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**THE POLICY-PRACTICE INTERFACE OF PRINCIPALSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA: A
STUDY ON PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

by

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the interface between policy and practice in the work of a school principal. The study was motivated by a knowledge gap, namely, the nature of that interface in school principalship and what informs it. To understand what the interface is, the study explored three research questions: i) what does the policy-practice interface of school principalship in the selected public primary schools look like? ii) why is the interface the way it is, in the selected schools? iii) what are the implications of the nature of the interface and the reasons thereof for improving the work of a school principal? The study adopted Transformational Leadership Theory and Management Functions as the theoretical lenses. The study is qualitative in nature, couched within the interpretivist research paradigm. Five public primary schools and five primary school principals were purposively selected as research sites and participants respectively. Data was generated through in-depth, individual face-to-face interviews. The findings reveal that, while the policy for school principalship lists many fundamental functions or requirements a school principal must perform, the participant school principals faced difficulties in implementing several key areas and fared well in only a few. There was persistent conflict among learners, teachers, and school principals and their SMTs. However, surprisingly, school principals related and worked well with their SGBs. The school principals' poverty in instructional leadership was evident from the reported low teacher morale. The findings suggest that all the participant school principals were transparent regarding school financial matters. However, regarding cultural leadership, the findings show limited understanding of cultural diversity and how it could be embraced in day-to-day school lives. The school principals were reportedly largely excluded from the recruitment and appointment of staff and this seemed to negatively impact on the subsequent working relationships. The participating school principals seemed to face huge difficulties regarding managing and utilizing data through the SASAMS system. Finally, there seemed to be very limited school community partnership across all the schools in question.

Keywords: *policy, practice, interface, principalship, policy-practice interface*

DECLARATION

The undersigned, Olivia Pinkie Mgeyane-Zondi, hereby certifies that the research report titled “The policy-practice interface of principalship in South Africa: A study on public primary school principals”, is entirely original with citations to all relevant sources. The study report has been submitted with the permission of my supervisor.

Signed:

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Olivia Pinkie Mgeyane-Zondi.

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Date: 24 June 2025

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandparents, Mr & Mrs Jonathan and Alzina Mgeyane, my late mom Ethel Ntombi Mgeyane, for your blessings in heaven. Also, to my two sisters Christine Nodi Mtungwa and Khoti Mgeyane for moral support. Further, I dedicate this study to my two children Siphokazi and Khetha for being understanding of me when they were deprived of my love and attention. I love you all.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAS	Academic Achievement Scale
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACESLM	Advanced Certificate in Education School Leadership and Management
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CM	Circuit Manager
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPF	Community Policing Forums
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DH	Departmental Head
DoH	Department of Health
DSG	Developmental Support Group
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOD	Head of Department
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
LIFO	Last In First Out
MANCOSA	Management College of Southern Africa
MBWA	Manage By Walking Around
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NTG	National Technical Guidelines
PDM	Participative Decision-making
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
QMS	Quality Management System

SA	South Africa
SANCO	South African National Civic Organisation
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASA	South African Schools Act
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SASAMS	South African School Administrative and Management System
SDT	Staff Development Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SRC	Student Representative Council
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TA	Thematic Analysis
TB	Tuberculosis
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
NEP	National Education Plan
PES	Principal Elegant School
PAS	Principal Avocado School
PPN	Post Provisioning Norm
PRS	Principal Royal School
PJS	Principal Jupiter School
PSS	Principal Sunshine School

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the scene of this study, which focuses on the quality of the work of school principals through examining the interface between the policy framework and practice. I present the background to the study and the statement of the problem. This is followed by research questions. From here I move on to the rationale with my personal motivation for pursuing the study as well as the significance of the study. Thereafter, key concepts utilised in the study are clarified. Lastly, I give an outline of how the research report is organized into chapters.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A school principal's portfolio is the highest one in a school hierarchy. It requires any person applying for it to possess requisite skills to be able to face the daily challenges in a school (Eller, 2010). For example, what strategies can the school principal come up with to deal with learners who do not like school (Willingham, 2021), learners who achieve below standard (Petrilli, 2011) as well as those who come from deprived families, amongst others? This suggests that school principalship is multi-faceted. Thus, it is necessary to present in some detail, the policy framework guiding the work of school principals.

1.2.1 The Policy Framework for South African School Principals

In this section, I describe the policy framework for South African public school principals through two policy documents, namely, the policy on the Duties and Responsibilities of a School Principal, found in Government Gazette, No. 39684 of 2016 (Department of Basic Education, 2016a) and the policy on South African School Principalship, found in Government Gazette, No. 39827 of 2016 (Department of Basic Education, 2016b). The Department of Basic Education (2016a) details duties and responsibilities that school principals need to perform to ensure that schools are managed satisfactorily. Those duties and responsibilities depend on the approaches and needs of a particular school and include (a) general/administrative (b)

personnel (c) academic performance of the school (d) teaching (e) extra and co-curricular (f) interaction with stakeholders and (g) communication.

1.2.1.1 General/administrative

This duty pertains to the implementation of all educational programmes and curriculum activities. It also pertains to the management of all educators and support staff. Other responsibilities under this heading include management of the use of learning support material and other equipment, the safekeeping of all school records, the implementation of policy and legislation as well as giving proper instructions and guidelines for timetabling, admission and placement of learners. It further includes the care of various kinds of school accounts and records that should be properly kept and making the best use of funds for the benefit of the learners, in consultation with the appropriate structures. Moreover, under this role, a school principal should ensure that a school journal containing a record of all important events connected with the school is kept safely. S/he should also make regular inspection of the school to ensure that the school premises and equipment are being used properly, and that good discipline is being maintained. If required, s/he needs to ensure that departmental circulars and other information received that affect staff members are brought to their attention as soon as possible and are stored in an accessible manner. This role also include handling correspondence received at the school. Apart from this role, a school principal is also responsible for personnel related matters in a school.

1.2.1.2 Personnel

This duty involves providing professional leadership within the school. This involves guiding, supervising and offering of professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, discussing and writing or countersigning reports on teaching, support, and on non-teaching and other staff. A school principal should also participate in agreed school/educator appraisal processes in order to regularly review their professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management. In addition to that, s/he should ensure that all evaluation or forms of assessment conducted in the school are properly and efficiently organised. Also, s/he should ensure that workloads are evenly distributed amongst staff. This role also includes the school principal being responsible for the development of staff training programmes – school-based, school-focused and externally directed and to assist educators, particularly new and inexperienced educators, in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school. A school principal is also expected to fulfil roles pertaining to academic performance of the school.

1.2.1.3 Academic performance of the school

This duty involves a school principal preparing and submitting to the Head of Department (HOD) an annual report in respect of (i) academic performance of that school in relation to minimum outcomes and standards and procedures for assessment, determined by the Minister of Education, and (ii) the effective use of available resources. Also, under this duty, the principal of a public school identified by the HOD in terms of section 58B of the South African Schools Act (SASA) must annually, at the beginning of the year, prepare a plan, setting out how academic performance at the school will be improved. The academic performance improvement plan must be presented to the HOD on a date determined by him/her. It should also be tabled at a School Governing Body (SGB) meeting. The HOD may also approve the academic performance improvement plan or return it to the principal with such recommendations as may be necessary in the circumstances. The next role discusses a school principal required to teach classes.

1.2.1.4 Teaching

A school principal is required to engage in class teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and the needs of a school. S/he should also be a class teacher and should assess and record the attainment of learners taught. Besides teaching, a school principal is also required to engage in extra and co-curricular activities.

1.2.1.5 Extra and co-curricular

This is the duty that requires a school principal to serve on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees. S/he should also play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school and to plan major school functions and to encourage learners' voluntary participation in sports, educational and cultural activities organised by community bodies.

Also, a school principal is expected to work and interact with other stakeholders.

1.2.1.6 Interaction with stakeholders

Under this responsibility, a school principal is expected to work with the SGB. This means that s/he should serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to it in the performance of the functions in terms of SASA. On top of this, s/he should attend and participate in all meetings of the governing body. Also, a school principal should provide the governing body with a report about the professional management relating to the public school. S/he should also assist the governing body in handling disciplinary matters pertaining to learners. Further, s/he should inform the governing body about policy and legislation and also assist the governing body in the performance of its functions and responsibilities, but such assistance or participation may not be in conflict with (a) instructions of the HOD (b) legislation or policy (c) as well as an obligation that s/he has towards the HOD, Member of Executive Council (MEC) or the Minister. A school principal should also participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community building. Therefore, a school principal is required to take part in the governance of the school and in fulfilling a communication role.

1.2.1.7 Communication

This duty involves co-operating with members of the school staff and the SGB in maintaining an efficient and smooth-running school. A school principal is also to liaise with the circuit/regional office, supplies section, personnel section, finance section, and so forth, concerning administration, staffing, accounting, purchase of equipment, research and updating of statistics in respect of educators and learners. This role also involve meeting with parents concerning learners' progress and conduct. On top of this, s/he should co-operate with the SGB regarding all aspects as specified in SASA. In addition, s/he should liaise with other relevant government departments, for example, Department of Health, Public Works, and so forth, as required. Further, a school principal should co-operate with universities, colleges and other agencies in relation to learners' records and performance as well as In-Service Education and Training (INSET) and management development programmes. Lastly, a school principal should participate in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses in order

to contribute to and/or update professional views/standards as well as maintaining contacts with sports, social, cultural and community organisations.

1.2.2 Policy on South African School Principalship

The policy on South African School Principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b) identifies key roles a school principal must perform. This policy is organized into eight key areas or purposes for the successful running of schools. The eight key areas are: (a) leading teaching and learning in the school; (b) shaping the direction and development of the school; (c) managing the school as an organisation; (d) managing quality teaching and learning and securing accountability; (e) managing human resources in the school; (f) managing and advocating extramural activities; (g) developing and empowering self and others and lastly (h) working with and for the community.

1.2.2.1 Leading teaching and learning in the school

This key area has to do with strategies for raising achievement and achieving excellence in a school. It forms the core business of a school principal's work. It is organised into five main kinds of leadership: strategic, executive, instructional, cultural and organisational leadership.

Kinds of leadership

A school principal's job is complex and multi-faceted because it requires them to fulfil many roles at once. School principals are strategic leaders when they develop staff and understand the need to support every learner. This means that they are required to create a school organisation where all staff members understand prioritising the learners and offer different kinds of support to them to achieve their academic goals. Also, they should create a climate of inquiry that challenge the school community. They are also required to develop a framework for continuous improvement of all systems in the school. Further, this kind of leadership requires them to put in place the plans that support improved academic performance. Moreover, school principals are required to create a collaborative work environment that is site-based, supports teamwork and promotes cohesion and co-operation. Promoting a holistic approach to wellness amongst staff, learners and parents is also one of their requirements.

Furthermore, school principals should be executive leaders. According to the policy, being an executive leader requires extensive job experience in the profession. Through experience, a school principal is required to create systems that will build teamwork and relationships amongst staff, learners and parents. It also means that s/he is required to create a common and

shared understanding of the school's identity and values. Further, a school principal is required to create an atmosphere of transparency in working towards common goals. The creation of a trusting environment and one conducive to teaching and learning is also a requirement of a school principal. A school principal is also required to create the school as an organisation that is adaptable to change. Being an executive leader also means that a school principal is required to maintain high visibility throughout the school and encourage all individuals to express their opinions.

The policy also stipulates that school principals should be instructional leaders. This means that they are required to lead the learners and ensure that the school is a professional learning community. Also, they are required to lead continuous improvement in curriculum implementation. Besides this, they are also required to lead the school into the future using technology, for example, using computers when teaching. They are also required to foster the success of all learners. Through instructional leadership, school principals are required to promote a culture of achievement of all learners by ensuring that the school's vision and mission are communicated to all stakeholders. Further, they are required to empower staff to become instructional leaders who share the responsibility for achieving the mission, vision and goals that have been set by the school. Moreover, they are required to recognise good instructional practices, motivate and increase learner achievement and encourage educators to implement these practices.

Additionally, they should embrace the diversity of cultures within the school and ensure that there is tolerance amongst those cultures. This means that they should be cultural leaders. In this regard, school principals are required to support and uphold the traditions, symbols, values and norms of the school community. Beyond this, they are required to understand the school community connect with the traditions of the people who make up that community. Moreover, they are required to ensure that policies on religion and language are adhered to. Lastly, they are required to acknowledge that a variety of sexual orientations exist among human beings and to ensure that there is respect and tolerance for the orientation of every person in the school.

As organisational leaders, they are required to carefully manage the school's operational budget, with both the School Management Team (SMT) and SGB so that the school has enough money for all its programmes and activities. Together with the SMT and SGB, they are required to ensure that the school recruit and retain high quality staff that meets the needs of all learners. In addition, they should create processes for identifying and resolving problems and challenges

in a fair, consistent and professional manner. Besides this, they are required to design a system of communication for sharing good practices and communicate with all stakeholders regularly and efficiently. They must also comply and implement national policies and provincial directives and mandates. Ensuring that the norms and ground rules of the school are set out clearly and that everyone involved within the school knows them, is also a requirement for school principals. Further, school principals are required to promote the interests of all learners and staff members and to establish implementable and clear management systems and processes. Moreover, they are required to take responsibility and be accountable in all matters concerning the school. Critically, they must develop and support other leaders within the school community. Lastly, they are required to take responsibility for a safe, secure and disciplined school environment. Apart from the above key areas, a school principal is responsible for shaping the direction and development of the school.

1.2.2.2 Shaping the direction and development of the school

In this key area, school principals are required to work with the SGB, the SMT and with parents in the school's community to create and implement a shared vision and mission of the school. The vision and mission identified by the SGB should summarise the educational values and traditions of the school's community and values, as stipulated by the DBE. Also, school principals should consider community and national values and must establish and maintain effective quality assurance systems and procedures within the school. Further, they are accountable to a wide range of stakeholders, which include both national and provincial DBE, learners, staff, parents, SGB and the wider community. Moreover, they should have knowledge of the South African legislation, strategic thinking, leading and conflict management skills. The responsibilities here are that school principals should work with everyone in the school's community to ensure that the vision and mission of the school is translated into agreed and attainable goals. They are also expected to serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to it in as far as the performance of its functions is concerned. They should also attend and participate in all its meetings. In addition, a school principal should participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community building. The principal is expected to manage the school as an organisation.

1.2.2.3 Managing the School as an Organisation

Managing the school as an organisation requires that school principals should provide for the effective organisation of the school. As managers, school principals manage the school by creating systems and processes to deal with curriculum implementation, extramural activities,

human resource matters and discipline. Hence, the systems and processes created should deal with inclusion and the application of knowledge, skills and understanding of managerial concepts to deliver educational services. Further, systems and processes should deal with monitoring and evaluating the use of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment of learners to provide timely and accurate feedback to all stakeholders. Under this key area, the requirements are that school principals are responsible for the professional management of a public school. Apart from that, management of quality teaching and learning is also his/her responsibility.

1.2.2.4 Managing Quality Teaching and Learning and Securing Accountability

The principal should ensure that there is quality teaching and learning in the school. S/he must maintain effective quality assurance systems and procedures within the school, which in turn, would ensure on-going evaluation and review of all aspects of the operation of the school and which promote collective responsibility. A school principal must have knowledge of mechanisms for the collection and use of performance data and other evidence to monitor, evaluate and improve school performance across all aspects of its operation. Also, s/he needs to ensure that all members of the school community understand their responsibilities, for example, teachers to go to class and teach. Further, s/he should encourage others in the school's community to use appropriate data and other evidence to support self-evaluation and accountability. Moreover, this key area also requires a school principal to account regularly in accessible and accurate ways in respect of the school's performance to key stakeholders. S/he should also support the SGB to meet its statutory obligations. Apart from that, a school principal is also responsible for the management of human resources in a school.

1.2.2.5 Managing Human Resources in the School

The school principal must understand the school's human resource requirements. The DBE focuses on the post establishment, whereas a school principal is required to attend to staff establishment. This will require him/her to create an environment that will guarantee the fulfilment of all posts as well as distribution of equitably workload amongst all staff members. Also, s/he is required to guide and advise staff regarding service conditions within the school. This includes labour-related issues, the well-being of educators, leave measures as well as many forms that need to be completed, need to be explained. This will ensure that teachers feel safe and secure and that they will do their best to carry out the business of the day, that is, effective teaching. In turn, there will be satisfaction on the side of a school principal, knowing that all

Departmental policies and legislation are complied with. Managing and advocating extramural activities is also his/her responsibility.

1.2.2.6 Managing and Advocating Extramural Activities

This key area focuses on a school principal enabling the offering of extramural activities in a school. This means that a school principal should create an environment that cares for the individual needs of its learners in the form of offering extramural activities in the school. Fundamentally, this key area entails knowing diverse sports codes such as, physical education and movement, occupational health and safety, ways of parental involvement in sports and relevant policies relating to local and international school tours and trips. Further, s/he is expected to have knowledge of establishing partnership with professional sporting bodies and clubs. Moreover, s/he should ensure that the SGB provides a budget for all extramural activities. Other than that, a school principal is also responsible for developing and empowering self and others.

1.2.2.7 Developing and Empowering Self and Others

The school principal must transform himself/herself and others (teachers and learners) for the betterment of the school. Also, s/he must embrace the philosophy and practice of *Ubuntu* and have the overall responsibility to build the professional learning community in the school. Through the provision of opportunities for shared leadership, teamwork and participation in decision-making, a school principal is required to promote the empowerment of those working in the school. Also, the encouragement and promotion of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities is an indication that s/he is a supporter of whole school development. In summary, a school principal is responsible for personal and professional development. Apart from the above key area, s/he is responsible for working with and for the community.

1.2.2.8 Working with and for the Community

Working with and for the community means that a school principal should build collaborative relationships with the SMT, SGB and parents within the school to discuss learners progress and conduct. Moreover, a school plays an important role in the well-being and development of the community. This means that school improvement and community development complement each other. What this suggests is that a school principal should work with the community (parents and caregivers) to support the education of the learners. Further, s/he should have knowledge of current affairs, the socio-politico-economic context of the school and ways of harnessing stakeholders.

1.2.3 Emerging issues from the Policy on the Duties and Responsibilities of a School Principal and South African School Principalship

Government Gazette 39684 is about duties and responsibilities of a school principal (Department of Basic Education, 2016a). Therefore, it is quite specific regarding what a school principal should do. Government Gazette 39827 (Department of Basic Education, 2016b) offers policy on school principalship. It is broad, comprehensive and abstract. In the eight areas, the duties and responsibilities specified in Government Gazette 39684 are quite evident, albeit not itemised. Thus, the two documents are complementary, but the latter is richer than the former. Therefore, I plan to use 39827 as the main frame, but I will still draw from 39684 for specifics.

From the highlights of the above policies, it emerges that the school principal should be both a leader (Abowitz, 2022) and a manager (Sharp & Walter, 2012). According to Rast III (2015, p. 133), “leadership is a ubiquitous feature of groups, whereby leaders serve as active agents of influence within the group to achieve both wonderful and terrible things”. This definition suggests that school principals, as leaders, should be able to take the organisation to another level, better than it was before (Lunenburg, 2010). This is a kind of an act that requires creativity and transformation in leaders (Bennis, 2008).

Also, principals as managers, should be able to maintain the organisation so that it achieves intended goals. Magretta (2012) argues that management is the ability to help people to be more productive and innovative. Once people are productive, organisational goals can be achieved. School principals cannot work in isolation, they can only succeed in their positions if they function in collaboration with other stakeholders such as the SMT, SGB, parents, staff, learners and the community (Chikoko, 2017).

Overall, the policy framework abundantly shows that the South African school principal’s role is complex and multi-faceted (Sepuru & Mohlakwa, 2020). Thus, a comprehensive understanding of such work requires one to examine in detail, all the facets involved. Studies suggest that most public schools are failing to achieve excellence. Examples of this include studies by Fleisch (2008), Maringe and Chiramba (2021), Mestry & Singh (2007), Spaul (2013), Spaul & Kotze (2015), and Van der Berg (2008).

Fleisch (2008) argues that the DBE is a paragon of inequality. He states that there are two systems of education in South Africa, the one that is characterized by wealth and the other by

poverty. The former benefits a minority of learners from rich families, who find it easy to proceed to universities upon completion of a matriculation certificate. The latter is the complete opposite as it deprives most of the learners of learning opportunities, for example, poor infrastructure, shortage of resources in schools, few books and other learning materials, and so forth. However, studies [for example, *Thinking and acting outside the box: a woman principal's lived experience of starting and leading a school* (Makhasane, Simamane & Chikoko (2018); *Mobilising and managing resources in deprived schools* (Khuzwayo, 2015)] show that sound leadership can transform schools in deprived contexts. This, similarly suggested that school principals, working with other stakeholders, can change school performance for the better.

The DBE is blighted by high wastage (Maringe & Chiramba, 2021). Examples of this include that schools experience high dropout rates, failure, repetition of grades and non-completion. From a large-scale study, the authors reported that, out of about 1,2 million learners who started school in 2007, only 800 000 of them registered to write the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination in 2019. While there are other causal factors, this high wastage suggest that many schools are not functioning optimally. This study largely implicated the school principals.

The DBE deliver poor literacy and numeracy results. There are studies that reveal the problem even before secondary school. Concerning literacy, some learners in secondary school have been found to have a reading ability that could be matched to a Grade 5 learner (Harmon, Wood & Stover, 2012). The same applies to numeracy, where almost 75% of learners in Grade 7 were found to be unable to perform basic mathematical operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (Spaull & Kotze, 2015). Incompetencies in literacy and numeracy were found to be a result of a lack of skills among teachers. This may suggest poor instructional leadership on the part of school principals, among other factors.

The DBE does not deliver decent learning outcomes when it comes to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects (Spaull, 2013). Despite that these subjects significantly influence a country's economy, only a few learners register for them, and the National School Certificate results are often disappointing. In 2019, the lowest pass rates in Grade 12 were recorded for Mathematics, Physical Science and Accounting yet far fewer learners compared to other subjects registered for examinations in them (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019).

South African public schools are generally led by principals with no formal leadership qualification. The recruitment of principals in schools is done following the competencies and skills as well as experiential competency. For example, *HRM Circular No.5 of 2022: School Based Promotion Vacancy List* (Department of Basic Education, 2022), clearly states such competencies. The circular states that, for competencies and skills, a school principal is required to have advanced knowledge of teaching which is in line with his/her professional qualification. S/he also needs to have good management and leadership skills. For experiential competency, a school principal needs to have good co-curricular skills, good people management, good administrative skills, good communication skills and good knowledge of applicable educator legislation, regulations and policies. Further, he needs to have seven years of actual teaching experience. Looking at the number of years of experience required of principals, they are so little in relation to the need for mastering the afore-mentioned schools, hence, the DBE becomes flooded with ‘leaders’ who have had no leadership capabilities (Mestry & Singh, 2007).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the highlights above, it seems most South African public schools are seemingly failing to deliver decent educational outcomes. Given the pivotal role of a school principal, that inevitably raises questions as to what the policy-practice interface of school principals’ work looks like. Scholars have studied individual areas of that interface. To illustrate, Mkhize and Bhengu (2015) studied successful leadership for effective teaching and learning in deprived school contexts. They concluded that principals must keep teachers and learners motivated so that they do not lose hope. In addition, those researchers concluded that school principals must monitor quality in teaching and learning by introducing curriculum trackers, which are tools used to specify what must be taught, when and how. Furthermore, they concluded that principals must maximise use of instructional time. Thus, they studied one important area of a school principal’s work.

Khuzwayo (2015) studied the management of human resources in a school. This is another key area of the work of a school principal. Khuzwayo found that flexible resource structures pointed to successful resource mobilisation and management thereof. The researcher also found that networking for resources with other affluent schools changed the state of limited resources. Further, he concluded that human resources should be well-trained for them to successfully implement other resources.

Naicker (2011) studied the formation and implementation of school-community partnership, another key area of the school principal's work. He found that action as opposed to rhetoric, formed one of the important ingredients of successful school-community partnership. Such action is driven by visionary leadership. Through action, both the school and the community enjoy tangible benefits such as infrastructure development, improved learner attainment and the generation of employment, among others.

In a study similar to that of Naicker reported above, Myende (2018) found that successful school-community partnership requires that a school principal should not only be part of the community, but s/he needs to be actively involved in community life. Myende concluded that successful partnerships were driven by a mutual benefit for both the school and the community. Further, this researcher also concluded that as much as the principal is the key link in establishing the partnerships, his/her work should ultimately seek to improve learning for both teachers and learners.

In a study conducted by Chuta (2018) in the Free State province of South Africa, the author argued that instructional leadership is an approach to improve learning outcomes. The reason behind this argument was on how people in leadership positions can influence or improve learners' scholastic performance. The study adopted a mixed-method sequential explanatory case study of three South African education districts. The data collection process involved a questionnaire survey consisting of closed questions and was complemented using one-on-one interview discussions. The participants of the study were the school principals and district officials. The findings indicated confusion regarding the existence and knowledge of the district vision, to the extent that district officials communicated various messages on instructional matters to schools. Few district officials were knowledgeable about policies that supported instructional leadership. Attempts to establish systems to coordinate and regulate instructional programmes failed. In that regard, existing structures that supported instructional leadership were not well coordinated, as a result, there were conflicting messages that were received by schools, resulting to duplication of roles and support to schools. With regards to structures that supported instructional leadership by school principals, the study discovered that those serving in those structures lacked specialised knowledge and skills to support instructional leadership by school principals. The study focused on one aspect of a school principal as an instructional leader. My takeaway in summary is that instructional leadership is an important requirement in a school principal's day-to-day activities.

Matshika (2014) conducted a study on financial management by school principals in the Nkangala District of Mpumalanga province, in South Africa (SA). The study examined how school principals manage the school's operational budget. Thus, that was one aspect of the work of a school principal. Data were collected from 245 school principals and acting principals who were used as the participants of the study. Questionnaires were used as research instruments in this quantitative study. The findings revealed that most school principals were struggling to manage the school funds in their schools (Maforah & Schulze, 2012). To be able to manage funds effectively, the conclusion was that they should register for financial course to enhance their knowledge and skills on financial management (Mestry, 2017). This suggests that financial literacy is of utmost importance if one is to become a school principal. This links with the first key area where the school principal is a leader of teaching and learning in a school.

A study conducted by Walker, Kutsyuruba and Noonan (2011) was based on the argument of the fragility of trust in the world of school principals in Canada. The aim was to examine trust-related aspects of the work of school principals. The study used open-ended responses from surveys on 177 school principals as the participants. This was a large study conducted in ten provinces and three territories of Canada. The findings of the study pointed to the perception that trust-related matters were an important yet fragile aspect of the work of school principals (Walker, Kutsyuruba & Noonan, 2011). However, trust-related problems contribute to the fragility of trust and frequently seem to pertain to relationships between principal and other administrators, staff members, parents and students. Therefore, school principals as leaders feel personal responsibility to make sure relationships amongst all stakeholders are sustained and, if broken, restored. The conclusion here was that trust is an important aspect in educational leadership. This links to the first key area where the school principal is a leader of teaching and learning in a school.

Setlhodi (2020) conducted a study on collaboration between the School Governing Body (SGB) and the SMT in underperforming schools. The aim was for action to be taken to improve performance as envisaged in South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996. This was a qualitative study that used an interpretivist approach to explore how shared leadership collaboration practices between SGB and SMT could improve performance. Data was collected from three school principals, using individual interviews, and focus group interviews with three parent SGB members, SMT members and teachers. Findings revealed that when SGB members' developmental needs were considered significant, stakeholders were mobilised

towards collective effort, collaboration and interaction enabled school performance. The recommendation was that SGB development be contextualised to enable quick interaction with stakeholders. The essence of SGB and SMT collaboration in providing leadership and dealing with issues impacting on performance should be highlighted. The conclusion was that school principals working together with other stakeholders is a necessity to improve student/learner performance. This has to do with school development because, if learners pass, the name of the school is uplifted to greater heights.

While the above studies provided some insights regarding school principals' work in specific individual areas in the policy framework, I have not found studies that interrogate the role of the school principal in a holistic way, that is, 'speaking' to all the areas as contained in the policy framework. While there seems to be a big gap between policy and practice regarding school principals' work, I see a knowledge gap regarding the nature thereof, and what informs it, hence the study of the policy-practice interface. This is the knowledge gap I seek to address in this study.

1.4 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the nature of the policy-practice interface and what lessons can be drawn regarding the work of a South African school principal?

1.5 CRITICAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study addressed and sought to answer the following questions.

1. What does the policy-practice interface of school principalship in the selected public primary schools look like?
2. Why is the interface the way it is in the selected schools?
3. What implications do the nature of the interface, and the reasons thereof have for improving the work of a school principal?

1.6 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

I was born in the township of Umlazi, which is in the South of Durban. I was raised by a single parent, my mother, together with my other siblings. She did not have a job but was assisting in

a shop that was owned by my grandparents (her parents). Our grandfather loved us so dearly that he did everything for us as grandchildren. He also made sure that we went to school to get proper education. When I was young, my dream was to become a nurse. That dream was shattered when I went to school. I was always exposed to teachers and school principals who motivated me in their teaching and leadership styles, so much so that teaching became a higher priority than nursing.

