Hot asserted that serving as the Public Relations Officer of the church has made him an effective communicator.

Mr Mild on the other hand indicated that since he became the principal of the school he is now more disciplined and responsible than he was before taking this position. In a letter to 'old self', Mr Mild indicates that:

*(He) was once an irresponsible person, who used to come to work late, take early leave, misuse money by buying unnecessary things and lacked direction in life.*

But since he became the school principal, he is now:

*I am now a very responsible person who leads by example. I have acquired a number of skills that a progressive manager requires in order to manage successfully, I am now a principal of a very big school.*

Mr Chilli has since deserted some of his beliefs in order to be an accommodative principal. Before becoming a principal, he:

*...happened to be a very traditional (believes in African traditions) someone.*

But since he became a principal, all that has changed.

*... one had to learn to embrace those who think differently. I used to talk bad about Christianity but now I am accommodative to everybody.*

#### **6.4.2 Experience can inform an identity**

Another important lesson that can be learned from this study is that experience informs identity. By experience here, the reference is being made to both positive and negative life experiences. As we see from Mr Hot's experience, he:

*...grew up in a deprived community like this one. I will start from my family. I grew up in a deprived home. My father was a general worker and my mother was a domestic worker.*

The above outline experience moulded him. He mentions that it:

*... motivated me and triggered on the value of education. And value of growing up and wanting to become a teacher. That also encouraged me to become a leader...*

Mr Chilli's experience of growing up in a poverty-stricken background has yielded positive outcome. Due to his experience, he is able to motivate the learners that despite the deprived context in which they find themselves they can grow up to be whatever they aspire in life.

#### **6.4.3 Different strokes for different folks**

The principals in this study are leading schools in deprived context. However, as much as all are in deprived context they have different set of identities that are working for them. What works for principal A in his school might not work for principal B in his school. This is due to variety in the deprivation of the schools in question. For example, Mr Chilli in his context he believes that being strict and drawing clear boundaries between him and the staff is important. However, his experience as a principal has taught him otherwise. He posits:

*But it does not work like that. If you are a principal, you must just take a role of a principal at all cost all the time.*

In contrast to Mr Chilli's experience and as it has been shown in chapter 5 Mr Mild believes that:

*You must serve with dignity and you must always humbly yourself, so that people can listen to you.*

#### **6.4.4 Identities are interconnected and overlapping**

This study has confirmed what has already been established in the identity literature. It has emerged in this inquiry that sometimes identities can be overlapping and they are also interconnected. Some studies (Hancock, 2007 & Pugach et al., 2018) have already established this property of identities. From the current study, here is one example of interconnectedness and overlapping of identities. Drawing from Mr. Mild's story, he says:

*... if one of the teachers or learners are experiencing personal problems, they confide in me with the hope that I would be able to come up with solutions. That is exactly what I do ...*

Mr. Mild is positioning himself as a problem solver (identity) but for him to solve the problems the people must confide (and he listens) in him. Hence, it is hard to separate 'listener' identity from a 'problem solver' identity.

#### **6.5 Recommendations**

This was an interesting study. A number of findings emerged. A number of useful lessons were learnt. Drawing from all the findings and lessons from this study, I am hereby putting forth the following recommendations. The recommendations are categorised into three categories. Firstly, I present recommendations for other fellow researchers who may want to replicate or further this study. Further to that I present recommendations for principals who are leading in deprived contexts who may happen not to be as successful as the principals in this study. Lastly, I make some recommendations to the Department of Education.

##### **6.5.1 To other Researchers**

As asserted above, this study has revealed a number of important and interesting points about the identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts. It has revealed some personal, professional and social identities of such principals. However, the study has not exhausted what is there to know.

- Firstly, this was a small-scale study with only three participants. I believe a much bigger study, containing a bigger sample is needed to further understand the identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts.