I never went to crèche or preschool as those schools were non-existent in my area. The lower primary school that I went to was just a walking distance from my home. It started at first year (grade 1) and progressed to Standard 4 (grade 6). The teachers were so good and took education seriously. The school principal was exceptional, because she was emphasizing that we communicate in English, as early as first year learners. The learner performance was outstanding, and all learners would pass and be moved to the next class. I was deeply impressed by her strategy as it benefited us all. She ensured that teaching and learning took place, and teachers would come to class prepared. My English vocabulary started to improve, and I was able to construct sentences, using correct grammatical order. I enjoyed myself so much and school for me was fun.

I then went to a higher primary school. I only spent one year there in standard five (grade 7) class. The school principal was a male whose leadership strategies were almost the same as that of my former principal. It was English throughout except during Afrikaans and IsiZulu periods. Teaching and learning were on top of the priorities and the teachers were highly dedicated to their work. No class would be left unattended to, and the school principal was always visible, even in verandas during teaching time. We participated in all the sporting activities for the full development of the body.

The following year meant a journey to a junior secondary school. The school catered to learners from standard six through standard eight (grade 8 to 10). I was made a prefect from day one. This title was not for ordinary learners, but only for the best. I was also in the debating society which took place on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The idea of time management was introduced to me at a young age because I was a bellringer for changing of periods. School was so exciting, and school principals were so innovative. Even now this surprises me because they did not have recognised qualifications nor any kind of formal preparation (Mestry, 2017). I wished to become a school principal one day. I then headed to a senior secondary (high school) school for standard nine and ten (grade 11 to 12). I looked so good in my school uniform and that led

to recognition by my teachers and school principal. Again, I was made a prefect by my school principal. My leadership roles were developed at an early age, hence my focus on the leadership and management discipline.

After Matric (grade 12), I made sure that I registered for the teaching profession. I then moved to a tertiary institution, a college of education. Things were just the same as in a secondary school, with few exceptions. For example, the number of subjects was quite odd, 23 and we had to pass all of them to qualify for the next class. I did not want any responsibilities nor titles attached to my name because I had to study. Little did I know that I was going to be selected as a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC). I was the secretary, and my English writing had to be proper, because even the College Rector would read the minutes of the meetings.

Given all the above realities, I felt so motivated by the way schools were run by school principals. This triggered my desire to work in schools so that it will be easy for me to achieve my goal of becoming a school principal one day. My life experiences of school principals' commitment to their work had motivated me to deliver quality teaching to learners in my school and making sure that learner achievement was good. I, therefore, began to appreciate school principals' day-to-day activities for me to understand all the nitty-gritty pertaining to their positions.

Things took another turn when I found myself in a real place of work, a school. I was expecting to see behaviour similar to that of my former principals. Things were totally different. For example, teachers were introduced to different unions to be part of. The aim was to work in partnership with DBE through the involvement of their members to take part in many departmental endeavours in improving the quality of education (Mafisa, 2017). However, that contrasted with the adversarial relationship between the two stakeholders. Teacher unions began to challenge the DBE, making it so difficult to work and the professional function of their original goal became a secondary one. This made school principals powerless.

Schools were no longer what they used to be. Teachers would leave school early and attend union meetings in different sites, leaving the learners unattended. Principals were obliged to release them as early as nine o'clock in the morning. Every idea the school principals brought to the teachers was challenged. There was chaos and schools were ungovernable. School principals with good qualifications seemed to be defeated. Most of them rallied with the unions instead of the employer. Teaching and learning were totally negatively affected and the idea of

improving the education system for the better was no longer entertained. In some schools, learners supported their teachers. This had been so continuous in such a way that learner performance dropped in most schools. There was nothing entertaining anymore. The unions took over everything, for example, they were decisive in recruitment and selection into higher positions. Teachers with good qualifications had become a threat and principalship positions were given to those who were most vocal in union matters.

Many of the selected school principals did not have proper qualifications nor training into such positions. The good performance of the learners was no longer a priority as it used to be. They would come to school with dangerous weapons, both in primary and secondary schools. Fighting, swearing and stealing amongst them became the business of the day. I felt so defeated and it was difficult to use any kind of punishment on them. Had I know before that things were going to be like that, I would have preferred nursing. All these led to a huge challenge in numeracy and literacy, a challenge that is typical of South Africa, and that contributes to our national shortage in medical, technological, engineering, climatological and linguistic professions.

Failure to achieve good results weakened the work of a school principal, hence the reasons for further exploration of the policy on school principalship and the practice thereof.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This refers to what knowledge the study hopes to achieve. The answer to that lies in the questions that the study poses. Firstly, the study sought out to generate knowledge on what the interface is between policy and practice in selected primary schools. If there is a strong interface between the two, this will mean that the work of a school principal in SA is of good quality. Good quality implies effectiveness in a school principal's work, which in turn guarantees good learner performance. It also sought to generate knowledge/insights into why the interface exists in its current form in the selected primary schools. Lastly, the study sought to generate knowledge on what implications the nature of the interface and the reasons thereof have for improving the work of a school principal.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

(a) Policy

This is a concept that refers to “a legislation that needs to be performed by personnel in an organisation in order to achieve the desired objectives” (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020, p. 1). A further argument was that a policy is a guideline for implementing learning activities to accomplish particular goals of education (Fathurrochman, Danim, Anwar & Kurniah, 2021), for example, producing outstanding results for learners/students.

(b) Practice

According to Ball, Maguire and Braun (2011, p. 2) practice refers to “how well a policy can be implemented”. This could be an implementation by an organisation or individual. In this study, it refers to the implementation by the school principals. Sepuru and Mohlakwana (2020, p. 1) argue that practice also refers to an interpretation of legislation. This simply means demonstration of specific actions; for example, in this study it means a school principal ensuring even distribution of workload amongst teachers as a way of managing human resources in a school, amongst others.

(c) Interface

This is a concept used to draw together separate classes as a single and augmented body (Hookway, 2014). In this study, it refers to drawing together policy of South African School Principalship and the implementation to determine the quality of a school principal’s work.

(d) Principalship

Williamson and Blackburn (2016, p. 1) argue that this is the “complex position in a school where one is expected to manage personnel, handle discipline issues, improve instruction and maintain student safety, while also balancing the budget and building positive relationships with families and community”.

(e) Policy-practice interface

This refers to the space of interaction between the school principalship policy framework and the nature of work a principal does in response to the policy. It is in that space that a school principal’s work can be determined, hence it is the focus of this study.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This research report comprises six chapters, which are the following:

Chapter 1. This is an introductory chapter which provides the background to the study and the policy framework for South African school principals. The highlights of school performance in South Africa and what it suggests about school principals' work is also discussed. Further, I discuss the statement of the problem and the research questions.

Chapter 2. This is dedicated to a literature review. The review involves clarification of concepts, discussion of empirical evidence, and of key issues about the work of a school principal, among others.

Chapter 3. This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study. It discusses two theories, namely transformational leadership and management functions theory.

Chapter 4. This chapter presents and discusses the research design and methodology. It is positioned within the interpretivist paradigm, using a qualitative case study. It addresses issues of data generation, analysis, trustworthiness and ethical clearance.

Chapter 5. This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter 6. This is a concluding chapter which reflects the research journey.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter set the scene of this study, which focuses on the quality of the work of school principals by examining both the policy framework and practice. This chapter addresses debates around leadership and management, with a focus on the work of a school principal. The debates will surround the eight key areas that form the basis of the work of a school principal in South Africa. The purpose of a literature review is to gain an understanding of the current study to close the gaps that can be identified (Rozas & Klein, 2010). This is done to strengthen and deepen the understanding of the current study (Wamba, Akter, Edwards, Chopin & Gnanzou, 2015). To achieve this, one needs to draw ideas from different authors at local and international levels (Hart, 2018). For this study in particular, the aim is to obtain information from different sources on how the eight key areas can be successfully implemented by school principals. First, the concept of leadership is defined. This is followed by a definition of management, the relationship between these two concepts and what policy implementation is. The next section is about leading teaching and learning in a school. This is followed by managing quality teaching and learning and securing accountability. The next section after this is managing a school as an organisation. Shaping the direction and development of a school is another section, followed by the requirement that a school principal is also required to manage human resources in a school. Further, s/he is expected to manage and advocate extramural activities. The next key area is developing and empowering self and others. The chapter concludes with the section on working with and for the community.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is defined as the ability to influence people towards the realisation or accomplishment of goals (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Hogan and Kaiser (2008) posit that leadership is key to organisational effectiveness. Yukl (2012) argues that leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done to accomplish shared objectives. In a similar way, Van Vugt and Ahuja (2011) define leadership as a process of social influence to attain shared goals. Curtis and Manning (2012) define leadership as social influence. Another argument by Burns (2012) is that leadership is a special form of power a person possesses, for example, the power to develop and transform people or

an organisation for the better. Kruse (2013) argues that leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal. Hackman and Johnson (2013) argue that leadership is an action, not a position. In addition, Rzepka (2023), citing Daft (2014), argues that leadership has to do with providing direction, aligning followers, building relationships and developing personal qualities. The author further asserts that leadership involves people (leaders and followers) who work together to achieve organisational goals. Further, the author posits that leadership can come from anyone, meaning anyone can be a leader. In addition to this, the author argues that leadership involves influence and change towards a desired goal or outcome. Striving for change is a requirement of a school principal, which entails influencing his/her staff to work tirelessly to bring about improvement in a school. Szelwach (2020), citing Bennis and Thomas (2020), argues that leadership is a sense-making heuristic to account for organisational performance and is important primarily for its symbolic role in organisations. Further, Northouse (2021) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

What emerges out of these definitions is that leadership is about influencing others to achieve a common goal. In this study it refers to a school principal influencing his/her teachers, students and parents towards achieving the vision and mission of a school. To achieve that requires clear purpose and intentional planning. Therefore, a school principal's role, values and purpose of how s/he leads others will be clearly defined. To conclude, leadership is very crucial in a school principal's role. However, school principals cannot just lead, they should also manage. Accordingly, the next section examines the latter concept.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF MANAGEMENT

Koontz and Newig (2014) argue that management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals work together in groups to efficiently accomplish selected aims. In relation to school, the authors argue that management involves planning school activities. Vukic and Nikolic (2023) citing Kreitner and Cassidy (2012) define management as a process of working with and through others to achieve organisational objectives in a changing environment. Magretta (2012) argue that management is a discipline that deals with productivity and innovativeness of an organisation. Management is defined by Daft and Samson (2014) as the attainment of organisational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling organisational resources.

DuBrin (2024) states that management refers to the process of using resources to achieve organisational objectives through the functions of planning, organising and staffing, leading and controlling. According to Okafor and Ndinechi (2018), citing Oosterlynck (2011), planning provides staff with a sense of purpose and direction. In a school situation, planning will involve compiling a school's year plan and the composite timetable for all the grades, as well as planning for extra-curricular activities in a school. For example, in a school year plan, a school principal as a manager is required to take a leading role by giving directives on what activities to be included and who is to be responsible for them. When planning a school's composite timetable, a school principal is required to ensure an equitable workload amongst staff. For extra-curricular activities, a school principal's role is to enable the offering of those activities in a school. Organising is defined by Kohler (2016) as a function that has to do with shaping the structure of an organisation. In a school context, it refers to organising teaching and learning activities. For example, this refers to knowing the phases in a school, the grades under those phases, the subjects to be taught and by whom, which are some of the issues that should be considered. The role of a school principal in that regard is to facilitate the implementation of this activity. Also, organising a school trip is another example to be highlighted. A school principal with a fundraising committee can organise a school trip to take place. For this to be effective, they should decide on a place to visit, the mode of transport to be used, the amount to be paid and the reasons behind the visit.

A school principal's role is to oversee whether everything is done accordingly. Staffing involves recruiting staff by looking at their skills and qualifications to see whether there is a match concerning the positions (Alexopoulos, 2019). The author further argues that staffing refers to the process of hiring eligible staff with knowledge and skills as well as proper attitudes and behaviours in an organisation to perform their duties. For teaching and learning to take place, school principals should ensure that qualified teachers are employed in their schools. Depending on the number of subjects offered in that school, a school principal needs to ensure that there is no subject without a teacher. If it does happen, s/he needs to inform the circuit manager to intervene by finding a right candidate for the job. By so doing, learners will benefit. Another important function of management is directing. Ray (2020) argues that directing refers to telling people what to do and seeing that they do it to the best of their ability. This suggests coordinating all the activities and bringing them closer to the vision and mission of the organisation. In a school context, it requires a school principal to be an organised person. Being organised can refer to several factors, for example, management of school funds/budget,

management of human resources and or programmes and school activities. In the South African context, a school principal cannot do that by himself and therefore requires the assistance of other key role players (SMT, SGB and parents) to ensure progress towards teaching and learning. Controlling can be defined as ensuring that activities in an organisation are performed as per the plan (Francsovcics, Kemendi & Piukovics, 2019). In a school context, this can mean controlling the level of late coming and absenteeism by a school principal. This can be effected by using a timebook, which is an important document in a school that requires teachers to indicate their presence/attendance. In that document, a school principal should ensure that teachers sign in and out when they arrive and depart. That signing should be done in his/her presence so that the correct time is entered. However, if a school principal is absent, a deputy principal (DP) takes over the controlling of the timetable. As I said previously, such an action assists in determining the number of hours worked and or lost. Schermerhorn, Bachrach and Wright (2020) argue that management is about people in organisations who directly support, supervise and help activate the work efforts and performance accomplishments of others. King, Griffin and Bell (2023) view management as a set of activities, including planning and decision making, organising, leading and controlling, directed at an organisation's resources with the aim of achieving organisational goals in an efficient and effective manner.

Because the terms 'leadership' and 'management' are closely related and collectively form the backbone of a school principal's work, it is necessary to discuss this relationship. The next section addresses this matter.

2.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Both leadership and management are essential for the success of an individual and that of an organisation (Lopez, 2014). Leadership focuses on persuading people (followers) and building relationships and teamwork (Sohmen, 2013). A school principal as a leader invests in people to achieve the school's objectives. Management rather involves organising, staffing, providing control and solving problems (Kotter, 2011). Also, management focuses on occupying a position and utilizing all the management functions that will help in ensuring the achievement of organisational goals (DuBrin, 2024). As discussed under management sub-section, a school principal as a manager must plan, organize, staff, direct and control the resources of an organisation to achieve its objectives (Francis & Oluwatoyin, 2019). This means that the investment is in the goals of the organisation. Kruse (2013) said leadership is a process of social influence, which maximized the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal. As argued

above, DuBrin (2024) argues that management focuses on the utilization of all management functions that will help in ensuring the achievement of organisational goals. What I learn here is that leadership uses personal influence whereas management uses position power. Also, Burns (2012) argues that leadership is a special form of power a person possesses. This argument suggests that a school principal as a leader should have the ability to inspire with purpose and trust. In this study, s/he should create an environment of discipline and trust to his/her staff. Management is defined by Daft (2014) as the attainment of organisational goals in an effective and efficient manner through utilization of its functions. Moreover, according to Kotter (2011), leadership involves setting direction, meaning producing change in an organisation. A school principal is required to bring change to his/her school, for example, by improving the academic results of students. The author further said that management involves planning and budgeting. As a manager, a school principal strives to get good results for his/her school. In addition to the leadership definition by Kotter (2011), the argument is that leadership involves aligning people and providing motivation. Aligning people means looking for the right fit between people and vision. As a leader, a school principal is required to ensure the recruitment of quality staff for his/her school for the implementation of a school vision and mission. Organising means looking for the right fit between people and jobs. A school principal has the responsibility to match teachers with their relevant subjects. Therefore, a school principal as a manager focuses his/her teachers to teach in such a way that they achieve specific goals of a school.

In order to lead, a school principal has to plan, organize, staff, direct and control. Therefore, while the two concepts are not synonymous, they are intertwined. Leadership and management are thus, two sides of one coin. The vision that a leader develops can only be put into action through management. To succeed in their job, a school principal must be both a leader and manager. The eight key areas of a South African school principal's work require them to perform both functions. Thus, a key focus of the present study is to research on school principals' understanding of their roles as both managers and leaders and the extent to which they cope with balancing the two. Apart from being leaders and managers in a school, it is a requirement that they practise the policy document, hence, a section on an understanding of policy implementation.

2.5 UNDERSTANDING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A policy refers to “a legislation that needs to be performed by personnel in an organisation in order to achieve the desired objectives” (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020, p. 1). A further argument is that a policy is a guideline for implementing learning activities to accomplish particular goals of education (Fathurrochman, Danim, Anwar & Kurniah, 2021). The authors also argue that a policy refers to a document that needs to be implemented regarding the performance of an action by individuals or organisations. In simpler terms, policy implementation means practising the policy document. According to Ball, Maguire and Braun (2011, p. 2) practice refers to “how well a policy can be effected”. In this study, it refers to implementation.

There are several factors that influence policy implementation, for example, there are commitment, content and context (Brynard, 2009). Commitment refers to the dedication or effort one puts in or simply an engagement or enthusiasm for work (Whittington & Galpin, 2010). In this context, a school principal is required to engage or commit himself/herself towards the requirements stipulated in the policy under scrutiny. The authors further argue that commitment is seen to have a positive relationship with productivity or profitability. In this study, commitment refers to school or classroom improvement. It is so important because school improvement guarantees good learner performance. Content refers to the wording or what a policy sets out to achieve. The wording in this case refers to a set of rules that should be practised. In this study, it refers to the requirements under each key area. It is so important because it gives directions to what needs to be done by school principals when leading and managing schools. By context, reference is made to the type of organisations or institutions and the conditions within which they operate, which can be in township or rural environments. Here, context refers to primary schools, in the township environments, with limited or few resources. The actors in this case are primary school principals, teachers, learners, SGB and the community. These are expected to work jointly with a school principal to ensure that teaching and learning takes place. The results of working together are the positive results that are yielded in the academic performance of learners. Without these people, a school principal will experience some challenges in implementing the policy. The argument brought by Mthethwa (2012) is that policy implementation refers to what school principals do in the execution of the set rules found in the policy. Further, Khan and Khandaker (2016) refer to policy implementation as involving the translation of goals and objectives of policy into action.

Ansell, Sorensen and Torfing (2017) similarly state that policy implementation refers to the execution of the policy guidelines or requirements to achieve goals of an organisation.

Another argument by Grindle (2017) is that policy implementation involves far more than a mechanical translation of goals into routine procedures. In an equivalent way, Viennet and Pont (2017) define it as a purposeful and multidirectional change process aiming to put a specific policy into practice. The meaning here is that policies should be created to solve problems in an institution. The one on school principalship was created with the idea to bring about improvement in South African schools, especially, improvement in learner performance. The policy-framework about school principalship is important because it is purely about leadership and management, which are regarded as vital in describing who a school principal is. As I said earlier, a school principal should be both a leader and a manager, hence the policy framework with both leadership and management components. From the above definitions, the major conclusion I draw is that policy implementation involves translation of policy into practice.

2.6 LEADING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A SCHOOL

This section discusses the leading of teaching and learning in a school. According to the policy on school principalship, this core area of a school principal's work encompasses five main kinds of leadership. They are instructional, strategic, executive, cultural and organisational leadership. In the sections that follow, I discuss each of these as it pertains to the role of a school principal.

2.6.1 Instructional leadership

Adams and Carnine (2003) posit that instruction means to tell in order to master. Weiss and Pasley (2004) argue that instruction is the provision of high-quality education to all the students. Rosenshine (2008) states that that instruction means to model and demonstrate a skill. Furthermore, Lee and Anderson (2013) define instruction as a provision of explicit rules or procedures to learn and master a particular concept. Thus, instruction, in this context, refers to teaching. As I discussed earlier, leadership is the ability to influence people towards the realization or accomplishment of goals (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). So, instructional leadership is about what leaders do to enhance teaching. In the South African context, school principals are responsible for putting all the structures in place for school functionality. Some of these instructional leadership roles include mentoring teachers and developing programmes to support them during teaching, and classroom visits to supervise and evaluate teachers. Such

duties and responsibilities are intended to improve learners' academic results, which in turn will lead to accomplishing the school's objectives. While the school principals may not necessarily perform all those duties on their own, they are expected to oversee such leadership. According to the policy framework guiding the work of a school principal, instructional leadership is regarded as the main function in this key area. For a better understanding of what instructional leadership is all about, I utilise a model by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). It clearly categorizes instructional leadership into three broad areas. They are (i) defining the school's mission (ii) managing the instructional programme and (iii) creating a positive school climate. These three are discussed one-by-one below.

(i) Defining the school's mission

Stiggins (2004) defines a school mission as a statement that places educators clearly in the service of the success of all learners. Also, Wiggins and McTighe (2007) argue that a school mission is the long-term goal in mind against which schooling is designed. Defining the mission of the school means identifying its purpose, clarifying the set objectives (improving the academic performance of learners) and knowing exactly what needs to be done to achieve that. Here are examples of mission statements from two schools.

- Mission statement for school A:

We at Sunshine Primary School are committed to provide equitable access to quality education for the people of KwaZulu-Natal.

In this mission statement, the words that I identified were committed and quality. In this context, the suggestion is for a school principal to be committed to his work and work entirely hard to ensure the provision of high-quality education to all learners in a school for their academic results to improve. In this regard, my study sought to find out what it is that school principals do to be considered committed in their work. Further, it sought to find out what it is that school principals do to produce quality education.

- Mission statement for school B:

We at Jupiter Primary School are committed to providing all pupils with the tools that will empower them to excel in the classroom, on the sports field and into their next phase of education and through their lives.

The word **committed** also came up again, in a mission statement from another school. Commitment is defined by Wainwright and Brueilly (2019) as dedication. This emphasises that

a school principal should be dedicated to his/her work. Also, empower is another word that I identified here. In this regard, it means the assistance offered by school principals in ensuring that learners pass and are ready for the next grade. Therefore, this study seeks to find out how school principals empower others for the achievement of good results.

The role of a school principal as an instructional leader is thus to ensure that learners are assisted so that their academic performance improves (Cox & Mullen, 2023). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) argue that defining a school mission comprises two main functions. These are framing and communicating clear school goals.

The first function refers to clearly detailing what needs to be done and achieved by a school to achieve good results for the learners at the end of the year. As shown by the mission statements above, in South Africa, the goal to achieve quality education is very topical. This is because many schools, particularly the poorly resourced ones, have been found wanting in this regard. Thus, in this study, I seek to engage school principals regarding how they attempt to lead their schools towards quality education. Salleh, Amin and Muda (2013) argue that for this mission to be a success, it requires school principals to work jointly with other stakeholders. In South Africa, a school principal is expected to work with such stakeholders as the SMT, other staff members, SGB, parents and community. Setlhodi (2020) contends that when school principals work with other stakeholders, the aim is to promote good results for learners. They, therefore, decide on what needs to be done and on what resources need to be used to ensure improvement (Francis & Shannon, 2013). How successful school principals are in working together with other stakeholders constitutes an important issue for investigation in this study.

The second function is about communicating clear school goals. This means simplifying the school's set goals in such a way that everybody understands them, for example, improving methods of teaching numeracy and literacy. Communication can be enhanced through activities such as developmental workshops and professional learning communities (PLCs). A PLC is a learning group that unites all teachers responsible for a particular subject to work together for school improvement needs (Cormier, Olivier & Lafayette, 2009). Its aim is professional growth and development. The effectiveness of these communities depends on the availability of teachers to attend workshops and training sessions for the benefit of learners. Salleh (2014) argues that communicating clear school goals means giving clear directions on what needs to be done to achieve the objectives that have been set out in a school. Thus, this study investigates the ways and extent to which school principals succeed in communicating school goals.

(ii) Managing the instructional programme

According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), managing the instructional programme refers to reviewing the full curriculum to see how best it meets the needs of the learners. This requires a school principal to consider the learning outcomes, among other things. This dimension incorporates three leadership functions, which are i) supervising and evaluating instruction, ii) coordinating the curriculum and iii) monitoring student progress.

Supervising means good authority or observing and directing a task or an activity (Bostock, Patrizo, Godfrey & Forrester, 2019). Cottrell, Kilminster, Jolly and Grant (2002) posit that supervision refers to clear guidance and the establishment of appropriate procedures and mechanisms to resolve difficulties relating to inadequate supervision for trainees. In a school context, the aim is to support teaching. If students are learning, there should be a change in their behaviour to see whether what has been learnt has been effective or not. Its effectiveness is shown when learners show independence, when they think abstractly and can utilize the acquired knowledge in different scenarios of their lives. In the South African context, teaching is largely supervised by the departmental heads. A DH is a subject specialist and an expert in his/her field (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019). DHs are teacher leaders who have full responsibility to facilitate professional learning for their colleagues (Mthiyane, Naidoo & Bertram, 2019, citing Nicholson, Capitelli, Richert, Bauer & Bonetti, 2016). They lead teachers in a phase, that is, a Foundation Phase DH, an Intermediate Phase DH and so forth. They are expected to make sure that they lead and provide directions to teachers under their supervision. For example, they are expected to do class visits and observe teachers teaching. This, on its own is a problem that needs further attention, which if not attended to, can lead to exhaustion, burnout and poor work performance. In addition to that, they are expected to sign lesson plans to see whether what has been taught is in accordance with Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). They should mentor teachers under their supervision and assist them to become effective in their teaching. For mentoring of teachers, they may do that using platforms like Staff Development Teams (SDT) and Developmental Support Groups (DSG). They should check teachers' coverage of the curriculum and learners' work. They should work with teachers to improve curriculum coverage and further assist those teachers who experience challenges in covering the curriculum. For all that work to succeed, there is a need for oversight by the school principal. Thus, this study investigates such oversight regarding supervision.

Evaluation refers to a process of determining whether the designed instruction meets the intended objectives (Xu, Grant & Ward, 2016). It means seeing whether the intended

programme is working or not. For example, in South Africa, part of the aim of the Quality Management System (QMS) is to evaluate teachers' performance. Therefore, evaluating instruction means observing the processes of teaching to see whether the set goals are met (striving for excellence, improving numeracy and literacy as well as improving academic performance of learners). Moreover, if learners score high in a test, the suggestion is that the content learnt was understood. This implies readiness for the next topic. Evaluating teaching is often contentious as teachers tend to fear having their shortcomings exposed. Thus, the study is interested in understanding how school principals manage this matter.

The second function is coordinating the curriculum. Coordinating refers to a process of organising people or groups so that they work together properly (Zamparelli, 2019). For teaching and learning context, it means the function of management which ensures that different departments and/or groups work together. In this study, it means seeking a unity of action amongst teachers, learners, SMT and parents in the improvement of the school. How school principals oversee the coordination of school activities is an important item for this study.

The third function is monitoring student progress. This refers to a variety of ways or methods that teachers use to assess the progress of their learners. Monitoring learners' progress enables school principals and teachers to see where learners stand and if need be, what needs to be done to support those who lag. In a similar way, Naidoo and Petersen (2015) argue that monitoring is important as it helps in measuring the level of academic performance of learners. In this context, schools may use tests, examinations, assignments, observation, quizzes and so forth, to monitor learner progress. In South African schools, after test or examination writing, learners' marks are entered into a system called South African School Administrative and Management System (SASAMS) to ensure that data is submitted in the correct format by all schools in the DBE. This will further assist in determining how learners fare in their assessments. This will also enable the District, Province and National government to see the ranking of all schools. Thereafter, a seven-point scale is used to assess learner performance, with a higher overall score indicative of *outstanding* as the highest academic achievement and *not achieved* as an indicative of the lowest academic performance. They describe the quality or frequency of students' work after an assessment. They are also determining factors concerning relevant intervention strategies to be used by teachers and school principals in improving learners' academic results.

Table 2.1 An example of an Academic Achievement Scale (AAS):

Rating code	Description	Scores
7	Outstanding achievement	80%-100%
6	Meritorious achievement	70%-79%
5	Substantial achievement	60%-69%
4	Adequate achievement	50%-59%
3	Moderate achievement	40%-49%
2	Elementary achievement	30%-39%
1	Not achieved	20%-29%

Thus, this study is, amongst other concerns, aimed at understanding school principals' management of school data, in this case regarding learner performance.

(iii) Creating a positive school climate

The third area refers to all the components that make a positive school climate, for example, the components that lead to an orderly and supportive environment, where the school family (teachers, learners) feels safe and valued. It is in this kind of environment that the school mission will be pursued freely and without any disruptions. This area comprises five emergent functions. They are i) protecting instructional time, ii) promoting professional development, iii) maintaining high visibility, iv) providing incentives for teachers, and v) providing incentives for learning. Each of these will be independently discussed to see how best it promotes effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Protecting instructional time. This is an ideal function in determining learner academic achievement because its focus is on content coverage (Grissom, Loeb & Master, 2013). It deals with how much time is available to tackle the prescribed learning content. Therefore, school principals should be motivated and encourage both teachers and learners to make school attendance a priority to avoid lost time. In this context, the focus is on what school principals do as instructional leaders to enhance learner academic performance (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2021). This function also called for school principals to devise a plan to carry out all the planned activities for the year so that no time is lost unnecessarily. Mostly, school principals emphasise the notion of punctuality, for example, to both teachers and learners. Regular attendance is

stressed by school principals to both teachers and learners. Moreover, school principals should develop strategies on how to catch up on the lost time. In this case, they make a timetable detailing how different grades should catch up if necessary. Thus, this study examines school principals' oversight regarding time use.