- The study only focused on principals of successful schools. I suggest that a study into the identities of principals in similar contexts but in less successful schools is needed. As much as we now have an understanding of who is leading in successful schools, we equally need an understanding of who is leading the not so successful schools. Maybe, just maybe we can then develop a model of successful leadership in deprived contexts.

### **6.5.2 To School Principals Leading in Deprived Contexts**

I have learnt a lot from this inquiry about the identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts. As such, I believe that other principals can learn a few valuable lessons. Be it the principals leading in a similar context or the principals leading in a completely different context. Below I present what I call the ‘top ten identities’ of principals leading successful schools:

6.5.2.1 Principals who are visionary

6.5.2.2 Principals who are time conscious and are able to instil the same identity to the rest of the school community.

6.5.2.3 Principals who are team players.

6.5.2.4 Principals who are brave and able to face the problems heads on. In essence, principals must be problem solvers.

6.5.2.5 Principals to prioritise serving over leading. The servant –leader kind of principals.

6.5.2.6 Principals who are able to communicate effectively.

6.5.2.7 Principals who understand that caring is part of leadership.

6.5.2.8 Principals who are able to share and distribute leadership. Principals who understand that leadership is not a one man show.

6.5.2.9 Principals who are supportive and considerate of other people’s needs, belief etc.

6.5.2.10 Principals who walk the talk. Principals who lead by an example.

### **6.5.3 To Department of Education**

This study is also useful to the Department of Education. The department is the one that is responsible for setting policies that guide the recruitment of school principals. For the department, I suggest that:

- When recruiting principals for deprived schools, it may be useful to consider people that have got some experience of working in a deprived context. These people are more likely to have a better understanding of the problems facing such schools.
- When recruiting principals for schools in deprived contexts it may be an advantage to employ people who have a traceable experience of active involvement in the various structures and groupings in the community. Further to that, the people who are considered for Principalship must be people who have some form of experience as departmental heads and deputy principals.
- It may also be useful for the department to organise workshops and training on critical aspects such as communication, problem solving and team building for Principals leading in deprived contexts.

### **6.6 Summary of the Study**

This narrative inquiry into the identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived contexts has provided some valuable insights. This was a qualitative study that depended on narrative posters, narrative interviews and letters to elicit data about the participants. From all the above data generating methods, I was able to elicit the personal, professional and social identities of the participating principals. The study sought to answer two research puzzles. These puzzles are:

1. What are identities that are common and also those that are exclusive to individual principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts?
2. How do the identities intersect and shape the leadership practices of principals who lead successful schools in deprived contexts?

These two puzzles were a breakdown of the title of the project which is, Identities of Principals Leading Successful Schools in Deprived School Context: The Narrative Inquiry.

## **6.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter is a concluding chapter of the dissertation. This chapter served as a consolidation of the whole dissertation and the inquiry. It is in this chapter where the second and final research puzzle was solved. Further to that, this chapter also sought to highlight the lessons that were learnt from this inquiry. It also provided the recommendations as informed by the findings of the study. Finally, it summarised the whole study by highlighting the most important aspects of this study.

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## Appendix A- Ethical Clearance Certificate

 UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

04 July 2018

Mr Sihle Siyabonga Ngidi (207527014)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Ngidi,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0586/018M  
Project Title: Identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived context: A narrative inquiry

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 05 June 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr BCNK Mkhize  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbwa@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbwa@ukzn.ac.za) / [senyama@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:senyama@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunpe@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunpe@ukzn.ac.za)  
Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

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## Appendix B- Permission letter from KZN DoE

 **education**  
Department:  
Education  
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

---

Enquiries: Phindile Duma Tel: 033 392 1063 Ref: 2/4/8/1573

Mr SS Ngidi  
94 Fitzsimmons Rd  
Willowtown  
Pietermaritzburg  
3201

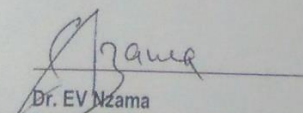
Dear Mr Ngidi

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

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"IDENTITIES OF PRINCIPALS LEADING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS IN DEPRIVED CONTEXT: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY"**, 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 10 July 2018 to 02 January 2021.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
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.