Promoting professional development. This function allows employees to progress on their careers through the attainment of new skills, knowledge and experience. This can be achieved by introducing developmental projects to employees to stretch these newly introduced skills. In this context, school principals aid their teachers to develop professionally in the teaching profession. They (school principals) do this by arranging training workshops that teachers should attend to develop their teaching skills (Thaine, 2010). As instructional leaders school principals should provide teacher mentorship programmes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), where they arrange for team-building workshops at which teachers will be assisted to grow both personally and professionally. Bootcamps and/or retreats can also be effective in promoting teachers' professional development (Aitchison, 2020). Further, for teachers to develop professionally, it is the role of a school principal to give feedback on the previously planned activity. Giving feedback is very important because it promotes effective learning and encourages an evaluation of that planned activity to see whether it was effective or not (Gamlem & Smith, 2013). The study should therefore investigate how successful school principals are in promoting professional development.

Maintaining high visibility. This function means increasing visibility at work. This can be shown by being proactive in the events organized by a company. In this study, it means the visibility of a school principal in the whole school and during classroom visits (Abes & Wallace, 2018). This applies in the events taking place in a school, for example, during SMT meetings, parents' meetings, SGB meetings, a school principal needs to be present. During classroom visits, it is when school principals offer support to both teachers and learners in challenging concepts. For example, if there is no effectiveness during content delivery, a school principal intervenes by providing all the resources that may be required. Further, to show high visibility, a school principal is required to work in partnership with the community, which in turn leads to successful educational leaders as well as successful delivery of content (Kladifko, 2013). The extent of school principal's visibility should be an area of investigation in this study.

Providing incentives for teachers. This is a powerful and positive tool for promoting effectiveness in teaching and learning. In this study, providing incentives for teachers means that school principals should reward teachers for their good performance (Sowell, 2018). This can be in the form of certificates, trophies or monetary benefit, to mention a few. School principals can also arrange for their teachers to take part in ceremonies, for example, teacher award ceremonies where teachers will be acknowledged for their good work. In a school setting, school principals give their teachers some few hours off work, especially on Fridays, when they allow teachers to leave early instead of at normal time. In a similar way, school principals entertain their teachers when it is the end of the school term or year. They organize parties or a staff outing for celebration. This impact positively on their morale, stress and commitment (Lambersky, 2016). The author further argues that this appraisal behaviour supports students' learning and brings effectiveness in teaching. The study is interested in the incentivisation that teachers, school principals adopt.

Providing incentives for learning. This is another powerful and positive tool for promoting effectiveness in teaching and learning. This one suggests that learners should be rewarded for displaying good performance. In this study, this tool is important as it serves as a motivational device for intended learning (Kapur, 2018). In the context of South Africa, school principals together with teachers reward learners who do good using different forms, for example, issuing stars, stickers, bookmarks and or prize boxes, to mention a few. All these are issued when learners do well in a test, assignment, projects and examination, for example. Also, teachers issue merit certificates to motivate learners who display good behaviour in class. If learners are rewarded, they tend to excel in class which is a result of a healthy competition amongst them. How learning is incentivised should also be an area of interest for this study.

Drawing from the above three areas, it transpires that the work of a school principal as an instructional leader is a multi-faceted one as it involves several interrelated aspects that lead to school effectiveness.

2.6.2 Strategic leadership

Mintzberg et al. (1998) argue that a strategy comprises a sequence of decisions taken at different points in time, possibly subject to revision and redefinition. Davies (2022) maintains that a strategy drives decisions relating to the acquisition, development and deployment of a company's resources. The author also, defined a strategy as a specific pattern of decisions and actions taken to achieve an organisational goal. Further, Eacott (2008) argues that the word

strategy is often used to characterize different kinds of actions, namely, to weigh management activities, to describe a high range of leadership activities, to define planning or to report to individual actions within an organisation. Moreover, McKeown (2019) posits that a strategy is about moving from where you are to where you want to be. In this context, these definitions suggest that a strategy is about making decisions on how to do something. As previously discussed, leadership is the ability to influence people towards the realization or accomplishment of goals (Van Vugt & Ahuja, 2011). Therefore, strategic leadership is about the decisions taken by leaders to accomplish an educational goal. In a school context, school principals as strategic leaders are responsible for the successful operation and progress of schools. To ensure the achievement of this responsibility, they are expected to perform various duties. In the South African policy context (Department of Basic Education, 2016b), the roles include developing staff and having a need to support every learner to succeed, supporting teamwork and promoting cohesion, promoting stakeholder wellness and setting the school on a continuous improvement path, to mention a few. Therefore, as strategic leaders, school principals are required to ensure that they perform these roles in their schools no matter how challenging they are. Concerning several definitions of strategic leadership brought about by different authors, Quong and Walker (2010) present seven principles of strategic leadership. The authors argue that strategic leaders are i) future oriented and have a future strategy, ii) are evidence-based and research-led, iii) get things done, iv) open new horizons, v) are fit to lead, vi) make good partners, and vii) do the ‘next’ right thing. These are the main features of strategic leadership that I would like to focus on.

(i) Strategic leaders are future-oriented and have a future strategy

The suggestion by Bolstad, Gilbert, McDowall, Bull, Hipkins and Boyd (2012) is that strategic leaders are visionary leaders. This means that they set a vision for an organisation towards its improvement. A vision, according to Kantabutra (2010) is a “fundamental attribute of effective leadership and a basis of one’s power to lead”. Also, the author argues that a vision is the ability to achieve sustained competitive advantage over those organisations that were lacking on it. In a school context, every school should have a vision of what the school would be in future compared to what it was then (Cowley & Domb, 2012). It is the responsibility of school principals to close the gaps that exist between now and the future of schools as a way of achieving effectiveness in a school. Therefore, setting a vision is about what leaders do to achieve organisational effectiveness (Kotter, 2017). Further, Zaccaro and Banks (2001) argue

that setting a vision is a collective effort on behalf of organisational progress. In the South African context, school principals work with other stakeholders towards achieving the progress of each school. They have plans in mind and how to implement them to achieve school success. For example, school principals adopt school year plans to refine a school vision. This is a plan that clearly details all the routine and activities to be implemented in a particular year by responsible personnel (Schumm, Vaughn, Haager & Klingner, 1994). The aim is to review and decide how to improve on those activities that have flopped. Also, school principals work with timetables for easy flow of subjects without any clashes. This they do considering the number of hours allocated per subject. Further, school principals work with school improvement plans to have planned strategies to be followed to bring improvement in a school. Therefore, what school principals do as future-oriented strategic leaders to achieve school progress is an important item for investigation for this study.

(ii) Strategic leaders are evidence-based and research-led

Being evidence-based and research-led simply means making decisions based on real evidence coming out of research and not on hearsay or guesswork. As leaders of schools, school principals use evidence to challenge the teacher and learner under-performance. In the South African context, for example, to challenge teacher under-performance, school principals depend on scores obtained during QMS implementation. The teachers' scores on score sheets are determining factors for a corrective strategy to be used. As for learner under-performance, school principals rely on SASAMS scores. As I stated previously, SASAMS is a monitoring tool to determine how learners fare in their assessments. Therefore, school principals rely on this tool to challenge underperformance and in turn can suggest corrective measures to increase learner performance, which then suggests school improvement.

(iii) Strategic leaders get things done

Getting things done is an indication of knowing exactly the required expectations. This principle suggests that strategic leaders should have clear expectations about the goals of an organisation. Thompson (1994) argues that having clear expectations means highlighting the complexities or having clearly define instructions. Lederach (2015) maintains that having clear expectations refers to defining more for better understanding. Also, Boudes, Robinson and Bertelsen (2018) posit that having clear expectations means knowing exactly what is desired. In addition, Yin, Zhou, Ai, Sun, Duan, Sun and Guo (2023) argue that having clear expectations refers to a consistent action defined by a goal. In a school context, this means doing what needs

to be done to achieve school goals. It also means defining concepts and policies for better clarity. Therefore, school principals are the link between teachers and the education system. They link teachers with the education system by unpacking school policies to teachers and acting on them, by encouraging discussion of circulars with them, by sharing information with teachers in staff meetings, and so forth as a way of simplicity. Teachers are expected to respond positively to ensure facilitation of the mentioned documents. This study sought to understand what school principals as strategic leaders do to keep up to date with national and international education policies to ensure that things are done; accordingly, in this context, the correct implementation of policies.

(iv) Strategic leaders open new horizons

Chomsky (2000) argues that opening new horizons means opening new frameworks or opening up for the future (Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2023). Roy (2009) asserts that opening new horizons means opening fresh perspectives. Kirkpatrick (2015) posits that opening new horizons means opening new segments. The meaning here is that the above principle refers to being always on the look-out for new ways of doing things. In a school context, this means that school principals should open possibilities and opportunities for school improvement. In the SA context, they should look beyond and experiment with new ideas more often for better development of schools. For example, in some schools, there are computer rooms with laptops to enhance student learning. Learners take turns so that they all get equal share in using those facilities. Learners become computer-literate at an early age, which is a skill that is required in the country's economy. With that skill, learners can write documents and prepare files. Also, some schools have laboratories which are a necessity in the production of future medical doctors, pharmacists, dieticians, medical technologists, and other health related occupations. There are hospitality rooms in some schools that prepared learners to be chefs and can build a career because of the skill gained. Moreover, in some schools, school principals go out of their call of duty and ask for donations to build and erect recreational facilities, for example, swimming pools, rugby fields and soccer fields. A school principal as a strategic leader ensures that learners' talents are equipped at an early age. With these facilities mentioned in schools, the country benefits because there will be production of swimmers, soccer players as well as rugby players. Therefore, change is necessary, and school principals need to lead it, so the study should seek to investigate school principals' roles in that regard.

(v) Strategic leaders are fit to lead

Being fit to lead suggests being able to develop others to achieve better performance (Hansen, 2013). In this context, a school principal should be able to develop others, that is, him/herself and other teachers, to achieve good results for his/her school. This principle suggests professional development of school principals and teachers. Friedman and Phillips (2004) posit that promoting self and others' professional development is a way of providing employers with competent and adaptable workforce. Postholm (2012) argues that this feature is about the learning of teachers. Similarly, Zepeda (2019) argues that promoting self and others' professional development means implementing programmes that promote teacher growth. In this context, the aim is to provide school principals and teachers with opportunities to enhance their personal knowledge and practice. This study is thus focused on studying school principals' role in their own development and that of teachers.

(vi) Strategic leaders make good partners

Making good partners means involving staff and other stakeholders to work collaboratively in order to promote school success (Goddard & Goddard, 2007). Quirke (2017) argues that making good partners means involving staff in planning and action and leading collaboration practices. This means working together and making connections to achieve organisational objectives. De La Harpe and Radloff (2008) posit that staff involvement in planning and action refers to their engagement to assure and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Similarly, Ainscow, Beresford, Harris and Hopkins (2013) define staff involvement as participation of all staff members to achieve the set goals. In a school context, this means that all staff members should work in collaboration with other stakeholders to accomplish the school's vision. However, in SA context, school principals should work with SMT members, teachers, parents and the community to ensure the future of the school. The extent to which school principals worked in partnership with other stakeholders to achieve school goals is an important area of focus in the study.

(vii) Strategic leaders do the 'next' right thing

Karp and Abramms (1992) argue that doing the next right thing means ensuring that an action that is designed to achieve a certain objective will do so without violating a value. Badaracco (2002) defines doing the next right thing as doing what you really believe you should do. Forgeard et al. (2011) refer to interventions that are designed to boost positive emotions. In this context, doing the next right thing means acting ethically and accordingly by a school principal. For example, a school principal should value punctuality at all costs and should be the first one

to come and the last person to leave school premises. S/he should act decisively following departmental policies. Further, a school principal is required to take good care of school finances. Together with a school administrator, they should keep records of the money collected and used for any other reason. Doing the next right thing means continuously seeking to achieve organisational goals, so this study will determine how school principals perform in all the areas of their principalship.

2.6.3 Executive leadership

Zaccaro (1996) bases his/her argument on the notion that executives are ensuring that the organisation is working correctly to accomplish its purpose. The argument by Hewlett and Ashford (2014) is that executive refers to how you act, how you speak and how you look. Drucker (2018) posits that executive means effectiveness or getting the right things done. Further, Menkes (2022) maintains that executive means demonstrating to be able to work with other people in the accomplishment of tasks. In this study, the above definitions suggest that executive is about the accomplishment of tasks to bring about effectiveness in an organisation. As was discussed previously, leadership is key to organisational effectiveness (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Therefore, executive leadership is about bringing effectiveness in an organisation (Herman, 2016). In a school context, school principals as executive leaders are responsible for ensuring that things are done correctly to accomplish school objectives. However, as previously stated, the work of a school principal is a multi-faceted one as it has a list of tasks to be performed each day. According to the Department of Basic Education (2016b), in the SA context, the tasks include creating a school identity, creating a climate of transparency and creating an environment of discipline and trust. As executive leaders, school principals are responsible for ensuring that these tasks are acted upon daily.

(i) Creating a school identity

Shank (2006) argues that creating a school identity means connecting to others and developing professional identities. Muhammad (2012) posits that the above task refers to creating a space for everybody to learn. Also, Rios and Longoria (2021) maintain that creating a school identity means creating a home in schools. This means knowing about oneself and where one stands. In a school context, this requires prioritising a school by a school principal or putting the name of a school first in everything s/he does. In this study, a school principal emphasizes an inclusive environment where every child matters the most. S/he equips staff to embrace their

own leadership roles. As a leader, s/he trusts his/her staff to make the right decisions towards school improvement. Further, s/he interacts and collaborates with parents and the community O'Connor (2008) and form partnerships with structures like policing forums in the alleviation of crime affecting the school. This is a sign of his visibility even outside the school. Barab and Duffy (2012) argue that to be visible outside the school means learning and using knowledge outside of school premises. Pyne and Means (2013) maintain that to be visible outside the school suggests moving beyond illusions of community. Therefore, a school principal's visibility is an important item in this study that I want to focus on. This study sought to find out what it is that school principals do to be considered visible in and outside the school.

(ii) Creating a climate of transparency

Foster and McAdams III (2009) posit that creating a climate of transparency means working publicly in procedures and protocols. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans and May (2005) argue that creating a climate of transparency means fostering a healthy ethical climate characterised by transparency. Jiang and Men (2017) maintain that creating a climate of inquiry means an exhibition of authentic leadership capabilities to shape a nurturing organisational culture. This literally means being open, honest, direct and transparent. In a school context, a school principal is open in the sharing of information in departmental circulars. He ensures that feedback is given to teachers on decisions taken during principals' meetings. He shares information with teachers related to school's budget. Moreover, he keeps to the promises he makes.

(iii) Creating an environment of discipline and trust

Mokhele (2006) contends that creating an environment of discipline means the management of discipline. Cone (2010) argues that creating an environment of discipline and trust refers to enduring attributes of the profession. School principals as executive leaders should ensure that discipline prevails in a school. This means discipline amongst staff members, amongst learners, especially learners from different cultural backgrounds. From my experiences as a teacher, there is discipline in schools, however, it is to a minimum. Most teachers fail to keep to the time stipulated by the DBE. The same applies to learners, most of whom come to school late. This shows a lack of discipline on the side of a school principal. School principals need to be trustworthy to their staff, learners and parents. To comment on this requirement as a long service teacher, some school principals are trustworthy whereas others are not. For example,

my school principal provides feedback to meetings attended. He outlines the school's budget; he shows receipts of the items bought for the school and so forth. Other school principals do not do that; they do not even co-operate with the SGB when it comes to school finances (Mokoena, 2013). This study therefore looks at what can be done to ensure that school principals enforce discipline in their schools and what it is that can make them trusted. Put differently, this refers to those school principals who can turn their schools around, that is, those who take and transform their schools from low-performing to high-performing (TschannenMoran & Gareis, 2015).

2.6.4 Cultural leadership

Sergiovanni (1987) argues that culture is the performance of routine activities. Those activities refer to stories, values, traditions, of heroes and heroines (Glanz, 2005). According to Hofstede (1994, p. 5) culture is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group of people from another". Matsumoto, Kudoh and Takeuchi (1996) argue that culture is the set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people but different for each individual communicated from one generation to the next. As I discussed earlier, leadership is a special form of power a person possesses, for example, the power to develop and transform people or organisation for the better (Burns, 2012). Therefore, cultural leadership is the utilization of power in the performance of the afore-mentioned routine activities. This is done to ensure that the activities of different cultures are embraced (Markey, O'Brien, Kouta & Okanteyi, 2021). For a school principal to be successful in this kind of leadership, s/he is expected to perform some of the responsibilities. In SA context, the responsibilities include ensuring that there is tolerance amongst different cultures in a school. For better understanding of what cultural leadership is, Glanz (2005) discusses seven activities of a cultural leader. The author argues that a cultural leader i) supports positive school climate, ii) pays attention to rituals, ceremonies and other symbolic actions, iii) establishes a commitment to shared vision and goals, iv) communicates and maintains high expectations for student achievement, v) communicates and interacts with the school community on a continuous basis, vi) supports risk taking among teachers to improve student learning, and vii) maintains high visibility and accessibility.

(i) A cultural leader supports positive school climate

Glanz (2005) argues that supporting positive school climate refers to positive contributions made by other personnel in an organisation to create a spirit of harmony and working

togetherness. In this study, it refers to what school principals do to motivate their teachers to work in a team, which then leads to good academic results. Smith, Connolly and Pryseski (2014) suggest that school principals should support a positive school climate in order to promote the academic achievement of learners. From my observation as a teacher, I have seen school principals supporting the well-being of staff. This they show in several ways, for example, during the PPN declaration, they write motivational letters to district offices as a way of retaining teachers. Mdlalose (2003) argues that post provisioning norm is a national norm that was adopted by DBE to achieve equity in the learner teacher ratio and to reduce high government expenditure on teachers' salaries. Additionally, school principals provide safety measures to both teachers and learners by installing security features like burglar-guards in windows and doors, having a security guard and so forth. Further, for a positive school climate to exist, school principals promote healthy social interactions. By the end of each term, in my school, we attend team building workshops arranged by the school principal. To show support, my school principal also attends. There is a lot of engagement with other teachers, and we play a lot of games. However, this is news to other schools. Moreover, when it comes to dropout, most school principals ensure that it is prevented. Hence, in my district, there are subject clusters formed by subject advisors, school principals and teachers. This is an innovative programme as it brings positive results to learners' academic work (Chikoko, 2007). This programme improve teaching and learning through the formal and informal training of teachers. In cluster meetings, we clarify concepts and share ideas with other teachers. However, for all these to be effective requires a school principal to work with other stakeholders, for example, SGB. As a teacher, I have never seen an SGB member taking part in healthy social interactions and during the time when learners do not do well in their academic performance. This is missing between a school principal and SGB and leads to a question of what can be done to correct the situation and to ensure that learner performance is enhanced. Therefore, how is harmony going to prevail if there is no togetherness between school principals and SGB members?

(ii) A cultural leader pays attention to rituals, ceremonies and other symbolic actions

Imber-Black and Roberts (1998) argue that rituals offer opportunities to make meaning from the familiar and unfamiliar situations at the same time. Rai (2010) points out that paying attention to rituals, ceremonies and other symbolic actions can lead us to understand to why certain norms, rituals and ceremonies are normalised and others deemed deviant. McComas, Besley and Black (2010) maintain that public meetings are often referred to as rituals to denote

a largely symbolic activity. Further, rituals encourage group cohesion. The emphasis here is that of unity amongst different cultures. In a school context, it is a school principal's role to ensure unity amongst learners with different cultural backgrounds. In the SA context, a school principal as a cultural leader is required to embrace cultural diversity in a school. The aim is for learners to understand and respect one another. Khumalo, Sebatlelo and Van Der Merwe (2014) argue that learners learn of their cultures in subjects like History and Tourism where the narratives of the people who lived ages ago are brought to the fore to recent learners (Dunkley, Morgan & Westwood, 2011). For example, former Model C schools have learners from different cultures who display their cultures and who they are during Heritage Day. Radebe (2015) reports that former Model C schools were schools in which the state only paid the salaries of permanent teachers and the SGB ran the finances of the school, setting their own fees and admission requirements. In SA, this day is commemorated on the 24th of September every year in acknowledging cultural differences of its people. In one school, there are Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Indian learners. Black learners, mostly Zulu speaking in the province of KwaZulu Natal (KZN) celebrate this day by wearing traditional attires. For example, boys wear *ibheshu* made of animal skin to cover their lower bodies whereas girls wear *patterned skirts and beads*. Learners celebrate this day by singing of traditional songs and reed dances (Field, 2020). In Indian culture for instance, girls wear long *saris* and boys wear *kurta pyjama*. A school principal ensures that harmony exists during this day, and no learner feels offended by his/her cultural clothing, instead is acknowledged and accepted. Teachers working closely with a school principal also ensured that fair treatment to all learners exist and no one is marginalised or discriminated against, when it comes to his/her cultural background.

(iii) A cultural leader establishes a commitment to shared vision and goals

Roueche, Baker III and Rose (2014) argue that establishing a commitment to shared vision and goals means setting the tone, motivating and showing positive attitudes about the future of an organisation. The authors further argue that it refers to a long-term commitment to achieve a common goal. Cohen (2015) contends that a shared vision creates a sense of purpose and direction. Also, the author maintains that a shared vision is an aspirational description of what a work group can accomplish when people are committed to achieving a common goal. Moreover, the author states that a shared vision is predicated on the belief that when employees participate in the decision-making process on issues that impact their job, they embrace the decision as their own and feel a positive emotional connection with the manager. This means

being dedicated to work hard so as to achieve positive results for your organisation. In a school, a school principal is expected to commit himself/herself to working hard to enhance the performance of learners' academic work and bring about school improvement. From my observation as a teacher, school principals encourage continuous professional development of staff to enhance learners' academic work. For example, district directors together with circuit managers and principals of schools, issue circulars on orientation workshop. The aim was to give support especially to new teachers so that they master the correct methods and approaches to teach a particular subject. In addition to this aim, teachers start to have confidence, which result in the correct delivery of the learning content.

(iv) A cultural leader communicates and maintains high expectation for student achievement

MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) argue that communicating and maintaining high expectation for student achievement means promoting high academic achievement for all learners. Cotton (2003) states that this requires a school principal to establish a pervasive culture of teaching and learning in a school for students to get good results. For example, the notion of “*no child left behind*” should prevail in schools. This notion encourages school principals to pay attention to each learner in a school and ensure that individual attention is given to those who lag behind.

As a teacher, I have noted that some school principals arrange tutoring and afternoon classes so that learners assist one another with homework and studying. The same programme benefits learners with barriers. Further, in some schools, secondary schools for example, school principals arrange for winter and or summer schools. All these arrangements are made to increase the academic performance of the learners. For effective implementation of it, some schools and school principals extend learners' departure time whereas in some schools, nothing happens. For example, in my district, I have noticed that most schools close at half past two. However, to accommodate afternoon classes, some school principals close their schools at four o'clock. This is not the case with some schools as I see learners in the streets in different school uniforms by half past two or three o'clock. So, how do school principals ensure that the principle of no child left behind is achieved learners depart as early as half past two? This is a question that needs attention so that it closes the gaps in existing literature. This study therefore sought to find out what it is that other school principals do to guarantee that no child is left behind.

(v) A cultural leader communicates and interacts with the school community on a continuous basis

The above activity of a cultural leader suggests working together with other stakeholders in a school to improve schools and increase the success of all students (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Williams, 2018). These authors argue that community engagement activities help improve student attendance, achievement as well as behaviour. Further, they state that interacting with school community assists in student learning and development. Simply, a partnership between a school principal and the community to assist learners to attain good results. In a school context, working together with the community proves the notion that school principals cannot work in isolation to move their schools forward, but are dependent on the community as well (Spillane & Lee, 2014). It is a requirement for a school principal to work with parents and community to assist in improving learners' results for the better. The same policy under scrutiny also asserts that a school principal is expected to work with and for the community as one of its key areas. This is a repetition coming from different key areas, which to me is an emphasis on how important it is for a school principal to work with others in the running of a school. In the SA school context, school principals are expected to work with the SGB in the governance of the school to help in increasing the performance of the learners. This is a body that requires broad participation of stakeholders in school life (Mahlangu, 2008). In this body, it is the parents that constitute most of the members, for example, the chairperson, the treasurer and the secretary (Heystek, 2004). Also, in forming partnerships, school principals are expected to work with other government departments to assist in the enhancement of learners' results, for example, the Department of Social Development. What I have experienced is that under this department, schools work with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) which is a public service delivery that recognizes the principle of *Batho Pele* which literally means "*people first*" (Mbecke, 2014, citing Twinomurinzi & Visser, 2004). The authors maintain that this service caters and looks after the well-being of needy learners in all schools in the country. Moreover, school principals are expected to work with the Department of Health to attend to learners' health. For example, based on what I have experienced as a teacher, nurses visit schools regularly to immunize learners against diseases, dental therapists visit to educate learners on how to take care of their teeth and they leave behind toothbrushes and toothpaste for each child. Further, non-profit organisations (NGO) also play a role in school partnerships (Verger, 2019). For example, in my district, it is somehow normative that priests visit schools on Mondays or Fridays, not on any day. In most schools, these are the days set aside for assembly and devotion. Therefore, they come during assembly and pray with the learners. From what I have experienced, the only religion that is emphasized is Christianity

whereas there are so many. To me, this could be an offence to other learners as their religions are seemingly discriminated against. So, this study looks at how schools and school principals form community partnerships if there is still discrimination against other religions.

(vi) A cultural leader supports risk taking amongst teachers to improve student learning.

Beghetto (2018) argue that this activity means having the courage to teach so that students learn creatively. The author also ascertained that supporting risk taking amongst teachers to improve student learning means thinking and acting in different ways so as to make creative contribution to others. This means trying new things and implementing new ideas to see what they bring on the table. Most SA schools have challenges when it comes to employment of new teachers. This is due to the lack of funds by our national DBE. Regardless of this, school principals make some changes by rearranging teachers within a school. For example, teachers are moved by their subjects and given new subjects they have never taught before. This movement also occurs in phases where a teacher who has been teaching in the Foundation phase, for example, is moved to an Intermediate and Senior phase to have a subject or two to teach. This rearrangement is a big risk that a school principal must take, not knowing how the performance will be, but to move the school forward and for learners to learn, he must take that risk. However, in some schools this is not happening and there is still an outcry from school principals concerning teacher shortages. What happens in cases like this and how is student learning improved? This is a question that this study sought to answer.

(vii) A cultural leader maintains that high visibility and accessibility is good for school climate

Blaydes (2004) argue that the above activity means to be up and walking around the school, assisting teachers to teach and learners to learn. In some schools, school principals avail themselves by communicating with their teachers through messages, circulars and statements. In my school for example, I have seen my school principal relaying important messages to us as teachers using circulars, some of which are from the DBE, and some from school level, usually called communiques. These circulars are expected to be acted upon when schools respond positively by interpreting and implementing them (Samkange, 2013). In addition to circulars, I have seen school principals from other schools availing themselves in classrooms during teaching time, in assembly during prayers and announcement making, in playgrounds and wherever teachers, learners and parents gather. Further, Durrah, Eltigani and Bilal (2018) posit that some school principals maintain high visibility by walking around in classrooms and verandas. This is not always the case as, in some schools, school principals do not teach and

do not even come to assembly except in cases when there are special announcements. In my school, for example, my school principal is not a sports fanatic. This is supported by an announcement that he once made during a parents' meeting that his role as a school principal was only academic and not extra-mural. No one challenged him about that declaration, but to me it was like an offence to sports lovers and indicated how less knowledgeable he was about the policy document under scrutiny. These are some of the things that this study sought to understand.

2.6.5 Organisational leadership

Makaula (2009) argues that an organisation means an organized group of people with a particular purpose, such as a business or a government department. The author also asserts that an organisation refers to a group of people who work together in the fulfilment of a particular purpose, for example, a union or an association, to mention a few. This means working together with people from the same group to achieve a particular objective. As previously mentioned, Daft (2014) asserts that leadership involves people (leaders and followers) who work together to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, organisational leadership has to do with cooperating with other stakeholders in an organisation to achieve its objectives (Mohelska & Sokolova, 2015).

In a school context, school principals are expected to work with the SMT, teachers, SGB and the community to achieve the schools' objectives, mainly that of assisting learners to achieve good results at the end of the year. In a similar way, a key area for shaping the direction and development of the school is that school principals work with the afore-mentioned stakeholders to implement the school vision and mission. The message that I am getting in this case shows how important these stakeholders are in school functioning. In the SA context, school principals as organisational leaders are expected to carefully manage the school's operational budget, to ensure the recruitment and retention of quality staff, to manage conflict, to communicate with stakeholders regularly and efficiently and to comply with policies and directives, to highlight some of the requirements. The suggestion here is that the management of school funds is not solely a school principal's responsibility; other stakeholders are expected to make positive contributions as well (Haji, Lian & Fitriani, 2020), hence, we see SGB members involved in school's financial matters (Basson & Mestry, 2019) For example, in my school, the treasurer is from the parent component. The chairperson of the SGB is responsible for signing for payments on bank accounts for school needs. In as far as recruiting and retaining quality staff,

school principals do not have a say in that. From what I have experienced as a teacher, school principals report to the district office if there is a vacancy to be filled in. The district office decides on any teacher to be brought to a school, without looking at the school's needs. In my school for example, the shortage of teachers is greatest in Mathematics in both Intermediate and Senior phases. This means when the district office decides to bring a teacher, they should consider the school needs. It is surprising that no one takes note of that, and the school ended up having a pool of teachers to teach in the FP. If a school is affected by PPN, that is, the number of teachers is dropping, the *Last In First Out* (LIFO) principle is applied, without looking at the school needs. In most schools, there is a shortage of teachers who can teach Mathematics. In my school for example, we are always experiencing that shortage. However, most Mathematics teachers are affected by LIFO, forcing them to leave for another schools. This policy under scrutiny suggests that school principals are expected to have a say in the recruitment and retention of quality staff. Unfortunately, when looking at the practical aspect of it, it is quite the opposite. Further, according to the policy, school principals are expected to manage conflict in schools. From what I always observe, they do but to a minimum level. Msila (2019) argues that this is due to a lack of skills on their side as conflict is still rife in schools. This, I say because what I am observing in some schools is that there is conflict amongst school principals and teachers, hence I see them at loggerheads over school finances, over recruitment in promotional posts and so forth. Apparently, there is conflict amongst teachers themselves over petty arguments, and I always see daily conflict amongst learners.