(PLEASE SEE LIST OF SCHOOLS ATTACHED)

  
Dr. EV Nzama  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 12 July 2018

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa  
Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201  
Tel.: +27 33 392 1063 • Fax.: +27 033 392 1203 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzneducation.gov.za  
Facebook: KZNDoe ... Twitter: @DBE\_KZN ... Instagram: kzn\_education ... Youtube: kzndoe

...Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

## Appendix C- Permission Letter (Gatekeepers)

108 Avocado Groove

Avoca hills

4051

10 May 2018

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Sihle Siyabonga Ngidi, a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my Master's Degree fulfilment, I am required to conduct research. I therefore kindly and humbly request permission to conduct research in your school. The project title is: **Identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived school context: A narrative inquiry**. The aim of this study is to explore the identities of principals who lead successful schools in deprived school contexts. The main question is: What are the special identities of principals that are able to lead effectively and successfully in a context that is laden with deprivations. The study will use multi-methods (collages, letters and conversational interviews) to elicit data from principals participating. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes at the times convenient to them which will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice-recorded.

#### PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.
- All the responses, observations and reviewed documents will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school and names of the participants.
- Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw

from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

- Participants will be purposively selected to participate in this study and they will be contacted well in advance for interviews.
- The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist in concentrating on the actual interviews.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. You may also contact the Research Office through:

P. Mohun  
HSSREC Research Office,  
Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)  
Or  
Dr BNCK Mkhize(Supervisor)  
Tel. 031-2601398 (office)  
Cell: 083 6530077  
E-mail: [Mkhizeb3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mkhizeb3@ukzn.ac.za).

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr Sihle Ngidi  
Cell: 076 091 6631  
E-mail: [sihlesiyabongangidi@gmail.com](mailto:sihlesiyabongangidi@gmail.com)

## **Declaration**

I..... (Full names of the principal) of -----(School name) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **Identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived school context:A narrative inquiry**. I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily for the school to be part of the study. I understand that the school is at liberty to withdraw from research at any time should the school so desires.

**I agree/ do not agree** for the use of audio recording device.

Signature of Principal

.....

Date

.....

School stamp

## Appendix D- Permission Letter (Participants)

108 Avocado Groove

Avoca Hills

4051

10 May 2018

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH**

My name is Sihle Siyabonga Ngidi, a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my Master's Degree fulfilment, I am required to conduct research. The project title is: **Identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived school context: A narrative inquiry**. The aim of this study is to explore the identities of principals who lead successful schools in deprived school context. The main question is: What are the special identities of principals that are able to lead effectively and successfully in context that is laden with deprivations. The study will use multi-methods (collages, letters and conversational interviews) to elicit data from principals participating. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes at the times convenient to them which will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice-recorded. I therefore would very much like you to participate in this research project. I believe that you can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of my knowledge on this issue.

### **PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:**

- There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process.
- All the responses, observations and reviewed documents will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school and names of the participants.
- Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

- Participants purposively selected to participate in this study and they will be contacted well in advance for interviews.
- The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist in concentrating on the actual interviews.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. You may also contact me, my supervisor or Research Office. The details are as follows:

**HSSREC Research Office**

P. Mohun

Tel: 031 260 4557 E-mail: [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

**Supervisor**

Dr BNCK Mkhize(Supervisor)

Tel. 031-2601398 (office)

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Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr Sihle S. Ngidi

Cell: 0760916631

E-mail: [sihlesiyabongangidi@gmail.com](mailto:sihlesiyabongangidi@gmail.com)

**Letter of consent from participant(s)**

I .....(Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **Identities of principals leading successful schools in deprived context.** I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study noting that:

- Confidentiality will be guaranteed as my inputs will not be attributed to me in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split depending on my preference.
- Any information given by me cannot be used against me, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- I have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. I will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- My involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I am willing to be interviewed.
  - please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording		

Signature of participant

Date: .....