What should school principals do to manage it? How, then was the performance of the learners going to improve if conflict in schools is still a problem? This shows that there is a missing link to be utilised to make the connection so strong between school principals and learners' improved results. This study therefore looks at what can be done to bring about positive results.

2.7 MANAGING QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING AND SECURING

ACCOUNTABILITY

As previously stated, management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals work together in groups, to efficiently accomplish selected aims (Koontz, Steelman, Carmin, Korfmacher, Moseley and Thomas (2010). In relation to a school, the authors argue that management involves a school principal working with other stakeholders, for example, SMT and teachers to plan and implement school activities. Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011) maintain that quality refers to fitness *for* purpose or fitness *of* purpose. Another aspect

identified by the same authors is that quality means good. Moreover, the authors assert that quality means purpose to the highest possible level of profit. Further, the authors, citing Harvey and Green (1993), argue that quality is interpreted differently by different people and the differences are then grouped into five categories. For example, the categories are i) quality as exception, ii) quality as perfection, iii) quality as fitness for purpose, iv) quality as value for money and v) quality as transformation. For clarity, these categories are discussed below.

2.7.1.1 Quality as exception

According to Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011), quality as an exception means quality as unattainable by most people. In this study, this refers to what school principals do to ensure teaching and learning are exceptional or that is extraordinary to be found for the attainment of good results. For example, in as far as my schooling days are concerned, I consider my secondary school principal as an exception (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018). He was the first one to come to school and the last one to leave, something that I no longer see in other school principals. He taught English to the Matriculants of that time including both grammar and literature, in such a way that we all got As and Bs and nothing lower than that. According to AAS above, symbols A and B means a rating code of seven and six. Our school was regarded as a special school because of my former school principal. Teachers were always prepared, presentable and were able to instil the love for learning to us (Buenviaje, 2016). Verandas were quiet zones and there was order throughout the day. From what I see as a teacher now, things are totally different from what they used to be, making it easy for me to compare what was going on during that time and what is happening now. My study sought to find out what this gap is and what school principals can do to close it. The next category is quality as perfection.

2.7.1.2 Quality as perfection

Quality as perfection suggests that the focus is on certain specifications that is, what things to focus on to achieve the required output (Wittek & Kvernbekk, 2011). From my observation as a teacher, most school principals seem to not know what role to play to achieve the required results of improving learner performance. In all schools, school principals are expected to work with the SMT, SGB, parents and community to implement the vision and bring about improvement (Ntseto, 2015). As I mentioned previously, in my school for example, my school principal regularly meets with the SMT during meetings held every Mondays. Hence teachers draw lesson plans following ATPs, set tests based on programme of assessment (POA) and submit to the DH. The DH then submits to the DP in a file format once a month, the DH has a responsibility to submit to a school principal. This is how the work is monitored by a school

principal, and this is how s/he gets to know what has been taught and learnt in class. However, despite this, most schools fail to increase the academic performance of the learners. School principals also meet regularly with SGBs, parents and community. The purpose of their meetings makes me wonder as a teacher because in most schools, academic improvement of learners is non-existent. Does it mean that the focus of their meetings is on something else, rather than school improvement? This is what this study should try to find out so that the work becomes perfect.

2.7.1.3 Quality as fit for purpose

Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011) argue that this refers to the purpose of a product or service. In a school context, the purpose is for the delivery of learning content that meets the needs of the learners. As I previously said, a school principal should consider the learning outcomes, among other things. That is what the school aims to achieve by the end of the year. Therefore, schools should make it a priority that the kind of education they are instilling in the learners is the one that is going to open doors for them in the labour market (Curran, Castejon & Manzano, 2023), hence, many schools offered STEM subjects, as well as skills subjects offered in Comprehensive Technical Colleges (CTC). To ensure relevance, school principals hire teachers with relevant teaching qualifications so that they impact positively on the learners' results (Aina & Olanipekun, 2015). Connell (2009) defines good teachers as experts who know how to measure the capacities and achievements of the learners and direct them into appropriate pathways. For example, from what I have observed as a teacher, most school principals hire teachers who can teach STEM subjects. Having computer knowledge, learners prepare notes and do assignments using their laptops, tablets or cell phones. Drawing from the abovementioned information, learners can withstand any pressure they come across in the business world, for example, in banks and manufacturing companies, employees' data is captured in computers, in mechanics as well, combining car parts requires knowledge of computers. Further, I always see school principals recommending the recruitment of young teachers in their schools. Alabi (2017) discusses the benefits of mentoring young teachers in a school system. For example, the author argues that young teachers are trained teachers but not experienced in the teaching profession. It is therefore useful for these teachers to be mentored so that teaching and learning is enhanced. What skills school principals need and what is it that can be done to ensure that teachers have those skills? This is what this study is trying to explore.

2.7.1.4 Quality as value for money

Value for money means that the measurement of quality is profit (Wittek & Kvernbekk, 2011). From my observation, in a school context, quality teaching and learning means good academic results for learners. As I previously said, school principals should ensure the employment of teachers who can teach subjects like Numeracy and Literacy for the attainment of good results for the learners. For example, Schulz and FitzPatrick (2016) refer to high-class teachers as those who are innovative and can think critically. The authors further argue that high-class teachers possess some skills, which amongst others are communication, time management and creativity. As far as time management is concerned, most teachers are having problems. From my observation in my school and in other schools, teachers come late and leave early, hence all schools have the 'late coming early departure document' that school principals use as a controlling measure in time management. According to DBE, teachers are expected to work for seven hours, however, looking at the behaviour of teachers, there are only a few in my school who keep to these seven hours. How then are good results going to be attained if teachers fail to keep to the stipulated time? Khan, Farooqi, Khalil and Faisal (2016) argue that teachers' management of time determine the quality of the results produced. Bambaeroo and Shokrpour (2017) maintain that teachers who are competent in communication with their learners can teach well. I have a different perspective when it comes to that argument. Most teachers shout on top of their voices when teaching the learners. At first, I thought it was due to overcrowding in classrooms so that all learners could hear the teacher. From what I always observe, teachers shout even if they are in close proximity with their learners. Learners feel scared and this makes me wonder as to how quality results are to be attained if learners are not free. The bigger question is the extent to which school principals engage both teachers and learners to ensure a conducive teaching-learning environment, which at the end is going to produce good results. This is what this study hopes to achieve.

2.7.1.5 Quality as transformation

Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011) argue that quality as transformation means the transformative processes students go through during their education. This simply means changes they go through to make them better people, for example, enhancing or empowering students to become better citizens of the country. Mestry (2017) posits that school principals create platforms to develop and support learners to do well in class. To support this idea, schools form debating teams which are platforms used by students in classroom discussions. This improves learners' communication skills as well as their English proficiency. What about those students who are not in debating teams? How are they going to transform if they are doing nothing? School

principals provide students with opportunities where they take on leadership roles in group projects, for example, I always see many schools establishing what is called a prefect system, which according to Murage (2014) is to promote discipline in schools. This prepares learners for leadership roles at an early age; hence, the country has young politicians, young pastors, managers and so forth.

Securing accountability means taking responsibility for your actions. This simply means that school principals, as head of schools are also accounting officers (Xaba & Nhlapho, 2014). As accounting officers, they account for the performance of their students and schools. This means that if students perform well, they are commended. Thus, if the performance is bad, they account for and give reasons as to why the results are not good and provide strategies to bring about improvement.

2.8 MANAGING THE SCHOOL AS AN ORGANISATION

As previously stated, management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals work together in groups, to efficiently accomplish selected aims (Koontz et al., 2010). Cassidy (2012) argues that management is a process of working with and through others to achieve organisational objectives in a changing environment.

Burke and Grosvener (2008) argue that a school is a place where teaching and learning take place. Young (2013) contends that a school is an institution with a purpose. In a similar way, Kools and Stoll (2016) argue that a school is a learning organisation. This means a school is an educational institution that aligns both teachers and learners to achieve school objectives. Simply put, it is where teaching and learning take place. Kanber, Al-Taai and Al-Dulaimi (2023) share the same sentiment when they discuss how important it is for teachers to teach their students and develop their skills and ideas. Therefore, managing the school refers to its maintenance so that activities of teaching and learning are carried out in a prescribed way (Everard, Morris & Wilson, 2004). The policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b) suggests that managing the school as an organisation requires a school principal to equitably deploy resources and maximise their use. Also, a school principal is required to oversee curriculum implementation, to oversee human resources, discipline, inclusion, application of knowledge and learner assessment. Further, this key area requires a school principal to know financial management, legal frameworks and technology. To bring more light on this key area, I attend to each requirement individually.

2.8.1 Equitably deploy resources

Deploying resources means spreading out resources in a fair and impartial manner (Plecki, Knapp, Castañeda, Halverson, LaSota & Lochmiller, 2009). The authors argue that the purpose behind deployment of resources is to ensure equity and improvement. For example, the key resources in a school include teachers, learners, textbooks, writing material, worksheets and instructional videos, to mention a few. In a school setting, a school principal is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that equity prevails in his/her school. To support this idea, schools are divided into phases, for example, in a primary school there is a Foundation phase, an Intermediate phase and a Senior phase. In all these phases, school principals are expected to ensure that teachers are equitably distributed based on the number of learners in a grade (Fuller & Ladd, 2013). Also, in these phases, it is the responsibility of a school principal to ensure that teachers with expertise are spread evenly in different grades to be an eye to the novice teachers for mentoring purposes (McIntyre & Hagger, 2013). This means that a school principal is required to consider teachers' qualifications and skills to ensure that teachers are allocated into subjects that they have knowledge of. In policy, things should be like that but, practically, I have a different experience pertaining to that. For example, in my school, there are classes with few learners, especially in the FP, whereas others in the Intermediate and Senior phases are full. The enrolment in some classes is 26 whereas in other classes, there are 40 to 45 learners. This is because there are so many learners from other schools who come and register for the Intermediate classes. However, for equal or fairness distribution, no one attends to that. This means that teachers in the Intermediate and Senior phases are overloaded with work. Therefore, given the importance of resources, I am interested in learning how school principals experience the deployment of resources.

Therefore, managing the school as an organisation does not only involve a school principal deploying resources equitably, but attention should also be given to what a school principal does to oversee curriculum implementation, hence is the next topic in this section.

2.8.2 Oversee curriculum implementation

A curriculum is a prescribed set of activities for teaching and learning (Young, 2018). Implementation refers to an approach that is used to test the effectiveness of a strategy (Slaughter, Hill & Snelgrove-Clarke, 2015). To oversee is to ensure that those to whom authority was delegated remain responsive (Ogul & Rockman, 1990). In this study, authority is delegated to school principals. Therefore, to oversee curriculum implementation in a school

setting is the responsibility of a school principal to ensure the effective implementation of teaching and learning activities to bring about school improvement. What exactly does a school principal do to ensure this effectiveness? For example, in a school context, Forzani (2014) argues that the core business is for teachers to teach and learners to learn through the mastery of content. Therefore, school principals have the responsibility of motivating and supervising teachers to teach for the benefit of the learners to learn (Mestry, Moonsammy-Koopasammy & Schmidt, 2013). As a teacher, I have a task to prepare lesson plans for the subjects I teach. I submit these lesson plans in a file format to the DHs, which then are submitted to the DP by the DH. The DP then submits these to the school principal to understand what is going on in classrooms (Hatch & Clark, 2021). Theoretically, this is true but practically, there are still loopholes here and there. From what I always observe, there are teachers who go to classrooms without lesson plans. The teachers I am referring to are the ones with a long service in DBE. They usually come up with many reasons as to why the lesson plans are not ready. Amongst the reasons, they mention that they know the curriculum by heart. How then does a school principal know what is being taught if there is no evidence? Also, with learners, some days have a high percentage of absenteeism. This means that learners cannot articulate what is being taught. This is likely to bring the learners' performance down and the school into disrepute. Also, school principals monitor the curriculum delivery process through assessment based on tests or examination writing. Tests and examinations are written at the end of a month or term to ascertain whether the content learnt was understood by the learners (Brown, Bull & Pendlebury, 2013). Whilst on the tests and examination, what happens if learners do not pass? Does it mean that curriculum delivery is ineffective? If so, what school principals need to do to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum as is suggested in the policy, is part of the purpose of this study.

2.8.3 Oversee human resources, discipline, inclusion

As I previously stated, to oversee is to ensure that those to whom authority is delegated remain responsive (Ogul & Rockman, 1990). In the context of this study, authority is delegated to school principals. Jackson, Schuler and Werner (2018) argue that human resources refer to human needs that should be provided and deployed in an organisation. In this study, human resources and needs should be deployed to schools. Therefore, it is the responsibility of a school principal to ascertain that the needs of the teachers, learners and non-teaching staff are provided for. There is a connection in these two key areas (managing the school as an organisation and

managing human resources in the school) because both refer to human needs that should be provided to schools. This is an indication that, without the needs of the personnel being fulfilled, schools would not function properly. Non-teaching staff play a crucial role in school functioning. Ong'ola and Otieno (2019) state that non-teaching staff refer to administration clerks, cleaning personnel, school security, to mention a few, who provide support services in the management of schools.

Viano, Pham, Henry and Kho (2021) argue that teachers need good schools, furnished classrooms, textbooks, files and filing cabinets, writing materials, libraries, a museum of student work and so forth, to be able to work. Indeed, the DBE does supply schools with some of the above-mentioned resources, but only some, due to funding shortages as there are many schools to be supplied in a district. For example, from what I observe in most primary schools, there are few schools with libraries, but to cater for this service, my school principal and SMT converted one of the classrooms to be a school library. As a teacher, I have seen my school principal providing furniture in the form of tables and chairs to teachers and an administration clerk. With laptops, the school has one that is used by an administration clerk. Teachers rely on their own or on a chalkboard during teaching. The reason is because of the lack of funds from DBE. When it comes to learners, their needs are fulfilled, hence each learner is provided with a writing pack consisting of exercise books and other writing materials like rulers, pens, pencils and so forth. Each learner has his/her textbook, to avoid lending during teaching time. Further, the classrooms are full of desks and no child wanders, trying to look for a desk to sit at. However, this is not the case for some learners, especially those in disadvantaged schools, where learners may struggle to share a desk to sit on or opt for something else to use as a desk, like blocks or stones (Pratt, 2014). The cleaning staff does not have personal protective equipment (PPE) to use when cleaning the school yard, verandas and toilets. They just use their own clothes, meaning their resources are not provided for. The security guard as well does not have a uniform or a baton to chase away thieves. He just stands by the gate and controls who comes in and out. How then are security measures going to be applied if schools have ineffective security guards? The meaning here is that schools, teachers and learners are not protected.

As a teacher, I have observed that it is difficult for most school principals to oversee curriculum implementation. Corporal punishment was banned in 1997 (Republic of South Africa, 1997). A circular (Department of Basic Education, 2023) similarly reminds all DBE stakeholders that

corporal punishment was banned and may not be used as a method of enforcing discipline in schools (Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021). Since the prohibition, school principals and teachers rely on other forms, for example, in most schools, teachers rely on one hour detention. According to McGinn (2017, p. 628) discipline is “a law-enforcement practice that implicates important constitutional rights”. This suggests that rights limit the use of excessive force. In a school setting, I have seen school principals using different kinds of punishment against students to ensure that peace prevails. For example, my school principal detains learners by giving them extra work to do after school. Instead of a child being released at the normal half past two, an hour is added to make half past three. What then should school principals and teachers do to enforce discipline in schools, is a question this study tries to explore. Moreover, the key area under scrutiny requires school principals to ensure that there is inclusion in schools. Florian, Black-Hawkins and Rouse (2016) posit that inclusion means consideration of others who are more vulnerable. In my school, inclusion means consideration of learners from different religions as well as consideration of needy learners at the same time giving fair treatment to all of them. For example, my school is dominated by learners who are Christians and a few who belong to the Nazareth Baptist church. This church incorporates both traditional and African cultural practices. Learners from the latter church are less represented and that is seen even in assembly. The songs that are sung are mostly Christian songs, making the other group feel marginalized. What needs to be done by school principals to ensure that all their requirements or expectations are met?

2.9 SHAPING THE DIRECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHOOL

Popper, Lempert and Bankes (2005) consider that shaping means improving the quality of something. The authors further assert that shaping means rethinking the roles and responsibilities of a position one is involved in. Hewitt (2006) maintains that shaping means to give a wholeness of the form or structure. Glatthorn and Jailall (2009) posit that shaping means aligning, monitoring or enrichment. In a school context, shaping refers to improving the quality of teaching and learning for the benefit of the learners. Direction means providing insights into how and why something must be done (Paris & Winograd, 2013). Development means change, growth or an upward mobility (Adolph, Robinson & Young, 2008). Based on the definitions of the afore-mentioned key concepts, this area is about improving the quality of schools by providing insights to bring about change.

According to the policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b), shaping the direction and development of the school means that school principals are expected to work with the SGB, SMT and parents to create and implement the school vision and mission. Also, it means that school principals are expected to account to the DBE, SGB, parents, staff, learners and community. Further, it means that school principals are required to have knowledge of SA legislation, strategic thinking and acting as well as leading and conflict management. From my experiences as a teacher, I have seen school principals working in conjunction with SMT members. In my school for example, every Monday afternoon, there are SMT meetings which are held prior to the staff meetings, held every Tuesdays. These meetings are supposed to bring about school improvement. School principals are expected to work with the SGB to implement school vision and mission. To my surprise as a teacher, I have never received any feedback on SGB meetings, even though the school has teacher representatives from the teacher component. The SGB is formed by both the parent component and the teacher component (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2021). It is the responsibility of the teacher component to inform teachers of the SGB meeting so that teachers decide on topics to be discussed with the SGB members pertaining to school improvement. This is not happening in my school, no matter how hard teachers try to remind a school principal of the responsibility of the teacher component in SGB meetings; this falls on deaf ears as has never happened. Teachers are not involved in SGB matters including meetings. How is the vision and mission of a school going to be implemented if there are forces between a school principal, teachers and SGB members that pull in different directions (Bagarette, 2012)? Theoretically, the policy has a long list of requirements, but, looking at the practical aspect of it, some are not effectively regulated. This alone is going to hamper the progress of the learners. What is it that needs to be done so that there is working togetherness? In my school, it seems like there are so many meetings, SMT and SGB, but to me they are not effective because they do not bring about improvement. This needs to be clarified in this study to make sure that learners are assisted to perform well. Further, school principals are expected to work with parents and the community to safeguard the school. From my observation as a teacher, in some cases they do, whereas in others, parents are far from being reached.

Epstein et al. (2018) argue that schools and parents all belong to the community, therefore it is important for school principals to form partnerships because parents and the community provide additional support and accountability to schools, leading to better learner performance. For example, most of the schools in my district are affected by burglaries; instead of the

situation getting better, it is worsening day by day. Parents or the members of the community do not show up, even if a meeting to trace the culprits is being called. In my community for example, there are CPF members whose responsibility is to get rid of crime in the area. My school principal once confronted them to assist in tracing the school laptops that were stolen. What they said was that they were working for the community and not schools. This kind of response signal poor working relationship between schools and the community. One can ask about how beneficial these forums are if they are failing to protect schools which belong to their children. What then needs to be done in the community to bring about learner performance and school improvement? However, there are other communities that school principals work with, other than CPF for school improvement. For example, school principals work with the Department of Health to cater for learners' health and well-being. Musakwa et al. (2018) argue that learners need access to health care services for tuberculosis (TB) human immune virus (HIV) immunisations, injections and medication. In my school, I have seen health officials visiting schools to immunise the learners against diseases. They come to talk to girls, especially teenagers, to prepare for changes in their bodies and how to deal with them. The Department of Social Development also makes positive contributions in the lives of the learners and schools respectively. As I previously stated, under this Department, there is a South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) section. This is a programme that is responsible for the issuing of support grants to needy learners in the country, with the aim of reducing poverty (Udjo, 2014 citing Woolard, Harttgen & Klaasen, 2010). For example, this programme benefits learners who have no parents or whose parents are not working, and so forth. Further, South African Police Services (SAPS) are expected to provide safety and security to schools in cases of burglary. From my observation, this service benefits schools by issuing case numbers only. The reason I say this is because I have never seen or heard of any culprit being brought to justice for school burglary. How then are schools going to improve if there is criminality in communities? This study will also look at this issue. As I said previously, school principals need to be assisted to manage conflict as it is still rife amongst themselves, teachers and learners in schools.

In summary, because of a few challenges facing the community, for example, burglary, theft, house-breaking and so forth, how then can school principals, parents and the community be assisted to work together so that learners' results improve for the better? How much contribution do parents and community must make in producing good results?

2.10 MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL

Human resources refer to human needs that should be provided and deployed in an organisation (Jackson, Schuler & Werner, 2018). This refers to the needs of the teachers and learners. For example, schools need teachers, learners and study material to function properly. With a shortage of each of the mentioned needs, it becomes difficult for schools to function. It is, therefore, the responsibility of a school principal to ascertain that such needs are provided for, whether teachers' needs or learners' needs. As I previously stated, on managing the school as an organisation, it is important for a school principal to ascertain that the needs of staff are well catered for, for the proper functioning of schools. This repetition of providing human needs indicates how important it is for a school principal to take good care of staff under his/her supervision. On the one hand, Viano, Pham, Henry and Kho (2021) state that school principals are expected to provide furnished classrooms, study and writing material, files and filing cabinets to teachers. On the other hand, school principals ensure the provision of sheltered classrooms to learners so that they feel safe, secure and valued. Practically, some of these are provided for but not everything. This is due to a lack of funds for most schools. From my experience, school principals always complain of the delay in the release of National Norms and Standards School Funding (NNSSF). The aim of that funding is to redress imbalances created by the apartheid government in order to bring about restructuring in the SA education system (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014). This results in schools lacking some of these items, for example, teachers do not have filing cabinets, and they buy their own files. Even with the learners' materials, some of the items are not provided for. The study sought to learn how school principals fare in meeting teachers' and learners' needs.

2.11 MANAGING AND ADVOCATING EXTRAMURAL ACTIVITIES

Advocacy is defined as an act or process of supporting a cause or a proposal (Tomajan, 2012). The author further states that advocacy requires working through formal, decision-making bodies to achieve a desired outcome. Therefore, advocating refers to publicly recommending or supporting excellency (Owen, Kotel, Ramirez, Zeitlin, Dejewki & Feingold, 2014). McNeill (2020) states that extra-mural refers to a means of receiving more than what is expected. However, for extra-mural activities, Rau (2019) asserts that they refer to additional interactions taking place in an organisation. In a similar way, D'Adamo (2022) posits that extra-mural activities refer to more activities to enhance learning in children. From what I have seen in most schools, the activities include soccer, netball, rugby, hockey, volleyball, athletics, swimming

and so forth. The policy under scrutiny requires school principals to know of diverse sports codes which should be given to learners as part of a school curriculum. Also, the policy requires that a school principal is involved in those sports codes or activities.

From the information gathered on the above definition of concepts, school principals work with other parties to support the offering of these activities, which, if taken seriously, result in the production of quality players (Dain, 2025). Looking at the background of professional South African soccer, the author further argues that most players start their careers in football at a young age when they are playing for their schools. There are professional netball players who came from school backgrounds. However, the production of these players is not based solely on the intervention of school principals as most of these players rely on community clubs for development. In addition to this, some of the school principals are not keen when it comes to sports. They avail themselves so little during practice but are not seen during the real games. Based on my observation, it is always the Sports Committee that accompanies the learners to playgrounds for a game. A school principal is busy in his office doing administration work or attending principals' meetings in different venues. How is a school principal referred to as an advocate or champion if s/he does not even accompany learners to sports grounds? Also, how are quality players going to be developed if motivation and support is lacking from a school principal? The study investigates the levels and quality of school principals' involvement in extra-curricular activities.

The policy under scrutiny also maintains that school principals are expected to work with parents to support their learners during extra-mural activities. Parents do support learners but to a minimum. From my observation, parents play a huge role in supporting their learners in former Model C schools. However, this kind of support is lacking in township and rural schools. This is caused by several reasons, which amongst others is a shortage of sports facilities. For example, from what I am experiencing as a teacher, in some schools, sport kits are bought by parents. In soccer, parents buy soccer jerseys and boots for their children and contribute financially if there is an outside game which requires learners to travel to another school. How could sports men and women be produced if these young learners are not developed fully whilst still at school?

2.12 DEVELOPING AND EMPOWERING SELF AND OTHERS

Bruhn, Karlan and Schoar (2010) posit that developing means moving forward. Similarly, Esteva (2023) defines developing as an upward movement or growing up.

Empowering is defined by Burke (1986) as providing direction. Harvey and Burrows (1992) define empowering as giving someone control of something. However, empowering people means to make strong so as to pursue goals that are most important (Duckworth, 2013). What emerges out of these definitions is that upward movement requires some directives in order to happen. In a school setting, this is the responsibility of a school principal to ensure that his/her teachers move or advance to the next level of their profession. Drawing on Duckworth (2013), I contend that school principals create opportunities for their teachers through development, hence, schools have DPs and DHs. The policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b), maintains that developing and empowering self and others requires a school principal to embrace the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which is humanness.

It also requires school principals to cultivate effective interpersonal relationships. This requires school principals to practise participatory decision-making. Moreover, school principals are required to build personal capacity, to encourage continuous professional development (CPD) and lastly, to know methods of participatory decision-making, the importance of *Ubuntu*, performance management approaches and approaches to CPD. To gain clarity on this key area, I tackle each requirement individually.

2.12.1 Embrace the philosophy of Ubuntu

Codes of Conduct

Haslam, Loughnan and Holland (2013) define humanness as respect. The authors also consider that humanness means to be human. Rezaee, Elmore and Szendi (2001) argue that a code of conduct refers to practices and procedures to be followed to monitor schools. A code of conduct for teachers lists the regulations that teachers abide with at schools. Amongst these, is the dress code for teachers. It is required that teachers wear clothes to make them presentable. This is no longer the case anymore as some of my male colleagues come to school wearing shorts. Female teachers will come to school wearing flops. This is against the code, and it makes life so difficult for a school principal because s/he should remind teachers of what to wear to be presentable. How can respect be instilled in learners if teachers do not respect themselves? This is a part that needs redressing. The same goes for learners. From what I always observe, especially during winter season, learners come to school wearing colourful jerseys. This is so disturbing, and it is difficult to discourage it. Parents provide teachers with different reasons as to why their learners' jerseys are not matching the school uniform. This shows disrespect for

authority. Therefore, if teachers and learners disrespect authority, how then can a school principal ensure increased results in learners' academic work whilst respect is still lacking?

2.12.2 Cultivate effective interpersonal relationships

Scott (2015) states that cultivating is to enable. Duhn and Galvez (2020) posit that to cultivate means to learn to or to build. Interpersonal relationships refer to interpersonal interactions between people. This study addresses interactions between school principals, teachers, learners, parents and the community. From my observation as a teacher, this is somehow difficult to achieve. For example, in my school the relationship amongst the SMT members is supposed to be good but is not, because there are always disagreements even during staff meetings. It is the same with teachers. There is always gossip and some teachers are not even on speaking terms. Further, learners always bully and fight one another. Epstein et al. (2018) argue that schools, parents and community should form partnerships to improve learners' results. However, concerning the parents and the community, relationships are not good. For example, during burglary, I have never seen parents or community members showing concern and wanting to deal with the culprits. To me, they do not care. I have never seen even the SGB members sympathising with us. Therefore, what is it that school principals need to do to improve such relationships? This is what I intend this study to find out.

2.12.3 Practise participatory decision-making

Pitts and Davidson (2000) argue that to practise is to foster. Antonacopoulou (2009) states that to practise is to demonstrate. In a school, school principals are expected to work with the SMT, SGB, parents and community to move the school forward and make it better than it was before. As I mentioned earlier, the relationship amongst SMT members is not that good. From my observation, these people are always having conflicting ideas. What is it that school principals need to do to improve the relationship so that they can work together with the SMT and SGB, thus making informed decisions thereafter?

2.12.4 Encourage continuous professional development (CPD)

Professional development refers to developmental opportunities in one's field of work (Bechtel & O'Sullivan, 2006). In a school setting, school principals are expected to encourage participation and attendance of teachers in subject workshops arranged by the DBE to improve learner performance. From what I always witness in these workshops, subject advisors unpack and assist teachers on the work to be taught in a term, using a variety of teaching methods to

be utilised to deliver the content, what assessment to be done and how many there are in a year, and they answer the questions teachers have on a particular subject. School principals also motivate teachers to attend workshops relating to QMS, which are developmental in nature, because the aim is to produce the best out of the teachers' teaching (Aniskina & Terekhova, 2019) and learners' learning. Be good as these workshops are, some teachers do not attend them. They leave school with the pretence that they will be attending, only for others to find that they do not. Sometimes they do attend, but the room where the workshop is held becomes overcrowded and noisy and the workshop loses its objective. What is it that needs to be done to ensure full attendance so that all teachers benefit? Also, there are phase and grade workshops that school principals motivate their teachers to attend. These workshops are facilitated in a school by DHs and both senior and master teachers to assist teachers, especially novice teachers, to master the correct way of delivering the content and how it should be organized to learners. As far as these workshops are concerned, I always see full participation of teachers, especially novice teachers. Further, school principals encourage teachers to be part of a PLC (Professional Learning Community). As I said earlier, this is a committee formed in a school which requires a team of teachers to share ideas with the aim of enhancing their teaching so that learners produce good academic results (Brown, Horn & King, 2018). How school principals seek to manage their multiple roles is also part of the focus of this study.

2.13 WORKING WITH AND FOR THE COMMUNITY

The policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b), maintains that working with and for the community means building collaborative relationships and ensuring that school improvement and community development complement each other, as well as knowing current affairs, the socio-politico-economic context of the school and ways of harnessing stakeholders. For clarity, each of these aspects is discussed separately.

2.13.1 Building collaborative relationships

Anderson (2012) posits that collaborative relationships refer to the manner of engagement with another person. Kvan (2000) posits that collaborative relationships require a close coupling amongst its participants. In this study, this refers to a close coupling of school principals with surrounding communities. The policy maintains that school principals are expected to form partnerships or working relationships with SGBs, parents and communities to implement the vision and school mission. These expectations are similar to those of cultural leadership, where

a school principal is expected to communicate and interact with the school community on a continuous basis. This suggests how important it is for a school principal to liaise with the community to safeguard the school. This working togetherness is so limited because some parents and community members do not care. All they know is for teachers to do everything. For example, it takes ages for some parents to provide support to their learners. They seem to not care. In addition to that, from what I always observe, they do not assist their learners with homework either. So, how can results improve under these circumstances? However, with a number of challenges and problems in communities, it is very important for school principals to form partnership with parents and communities. Myende (2018) found that successful partnerships were driven by a mutual benefit for both the school and the community, meaning the relationship is so mutual that a developed community creates a sense of belonging amongst students, teachers and learners. Further, Naicker (2011) studied the formation and implementation of school-community partnership and suggests that school principals should contribute to the formation of collaborative relationships with parents and communities. This is what this study sought to explore.

2.13.2 Ensure that school improvement and community development complement each other

The meaning here is that families and community should support learning. For example, from what I have been observing as a teacher in the previous years in my school, parents and the community did so little to support schools. When there is a burglary in school, the parents do not show up and yet they want the best for their children. However, looking at the performance of the learners, they do well if the community is on their side (Brown, 2011), which entails supporting them with all the requirements of a school. Also, they stay in school for longer hours, participate in school activities and they like school more. With regards to this, they earn high marks in tests and examinations. It now becomes easy for them to proceed and enrol in higher-level programmes. Therefore, what was it that school principals need to do to ensure that school improvement and community development complement each other?

2.13.3 Know current affairs, the socio-politico-economic context of the school and ways of harnessing stakeholders

Parents need to know and understand what schools offer and how best learners can be assisted to accomplish their goals. I have been in the teaching profession for more than three decades. I have seen that school principals cannot be effective towards leading and managing schools without the assistance of other stakeholders. From the above information I have provided in other sections, school principals work partially with the SMT and SGB but are lacking when it comes to parents and the community. What I always witness is that when parents' meetings are called by school principals, in most schools, the attendance is very low. Parents do come but those who do, do not even meet the quorum. For example, my school has 581 learners. For both parents attending a parents' meeting called, the number should be doubled, making it 1 162. In contrast with this figure, only 15 to 20 parents come in attendance. This alone signals the idea that, even though school principals and parents are expected to work together, the connection is lacking.

When it comes to school policies, school principals should understand them so that whatever they do or say is in line with their requirements. Failure to have that understanding results in the dropping of performance in learners' academic results because of the limited amount of information that a school principal has. The study therefore looks at what can be done to assist school principals to be able to work with parents and the community so that good academic results of learners are produced.

2.14 EMERGING ISSUES

What emerges across all the readings is that the work of a school principal requires multiple tasks. The tasks may be associated with the idea that school principals should be both leaders and managers. The literature consistently states that leadership is about influencing others to achieve a common goal. In this study, it refers to school principals influencing their teachers, students and parents towards achieving the vision and mission of a school. For this to be achieved, a school principal is required to have a clear purpose and intentional planning. However, leadership is not solely a school principal's responsibility, management is another responsibility.

Different authors define management functions differently. On one hand, Daft (2014) talked of the five management functions which are planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. On the other hand, DuBrin (2024) refers to management functions as planning, organising, staffing, leading and controlling. Further, Griffin (2021) argues that management functions include planning and decision making, organising, leading and controlling.

Thus, these two terms (leadership and management) are not synonymous but are closely related and collectively form the backbone of a school principal's work. The vision that a leader develops can only be put into action through management. The eight key areas of a South African school principal's work requires them to perform both functions. Further, the literature is consistent that school principals should put into practice the policy document, hence, there is a need for policy implementation. Policy implementation involves the translation of policy into practice. What this means is that policies are created to solve problems in an institution. The policies on school principalship were created with the idea to bring about improvement in South African schools, especially, improvement in learner performance.

According to the policy framework guiding the work of a school principal, instructional leadership means teaching and learning in the school. The literature categorizes instructional leadership into three broad areas, which are defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and creating a positive school climate. Besides being an instructional leader, it emerges through literature that the school principal is also a strategic leader, as their role involves the successful operation and progress of schools. Further, the literature is clear that school principals are executive leaders. This role requires them to ensure that things are done correctly to accomplish school objectives, for example, encouraging professionalism, punctuality and respect for teaching periods. Moreover, according to the literature, school principals are cultural and organisational leaders. As cultural leaders, their role includes ensuring that the activities of different cultures are embraced. As leaders of organisations, they are expected to co-operate with other stakeholders to achieve the organisation's objectives (Mohelska & Sokolova, 2015).

The literature also contends that schools are learning organisations, therefore school principals as accounting officers should account for the performance of their schools and learners. What also emerges is that school principals are to take good care of staff under their supervision. This study therefore seeks to unpack how school principals fare in meeting teachers' and learners' needs. Additionally, the literature also reveals that school principals are involved in

all the sports codes or activities in a school. Further, literature also reveals that upward movement requires some directives in order to happen, as a result, school principals have a role of empowering themselves and others in a school.

How school principals seek to manage their multiple roles is what this study sought to explore. This suggests how important it is for a school principal to liaise with the community to safeguard the school. In conclusion, school principals need to ensure that school improvement and community development complement each other.

2.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed literature, nationally and internationally, on the interface between policy and practice on school principalship. For learners' academic results to improve for the better, school principals need to fulfil multiple tasks associated with leadership and management. School principals need to lead teaching and learning in schools. School principals cannot work in isolation but with the SGB and parents to shape the vision and mission of the school to improve learners' results. It is necessary for school principals to recruit and retain high quality teachers to bring about such improvement. Further, the literature suggests that the management of quality teaching and learning as well as human resources can have positive contributions in learners' academic results. Moreover, the involvement of parents and the community can also be regarded as crucial for the improvement of learners' results for the better. The next chapter discusses the two theories used in the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discusses the debates around leadership and management with a focus on the work of a school principal. The debates surround the eight key areas that formed the basis of the work of a school principal in South Africa. This chapter discusses two theories that frame this study. De Vos et al. (2012) argue that a theory is a set of interconnectedness and abstract concepts, ideas and definition statements as well as principles that attempt to envisage and verify a particular phenomenon. The purpose of a theoretical framework is to introduce and describe the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. In this study, it will also explain why and how the two theories are used as the lenses for the study. As I previously said, this study is underpinned by two theories. They are Transformational Leadership Theory by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Management functions. Daft and Samson (2014) argue that management consists of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. The reason for the selection of these two theories is to frame questions as to how school principals should behave as leaders and managers of schools. It is, therefore, worth knowing that transformational leadership theory is about those in authority assisting their subordinates to advance to a higher level. In this study, this refers to a school principal fostering the success of all learners in a school. Also, it refers to promoting the interest of staff members in a school by a school principal. For that to be effective, a school principal needs to plan, organise, staff, direct and control, hence the management functions of the school. The next section gives a description of the two theories in detail and how I have used them as the lenses of this study.

3.2 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

Transformational leadership theory is also called the relationship theory, because the focus is on the connections formed between leaders and followers. The transformational leadership concept was introduced by James MacGregor Burns (1978). As stated by Burns, transformational leadership is a process where those in authority and subordinates assist each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation. Also, leaders of that theory were

focused on the performance of group members but also on each person to fulfil his or her potential. This theory suggests that there is a need to transform schools for the better.

The key features of this theory are listed below:

- i) In this theory, leadership is the process by which a person engages with others and is able to create a connection that results in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders.
- ii) Lamb (2013) argues that this theory is always compared to charismatic leadership theory in which leaders with certain qualities such as confidence, extroversion and clearly stated values are seen as best able to motivate followers.
- iii) Relationship leaders or transformational leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task.
- iv) Transformational leaders are focused on the performance of group members but also on each person to fulfil his/her potential.
- v) Charry (2012) argues that leaders of that style often have high ethical and moral standards.

As I indicated above, the protagonists of this theory argue that this theory is also known as the relationship theory. This is because it focuses on the connections formed between leaders and followers. For this study, it refers to the connection formed between the school principal and the SMT, SGB, teachers, learners, the community and all other stakeholders. In as far as the policy is concerned, school principals should work with the mentioned stakeholders to create and implement the school vision and mission.

Again, in this theory, leadership is defined as the process by which a person engages with others and is able to *create a connection* that results in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders. With reference to this study, this suggests that the school principal should work so closely with other stakeholders as a way of promoting teamwork as well as cohesion and stakeholder awareness.

This theory also suggests that transformational leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task. Moreover, the leaders of this theory are focused on the performance of group members, but also on each person to fulfilling his or her potential. For this study, this refers to the school principal fostering the success of all learners. It also refers to the school principal promoting the interests of all learners and staff. These actions describe the job description of a school principal that relate to the above

suggestion, hence the selection of this theory. Further, Charry (2012) argue that leaders of this style often have high ethical and moral standards. For this study, there is a link between this argument and the work of a school principal. The policy on school principals suggests that school principals should report all cases of misconduct, which is a sign of being ethical. This suggests that being ethical is one of the requisite skills that school principals should have, hence the link of this theory with the fifth key area of managing human resources in the school.

The work of a school principal, particularly in South Africa, should be about transforming the school for the better. Thus, I seek to adopt this theory to study how school principals fare in the transformational agenda. Therefore, the selection of this theory is in line with this research study because the key features of the theory are in line with the key features of the policy framework.

3.3 MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

To understand the work of a school principal, I seek to study how s/he exercised each of the management functions highlighted above. According to Daft and Samson (2014), there are five management functions, which are planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling.

3.3.1 Planning

According to Oosterlynck et al. (2011), planning provides staff with a sense of purpose and direction. This means that it provides a basic foundation to enhance performance in the work of a manager on daily basis. In this study, planning suggests laying down the tasks (eight key areas) to be performed by the school principal. This is to be achieved by detailing how the daily activities (teaching and learning) in a school are related to the overall policy framework. In a school situation, planning will involve compiling a school's year plan, a composite timetable for all the grades and planning for extra-curricular activities in a school. For example, in a school year plan, a school principal as a manager is required to take a leading role by giving directives on what activities to be included and the responsible people behind them. When planning a school's composite timetable, a school principal is required to ensure an equitable workload amongst staff. For extra-curricular activities, a school principal's role is to enable the offering of these activities in a school.

3.3.2 Organising

Kohler-Koch (2016) argues that organising has to do with shaping the structure of an organisation. In this context, it suggests that the school principal should be an organized person. This requires their developing a school structure and allocating the human resources (deputy principals, DHs and teachers) to ensure accomplishment of the school's objectives. It also refers to organising teaching and learning activities. For example, this suggests knowing the phases in a school, the grades under those phases, the subjects to be taught and by whom; these are some of the issues that should be considered. The role of a school principal in this regard is to facilitate the implementation of this activity. Further, organising a school trip is another example to be highlighted. A school principal with a fundraising committee can organise a school trip to take place. For that activity to be effective, they should decide on a place to visit, the mode of transport to be used, the amount to be paid and the reasons behind the visit. A school principal's role is to oversee whether everything is done accordingly.

3.3.3 Staffing

This involves recruiting staff by looking at their skills and qualifications to see whether there is a match concerning the positions and the applicants (Alexopoulos, 2019). The author further argues that staffing refers to the process of hiring eligible staff with knowledge and skills as well as proper attitudes and behaviours in an organisation to perform their duties. For teaching and learning to take place, school principals should ensure that qualified teachers are employed in their schools. Depending on the number of subjects offered in the school, a school principal needs to ensure that there is no subject without a teacher. If it so happens, s/he requests the circuit manager to intervene by finding the right candidate for the job. By so doing, learners benefit.

3.3.4 Directing

Another important function of management is directing. Ray (2020) contends that directing refers to telling people what to do and seeing that they do it to the best of their ability. This suggests coordinating all the activities and bringing them closer to the vision and mission of the organisation. In a school context, it requires a school principal to be an organised person. Being organised can refer to several factors, for example, management of school funds/budget, management of human resources and or programmes and school activities. In the South African context, a school principal cannot do this by himself and therefore requires the assistance of

other key role players (SMT, SGB and parents) to ensure progress towards teaching and learning.

3.3.5 Controlling

Controlling can be defined as ensuring that activities in an organisation are performed as per the plan (Francsovcics, Kemendi & Piukovics, 2019). In a school context, this can mean controlling the level of late coming and absenteeism by a school principal. This can be effected by using a timebook, which is an important document in a school that requires teachers to indicate their presence/attendance. In this document, a school principal should ensure that teachers sign in and out when they arrive and depart. This signing should be done in his/her presence so that the correct time is entered. However, if a school principal is absent, a DP takes over the controlling of the timetable. As I said previously, such an action assists in determining the number of hours worked or lost.

Overall, as I indicated earlier, a school principal must perform both leadership and management functions. This is consistent with the expectations of the South African school principalship policy framework, hence a combination of the two theories to form one framework. Also, the utilisation of the two theories helps the researcher to understand the essence of implementing the policy for the betterment of the school.

3.4 CONCLUSION

As I previously stated, the two theories used in this study are relevant because they furnish the reader on how school principals should behave as leaders and managers of schools. They are both aimed at bringing about improvement in learners' academic results. For example, transformational leadership theory is about those in authority assisting their subordinates to advance to a higher level. In this study, this refers to a school principal fostering the success of all learners in a school. For this to be effective, a school principal needs to plan, organise, staff, direct and control, hence the management functions of the school. Improving learners' academic results is every school principal's dream, therefore it is a necessity for them to be effective in their roles to achieve that dream. The next chapter to follow discusses the design and methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was about the discussion of the two theories that were used in framing this study. This chapter presents the study's research design and methodology. It comprises the main elements of the design and methodology that will be utilized in this study, which are the research paradigm, research design, selection of research sites and participants. I then discuss how I generate and analyse data. Further, I explain how the concept of trustworthiness is considered. Thereafter, I conclude the chapter with ethical considerations of this study.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Davies and Fisher (2018) state that a paradigm can be described as different ways of viewing the world and it forms the foundation from which research is undertaken. Khatri (2020) maintains that a research paradigm is a theoretical or philosophical ground for the research work. This study used the Interpretivist Paradigm. The three components of a research paradigm are ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Potrac, Jones and Nelson (2014) posit that the ontological assumption of this paradigm is that reality is subjective. It is therefore relevant to this study because multiple truths and meanings were constructed from different school principals. In a qualitative approach, there are multiple realities from individuals, and they provide an understanding of the same social phenomenon from different perspectives. This refers to school principals telling the reality of the nature of their own schools. This justifies the notion that human beings are unique and can interpret reality based on their understanding of the concept.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. Concerning the epistemological assumption, interpretivists believe knowledge is generated through active engagement with the sources of such knowledge (Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014). It, therefore, assumes that knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore, the constructed knowledge is from different school principals to derive at the truth on how they understand the policy framework and practice governing their positions. In this paradigm, as a researcher, I am relying on the views of the participants about

the phenomenon under investigation. This suggests that I am relying on the views of school principals to determine what can be learnt of the interface between policy and practice. Moreover, concerning methodological assumptions, participants in qualitative research are regarded as people who are well informed about their situations and can construct their own meanings of the situations (Sanjari et al., 2014). For this study, all the school principals that I interviewed had enough years in the teaching profession as well as in the school principalship. Having utilised semi-structured interviews for school principals made it easier for me to obtain enough information on the nature of the interface between policy and practice.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design refers to the overall strategy that one chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way (Rosenstein, 2019). This study adopts a multi-site case study design involving five public primary school principals. A multiple site case study refers to case studies conducted in different sites, in this case, it refers to different primary schools (Stake, 2013). The author further argue that the multi-case study is a special effort to examine something having lots of cases, parts or members. Therefore, the information received from school principals in different schools assisted to illustrate thoroughly the phenomenon under investigation. Stewart (2012) argues that multi-case studies are in essence comparative. This means that cases are chosen for their similarities rather than their differences. In this study, the similarity is that all five schools selected were primary schools, making it easy for comparisons within a single sector rather than within two sectors, for example, primary and secondary schools. Therefore, a case study describes what it is like to be in a particular real situation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In this case, it describes what experiences school principals have in their principalship positions. This is examined by looking at the interface between policy and practice. Also, multi-site case studies create a more convincing theory when the suggestions are more intensely grounded in empirical evidence at several sites appropriate to this study, because they provide more extensive descriptions and explanations of the phenomenon (Gustafsson, 2017).

4.4 SELECTION OF RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Once the research question has been formulated, the selection of individuals, groups and sites that will be the source of relevant data will determine the success of the study (Lanza, 2008). The

research sites for this study are public schools, specifically selected primary schools in a selected district in the KwaZulu-Natal province. These are schools situated in the township of Umlazi where most of the community members are faced with social ills like a high unemployment rate, teenage pregnancy, alcohol abuse and crime. Due to the high population in this township, schools belong to different circuits that are headed by circuit managers (CM). This made it easier for me to select schools amongst the many that are in that township. Therefore, the selection technique of participants was purposive. In this study, purposive sampling is used in that only primary schools were selected. This was because an analysis of one sector (primary schools) is better than comparing two sectors (primary and secondary schools). Again, as a primary school teacher, my expertise lies herein. In addition to that, another important aspect of conducting research is the choice of research participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This suggests how important sampling is in research work, hence one talks of a sample size (Singh & Masuku, 2014). It, therefore, refers to the process of choosing behaviours, cases, people or things to work with in a particular study (Thomas et al., 2010). Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) argue that purposive sampling is a process of choosing research participants based on characteristics, qualities or attributes that they possess, which the researcher believed added some value to the study. Therefore, the selection of school principals was also purposive. Campbell et al. (2020) argue that the reason for a purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigour of the study and trustworthiness of the data and results. In this study, only primary school principals in public schools were selected as the participants.

In conclusion, my selection included five primary schools, giving the total number of five primary school principals to be interviewed. Out of these five schools, three are headed by males and two by female school principals.

4.5 DATA GENERATION METHODS

The study adopted individual face-to-face interviews for data generation methods. An interview schedule was used as the research instrument.

Individual face-to-face interview

A semi-structured interview is a meeting of people face-to-face, especially for consultation. It can also be described as a question-and-answer session (Vogl, 2013). Moreover, the author

argues that there is an interviewer who asks questions and an interviewee who responds to the set of questions asked by the interviewer. In doing that, I used the interview schedule that has a list of questions to be asked. Prescott (2011) argues that an interview schedule is a construction of a schedule with questions about the course content. This means that the questions asked are derived from the eight key areas of a school principalship. Therefore, using semi-structured interviews helped me to probe further so as to gain a deeper understanding of the interface between policy and practice, which in turn determined the quality of the school principal's work. The questions asked allowed the participants to give open-ended answers where they were free to talk about the topic under investigation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Where necessary, I paraphrased the questions so as to get clear answers from my participants.

I conducted individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the school principals which took about one to two hours each. Given the depth and breadth of the eight areas of focus in the principalship framework, there was no way just two hours could capture everything. Therefore, I had a series of interviews with them, depending on their work schedule. That meant that, with some school principals, I did seven to eight sessions whereas with others, there were four to six sessions until all the key areas were covered. This was a form of qualitative interviewing which was a flexible and powerful tool to capture the voices and the ways people made meaning of their experiences (Rabionet, 2011). In this study, five school principals' voices were captured.

All the interviews I conducted with the participants were audio-recorded, using a cell phone. Thereafter I transcribed the data so that the preliminary analysis could succeed.

Table 4.1 Representation of data generation method, instrument and sites

Data generation method	Instrument	Site
Individual face-to-face interviews	Semi-structured interview schedule with five school principals	Five primary schools

The information in Table 4.1 above indicates how data were generated from five primary school principals using individual face-to-face interviews. In the next section that follows, I analysed the data, focusing on analysis procedures of the study.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Data analysis was the process of giving arrangements, categories and meanings to data generated in a research study through an organised but laborious process (Gray, 2009). One approach of analysing qualitative data is thematic analysis. Therefore, data from the interviews were audio-recorded. Thereafter, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. Data were then organised according to similar items. Then data generated from participants were analysed thematically. Thematic Analysis (TA) is an accessible, flexible and increasingly popular method of qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In data transcription, open-coding is used and compiled into themes in order to discover the most valuable part of the information given (Glaser, 2016). The following steps were used to analyse data thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Familiarise self with data: I listened to the recordings and transcribed all the interviews.

Chenail (2012) refers to the first step as data reduction, meaning to analyse data word-for-word.

Generate initial themes: In this step, I identified the preliminary codes that provided an indication of the context of the conversation. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to that stage as highlighting the data, which means taking excerpts from the participants' full text.

Search for themes: The third step was the start of the interpretive analysis of all the collated codes. Themes and sub-themes were sorted from relevant data extracts. That was the stage for establishing themes, which means breaking the data into smaller segments, making them clearer and more understandable (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Review themes: This is the stage where I made decisions as to whether to combine, refine, separate or discard initial themes. Data within the themes should cohere meaningfully and there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. I checked the themes in relation to the coded extracts and in all the data sets. I generated a thematic map to guide me in clearly distinguishing between the themes. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to that stage as evaluating the themes. This means ensuring that all themes represented the entire text of generated data. The authors further suggested involving an outside reviewer at that stage. The aim was to build trustworthiness in theme coding.

Define and name themes: In this step, I provided the theme names and clear working definitions that captured the essence of each theme in a concise manner. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to that stage as data display. That stage helped to view and enhance the data more clearly for

the study and to avoid data overload. The aim of displaying the data was to make sense of the data generated.

Produce the report: In referring to this step, I transformed the analysis into an interpretable report by using clear and compelling extract examples that related to the themes, research questions and literature by ensuring that the report was not a mere description of the themes but an analysis that was supported by empirical evidence that addressed the research question. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to that stage as drawing conclusions, which meant identifying interrelations between data generated and literature while building a coherent and consistent piece of writing that fitted with the theoretical framework of the study.

The next section that follows address how trustworthiness of this study was ensured.

4.7 ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS

In ensuring trustworthiness for this study, I adopted three concepts, which are credibility, dependability and confirmability.

(a) Credibility

This term refers to whether the test measured what it intends to measure, in that case the interview questions focused on the quality of the work of school principals which was determined by examining the interface between policy and practice (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This suggests that any researcher examining the interface between policy and practice in school principalship should be able to interpret and conclude, using data received from participants, whether the work of a school principal is of good quality or not.

(b) Dependability

The term refers to when the researcher could account for why there may be variations in the study, particularly between cases (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The suggestion here is that the researcher should be able to compare studies of different participants in order to find out why there may be variations, if there are any. In this case, studies of different school principals were compared to find out whether there were any differences and the reasons behind those differences.

(c) Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the fact that the research process needs to be transparent, with enough details for the reader to check if they have reached the same or a similar conclusion (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This means, all studies should have sufficient information for a reader to check whether similar conclusions were reached, for example, all studies should have a section on data generated from participants, and all studies should have analysed data as well as interpreted data.

The next section that follows is about ethical issues that were observed during data generation.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This is a vital section that allows for attainment of research results provided the researcher focused on the correct protocol (Thiroux & Krasemann, 2009). However, prior to the results, a researcher was compelled to follow three ethical principles, which were autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014) when generating data. Failure to do so, the study loses its meaning.

(a) Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the researcher having to respect the autonomy, freedom or independence of all those participating in the research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This means that they participated in the study willingly and were given the capacity to make their own decisions (Mfutso-Bengo, Manda-Taylor & Masiye, 2015). However, prior to that, as a researcher I need to be accepted so that it is easy for me to get access to my population. I then applied for ethical clearance (EC) from the University of KwaZulu Natal. After being accepted, I got permission from KwaZulu Natal DBE to conduct this study in five different schools. With the assistance of my gatekeeper, I was able to reach my participants (school principals) and got their consent. I then visited all of them to introduce myself and furnished them with the reasons behind my visitation. Thereafter, I gave them the consent forms to read and sign if they were willing to participate. Hence, the ethical principle applied that participants, especially in qualitative research, know what they are getting into and for what reasons (Mfutso-Bengo, Manda-Taylor & Masiye, 2015). I informed them that they were not obligated to partake in the study if they did not feel comfortable. I assured them that they participate voluntarily and that they can withdraw at any time, if they wish. Upon their participation, I guaranteed their safety by using pseudonyms instead of their real names and those of their schools.

(b) Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence refers to the researcher having to ensure the participant that the research was not going to threaten them or any other person participating (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). I explained to my participants about my study and the purpose behind it. I then assured them that the data generated from them would be for the purpose of this study and nothing beyond that. I assured my participants that the data collected would not be shared to anyone except with the person responsible when the need for clarity arose. In a similar way, that principle should remind researchers that they should not expose or cause any psychological or physical harm to participants (Rule & John, 2011). I indicated to them that the place where interviews would be held would be conducive. All interviews took place in the school principal's office after school hours, ensuring privacy once the school had emptied. As a researcher, I took the necessary measures to prevent the research process from causing any harm to the research participants. I assured them as participants that only the interview as well as follow-up questions regarding the study would be asked and nothing further than that.

(c) Beneficence

Christians (2005) defines beneficence as the guiding principle which requires researchers to put the needs and comfortability of participants. For a research study to conform to the ethical principle of beneficence, the benefits of the research should outweigh the potential harm that the study may cause to the research participants. This study posed no potential harm to anyone as the aim was for it to understand how school principals grow and develop in these eight key areas.

4.9 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

Amongst the challenges that I encountered, included withdrawal of a school principal from the project, postponement as well as school principals' failure to punctuality. For this study, I wanted to deal with each challenge individually.

(i) *Withdrawal of school principal from the project*

I had five school principals that I purposively selected for the completion of that research study. Prior arrangements were made and school principals agreed that I visited their schools for appointment purposes. Amongst the five school principals that I had, there was one who

withdrew from the programme. She did not give me any tangible reason except that she had changed her mind and did not want to participate anymore. For ethical purposes, I had to be calm and thanked her for the opportunity she had given me. I had no other option but to go back to the CM and reported the matter to him. I kept going even though it was hard. In that regard, the CM suggested that we look for another school to move forward and generate data. That was the relief that I got, and I went to another school, under the CM's instruction.

(ii) *Postponement*

The moment I realised that my study had five research participants and five sites to go to, was when I realised that it was going to be a struggle for me to complete the interviews within the set time. According to the plans I had, all the interviews were scheduled for after school. However, due to some commitments by school principals, I had to interview them during times that suited them but not me. Sometimes, they would call me during break time to do an interview for forty minutes instead of one hour or two. With some school principals, the interview would be cancelled at the eleventh hour due to a principals' meeting that had come up. That was the biggest disappointment, because preparing for the interview required a thorough preparation on my side, for example, making sure that my voice recorder, a cell phone in my case, was fully charged and operational. I made sure that the interview questions were at my disposal and that the venue was quiet and conducive for the interview to take place, and so forth.