.....



## Appendix E- Research Instruments

### 1. Biographical details

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname and Name(s) :

\_\_\_\_\_

Gender : Male /Female (cross the relevant answer)

Place of birth : \_\_\_\_\_

Religion : \_\_\_\_\_

Educational qualifications (list all post-school qualifications): if the spaces are not enough, please use the back of this page.

Qualification	Institution	Year obtained

#### Work experience

No of years as a teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Leadership experience within the school:

Position	School's name	Quintile level of the school	No of years in the post/position

Any other work experience: (please specify)

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Hobbies:

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Favourite sports:

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## **2. Poster making instructions**

Thank you for participating in phase one of the study. We are now in the second phase of the study. In the second phase of the study, you will be required to create a poster. In the poster, you are requested to paste pictures, drawings and words (and anything else that may be suitable) that you believe well describes you as a person and particularly as a Principal.

After you are done preparing the poster, you will be expected to engage in a short conversational interview in which you will be explaining about the choice of the words and pictures in your collage or poster. Please note that all the conversational interviews will be audio-recorded and will be kept safely and private throughout the research process. At the end, they will be disposed accordingly.

Should you have any questions during the process, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you again for embarking with me on this journey.

Sihle Ngidi

Researcher: 076 0916631

### 3. Letter writing

Greetings participant,

And welcome to the last phase of the research. In this phase you are required to write a letter to your 'old self'. Your 'old self' refers to yourself prior to becoming a principal. In your letter, include the following:

- How have you changed as a person since you became the principal (and why)?
- How has leading a deprived school impacted on you as the person?
- What do you attribute your success as a principal to?

Please note that I may request a conversational interview, if I need any clarity on the content of your letter.

Thank you in advance

Sihle Ngidi

### 4. Interview Schedule

**NB: These interviews will be in a form of conversational interviews. Some other questions will transpire during interviews.**

#### Phase 1

1. What identities did you possess prior to being a Principal?
2. How did the above identities shape the way you enacted leadership when you were new in Principalship?
3. What do you consider to be the most important identities for a Principal leading in a deprived context like you?


#### Phase 2

1. How do you balance your role as a Principal with other roles you play in other groupings that you are a member of?

#### Phase 3

1. How has the job of being a Principal changed your identities?
2. What are some of the identities you have maintained since your first day as a Principal until now? And Why?

## Appendix F-Turnitin Certificate

**turnitin** 

### Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	Sihle Siyabonga Ngidi
Assignment title:	Dissertations
Submission title:	Final Dissertation
File name:	Dissertation.docx
File size:	2.14M
Page count:	118
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Character count:	217,581
Submission date:	15-Dec-2018 08:30PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	1051089906

**CHAPTER 1**  
**THE JOURNEY BEGINS: ORIENTATION TO THE INQUIRY**

**1.1 Introduction**

Leadership is one of the concepts in the Social Sciences that is often used (Antonakis & Day, 2017) and sometimes abused. Despite this prominent use of the term leadership in the everyday life, there is no one universal definition of this concept (Antonakis & Day, 2017; Bush & Middlewood, 2005). As much as there are diverging views on what leadership means, there are common elements among many of the definitions that have been given by various scholars. Many scholars agree that at the heart of leadership is the ability and power to influence others (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Grace, 1995; Ni, Yan & Frenster, 2018; Sergiovanni, 2001). Bush and Middlewood (2005) further assert that leadership is also about being able to effect change in a particular organisation or institution. This change can only be possible and successful if the leader possesses a particular identity, an identity of being influential.

Furthermore, some scholars have pointed that leadership is also about being visionary (Bush & Middlewood, 2005; Goldberg, 2006; Goleman, 2017). However, Sergiovanni (2001) raises some concerns about this 'visionary identity' of leaders. Sergiovanni (2001) believes that the idea of leaders setting visions is absurd; instead he suggests that vision should be negotiated and agreed upon by all stakeholders. It should not be the sole responsibility of a leader. This consultative culture that is needed according to Sergiovanni (2001) should result in all stakeholders coming together to work as a single unit. It is not only about the leader extending the invitation to the followers but it also about the follower's willingness and readiness to participate (Grace, 1995).

In this inquiry (study) I seek to explore the identities of Principals that are leading successful schools in deprived school context. Below I discharge my motivation for the focus on Principals. There are many leaders in the school but the Principal is probably the most important figure in the school leadership (Milton, 2012). This is due to the positional power accorded to them. The Principal is the one that is responsible for the day to day running of the school, hence the influence. Naecker, Bliese, Chikoko, Khau & Naecker (2017) share the above sentiments as they assert that, the principal is the head of the school. This emphasis on the importance of Principal do not in any way seek to undermine the role that other stakeholders play in the functioning of the school. It is indeed true that the Principal cannot lead the school effectively alone (Harris, 2004; Le Fèvre & Robinson, 2015; Harris (2004) further asserts that

## **Appendix G-Letters from the participants**

### **Appendix G1-Letter from Mr Mild**

Dear Sir

First and foremost, let me say that it gives a great pleasure to write this letter to you since we have not been in contact for a very long time. I have changed a lot. I think you do remember that I was once an irresponsible person, who used to come to work late, take early leave, misuse money by buying unnecessary things and lacked direction in life.

I am now a very responsible person who leads by example. I have acquired a number of skills that a progressive manager requires in order to manage successfully, e.g. I am now a Principal of a very big school. As a leader I have to give direction and guidance. I am a visionary leader who gives support to both teachers and learners. You do remember that I used to mind my own business but now that is no longer the case. There are people who depend on me for a number of things. For example, if one of the teachers or learners are experiencing personal problems, they confide in me with the hope that I would be able to come up with solutions. That is exactly what I do when they come to me, i.e. try by all means to solve their problems.

Sir I have learnt to listen a lot and to remain humble at all times. I have developed a lot of respect for all persons under my care. I am also very supportive to non-teaching staff and parents of our learners. I am very co-operative to both staff and the School Governing Body. I always set goals and standard for myself every week. I believe that is why the school is succeeding academically. I have to stay focused everyday so that all those under my wing can see direction.

Let me tell you that being a Principal is very different from being a teacher in the sense that when you are a principal you have got more responsibility. You are given a mammoth task of leading an institution in the right direction. You remember that I used to be the last to submit my work to the Departmental Head, but now that has changed. I am very prompt when it comes to submission both to the circuit and district. I am now very disciplined because I believe that a manager that lacks discipline is doomed to fail in its endeavors. I have learnt that more often than not hard work pays off. That is why every day I am at work even if I am not feeling well. I am always punctual at work so that I start my day on a high note and as an organized person.

Sir, I am now a person who believes in acquiring skills, knowledge and information by reading books, manuals and by doing research. I have developed a deep commitment to education and

to ensuring that a black child succeeds in life. Previously, I use to work in silos, but now I network with other principals and share good practice with successful schools in and around our circuit. I also ensure that we always work as a team because I believe that alone I can go fast but collaboratively, we can go far.

I can continue and continue telling you about how I have changed till the cows come home. I hope to see you in the near future so that we can share our past memories.

Thank you

## **Appendix G2 -Letter from Mr Chilli**

Dear my 'old self'

It is with mixed feelings that I pen this letter to you. I am happy-sad. I am sad because it been a long time since we last met. A part of me misses you very much. However, I am also happy that growing up has taught me a number of useful skills. I can safely say that I am now a better person than the one that I was many years ago.

I am now a Principal of a very poor yet well performing school. My school has got very limited resources. What complicates things even further is that my school is a combined school. You know me, I used to be very social and outgoing. But now there is no time for all that. I used to go clubbing and stuff, but now I am much disciplined. I must focus at all times. I have a huge responsibility on my shoulders. As much as I am not as social as I used to be, do not worry I am still approachable. That is a very important attribute if you are in my position.