(iii) *Lack of punctuality*

When I realised that I would be working with school principals, I thought that everything was going to be plain sailing when it came to the issue of time and/or punctuality. Little did I know that I was deceiving myself. Had I known earlier, I was going to change and consider other participants as the phenomenon of the study. For example, I would schedule the appointment for 15h00 as I had to do the interviews after school. To my surprise, a school principal would pitch in at 16h00 instead, after I had waited for one hour or so. In some cases, due to commitments on a school principal's side, s/he would ask me to come in the morning at 10h00, for example, for me only to find that s/he was not even at school, and I would be forced to wait. The reason I agreed to 10h00 was because, in most schools, that was recess time, and it normally lasts for 40 minutes. All the appointments took another turn and there were a lot of excuses and failure for punctuality, from all the participants. However, eventually, I was able to proceed and gather the information I wanted.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I began with the research paradigm that underpinned the study. This was followed by the research design that was adopted by the study. I then proceeded with a discussion of the research sites and the participants of the study. Further, I discussed the method that this study utilised and gave the reasons for the selection of that method. In addition, I discussed the issue of trustworthiness, which was relevant in this case as I was conducting a qualitative study. The chapter concluded with a discussion of ethical issues, which were regarded as important to maintain professionalism throughout the research journey, the anticipated challenges and timeline of the study. The next chapter addresses and discusses the presentation of data.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was about the discussion of research design and methodology. This chapter presents and discusses the findings. The instrument I used for generating data was interview. The findings of this study are based on the understanding of the interface that exists between the policy and practice of their work in the country SA. This chapter unfolds with biographical information of schools and the participants, which are school principals. This will be followed by a discussion of themes that emerged after analysis. For example, the themes that emerged are (i) relationships in targeted schools (ii) kinds of leadership (iii) management in schools (iv) community partnership. This will be followed by verbatim quotes thereafter I draw a conclusion. The themes I am going to present are based on the responses from the three research questions of this study.

1. What does the policy-practice interface of school principalship in the selected public primary schools look like?
2. Why is the interface the way it is in the selected schools?
3. What implications do the nature of the interface and the reasons thereof have for improving the work of a school principal?

For ethics consideration discussed in the previous chapter (see section 4.9) I am using pseudonyms when referring to my sites and participants. For this study, it is schools and school principals that I am identifying, and the identification is as follows:

Schools – Elegant school, Avocado school, Royal school, Jupiter school and Sunshine school.

School principals – PES, PAS, PRS, PJS and PSS.

5.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF SCHOOLS AND THE PARTICIPANTS

5.2.1 The research sites

This section presents biographical information about the five schools where the research participants worked. As I previously stated, in naming the schools and participants, I used pseudonyms, hence the names of the schools on the table. For example, for participants, the P

stands for principal, the E is the first letter in the school's name and the S stands for school, hence I have PES, meaning Principal Elegant School (PES). This biographical information is followed by a short summary of each of the research sites.

Table 5.1 Biographical information of the selected schools

Name of school	Context	Quintile	Number of teachers	Number of learners (Grade 1 to 7)	Number of classrooms
Elegant school (ES)	Township	3	14	501	10
Avocado school (AS)	Township	3	10	267	10
Royal school (RS)	Township	3	28	1 006	22
Jupiter school (JS)	Township	3	27	915	15
Sunshine school (SS)	Township	3	20	581	18

The information in Table 5.1 gives a description of the selected schools. The number of learners given on the above table does not include Grade R learners. All these schools were easy to reach, though with a couple of them having poor driveways. They were all in a township environment.

The head of PES is a male principal. The number of learners in classrooms ranged from 50 to 55. According to Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga's speech (2022), there is no learner-teacher ratio policy in South African schools, however, the Minister commented on the ideal maximum class size, for example, 40 learners per teacher. Therefore, if a school has 50 to 55 learners in one class, it is clear that those classes were overcrowded. Therefore, a school with 501 learners and ten classrooms implies that the classrooms are overcrowded.

PAS was the smallest school, as the number of learners did not even reach 300. In this school, nine classrooms were occupied by Grade one to Grade seven learners and one was reserved for Grade R learners. The school principal is a female. PRS was the biggest of them all, with the greatest number of learners and teachers. The school principal is a female. The school has

recently been renovated, and more classrooms have been added. This made the school have buildings referred to as *new* and *old* buildings. All those classrooms were operational, and learners ranged from 40 to 45. There was no overcrowding in classrooms. On top of this, there were two separate classrooms built for Grade RR and R respectively.

In PJS, the school principal is a male. In classrooms, learner numbers ranged from 55 to 61, indicating that there was overcrowding. The head of the fifth and the last school (PSS) is a male principal. Learners in classrooms ranged from 30 to 35 and there was no overcrowding.

5.2.2 The participants

This section is about the biographical information of the participants of the study, the school principals. Table 5.2 presents the demographic information on participants.

Participants	Gender	Length service of the teaching profession year in	Length of service in school principalship in years	Length of service in school principalship in current school in years
PES	male	25	6	5
PAS	female	28	6	6
PRS	female	33	7	6
PJS	male	35	12	7
PSS	male	32	2	2

Table 5.2 Biographical information of the participants

Table 5.2 presents the participants in the study. On the basis of the figures in table 5.2, as far as length of service in the teaching profession, all participants were experienced and were able to give me the answers pertaining to the interface between policy and practice in school principalship.

Considering the themes, the following that I developed from the data.

5.3 THEME 1: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE TARGETED SCHOOLS

Under this theme, the main question I sought participants to answer was what kind of relationships school principals had with other stakeholders in the school: the relationship

amongst learners, amongst teachers, school principals' relationship with SMT, their relationship with staff as well as their relationship with the SGB.

(a) Learner-learner relationships

Regarding learner-learner relationships in his school, PES had the following to say:

The relationship amongst learners is not that good because they fight almost every day. Even the young ones in foundation classes, it is a problem. We are in a primary school, so learners like to fight, but we try as teachers to intervene and tell them not to

On engaging further with PES, he indicated that learners tended to fight for trivial matters.

Regarding this, he said:

Learners fight over petty issues, for example, through stealing someone else's possession like money, food, writing material and clothing like exchange of uniform, shoes and so forth. You cannot take away fighting from learners, so their relationship is not good at all.

Moving on to PAS regarding learner-learner relationships, she reported as follows:

Their relationship is good but there's a little bit of friction once in a while otherwise the relationship is very good. I always talk to them in assembly and encourage them to focus on their schoolwork. Also, our school has got prefects who deal with bad behaviour amongst learners. Once those who behave badly are caught, they are dealt with by teachers by being given extra work or detained after school for further 30 minutes. Most of the learners are good and I can proudly say that the relationship is good.

This participant goes on by giving the reason behind learners' fighting. She reported that:

The main cause of their fighting is stealing someone's writing material, food and money. Learners like to put their money on top of their desks, within seconds, the money disappears just like that.

Also, this is what PRS detailed about learner-learner relationship:

The relationship is good, there are no big problems like in high school. From my observation, they play together most of the time. With fighting, it is once in a while. Before the first period starts, teachers spend ten minutes every day talking to them about

their expected behaviour at school. Sometimes church pastors come to our school on Fridays, to talk to us as teachers but mostly to the learners. I think that helps them a lot, that is why I am saying there are no big problems.

To attend to learners' issues, PRS had this to say:

We make sure that their breaks are separated and by so doing, fighting is minimised.

Further, PJS reported on learner-learner relationships; this is what he said:

They always play together and in a happy mood. We talk to them, tell them to do their schoolwork and encourage them to lend a helping hand to those who do not have anything to eat or wear. At break time, I always see them sharing their food and no one takes someone's food forcefully. They are good learners.

Moreover, this is what PSS reported on concerning learner-learner relationship:

They are friendly kids who always play even during school hours. Teachers intervene and discourage them to not disturb the classes. What I notice is that they like to make noise but with fighting I do not have such cases. They connect and their relationship is good.

From the above information, the relationship amongst most learners is overshadowed by conflict. This could be a sign that no corporal punishment or disciplinary measures are exercised upon these learners, hence, their kind of behaviour. Also, it could be a sign of poor leadership or management on the side of school principals. It is therefore the responsibility of a school principal to ascertain that learners behave accordingly, if not, their relationship can have a negative bearing on their success.

(b) Teacher-teacher relationships

Reading teacher-teacher relationships in his school, PES reported that:

Female teachers tend to fight a lot, through gossip about their personal lives and what they do after school. Female teachers are a problem because of gossiping. It is as if they do not have work to do. They compete with their clothing and this competition sometimes led to them fighting. It is always noise from Monday to Friday, we cannot throw them away because we need them

PES gave the reason as to what the cause of fighting was, and this is what he reported:

They fight over money lending and clothing competition. This one is a big problem in schools with female teachers and it leads to unhealthy relationships. When I first came here, the conflict was very rife, but I always tell them to keep in mind the manner they approach one another. Fortunately, there is no male teacher in my school except me.

To move forward, PAS had this to say about teacher-teacher relationship:

My school is so small, with 300 learners. As it is a primary school, it still maintains keeping female teachers only. The relationship amongst them is very good and my teachers work as a team most of the time.

Upon probing further, PAS clarified what teachers do when they work as a team, and this is what she said:

They do lesson plans together; they attend workshops together and give feedback on the workshops attended. During break, they share their food and eat together. They engage in different sports codes like netball and athletics. Even when the term ends, they go out together and enjoy themselves in entertainment places. That to me explains that their relationship is good.

On top of this, PRS reported this about the relationship amongst teachers:

The relationship is good but is disturbed now and again by minor things. In my school, I have old teachers who do not get along with the young teachers. I am talking about male and female teachers here. Old teachers turn to be bossy for no reason at all. Young teachers feel disrespected, and they fight back, calling old teachers 'old timers'.

PRS gave the reasons as to why teachers do not get along and this is what she pointed at:

Sometimes we do not see eye to eye with young blood through taking each other for granted. There is a shortage of respect and that is that. As youngsters, they should allow being mentored by the old ones, but it is a complete opposite. Young teachers do not want to be told and that is the real cause of problems in my school

Moreover, PJS commented on teacher-teacher relationship and said that:

It is good but not 100% if I can put it that way, because we are dealing with human beings here. Human beings, especially adults, cannot be trusted. They change when situations suit them. They cannot be trusted and are inconsistent. They agree on something else and do completely the opposite.

Probing further, I asked why he referred to teachers as human beings who change like chameleons, and he said:

Human beings change like chameleons, meaning today they are good and well of but the next day, they have changed completely. So, one cannot say that the relationship is 100% good.

In addition, PSS said the following about the relationship amongst teachers:

To me it is not that good but is poor. Teachers are full of gossip and jealousy amongst one another. Most of them are not on speaking terms. When they argue, they do it in front of the learners. They talk about their personal lives in front of the learners and teaching and learning is disturbed. The SMT tries to intervene and ask them to attend to learners, from their body language, they do not care. It is tough and so is the relationship amongst themselves.

PSS went on to reason why teachers do not get along and he reported that:

There are those hiccups when it comes to teachers interacting when cracking a joke and the joke is interpreted as personal, and it becomes a problem. There is a lot of gossip which leads to their verbal fighting and there is negative competition of someone's possession

Regarding teacher-teacher relationship, it transpires that the relationship has conflict due to personal issues. Teachers focus more on personal issues than on work-related matters. However, according to the policy under scrutiny, a school principal as an organisational leader is expected to manage conflict in a school. This is failure on his/her side and can affect negatively on teaching and learning as well as the production of good results for the learners.

(c) Relationships with the SMT

For relationship with the SMT, this is what PES reported on:

It is a very good relationship, it is myself and one departmental head (DH) only.

PES further explained how his working relationship with a DH has been and this is what he said:

The two of us work together nicely and we respect each other

To continue, PAS had this to say about her relationship with the SMT:

It is very good because every idea a person has in mind, that is going to benefit the school is put on the table and we discuss it. We meet once a week with the SMT to discuss important matters concerning the school and we respect one another during discussions.

PAS thinks it is important to give the number of people in the SMT, hence, this is what she mentioned:

There are 3 people who are in the SMT, it is myself, HOD and admin clerk, so the three of us are enough. If someone can join us, there will be chaos. Too many people become a crowd.

Additionally, PRS gives her ideas on the relationship she had with the other SMT members, and this is what she said:

The working relationship is not good at all initially it was good but now, I do not know what went wrong. The DP is jealous of my post, and she is a very bad influence. She sides with the teachers more than with me. She does not support me at all and wants me out of my post

PRS went on by explaining why her relationship with the SMT is not good and this is what she gave as the reason:

SMT members are giving me a hard time, I trusted them but not anymore. They do not co-operate, sometimes they are not committed, and they do not lead teachers by good examples. There is one HOD who is loyal to me, but the others are giving me the hard time including the Deputy Principal.

Moreover, PRS ended up mentioning the poison in her school and this is what she said:

The (DP) is after my post, she is a bad influence on the teachers and everyone at school.

In addition, PJS had this to say about his relationship with the SMT:

For the past years before I became a school principal, it was exciting and pleasant because it was made up of people who wanted to learn, but now it comprises people who are hungry for positions. There are more disagreements than agreements. It is not nice at all.

PSS continued to give the current kind of relationship he has with his SMT, and this is what he reported on:

We try to be good and to work hard because the DBE expects us to do so, but there are more conflicting ideas and there is no way forward

Sometimes there are a lot of conflicts, so it is not that good. There is this one DH who does things her way and does not want to be told. She dodges classes and does not care about learners at all.

PSS further explained why that particular individual is not cooperating and this is what he said:

She does not listen to my instructions and is not supportive towards the team at all.

Most of the participants maintain that there is a big problem regarding their relationships with SMT members in schools. A school principal and the SMT are expected to give direction and guidance concerning school functionality. To be effective and to achieve the planned objectives, there should exist togetherness and trust amongst them. However, in the targeted schools, the relationship is characterized by conflict and jealousy, making it difficult to achieve good or positive outcomes. This, of course, is a failure on the side of school principals because, as executive leaders, they are expected to create an environment of discipline and trust in schools all the time. How, then are schools going to progress if there is no leadership? The people who are supposed to lead are always at loggerheads with each other. This is a problem that needs to be attended to and is a sign of poor leadership.

(d) Relationships with staff

Concerning the relationship with staff, this is what PES reported on:

My relationship with staff is good, especially between those teachers who are working and taking their work seriously. However, between the teachers who do not want to work, it is not good because I have to remind them all the time to work. Teachers should know why they are at school; I find it difficult sometimes if I have to remind them.

PES further explained how he interacted with his staff, and this is what he said:

What I do to make the relationship work is to interact with them all the time. For example, I sit and eat with them during break, when there is a school outing, I make sure that I go with them, during holidays, I pay them a visit. Having said this, I have

noticed that harmony prevails amongst ourselves, even to those teachers who do not want to work.

Moving forward, PAS said the following about her relationship with her staff

It is good, the relationship is good so far. As I said earlier, my school is so small, with ten teachers and 300 learners, you can imagine. We assist one another with schoolwork and go to different classes to teach in assisting those teachers with difficulties with some concepts. I am able to manage both the teachers and the learners, hence I am saying the relationship is good.

PAS reported on what she does with her staff to show that the relationship is good; this is what she mentioned:

We have made it a norm that every morning we pray together before the classes start. On Fridays, church pastors visit our school to preach and spread the word of God to us as staff and to the learners. That is how we survive, we pray a lot.

PAS then went on by mentioning how she related with her staff on a daily basis. This is what she touched on:

When we greet and address one another, we use titles like Madam, Miss or Sir, we try to be formal most of the time.

On top of this is PRS whose working relationship with her staff is described as:

The relationship I have with my staff keeps on changing. Sometimes it is good and sometimes it is bad. I said to you earlier that the DP is a bad influence. She influences teachers to rebel after me and teachers take her side more often. There are few who side with me, my school is divided into groups.

PRS further explained how sensitive her relationship with staff is and she said:

We are always mindful and sensitive towards the next person, you should know what you discuss with anyone, because there is a lot of gossip.

Moreover, PJS said of his relationship with staff:

It is above average, mostly we have teachers with long experience who take their work seriously. Also, I do not talk too much, teachers know what to discuss with me, I do not like gossiping.

On further engagement with PJS, he went on by explaining what he does not to entertain cheap talk

I discourage gossip and most of the time I discuss with them work-related matters. Cheap talk is not my friend.

In addition, there is PSS whose relationship with staff is described as follows:

I am approachable and I do listen to people or staff members. Teachers come to my office for different reasons, and I listen to them and give them guidance afterwards. However, there is one SMT member who is a bad influence to the teachers. That one is troublesome; she does everything bad to destroy the relationship I have with my staff

PSS further gave staff an assurance about the discussions he had with them:

Whatever discussion they had with me is kept confidential. As a school principal, you cannot go around discussing teachers' personal issues. That is wrong, I need to be trustworthy to them.

The policy under scrutiny requires school principals as executive leaders to create an environment of discipline and trust for effective teaching and learning to occur. In that regard, the relationship that school principals had amongst staff members was characterised by trust, respect and confidentiality. This gives rise to positive outcomes, for example, the achievement of school goals. Also, from what I see, there is a good attitude that exists amongst school principals and their teachers, hence, one school principal regarded himself as being approachable, which is a sign of a positive interaction amongst people. Having said this, there is good leadership portrayed by school principals in schools.

(e) Relationships with the SGB

Concerning the relationship with the SGB, PES had this to say:

The relationship I have with my SGB is good, we understand one another. We work nicely with the aim of lifting up the name of the school. SGB respects me

PES further explained how working together with the SGB has been and this is what he reported on:

We work together nicely, for example, we keep to the appointments of our meetings and are always punctual, we apologise if we cannot make it to the meeting, we give each

other time to talk, and we listen to one another. More than anything, we learn from one another.

PAS has this to say about his relationship with the SGB

The relationship I have with the SGB is good though some of the SGB members, due to work constraints do not come to the scheduled meetings. With regards to that, we have decided on creating WhatsApp groups for further communication. We also do Zoom meetings because, luckily, all of us have laptops and are computer literate.

Further, this is what PRS reported on concerning her relationship with the SGB

The relationship I have with my SGB is perfect, these people respect school principals. They are so supportive to me, teachers and the learners. They even go an extra mile and render voluntary services to the school doing cleaning of school yard and classrooms at no cost. They commit themselves into painting school walls, attending to school plumbing and so forth. I remember last year (2023) they offered their 67 minutes for Mandela Day just doing painting free of charge. They put an eye in the school during school holidays. In addition to this, the secretary of the SGB is a Masters' student at Unisa. We interact perfectly; I prefer them more than the teachers.

PJS also shared his perspective on his relationship with the SGB, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

To answer your question, what I have noticed is that parents come and go, so are the SGB members. However, with the current SGB, we are working so smoothly because they are behind and supporting the school all the time. For example, they assist in cleaning the school and classrooms, they painted the two Grade R classrooms using different coloured paints free of charge. They keep an eye to our school during weekends and holidays so that there is no burglary taking place

In addition, PSS had this to say about his relationship with the

There exists a good relationship between myself and the SGB personnel. Those people are so supporting, they assist by providing cleaning material for the school at no cost, they provide plastic plates and spoons to be used by learners during break and they are the first one to come to school if there is burglary. My relationship with them is honestly good.

The above excerpts on the relationship with the SGB are an indication of effective communication between the school principals and the parents. That kind of relationship can have a significant impact on the success of the learners. With that regard, that kind of interaction between school principals and the stakeholders is a positive one and is a sign of good leadership.

In summary, the data suggest that where teachers worked together, and prefects worked hard to maintain learner discipline, relationships in those schools were conducive to teaching and learning. However, in some schools, conflict seemed to have been rampant. A key source of conflict seems to have been hunger for positions among some teachers. Thus, some participant school principals seemed to succeed in building healthy relationships while others struggled in that regard.

5.4 THEME 2: KINDS OF LEADERSHIP

In this section, I dwell on participants' views regarding different kinds of leadership a school principal is expected to exercise. According to the policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b), there are five such types of leadership, namely instructional leadership, strategic leadership, executive leadership, cultural leadership and organisational leadership. However, my engagement with the participants centred on instructional leadership because it is the core business of a school. Thus, in this section the other types of leadership are discussed in as far as they relate to instructional leadership.

Instructional Leadership

Under this kind of leadership, there are four main functions: improving learner academic performance, improving teaching performance, curriculum improvement and staff empowerment. The four functions are closely related; therefore, the data will be presented accordingly.

One of the issues raised by PES relates to improving learner academic performance and this is what he said:

It varies, you know I decided to come to a primary school from a Secondary school because there are some things I wanted to correct. I wanted learners to be able to read, write and count because they could not, what I noticed, is that, if learners read, they do not pay attention to Punctuation. This is a very important concept in literacy because

learners should know when to pause, where to exclaim, when to end a sentence and also how to begin a new sentence. It is an embarrassment to receive a learner from another school who cannot read. Reading is one thing but reading with understanding is something else. The mastery of any subject depends on how learners read and if they read well, their results will improve.

On further engagement with PES, he emphasised the importance of teachers teaching diligently as a way of improving learner academic performance and he said:

I always tell my teachers to teach diligently and learners to learn. For example, I tell teachers to respect and honour their teaching periods because there are those teachers who dodge classes. Also, I encourage teachers to give classwork and homework to learners and to monitor it, to mark the exercise books, because mostly teachers do not do the marking. Further, I invite parents to come and see their children's work so that they intervene if their learners do not do well. That is what I do in my school to improve learner academic performance.

PAS added another dimension on how to improve learner academic performance, and this is what she said:

Last year we had an Awards Day, it was a big ceremony. The improvement of academic performance of learners was seen by the trophies that we were supposed to buy, we had to buy 58 trophies because every teacher will give those kids who did well. The other years we were doing the certificates because they were not doing well. This year we decided that we do the trophies. We had 58 learners who did well, but some of them walked away with five trophies because they excelled in many subjects.

As with PES, PJS spoke about the need to improve teaching performance.

In our school, we have timetables that are drafted by checking the CAPS document. Particularly, in foundation phase, teachers are expected to teach all subjects but there is a change this year, we have a new system. There are three educators, one is taking mathematics and life skills the other one is taking the two languages. However, in grades 4, 5, 6 & 7, teachers are specialising maybe in two or three subjects. In foundation phase, we discovered that maybe the teacher is good with one subject. He/she will tend to dwell more on that subject and neglecting the other subjects, so we

decided to give him or her an opportunity to focus more on that particular subject where s/he is good at.

Regarding the need to revise curricula, PRS reported on the outdated curriculum and said:

The social science curriculum to me is outdated; it has nothing to do with the history of today. Learners are taught about the things that happened long-time ago in a way that is boring. I discovered that history is failed in most schools not in my school only I communicate with other principals they also say there is a problem in the History curriculum. With the other subjects it is better, and it is understandable. If the department can make changes in the curriculum of Social Sciences, it will be better.

Still on how to improve the curriculum, PAS reported:

I think the people who are in higher positions are people who have never been to teaching because they do things one year; as soon as they get familiar with something they will change. At one stage there is a teacher that said that our government does not want experts, because when you are a teacher and you are doing good, they change you to become an HOD to do something that you do not know; and when you get used to be an HOD they move you to be a Deputy Principal. You do not sit in one place, I think the Department of Education should make some changes up there, take people who have been to teaching and who understand the learners. They must take a person who has been a teacher to draw a curriculum.

PRS raised the issue of staff empowerment as a way of improving learner academic performance and said:

I encourage them to ensure that they develop themselves academically so that they can develop professionally. I also encourage them to attend professional development workshops so that they can be equipped of the more recently developments in education.

PES also weighed in on staff empowerment in order to improve the academic performance of the learners and this is what he reported:

I always tell them that this profession requires them to be life-long learners, I tell them to go and register and do something. They can register with Unisa for distance learning. I encourage them to go to workshop so that they upgrade and empower themselves. I tell them that they should not be like teachers who taught before 1994. This will prevent

them from being in the level of the learners. They should be life long learners and involve themselves with studying.

Still on staff empowerment as a way of improving learners' academic performance, PAS commented:

We implement CAPS and invite relevant people to come and empower us, we also go on team building workshops where we play together; at the same time, we are learning.

Further, I asked the participants what other ways school principals should adopt to empower staff for learners' results to improve. This is what PJS reported:

We have sessions where we invite experts to develop staff in a particular field, for example, leave measures and what the implications are thereof.

PSS remarked on staff empowerment to improving learners' academic performance, and this is what he said:

I discuss important issues with the teachers during staff meetings as a way of empowering them and unpack some of the policies, for example, a policy on leave measures. This I do to familiarise teachers with the kind of leaves that they take. Also, I expose teachers to South African Council for Educators (SACE) congregational ethics. This is a professional body for teachers which deals with their code of conduct, inside and outside the school.

Upon further engagement with the participants on ways to achieve instructional leadership, teamwork emerged as a contributing factor towards the improvement of learners' academic results. PES had this to say about working through teams:

We hold meetings frequently in a school where everyone will have a say. Mondays are scheduled for SMT meetings whereas Tuesdays and Fridays are for staff meetings. However, not all teachers attend, there are excuses. Also, Fridays are a problem because teachers do not want something serious, especially in the afternoon. Everyone's views are acknowledged, and we are able to make decisions, depending on what has been discussed. In addition to this, for effectiveness in teamwork, a team needs to abide to its characteristics, for example, synergy. This is an important characteristic as it helps to build interaction or cooperation amongst people, for this study in particular, amongst teachers and other stakeholders in a school.

Moving forward, PJS reported on how they met every Friday for staff development as a strategy they used to improve learners' results. This is what he commented on around teamwork

We normally have staff development on monthly basis every Fridays. There are staff meeting we hold every Tuesdays. We also practise teamwork during QMS meetings and we sometimes have bootcamps where we discuss school matters and human relations amongst staff.

In addition, PSS commented on teamwork and how it can be utilised to improve the performance of the learners, and this is what he came up with:

By attending staff meetings and encourage to be part of, by attending phase and grade meetings and by becoming PLC members

Other than working in a team, the participants also raised the importance of building trust amongst staff members. This is another function that brings improvement in learners' academic results. PES commented on honouring and keeping promises and said:

I am human of course, however, I try my best to keep the promises, as honouring of them is very important. I treat all the teachers equally and I also try to be transparent in financial matters.

Listening to PAS commenting on how she built trust in her school to improve learners' performance, she commented on confidentiality and reported that:

Confidentiality, because sometimes a teacher comes to me with her personal things, I should be confidential with her private life. I do not go out discussing and gossiping about my teachers or anybody else.

Also, PRS had this to say about building trust in order to bring about improvement in learners' results and she reported that:

I delegate some of my responsibilities to my teachers, especially my DP. This means that I trust them and that they will do the job just like me.

PJS added on the comments on building trust in his school as a way of improving learners' results:

I respect my teachers, and I do not go out gossiping about any of them. I listen to them and their problems and I am very open especially in matters relating to finance and vacant posts. There is nothing I hide from them.

Furthermore, PSS commented on building trust, so as to improve the results of learners. This is what he said:

To gain trust from a person you must first trust yourself and mind things that you say. The only thing that I use is to trust myself first and becoming open and approachable. Also, it is to play the role of being a leader and follow the leadership skills, meaning whatever you say it must not be influenced by other people. Further, I keep the promises I make, I do not take sides when there are conflicting issues, I take part in school activities, I provide support where necessary, I behave well, I do not shout at them, and so forth.

Stakeholder wellness is another component of strategic leadership which brings about positive results in learners' academic work. Below is what PES said around this issue:

To ensure wellbeing of my stakeholders, I listen to whatever problems they might have and advise accordingly especially on their personal problems.

Also, this is what PAS said about ensuring stakeholder wellness as a way of bringing about improvement in learners' results:

My relationship with my stakeholders is good. I sympathise with them during their loss and grief by visiting their homes and attending some of the events they have

In a similar way, PRS said this about ensuring stakeholder wellness to improve learners' results:

The relationship I have with my stakeholders is very good because we support each other even during death and personal problems.

Probing further with the participants, they also mentioned transparency as a significant factor towards the improvement of learners' results. This is what PES said about practising transparency in his school:

I am an open person, besides, what is there to be hidden? For example, with the issues of finances, I am very transparent. I always have clean audit ever since I became a principal. There are committees that handle school money, for example, the fundraising and entertainment committee, they are the one who collect, record and give feedback

to the teachers. I do not involve myself on that, however, I convene and keep the funds if it is above a certain amount. I then deposit it to our school account. I do not keep the petty cash myself. The only cash that I account for is the one given by the Department to the school.

Upon further engagement with one of the participants on what can be done to practise transparency in her school, this is what PAS reported:

Everything that is done by each and every person, whoever has done it must come up with feedback, even myself. Let me make a scenario, last year we did awards ceremony and when we had finished with everything, we sat down, and I told them that this person donated this money, and I showed all receipts for the donations. Everything is transparent in the school. We discuss everything that is happening in school, donations, even the school trips. We have event committee that deals with events of the school, that committee tells me everything about how the money collected will be used. Thereafter, I call the whole staff and tell them about what we have discussed with the committee. There is nothing that is hidden, everything is transparent. Whatever happens in the school, the SGB knows about it because I discuss with them first

Probing further, this is what PRS remarked on as practising transparency to better the results of the learners in her school:

I encourage transparency if we work as committees in the school for example. If a fundraising committee has met and funds raised, there is transparency demonstrated when they give feedback to the whole committees and the whole staff. We decided together on what we have to do with the money that has been raised, and I will give feedback to them on how the money was used

In addition to what PRS said, PJS reported on being an open book to ensure transparency in his school so as to improve learners' results:

Whatever we do, definitely we should be an open book even to our learners and this transparency we should have in finance committee as well.

Besides transparency, school principals are expected to create a common school identity to improve the performance of the learners. PES had this to say about creating a common school identity in his school:

Parents want to bring their children to this school, however, there is a school that is close by, but parents prefer this one. The teachers take good care of the learners, and they identify those who are struggling or who do not belong to a mainstream school and refer them to a nearby school that caters for those children, for them to get assistance academically

PAS, also, had this to say about creating a common school identity to improve the performance of the learners:

We are a caring school that caters for all learners, even those who are struggling and regarded as slow. There are also those who belong from struggling families, where there is no one working, if there are food leftovers, we give it to those families.