Being a Principal is very challenging, especially of a deprived school like this one. But it does come in handy, the fact that I grew up here in this environment. So I know the ins and outs of this community. I am now a hard worker, there is no time for playing. I have to be at school before everyone and again be the one to leave the school premises. There are a lot of assignments that I need to go through every day, hence it is very important to learn to prioritise if you are a principal. I face different challenges each and every day. With that in mind, I have decided to be a lifelong learner. I continuously try to develop myself. I read a lot. I watch informative shows on TV. I attend various workshops and seminars.

I am sure you do remember that I used to be very irresponsible. I am now very responsible and punctual, unlike in the old days. Being a member of many different structures in the community has moulded me into a much-organised person. I take care of the kids here at school as my own. As I have mentioned earlier on, it is very difficult to be in my shoes but with the courage that I have I am able to go through each and every day. It is also sad that being a principal has costed me certain things that I used to like the most. You know me as a strong supporter of SADTU, however after becoming a Principal I have to tone down my involvement in the union activities. I did this because I want all the teachers to feel welcomed here at my school.

It is very unfortunate that I will never get to meet you ever again.

Thank you and bye!

### **Appendix G 3- Letter from Mr Hot**

Dear Mr. Hot

I hope this letter finds you in good health, I have an interest in informing you about my development in the education fraternal since my appointment as a school Principal. I manage and lead Township High school. I would like to take you through a journey of great experience. I head a quintile two ranking school which is deprived in many ways. The school is located in a multiple deprived context with many social ills that affect our learners. We have an enrolment of approximately 1022 learners and I lead and manage a staff of 38 educators which includes members of the management team. Although the school is multiple deprived it is producing very good results measuring our grade 12 NSC examinations and our results are not only based on quantity but also on quality results. I am now a much matured person.

Let me tell you about the changes that I have experienced while occupying the position and the office of Principalship. I have developed in many spheres that contribute immensely to the way I professionally lead and manage the school. I am now able to solve difficult problems that I come across on a daily basis. I have been exposed to many educational policies which I knew before I became a school principal through formal education doing my teaching qualification, these educational legislation and policies have enabled me to understand human resources, labor and operational matters. These statutes have empowered me because I am able to efficiently manage the school. Besides these policies I have been developed through meetings, workshops and seminars conducted and initiated by the Department of Basic Education. These programs have sharpened my leadership skills and qualities. I will point out one dynamic seminar. I believe every school principal should take /attend such seminars. There was a seminar organized by Professor Jonathan Jansen where he was unpacking his book titled 'How to fix South African Schools'. These seminars, workshops have capacitated me to be able to provide professional and staff development in the school so in return professionalism and ethical conduct are always maintained by my staff through our developmental programs and approaches. I have also decided to further my studies, as I speak I am reading for my Masters. I have also joined a group of successful principals in the district where we have formed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CoPs) to be able to share our experiences, challenges, accolades and attributes in which we reflect on these experiences and shape our own practices when carrying our duties and responsibilities in our schools.



I have also have developed a good working relationship with other stakeholders, community leaders, non-government organizations including the private sector in which I gain assistance in number of resources which benefits our impoverished school. I am sure you are wondering how I have achieved so much, since you know me as a very shy and reserved person. I have changed.

I hope we could meet up sometimes and extend on this letter which I have drafted to you on all the positives experiences working with the wonderful staff of Township High school.

Thank you

## Appendix H- Language Clearance Certificate

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# Dr Saths Govender

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16 DECEMBER 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

## LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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

**Identities of Principals leading successful schools in deprived context:**

**A narrative inquiry by S. S. Ngidi, student no. 207527014.**

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

Yours faithfully

*S. Govender (duly signed)*

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DR S. GOVENDER

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Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers  
MPA, D Admin.