Further, this is how PRS commented on creating a common school identity in her school to improve learners' results:

What is common about this school to the community is that they view us as a school that can give better education to their children, why I am saying this, is because almost all learners pass with good marks. Also, the enrolment in our school is big and there a lot of activities done.

Probes with PRS, regarding creating a common school identity to improve learners' performance solicited the following comment:

We have different sports here at school, boys and girls play soccer and chess. We have music, gospel music and a school choir. We also offer computer studies for grade 7 and at end of the year we do computer awards for grade 7

PJS also commented on creating a common school identity and this is what he said about improving the academic performance of the learners:

The motto of the school says we strive for excellence, meaning the way we dress ourselves is part of the school identity and the way our learners dress the school uniform and carry their bags, shows that the school is organised. The outside appearance must actually tell what kind of learners and educators the school has. When I started teaching in 1988, we had a dress code but now it is no longer there. So, I have old teachers who dress properly.

Added to the above information, PSS had this to say about creating a common school identity to improve learners' results:

The school is presentable to the community in that out of four neighbouring schools that are close by, our school has the biggest enrolment, meaning that the community prefers us to others.

In addition to transparency and creating a common school identity, is the visibility of a school principal in and outside the school in increasing the performance of the learners. This is what PES said:

It is important, just imagine finding yourself in a crowded place and you do not see police visibility, you cannot feel comfortable. It is important for a school principal to take rounds in a school, in classes, kitchen, by the gate with the security guard. I am also visible to the community. Talk to the people so that they know you

To move forward, this is what PAS commented on about her visibility to improve learners' results:

It is very much important to be visible, because it gives parents a hope that the school is led, I talk with parents, I joke with them, and they also see that I am an approachable person. I am visible when I move around the school because some grade 7 learners bunk classes, so I move around the school, I check the toilets to see if there are no learners who stay there and bunk classes. I am not an office person. I am visible to the learners; I talk to them, and we laugh even when it comes to cultural events. Also, I help them with cultural songs, that it is where they get to know me. I always tell my teachers that a principal is like a man with many wives, all of them want love. The teachers, community and learners all want love from a principal

PRS had this to say about how she makes herself visible in a school in order to better the results of the learners:

It is so important to be visible at all times, even if you can be at school for few hours because, if you are a principal who is always away from school, the teachers will take advantage of that. So being at school does not mean you have to be at the office, you have to move around the school. You have to be visible just to monitor the work and to ensure that all systems are in order.

Further, PJS commented on school principals' visibility to improve learners' results, and this is what he said:

The school principal is the first citizen of the school, so I come early, and I will be the last one to leave and it should be like that. I take rounds during the teaching time, and I am teaching when I am free, I move around.

My engagement with the participants on ways to achieve instructional leadership has prompted them to mention embracing cultural diversity as another function to be utilized to improve the results in a school. PES had this to say about embracing cultural diversity:

Because we reside here at Umlazi, the diversity is not so much, however, there is a difference in terms of religion. All members of staff are Christians; therefore the assembly is addressed the Christian way. The motto in the 'Coat of arms' says we are united in diversity. We all belong to one country of South Africa. Even if it is Cultural Day, we allow learners to wear according to their own cultures, for example, Zulu speaking wear Zulu attire, we eat different kinds of food.

Moving forward, this is what PAS said about embracing cultural diversity as a way of improving the results:

I have two white kids in the school, I treat them the same as Black learners. The treatment is equally the same

PRS remarked about embracing cultural diversity in her school to improve the results of the learners and this is what she said:

My case is different from others because we have one culture in our school, we are all Zulu people, Blacks only

In a similar way, both PJS and PSS reported that their schools are dominated by Zulu learners, and this is what they said on how they embrace cultural diversity to improve learners' academic results:

We do not have challenges about culture because we almost have the same culture and that is a Zulu culture.

We are a monoculture school and that is a Zulu culture.

Another important function to discuss is ensuring tolerance in a school as a way of increasing the academic performance of the learners. This is what PES said about ensuring tolerance in his school

One of the things I preach to educators is that we should be able to tolerate one another. We are in a workplace, and we are different, so we need to try and tolerate one another. It is important and that is what I preach.

Upon further engagement with PAS on how she ensured tolerance in her school to improve the performance, she talked about maturity in her teachers, and this is what she said:

Most of my teachers are not young, they are matured, the elders are treating the young ones as their own kids. So, they tolerate each other, young teachers respect the elder teachers

PRS focused on respect as a key function concerning ensuring tolerance in a school and this is what she said:

We just respect one another; we listen to one another, and we are good about it

Similarly, PJS and PSS shared the same sentiment with PRS concerning respect and this is what they said about ensuring tolerance in a school as a way of improving performance:

We respect other people's cultures and religions

By ensuring tolerance, we respect one another, and I think we do respect one another.

A number of factors were raised by the participants on ways to achieve instructional leadership in their schools. Amongst the things they raised is that a school principal as an organisational leader is expected to carefully manage the school's operational budget. PES commented on the involvement of relevant stakeholders, and this is what he said:

I involve the relevant stakeholders which is myself, the SGB and members of the SMT in school budget. As an accounting officer I make sure that I do not spend money anyhow, the budget that we have is approved by the SGB and the parents. My role is effective in that way

On further engagement with PAS, she commented on the challenges she comes across with in managing the school's operational budget and she said:

This is a little bit challenging because I am doing financial management now, something I have never done in my times of schooling. One needs to be able to be a fulltime learner, let me say, I am the principal, but I am going to be taught by an admin clerk a financial management, I need to prepare to be a learner, even when I am going to be taught by someone who is under my leadership, I need to respect him or her and learn.

Further probing with PAS elicited the following response about the school's budget:

I keep the receipts for whatever I am doing with the school money, and it is very important to keep receipts. They should be a backup for the treasury of the SGB. Even if you want to buy something for the school, you sit with the SGB and explain everything you want to do with the school money

This is how PRS viewed her role in financial management, when she said:

Right now, my management in financial matters is good. You know in this department no one taught me how to manage the finances of the school, they just threw me in the deep pool; I had to swim by myself but now I am familiar with everything that has to do with finance because I try my best to network with the experienced principals. I also invited my auditor to equip me on what to do in such challenges but normally the department does nothing when you are newly appointed as a principal. They are so quick to come and assess and inspect about the financial matters, but they do not even equip us on what to do and not to do.

PJS further reflected on the management of the school's operational budget:

It is a key one in terms of finance committee because we are expected to draft budget from the SGB and the SMT and educators should bring their input. After it has been drafted, it must go back to educators to see what things for the incoming year we are going to buy. We budget through the paper and the money that we are going to receive. We must involve all the structures when we plan or make a budget, and we must tell them how much we have received.

PSS mentioned attending financial workshops as a way of managing the school's operational budget and this is what he based his argument on:

When it comes to finance, the accounting officer is the principal but somehow, we need to attend financial workshops so that the SGB and finance committee will understand the functions and responsibilities of different members in the finance committee.

Another function to look at is ensuring the recruitment and retention of quality staff as a way of improving the academic performance of the learners. To do that, PES reported that:

Every principal likes having a good teacher, who specialises in his/her subject, who does it very well and produces good results. But things have changed, there is an online application (OA) that allows those qualified teachers to put their credentials on. They get a call and are asked to report to a particular school the next day. That is how they get employed.

Moving forward, PAS had this to say about the recruitment and retention of quality staff as a way of improving learners' performance:

Most of the time the teachers are brought by the department through the database system. The school does not have any say any more about recruitment. To keep my teachers, I encourage them to develop themselves academically.

In a similar way, both PRS and PSS had this to report about the recruitment and retention of quality staff

I do not have a say in the recruitment of the staff because these teacher unions, whenever there is a post for an educator or promotional post, we have to invite them, for example, unions like NATU and SADTU. Even if I might like to have a teacher from another school that I know that he/she is an excellent teacher, I cannot share with each and every person in the panel, they will say I am biased. So, I cannot recruit as a principal.

I do not do recruitments, who does the recruitments is the department at circuit level.

Further, another function to look at is how conflict management can contribute positively to the improvement of learners' academic work. With regards to that, this is what PES said

There are conflicts, for examples, amongst the learners and of course amongst the teachers. As I told you earlier, mostly, I have female teachers, you know how it is like in a place full of females??? The conflict is very rife! I call the teachers, sit them down in establishing the problem. I talk sense to them and try to hear all sides of the stories

to see who could be right or wrong. Then it is up to the person who is wrong to apologise and say "I am sorry".

Regarding PAS, this is what she said about how she manages conflict in her school as a way of improving performance amongst learners:

There are conflicts, if it is a personal conflict, I give advice, but I am not sure if it will work or not. We are a praying school, I always tell them if we fight God runs away and whatever wrong I do it will drop down to teachers and whatever wrong teachers do, it will drop down to learners. So let us pray for peace at school and the children will look up to us.

PRS had this to say about conflict she comes across with and how she manages it:

The conflict that I come across is the conflict whereby a teacher is confronted by a parent where a teacher did corporal punishment to the child. So, such conflicts are common to the school, when I try to solve them as a principal, I become the department official and the policy on corporal punishment says corporal punishment is not allowed in schools. I ask a teacher to apologize to the parent and the teacher will say I am taking the side of the parent. In such a conflict, I am not involved

PJS raised the issue that conflict is part of the school, and this is what he said to manage it:

Conflict is part of the school but if we do have conflict, we normally manage it, for example, if a teacher wants to move from grade 1 to grade R but in grade R there is a teacher who does not want to move to grade 1. Those are minor conflicts that we have.

PSS reported on the issue of dangerous weapons brought by learners, and this is what he said on how he manages it:

There are learners who come to school with dangerous weapons and those who fight. I have to be a mediator and make sure that I bring peace.

Further, school principals are expected to communicate with stakeholders regularly and efficiently and see how that can lead to the improvement of learners' academic work. Concerning this aspect, this is what PES raised:

It is important to communicate regularly by way of holding meetings, sometimes I call a stand-up meeting or write a circular. If it is a one-way communication, I write a circular where teachers will have to read and sign. Sometimes I communicate using a

WhatsApp or write letters, especially to members of the SGB and WhatsApp if it is something of an emergency as well. In this way, communication is effective.

PAS indicated how she communicates with stakeholders, and she raised meetings as one of the channels she uses. This is what she said:

I communicate with stakeholders through meetings, we have grades, phase and staff meetings. Sometimes we go out as staff we talk about everything. Communication is very effective.

Likewise, PRS reported on letter writing to make communication effective and this is what she said:

I write letters to parents and SGB members. I communicate with them through WhatsApp groups and I also have WhatsApp groups with learners and parents. Also, I have WhatsApp group with my departmental officials where I communicate with our circuit manager, Mr X. When I communicate with businesspeople, I write emails, letters and I also use phone calls.

Similarly, PJS remarked on the formation of WhatsApp for effective communication and he said:

I do have a WhatsApp group with the SGB and the school is close to a government clinic down the road. The clinic is part of the stakeholder we are in partnership with, so if there is illness in the school, we communicate with them through WhatsApp.

PSS had this to share about effective communication with other stakeholders to improve the performance:

I have SMT meetings with all the members that take place every Mondays on fortnight basis. It is in this meeting that we pre-plan for the next coming staff meeting. There are monthly meetings that I hold with the members of the SGB concerning school finances. Also, I hold quarterly meetings with the SGB and the parents at large, updating and giving them feedback on the school activities for that particular term/quarter.

Moreover, the study also looks at how complying with policies and directives can lead to positive results. Upon discussing further with the participants how important it is to comply with policies, this is what PES said:

It is important to follow policies because schools are institutions that you cannot run by your discretion. Sometimes discretion comes in a hierarchy of things, but policies will never lead you astray. They are so many if I can tell you, for example, there is admission policy, finance policy, HIV/Aids policy, leave policy, safety and security and so forth. Everything you do will necessitate that you use a policy not your discretion. The policy will never deviate unless there is an addendum.

PAS touched on complying with policies and directives and she reported that:

It is very important because you can give directives to teachers, but if it is not based on policies, there will be problems. If we follow policies, everybody must have a copy on his or her file.

Also, PRS raised another important issue about complying with policies and directives and said:

It is very important because as the principal I cannot monitor the school using my common sense, I stick to the policies because policies will never get you lost, they give directions at all times.

PJS compared policies and directives with the Bible and had this to share:

It is very important because policies are just like the Bible, you cannot do anything without strictly following the policies of the government. When you come to school there is attendance register and time book that you must sign. We are guided by the policies of the department.

Further, PSS reported on complying with policies and directives as a way of improving performance and this is what he said:

It is very important to discuss policies because policies are the guiding pillars that we need to follow. Firstly, we unpack them so as to get a clear picture and understanding of what it means and what its intention is. Thereafter, policies need to be implemented. Sometimes policies indicate when to start and finish teaching, following the time allocated for each and every subject in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) document. Therefore, policies provide daily guidance to schools.

In addition, school principals are expected to establish implementable management systems and see how this can impact positively on the academic performance of learners. Concerning management functions, this is what PES said:

The management functions make management a lot easier. Planning is very important, there is short-term planning and long-term planning. You plan and control what you planned. The school cannot be effective if you disregard these functions.

PAS talked on the importance of establishing implementable management functions and she reported that:

They are very important that's why there are different committees in the school to plan and organise school activities. Also, I am always there in the committees when they meet, so that I hear their decisions.

Moving forward, this is what PRS raised concerning implementable management functions:

They are very important, by management functions, I think you mean planning functions, organising functions, holding meetings and monitoring also. All these functions are very important, and we plan together and I coordinate what has been planned, we delegate our duties, for example, I delegate to my deputy, my deputy delegates to the HOD's, the HOD delegate to master teachers. So, what has been delegated has be to coordinate because at the end we monitor what has been delegated and at the end we praise and criticize positively, we aim at developing each other.

Further, PJS had this to share about implementable management functions and this is what he said:

They are very important because without these functions you cannot control the school so it a nucleus of the running of the school. You plan and control what you planned. The school cannot be effective if you disregard these functions.

Moreover, PSS commented on establishing implementable management functions and this is what he shared:

Management functions are very important because they determine the kind of an institution one is leading. Also, they clarify the climate and the culture of the school. For example, planning is important because you cannot work without a plan, though it differs, hence there are daily and weekly plans. Organising is also a management

function that is very important. Organising structures the work accordingly. Staffing is also important, where people are placed depending on the qualifications and experiences they have. After staffing people, they need to be led and monitored to find out whether they are able to execute any course of action.

On top of establishing implementable management systems, school principals are expected to promote the interests of all learners and staff and see how this can impact in a positive way regarding the academic performance of learners. To comply with this function, PES had this to say:

There is an Act in South African School's Act (SASA) document that learners' rights should not be interfered with. Therefore, teachers should make sure that whatever they do should be in the interest of the learners because they have more rights than any person. For example, learners are registered even without their birth certificates. Also, there are many ways to arouse the interest of the learners, that is, take learners out for excursion so that they learn in a different environment, rather than finding themselves in a classroom situation all the time. You know, we as teachers must always "think outside the box". Involve them throughout the lesson. Learners do not want to/ like to learn. Teach them the way they want to be taught.

PAS commented on visiting classes to promote the interest of learners and bringing about improvement in learners' results and this is what she said:

I visit classes and I ask learners what they want to see happening in their school. They mention a number of things, for example, they say they like excursion, school trips, and so forth. You find things that learners like because at the end of the day they must enjoy at school.

Upon engaging further with the participants on how to promote the interest of learners, PRS had this to share:

Sometimes I find it difficult because as a principal you are not used to get to classes but fortunately, I am teaching one class in grade 6, and I can feel that learners want something else like sports things. I see learners when we have events in a school like when we celebrate Valentine's Day, they shine and become happy. They like extracurricular activities.

PJS remarked like this to promote learners' interest and said:

We are dealing with young kids so every time I go to them, I must be in a position to promote the learning culture, that is my duty to do so. If I go to them and there is no teacher in class, then my duty is to inform them about the advantages of coming to school and learn.

PSS made the following comments about promoting the interest of learners:

My school is a primary school which starts from Grade RR to Grade seven, so to have the interest of the learners at all times, I go down to their level. By this I mean their level of communication and understanding and ensure that I do not get irritated immediately because they are young. With them everything is about playing.

Lastly, school principals are expected to promote teacher wellness and professionalism and see how that can yield positive results on learners' academic work. This is what PES reported on:

Teachers are no longer professionals; however, I visit their job descriptions, revisiting the code of ethics, read and emphasize these codes on a regular basis.

PAS remarked about teacher wellness and professionalism, and this is what she said:

I do not want teachers and learners to come to school if they are sick, I always tell them to take care of themselves. Also, they should not spread the disease, so coming to school should be forbidden.

PRS reported that she leads through policies to promote teacher wellness and professionalism and this is the comment she raised:

I lead through the policies; we share the policies with teachers. I always tell them that if they do not understand something they must come to my office and ask me, so that I will know what needs to be done. My office is always open, they know.

This is how PJS commented on regarding teacher wellness and professionalism

Professionalism is one of the core businesses of the school. As educators, our behaviour must tell that we are professionals and the way we talk to others in a school must show the practice of professionalism and we must respect the views of others.

Moreover, PSS reported on teacher wellness and professionalism, and this is what he said:

Somehow, we are lacking on that one, however, we do read SACE principles so as to remind ourselves about how we should behave. Also, all of us should respect one another and treat one another as equals.

In as far as instructional leadership is concerned, what I find is that in some instances there was a strong connection between practice and policy, whereas in other instances, the connection was rather lukewarm or weak. According to the policy on school principalship, school principals as instructional leaders are expected to improve learners' academic performance. However, for improving learners' academic results, there is a combination of factors that make it difficult to see a close connection between practice and policy, hence the study looks at the identification of those gaps and what it is that can be done to close them.

Regarding the improvement of learners' academic performance, some school principals still remind their teachers to go to class and teach to ensure that no time is lost. The policy that is scrutinized requires school principals as heads of schools to manage quality teaching and learning and to be accountable about that. However, looking at the teachers, they are so relaxed and wanted to be pushed to bring about positive results in their learners' work. Therefore, school principals do their best to encourage teachers and give them support. This is because school principals' work is developmental in nature, because they are expected to develop staff for good results to be yielded. The fulfilment of this expectation is seen in some schools by the issuing of certificates to learners to show good performance. This, in other schools, is accompanied by trophies and awards, also for acknowledging learners' good results. In this regard, I see a lukewarm connection between policy and practice.

Moving forward, regarding teamwork, the policy under scrutiny requires school principals to support teamwork. Regarding the practice of teamwork, the targeted school principals argue that they held SMT and staff meetings frequently in their schools. There were also staff development meetings, also held frequently and most school principals had made it a norm that a week did not pass by without a meeting being held in their schools. What I find here, is that there are collaborative practices that school principals implement with their SMTs as well as the teachers. This shows some kind of willingness to work together with others to improve learners' results. Regarding this, the interface between policy and practice seems to be strong.

Also, the policy under scrutiny requires school principals to be transparent. Looking at the practical aspect of transparency, most of the interviewed school principals were open about the financial matters of their schools. They ensured that they did not work alone but in the presence

of their SGBs. They gave feedback of attended meetings to their teachers; they were open about the employment of teachers as well as the PPN declaration. The findings here reveal some kind of understanding and engagement between school principals and other stakeholders like the SGB. This is a sign of good leadership displayed by school principals and regarding the interface, it is strong. Further, I see a strong interface between policy and practice when it comes to the visibility of school principals. The policy requires school principals to be visible in and outside the school. Therefore, the targeted school principals reported that they took some rounds in schools by moving around the verandas, they came early and were the last to leave and they ensured that the school was led by being present for most of the days. In that regard, I see dedication and commitment of school principals towards their positions.

Further, the policy under scrutiny requires school principals to embrace cultural diversity. As far as the practical aspect is concerned, all the targeted schools were monocultural, making it difficult to see diversity in cultures. Nonetheless, there was one school principal who ensured that cultural diversity was embraced because she had two white learners in her school and was giving them the same treatment as the one given to black learners. From what I see, I find a lack or limited understanding of different cultures by school principals. It is only one culture that school principals had an understanding of because it dominated in all the targeted schools. Based on this information, I do not see the implementation of the policy effectively.

Moreover, as far as the school budget is concerned, there was no training offered to school principals, they survived by using their own discretions. However, regarding the policy, school principals are expected to carefully manage the school's operational budget. Regarding this, there is limited understanding of the school budget.

In addition, the policy under scrutiny requires school principals to comply with policies. I say this because in most of their arguments around this, they reported that they did what the DBE stipulated in circulars, documents and letters. For example, as far as teaching is concerned, school principals encouraged teachers to teach following the ATPs and to assess following the Programme of Assessment (POA). With circulars, they communicated with teachers by holding meetings and writing for further discussions. Some school principals created WhatsApp groups with their teachers, also for communication. Therefore, I see recognition and awareness of important documents from the DoBE and good leadership from school principals.

However, for directives, most school principals reported the inhibiting factors that made them to be ineffective. For example, some of them commented on the issue of teacher union meetings

and how they affected the school negatively during teaching and learning time. They raised the idea that teachers went to union meetings when they wished, no matter what time of the day it was. If teachers decided to put everything on hold and stopped working, they did so freely without recognising the directives from above (DBE). Here, the findings reveal poor management of time and a lack of leadership by school principals.

It is required by the policy that school principals recruit and retain quality staff. Regarding this, the gap is huge because school principals no longer recruit teachers, instead the DBE relies on online applications. This exclusion of school principals will have a negative impact on the learners' results, leading to failure to achieve school goals. The findings here reveal exclusion and a lack of engagement between school principals and the DBE officials.

For managing conflict, school principals are failing because in most schools, conflict is still rife, making it difficult to achieve good results in learners' academic work. This is a result of poor or bad management by school principals.

Further, school principals are expected to implement all the management systems. If not, that will impact negatively on learners' results. However, almost all school principals regarded planning as the most important. The findings reveal limited understanding of other functions and is a sign of poor management.

Moreover, school principals are expected to promote the interest of learners and staff in a school. This is lacking when it comes to staff because practically, only the interest of the learners is taken care of. The findings reveal a lack of support from teachers by school principals and is a sign that leadership is lacking.

To conclude, some school principals are good instructional leaders whereas others are not. This implies that in a school where a school principal portrays good leadership skills, learners' results show some kind of improvement.

5.5 THEME 3: MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Under this theme, which I engaged participants in, include managing the school as an organisation, managing human resources in the school as well as managing and advocating extramural activities.

Below is a discussion of each key area.

5.5.1 Managing the school as an organisation

Regarding my further engagement with the participants, I asked them to share with me how they managed schools as an organisation. From a number of responses given, they reported on a number of issues, for example, they reported that they continuously strived for improved organisational structures and functions. Besides this, they reported that they deployed resources equitably and maximized their use. Further, overseeing curriculum implementation, managing South African School Administration and Management System (SASAMS) as well as knowledge of technology were some of the key requirements that they reported. This study sought to understand how school principals went about managing their schools as organisations.

Under this section, I asked the participants how they experienced the functioning of structures like the SMT and SGB and how they wished to improve. From a number of responses received, PES reported on a good working relationship between himself and the SMT and this is what he said:

As I previously stated, the relationship is good, it is myself and one Departmental Head only. We respect each other and we work together nicely to develop both the school and teachers for the benefit of the learners.

However, to ensure that the relationship stays like this, this is what I do:

I have developed a policy of not allowing calls on a weekend, if any staff member calls me on a weekend, I simply reject that call.

In addition to this, PES reported on how his relationship with the SGB was like and he said:

Also, with the SGB, the relationship I have with them is good, we understand one another. We work nicely to uplift the name of the school. SGB respects me

Moving forward, this is what PAS reported as her experiences with working with the SMT:

It is very good because every idea a person has in mind, that is going to benefit the school is put on the table and we discuss it. We meet once a week with the SMT to discuss important matters concerning the school and we respect one another during discussions.

I asked PAS further as to what she did to keep the relationship with her SMT the same and this is what she reported on:

When I face a challenge and if I see that it is hard to come up with a solution, I contact other school principals to check how they attend to that challenge in their schools. I network with other principals because they might have a good solution to what is challenging me.

With the SGB, my experiences are not that good because of their work constraints, and this is what she said:

The relationship I have with the SGB is somehow good though sometimes it is difficult to get hold of them due to work constraints, making it difficult to reach consensus sometimes.

Further, I asked PAS about what can be done to improve their working relations with them, and she reported that:

With regards to that, we then decided on creating WhatsApp groups for further communication. We also do Zoom meetings because, luckily, all of us have laptops and are computer literate, so communication between us is a requisite.

Upon further engagements with my participants, I asked PRS as to what her experiences with the SMT were like and she reported on a number of negative issues like jealousy amongst other things. This was her response:

The working relationship with the SMT is not good at all, initially it was good but now I do not know what went wrong. The DP is jealous of my post, and she is a very bad influence. It is not nice to work with her at all. She sides with the teachers more than with me. She does not support me at all and wants me out of my post. SMT members are giving me a hard time, I trusted them but not anymore. They do not co-operate, sometimes they are not committed, and they do not lead teachers by good examples. There is one HOD who is loyal to me, but others are giving me the hard time including the Deputy Principal

I then asked PRS as to what she was willing to do to improve it and she reported that:

My personality plays a major role in such challenges. I do have challenges in the school, but someone can say I am a strong person because of my traits. I do not hold grudges with school staff, we are here as a family. I know that we are here to work but we have

to live as a family. Also, my circuit manager is very supportive when I have challenges, I report to him, and he attends to the matter.

Regarding PRS experiences with the SGB, she reported that there existed an element of respect amongst them, and this is what she said:

With the SGB, the relationship is perfect, those people respect me as a school principal. They are so supportive to me, teachers and the learners. They even go an extra mile and render voluntary services to the school doing cleaning of school yard and classrooms at no cost. They commit themselves into painting school walls, attending to school plumbing and so forth. I remember last year (2023) they offered their 67 minutes for Mandela Day just doing painting at school free of charge. They put an eye in the school during school holidays. We interact perfectly, I prefer them more than the DP and teachers.

Further, PJS commented on how he experienced working with the SMT and he reported on a lack of progress amongst other things:

With the SMT, we try to be good and to work hard because the DBE expects us to do so, but there are more conflicting ideas and there is no way forward. For the past years before I became a school principal, it was exciting and pleasant because it was made up of people who wanted to learn but now it comprises people who are hungry for positions. There are more disagreements than agreements. It is not nice at all.

However, to improve the relationship with the SMT, this is what PJS reported:

As a principal, you must be above the challenges because they will always be there, but you must act professionally and look beyond them. One should have all the structures involved to solve problems, for example, SMT, SGB and sometimes, call the Circuit Manager. You are not working alone; you work with all these structures and mine is to facilitate meetings.

Probing further, I asked PJS how he experienced working with the SGB and that is how he responded:

To answer your question, what I have noticed is that parents come and go, so are the SGB members. However, with the current SGB, we are working so smoothly because they are behind and supporting the school all the time. For example, they assist in

cleaning the school and classrooms, they painted the two Grade R classrooms using different coloured paints free of charge. They keep an eye to our school during weekends and holidays so that there is no burglary taking place

Moreover, PSS described his working relationship with the SMT as full of unhappiness and conflict and this is how he commented:

I am not happy with the SMT but with the SGB, everything is fine. However, for the SMT, sometimes there are a lot of conflicts, so it is not that good. There is this one DH who does things her way and does not want to be told. She dodges classes and does not care about learners at all. Also, with the SMT, there is one DH who does not listen to my instructions and is not supportive towards the team at all.

Probing further, I asked PSS about the plans he had in mind to improve his relationship with the SMT, and this is what he reported:

With the SMT, there are manageable challenges caused by one person, but I am able to attend to that. Why I say this is because as SMT personnel, we should be leading the school, calling for our relationship to be good at all costs.

However, with SGB, things are different as the relationship is good and supportive. This is what PSS said regarding that:

With the SGB, there exists a good relationship between myself and its personnel. Those people are so supporting, they assist by providing cleaning material for the school at no cost, they provide plastic plates and spoons to be used by learners during break and they are the first one to come to school if there is burglary. My relationship with them is honestly good.

To ensure that the relationship stays the same, this is what PSS said:

Fortunately, with the SGB, I have never experienced any challenges. The working relationship is always good.

My continued involvement with the participants led to the development of other functions, which amongst others require school principals to equitably deploy resources and maximise their use. The question that arises is what key practices school principals used to ensure an equitable environment for all learners. Looking at the excerpts, PES commented on the resources to be used by the learners and said:

The resources to be utilized by the learners, for example, textbooks become theirs for the whole year but if learners lose them, parents need to pay.

Moving forward, PAS shared her sentiment and reported how she took from her pocket to ensure that learners were fed, and this is what she said:

What happened today was that the supplier employed by the Department did not deliver food at school, leaving learners hungry. Some of these learners only eat at school, so I took out the money from my pocket and I bought some of the things that are short in the kitchen because not all of them carry the lunch boxes. This was to make sure that all learners have something to eat for the day.

PRS also reported on the issue of the library that her school has, and this is what she said as the key practices to ensure an equitable environment for all learners:

In my school there is a library. There are many resources suitable for all the phases in a school. For example, in the foundation phase, especially in Grade RR, Grade R and Grade One, there are corner libraries which learners use to seek books that are suitable for their ages, for example, books full of pictures. The responsibility of the class teacher is to make sure that learners take turns in visiting the library and in reading. For intermediate phase, we have mobile library that we obtained from Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA), learners use it.

Furthermore, PJS touched on the issue of textbooks as the key practice to ensure an equitably environment for all learners:

When it comes to resources, we have done our best to ensure that each learner has all the necessary textbooks. Furthermore, with the stationery that we have supply of from the DBE, we give the exercise books to the learners.

Moreover, PSS reported on the needs of a particular phase and this was his argument:

It depends on what is required by each component or structure because phases are not the same. For example, in the Foundation Phase, the needs are not as much as on the higher phases. Therefore, everything depends on the needs of a particular phase.

Another function to look at is overseeing curriculum implementation. This is one of the expectations a school principal should comply with, according to the policy on South African

school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b). However, there are factors that affect the implementation of the curriculum. PES reported on the issue of the Unions and said:

There are factors outside and inside the school. For example, attending to Union matters, teachers being called by their unions at awkward times, that is, during the teaching time. There are also other minor issues, when teachers are called during teaching time for important meetings like standing meetings.

PAS touched on a lack of resources as the factors that affect the implementation of the curriculum, and this is what she said:

There is a lack of resources at school and a lack of support from the leaders of the Department of Education.

PRS raised the issue of absenteeism of teachers as one of the factors affecting the implementation of the curriculum and this is how her comments sounded like:

Absenteeism of teachers and learners is one of the factors. Also, the internal politics and gossip of teachers negatively affect the curriculum implementation.

Furthermore, this was PJS' report on a lack of resources:

Basically, if the resources are not there, definitely curriculum will not function accordingly. In our case, we do have resources, but they are not that enough, for example, laptops, because other teachers want to project their lessons using laptops. Therefore, shortage of resources affects the implementation of the curriculum.

Moreover, PSS added his views and commented on improper staffing of educators and said:

It is improper staffing of educators which is not in accordance with the qualifications of that person. For example, the teacher might have measured in Literacy but finds him/herself teaching Mathematics. Also, a teacher might be qualified to teach in higher classes but because of shortages in employment, a teacher takes the job in the lower classes, thinking that everything will be easy. In addition to this, a teacher who is not Zulu speaking finds him/herself teaching that language to Xhosa learners, for example. I am not a Zulu person, but I teach isiZulu.

In addition to overseeing curriculum implementation, managing the school as an organisation involves management of South African School Administration and Management System

(SASAMS). Regarding this issue, I asked the participants on how successful they had been in managing SASAMS and this is what PES reported on:

I am not very successful with SASAMS. When it was introduced, it was to be used by the Administration clerks only. However, I am told that teachers can enter marks for themselves without the Admin clerk. It is very important to have a principal who is willing to learn, otherwise one can have a problem with the usage of this SASAMS. It is us as principals of schools to use this SASAMS more often, even the school timetable can be done using this facility. This is a new innovation; it needs somebody who has love for exploring new things.

Moving forward, PAS regarded her Admin clerk as very successful, and she had this to say:

Fortunately for me my Admin clerk is very good, she does her work, and she knows her story. We work hand in hand, and she teaches me everything, when she is not available, I do SASAMS on my own because she taught me. The challenge with SASAMS is small, it is Technology because I was born before Technology, but my Admin clerk is teaching me well.

Similarly, PRS reported on how successful her admin clerk had been, and this was her remarks:

My admin knows everything about SASAMS and even myself as a principal, I know how to do things in SASAMS. Even the teachers have been workshopped about SASAMS though there are some who are still struggling but most of them in my school know how to make use of SASAMS.

PJS regarded teachers as curriculum managers, and he had this to say about the management of SASAMS and reported that:

At one stage we had a workshop for all educators on how to use SASAMS because we regarded teachers as curriculum managers. In the SASAMS, we are expected to capture all the formal assessments. We had a workshop where we workshop all the teachers about capturing of marks on the SASAMS but now they are used to. We even purchased a number of laptops and in each phase, there are 2 laptops. It was a struggle at first and I told educators that the admin clerk is not responsible for capturing of marks but is there to assist us, only educators are responsible.

Added to what PJS reported on, PSS argue that his success depended on the person who is capturing data, and this was his comments:

Most of the time I have to look at the person who is capturing data whether s/he is capturing it at the right time. I do check what has been done, how far it has been done, and I recommend the printing of the reports. The problem which I consider minor starts when teachers delay the submission of marks for various reasons.

According to the policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b), school principals are required to have knowledge of Technology. This is another function that school principals are expected to implement to manage schools as organisations. The study looks at how school principals promote knowledge of computer literacy amongst teachers and learners to bring about improvement in a school. In this regard, PES commented on a lack of safety and security, and this is what he said:

Teachers can prepare their Test papers on a laptop, they can access internet, they can download papers, and they can save papers using their USBs, by so doing I am encouraging them to be computer literate. The problem with this school is safety and security, otherwise, I would have asked learners to bring their laptops or tablets. What was done by hand can now be typed on a laptop.

PAS reported on a number of laptops that were donated as a way of promoting knowledge of computer literacy amongst teachers and learners:

As I am speaking, we have 10 laptops that are donated by Hilltop company (pseudonym). I said to teachers that I am going to put SASAMS to all these laptops so that when it is time to put marks on them, everybody will do it instead of relying on the Admin clerk. What the Admin clerk can do is to print reports because every teacher will put marks on SASAMS this will make her work easy. My learners are not computer literate, this means that I need to get a computer room and more computers in the school. We need a Strong Room where we can keep them after the lesson, and we also need a qualified teacher who has computer skills to teach learners.

Regarding PRS, she commented on the issue of computer laboratory and said:

We have a computer laboratory in the school but it is not functional, but we do have computers. We promote everyone to be computer literate and most of my teachers are

computer literate. They do have their laptops that they make use of during lesson preparations. Marks are put in SASAMS which is computerised, and we ensure that each and every educator is capable to do the basic things in the computer.

Inversely, PJS suggested that schools should have laptop rooms so that knowledge of computer literacy can be promoted, and this is what he said:

For teachers it is better now as I indicated early that we have purchased the laptops, almost 8 laptops but the challenge is on the side of the learners I think we are struggling on that one. We need more laptops, and we need a room for laptops.

For PSS, the idea of teachers buying their own laptops and to attend classes to promote knowledge of computer literacy amongst teachers in his school was paramount:

In my school, we do not have sufficient computers or laptops to use when teaching. I encourage teachers to buy themselves their own and also attend classes so that they become literate in them.

Looking at the above excerpts on managing the school as an organisation, improving the performance of structures and functions is a key requirement. The idea that school principals network with others to improve schools, indicates the expected kind of relationship that school principals should have with other structures to improve learners' results. However, with the SMT, there is a poor connection because out of the five interviewed school principals, three of them reported that their relationship was not good at all, meaning most school principals did not see eye-to-eye with their SMTs. This is an indication that school principals cannot manage their SMTs, even though they are expected to work as a team. However, with the SGBs, school principals reported on a good working relationship, suggesting that school principals can manage their SGBs well.

I see a strong connection with the manner school principals deal with the challenges that come with performing their duties. This is because of the positive inputs they came up with to tackle the challenges. For example, they regarded themselves as professionals, they were always above the challenges, and they considered their personalities as playing a major role. Further, the policy that is explored requires school principals to equitably deploy resources and maximise their use. Regarding this, some school principals commented on making sure that every learner has a textbook that becomes his/hers throughout the year. Another school principal reported on taking money from her pocket to buy food to be eaten by every learner at

school. The findings reveal some kind of commitment by school principals and is a sign of good management of schools.

Moving forward, the explored policy requires school principals to oversee curriculum implementation. However, there are several factors that affect the implementation, making it difficult for school principals to achieve school goals. For example, the interviewed school principals reported on absenteeism of teachers, lack of resources and improper staffing of educators. All these, impacted negatively on the implementation of the curriculum. For example, if teachers are absent from school, there is no guarantee for teaching and learning to take place. What I find is poor management of schools by school principals.

Further, the policy that is explored requires school principals to manage SASAMS. In this regard, some school principals reported on being successful in SASAMS because of the assistance of their Administration clerks whereas others experienced challenges due to a lack of training. The lack of training can delay entering of learners' marks in the system and can have a negative bearing on the overall performance. In this regard, the findings reveal a lack of support of school principals by the DBE.

Moreover, as far as knowledge of technology is concerned, school principals are required to promote knowledge of computer literacy amongst teachers and learners. Results show that in some schools, teachers were literate whereas the learners were not. Also, in one school, there was a computer laboratory that was not functional. In another school, there were no sufficient laptops. This resulted in learners having no skill at all concerning usage of laptops. Based on this, I find that school principals had limited understanding of the importance of computers, resulting in most learners being illiterate. In addition to this, I find that there was lack of resources, hence, learners did not have any skill towards computer usage.

Further interrogation on what else school principals do other than managing schools as organisations, they reported on the management of human resources. Below is a discussion of this key area.

5.5.2 Managing human resources in school

Regarding my further engagement with the participants, I asked them to share with me how they went about managing human resources in the school. According to the policy framework on school principalship, school principals are expected to fill in the vacant posts, to ensure equitable workload, guide staff on labour issues, report all cases of misconduct and facilitate

regular parent-teacher meetings. The study sought to understand how school principals went about managing human resources in the school.

Under this section, I asked the participants how they went about filling in vacant posts. Regarding this, PES reported on informing the CM about any vacant positions and he said:

The DBE is dynamic when it comes to recruitments. For example, I tell my Circuit Manager if I have a vacancy in the school. We no longer have powers in our hands, they have been taken away. However, there are good teachers, but they are scarce.

PAS reported that there should be a flow in the classroom, and this is how she commented:

This is very important because there should be a flow in the classroom, for example, if there is a vacant post for a Mathematics teacher, I should employ a teacher who majored in Mathematics so that learners do not get confused, that is the flow I am talking about. For instance, if there is a vacant post in the Foundation Phase, I need a teacher who is qualified to teach in that phase. I cannot take someone who is qualified in FET phase because the foundation phase is dealing with children, we need someone who is trained to deal with them.

PRS commented on how educators are appointed to fill in vacant posts and this was her argument:

Here at school, we do not appoint educators that do not fit. I remember last time we were supposed to get eight educators because of our PPN that has increased, so they said that they are going to give surplus educators from other schools. We waited up until they sent us two educators from high school then I talked with them in my office, and I reminded them that this is a primary school we do not have specialization except in subjects that are crucial like Mathematics and English. I am very much sensitive about how we appoint educators because we appoint them according to their capabilities and qualifications.

Engaging further with my participants, PJS commented on liaising with his CM and said:

If there is a vacant post, we normally liaise with our Circuit Manager and he will escalate the matter to other bodies, so we wait for the response from the department.

In a similar way, PSS commented on liaising with the CM and how difficult it is to find teachers who can fill in the vacant posts. This is the issue he raised:

The subject that is a challenge is Mathematics; it is difficult to find teachers who can teach this subject in many schools. So, if there is a vacant post, I liaise with the Circuit Manager and prioritise Mathematics over all subjects.

Other than filling in of vacant posts, school principals are expected to ensure equitable workload when managing human resources in the school. This study sought to find out what strategies school principals employ to ensure equitable workload for all staff members. This was PES report about the placement of teachers:

There is no way we can have equal workload. Equitable, means someone can have 25 hours of teaching time, whereas someone can have 27. There is no way all of us can have equal numbers. Also, we do not place teachers according to what they are comfortable in but on what they have measured in.

PAS commented about PAM document and had this to say:

The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document gives us the hours that a teacher should have in the workload. The workload goes according to the major subjects.

PRS commented on how sensitive educators were when it came to allocation of workloads and had this to say:

Educators are so sensitive in allocation of workloads. This is treated as a sensitive issue because we have to balance them to give them equality. In most schools, the workload is drafted by the principal but in my school, I entrusted that responsibility to my deputy and my departmental heads. They come back to me, I look at it and if I approve it, it is distributed to the educators and most of the time it is equitable

Furthermore, PJS touched on the subjects with more workload and had this to say:

We are trying our best but there are subjects that have more workload because of the weighting like Mathematics, English and isiZulu but for other subjects, the weighting is much less. We explain this to the teachers that if you are teaching a language, maybe you will have 2 or 3 classes only. If you are teaching other subjects like Social Sciences and Life Skills, you should have more number of classes because your load is small when compared to Mathematics and Languages, so teachers understand that.

In addition, PSS commented on teachers who teach Numeracy or Literacy and reported that:

I make sure that a teacher who teaches Numeracy or Literacy focuses on those subjects only and not the content subjects. There are more hours allocated to Numeracy and Literacy than there are to content subjects. So, to strike a balance, that is how I operate.

Probing further with my participants, they mentioned guiding staff on labour issues as a requirement to manage human resources in the school. This study sought to understand who school principals consulted with in terms of post-provisioning norm of teachers. In that regard, PES reported that his CM is his priority:

It is my Circuit Manager (CM) that I speak to regarding that, however, if I am not happy with the PPN Certificate, my CM takes the matter up to the Human Resources, that is how I do things.

Moving forward, PAS reported that she had never been affected by PPN, and this is what she said:

I have never been affected by post-provisioning norm of teachers. As I said earlier, we are a small school, therefore the number of learners corresponds with the teachers that we have if we use the ratio of 1:40

PRS commented on the involvement of teacher unions around PPN matters and this is what she said:

We make use of unions and in my school a union that is dominating is SADTU, so we make use of SADTU because of the majority. Fortunately, there has not been a time where my school has to declare surplus educators, instead we are the recipients from other schools. In that way I can say we do not have any problems with PPN establishment.

Further, PJS regarded PPN as the baby of the department and reported that:

The PPN is the baby of the department once they have given us the PPN I have to explain to educators that we received the certificate, and it is showing how many educators are expected in a school.

Besides guiding staff on labour issues, the participants reported that school principals are expected to report all cases of misconduct. The study therefore sought to understand how school principals addressed the issue of disciplinary problems in schools. With that regard, PES commented on corporal punishment and had this to say:

If the teacher misbehaves or hit the child, that is corporal punishment which was banished long time ago. So, I call the teacher and sit him/her down and find out what the problem is

On top of this, PAS remarked on how she attended to learners who misbehaved and reported that:

With the learners I talk to them if they are fighting, at some point there was a learner who came with a knife and the security found that knife. When I asked him about the knife, he said there is someone who bullies him at school, that is why he comes with a knife. I called his parents, and they were shocked because he did not tell them about the one who bullies him, but we solved that matter and talked with his parents.

Probing further around addressing disciplinary problems, PRS commented on disciplinary committees and said:

There is a disciplinary committee that deals with cases. I get reports from disciplinary committee, and we do have policies on how to deal with different cases.

PJS relied more on protocols and reported that:

We follow protocols and we do have disciplinary procedures that we have explained to educators, for example, if you do not do this you will be called to disciplinary hearing by the SMT and that is where it starts. We start from the SMT and if there is a teacher that is giving us problems, we discuss it first with the SMT.

In addition to this, PSS believed in calling the involved parties and reported that:

I call the parties involved to come forward and address their side of the story. All sides must be known before a judgement is made as to who is at fault and who is not.

Facilitation of regular parent-teacher meetings is another function that the participants commented on. Regarding this function, the study sought to explore how school principals prepare when conducting a parent-teacher meeting. However, PES reported on learner performance and said:

What is important is to report on important matters like learner performance. For example, we issue academic reports to them quarterly. We also do statistical analysis per term where we say, out of so many learners who wrote, these are learners who passed, and these are those who did not. Feedback to parents is very important.

Moving forward, PAS regarded the SGB as the important stakeholder when preparing parentteacher meetings and said:

Parent-teacher meetings firstly should be known by SGB. So, there will be an SGB meeting where we meet and discuss all the issues that will be discussed with parents.

Also, PRS reported that meetings were scheduled according to phases in a school and said:

We prepare them in phases, before we planned to have two parent meetings in one day, but we discovered that two is impossible. We now have one, we plan it into phases, for example, the foundation phase has its day and the next day it will be the intermediate phase. So, we call parents on different dates in different phases and parents do turn out.

Furthermore, PJS commented about the importance of unpacking all the activities in a meeting and reported that:

We normally have our meetings with the SMT and then we unpack all the activities for the grades. Parents are expected to be at school to discuss about the assessments with the teachers and how the results are going to be issued to them when the term ends.

Moreover, PSS reported on consulting all the stakeholders and had this to say:

I consult with all the stakeholders through announcements made to staff and learners. I also issue letters to parents informing them of the date and time of the meeting.

Looking at the above responses on managing human resources in the school, the filling in of vacant posts in a school is a key requirement. However, school principals no longer have powers to fill in vacant posts, meaning they no longer appoint teachers. That responsibility has been shifted to the CMs. The findings in this case reveal some kind of exclusion of school principals by the DBE and is a sign of poor management.

Moving forward, for ensuring equitable workload amongst teachers, some school principals regarded the issue of equitable workload as sensitive and consulted PAM documents to ensure that they did things correctly. Others maintain that teachers who taught Numeracy and Literacy should focus on those subjects only because they both carried a lot of weighting. The findings here reveal an understanding of utilizing other sources of information for clarity as well as some kind of awareness regarding the importance of other subjects.

Upon guiding staff on labour issues, the concern was about who school principals consulted with, regarding PPN of teachers. As I mentioned earlier, school principals no longer implement

PPN processes, that is the responsibility of a CM working together with teacher Unions. The findings reveal a lack of engagement of school principals in staff establishment. This will affect negatively teaching and learning if, for example, the PPN drops, few teachers will be left to teach, and they will be loaded with more work. This will result in poor management of schools.

As far as addressing the issue of disciplinary problems is concerned, school principals were successful in doing that because they used structures like disciplinary committees to deal with any problems. They talked to learners who were fighting, they followed protocols and sometimes they called all parties involved in a problem. Findings reveal commitment and collaborative practices between school principals and school committees.

Further, the policy requires school principals to facilitate regular parent-teacher meetings. This was shown by regular meetings to discuss assessments and to report on learner performance, conducted in schools. These meetings were called in phases and sometimes, school principals made announcements to staff and learners for a particular meeting to take place. What I find is regular collaborative practice between school principals and parents and is a sign of good management.

In addition to managing human resources in the school, the participants reported on managing and advocating extramural activities in their schools. Below is a discussion of this key area.

5.5.3 Managing and advocating extramural activities

Upon further engagements with the participants, I asked them to share with me what it meant to manage and advocate extramural activities in a school. Regarding the afore-mentioned policy on school principalship, school principals are expected to enable the offering of extramural activities in a school. The study sought to understand how learners are encouraged to participate in extramural activities. From the responses given, PES reported on teaching through play and said:

We as a school are dealing with children, who by nature like to play. We teach them through play, however, in the foundation phase they role-play. When we teach, we make sure that the lesson has got some movements so that they do not get bored. Learners play, not even knowing that they are disturbing the teacher. During break time, they always come and ask for a soccer ball. PE needs to be included in the timetable so that all of them have a chance of playing.

Engaging with PAS, she commented on a cultural committee that was responsible for extramural activities and had this to say:

In school we have a cultural committee, I always tell teachers to encourage learners to participate in extramural activities because learners like sports. I communicate with the committee and the committee asks for things like provision for learners and also transport money.

Whilst on this function, PRS also shared her views and raised the issue of sports committee. This is what she said:

We do have a sports' committee whereby a chairperson motivates learners to ensure that they make use of sport codes, and they participate in sports. The Chairperson also motivates them to part take in sport clubs outside the school, like community soccer, netball and rugby.

Similarly, PSS made a comment on relevant structures like sports committee and said:

I allow this one to be handled by the relevant structures, that is, the Sports Committee. It must not interfere with the teaching and learning time, as the name suggests, it is extramural activities, meaning it must be extra, and it might not take time for teaching and learning.

Also, PJS reported on shortages of sports field and had this to say:

It is a challenge because we do not have a sport field at all, and we do not have a space. However, we do have Scouting, we have a team that is very active in scouting but all in all, the barrier is on our side because we do not have sufficient space. We do have football team, but we have to take to T-section there is a ground there.

Upon engaging further with the participants, they also mentioned the impact that extramural activities had on the workload of teachers. From the excerpts given, PES commented on the issue of discipline and said:

When children play, they become disciplined. If they do not play, they become unruly, I have noticed that in most schools where sport is not encouraged. A child who does well in sports will do well in class.

In addition, this is how PAS commented on teachers to give away some of their teaching time and said:

If there are extramural activities, it calls for teachers to give away some of their teaching time in school because we do not do extramural activities after school. The teachers will do extra classes and will tell learners, for example, we tell them that we can have a function at school, they must come early at 7 in the morning and learn so that we can have a time for a function, and they will come early in the morning excited.

Moving forward, PRS raised the issue about the impact that extramural activities have on the workload of teachers and said:

It does not have a bad impact because teachers volunteered to be sport members, of course some were elected because of their capabilities and interest so it does not have a negative impact in their workload. We train learners at 13h30 to 14h30.

Contrary to what PAS and PRS mentioned, this is what PJS reported on regarding educators who are complaining about these activities and said:

There are educators who are always complaining and who are taking part in these activities because they are doing so much and on the other side they must concentrate on teaching and learning. But we cannot minimize the workload because of these activities.

Be good as they are, there is a negative side to extramural activities due to factors that hinder the teaching of Physical education in schools. Based on this information, PES reported that they no longer make time for sports in his school, and this is what he said:

We no longer make time for sports at schools, Honourable Minister of Sports Mr Roy (pseudonym) once said, sports need to be revived in schools so that we have stars at an early age. During the olden days, sports were accommodated in the curriculum, unlike these days. These days we are focusing on academic work not extra mural.

PAS talked about a lack of facilities as factors that hinder the teaching of physical education and she reported that:

We do not have facilities in the school, we do not have a soccer field and netball court. If learners want to play netball, they train in other school. Physical education is a very big challenge in this school, but teachers are trying to do some of the things outside the classroom with learners.

PRS commented on the problem regarding the educators as the factors that affect the teaching of physical education and this is what she said:

The problem is with the educators, they are not physically fit to go outside and train learners because of their ages, sometimes illnesses.

PJS made his report on shortages of facilities, and this is what he reported on:

There is shortage of facilities, for example, proper playing grounds and shortage of sports kit.

Similarly, PSS commented on shortages of facilities and had this to say:

We have neither space nor sport facilities. Concerning infrastructure, we do have a small ground, but the facilities are not there. We do not have showers where learners can refresh after activities.

Finally, the participants raised a significant point when they reported how learners' health improved through Physical Education (PE). Upon listening to their comments, PES reported that there were no sports in his school and said that:

There are no sports in our schools, that is why we have learners that are obese. Long ago, we were participating in all kinds of sports in our schools and we even had houses. Our kids have weight problems. Before, our kids used to play and those who were not playing would go to the stadium to support.

PAS commented on the importance of a healthy mind on a healthy body and argue that:

I tell teachers that physical education needs to be done because a healthy mind makes a healthy body.

PRS talked about how body movements can improve learners' health through physical education, and this is what she reported on:

I think it has improved because moving your body helps a lot in fitness and human digestive system.

PJS made his remarks and reported on educators who exercised with the learners. This was his remark:

I have seen educators during PE doing exercises with the learners.

PSS concluded around the importance of learners moving their bodies and said:

Learners get to know about their health and how to take good care of it. Also, they get to know about the importance of moving their bodies to do away with sicknesses.

Regarding the above information on managing and advocating extramural activities, the policy requires school principals to enable the offering of extramural activities. In this regard, school principals encouraged their teachers to teach learners through body movements and play. The findings reveal an awareness of sports in schools and how important it is for learners to keep fit. This is good management on the side of a school principal.

In the targeted schools, there were committees, for example, sports and cultural committees responsible for different sport codes to take place. However, due to financial constraints, the schools did not have proper sport fields and teachers had to rely on other means for survival. For example, sport teachers used an open area in the school and sometimes negotiated with neighbouring schools to use their sport fields, of course, in better conditions than theirs. The findings reveal a shortage of facilities, which indicate failure towards school management.

However, the offering of such activities impacted negatively on teachers' workload. Further, the offering of extramural activities can bring about improvement in learners' health. For example, there was improvement in learners' fitness and digestive system, ensuring that learners' health is taken care of. In addition, learners developed healthy minds which contributed to the achievement of good results. From what I see, findings reveal commitment into sports and is a sign of good management displayed by school principals.

To wrap up, in schools where school principals provided professional management, learners' academic results improve for the better, ensuring a connection between practice and policy.

5.6 THEME 4: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Regarding the policy on school principalship, school principals are expected to work with and for the community. This requires them to build collaborative relationships, ensure that school improvement and community development complement and to know ways of harnessing stakeholders. Each of these expectations are discussed below.

Starting with the expectation to build relationships, I sought to understand how the school principals in the study went about this. PES reported on working with parents and war veterans and this is what he said:

We work with the community and some parents who are SGB members. There are other structures, for example, war veterans who keep an eye to our school for safety purposes. They provide two security guards who watch our school at night. We also have three classrooms that are used by different churches to worship. Those churches pay rent every month and that money is for buying ink for the school copier. On top of that, we work with SANCO and CPF, who also help to safeguard our school. They keep an eye to school infra-structure. That is how the schools work with these organisations.

Moving forward, PAS had this to report as to how she related with the community members, and this is what she said:

Community members will ask for a class to worship at, and I will call the SGB and inform them. I believe in prayer so when they worship here, on Monday, I can feel God's spirit.

PRS reported on going out for team building with her SGB to show some kind of interaction and this is what she said:

We go out for team building with the SGB. I remember three years back we went to Port Bay (pseudonym), sometimes we do picnics and meet occasionally on Friday afternoons. The trip to Port Bay was nice and an informal outing though professional. Sometimes we group each other according to phases. DHs were also invited. That is how we collaborated to work as a team.

PJS reported on working with neighbouring clinics and said:

As a school entity you cannot work in isolation, we do collaborate with other stakeholders, in our case, we work with our neighbouring clinics. The nurses visit our school on monthly basis to vaccinate our learners. We also work with CPFs because they keep an eye to our school.

Upon engaging with the participants, I then asked them the kind of collaboration they built with their communities. Regarding this, PES reported on how his school became a meeting place for community activities and said:

People come and celebrate different activities in our school, for example, during Heritage Day, young girls would come and perform. If there is an announcement to be

made in the community, people gather in our school, that on its own shows collaboration with the community.

PAS reported on regular meetings held and said:

The school is next to Ward Councillor's office. People use the classrooms when they want to hold meetings called by the Councillor for important announcements. For example, how to fight crime in the community, water shortage, loadshedding and so forth.

Similarly, PSS reported on a set aside classroom for meetings and said:

There is one classroom that is set aside for meetings with the Ward Councillor and community pertaining to the safety of our school. This regards theft, child rape and house burglary.

PRS reported on soccer and netball matches her school usually held with the parents and said:

We have matches with parents' soccer and netball teams at the end of each term. Parents would compete with their children, so we had team A of learners and parents. Parents played against their children and learners won the games. Team B of teachers and parents playing against each other, and it was so enjoyable.

Regarding the activities held, PJS reported on working with neighbouring clinics and said:

We collaborate with neighbouring clinics and with the EThekweni Municipality. The clinic nurses come to our school to vaccinate the learners against diseases. Also, there is Mr Bean [pseudonym] who is employed by the EThekweni Municipality who helps learners to cross the road. There are also pastors who do morning devotions that we work with.

Coming to the issue of how the school principals sought to have school improvement and community development complement each other, community refers to, but not limited to the following stakeholders: parents, business community, neighbouring schools, former students, the Department of Health, SASSA, SAPS and the church that schools work with for the benefit of the learners. The working togetherness with these stakeholders is likely to bring about positive results for learners. This section therefore looks at what it is that school principals did to ensure that positive results are achieved. The involvement of the community in children's education is of paramount importance (Brown, Graves & Burke, 2022). This is what PES

reported concerning working with the community, in this regard, some parents who are SGB members:

In my school, we work with some parents who are SGB members. They represent all the parents in the school community. Some of them come from different structures like war veterans to safeguard our school against burglary. We also have South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) who work with the CPF, to fight burglary and theft of school infra-structure. There are other church people that we interact with for worshipping on Sundays. All these structures have a common goal of bringing peace to our school for effective teaching and learning to take place. This in return brings about school improvement. If schools are improved, the community also develops.

In a similar way, PJS reported on working with CPFs to safeguard the school and said:

We also work with CPFs because they keep an eye on our school for learners' safety. This in turn will enable them to cope with their schoolwork.

PRS focused on previous learners and what their contributions would be towards school improvement, and this is what she said:

In our school, we ensure that former learners come back and give us feedback on what they are doing after matric and what they can contribute with to the school for further development. That is, they buy school shoes and uniforms for under-privileged learners, some assist with cleaning materials to keep our school clean. There is the other one who is a librarian who brings old newspapers to our school for learners to have a variety to read, including textbooks.

Further, PJS reported on previous students and said:

There is this neighbourhood watch that is protecting our school. It consists of members who were learners in our school. It assists by providing us with two security guards that look after our children at school. The first one assists learners to cross the road as we have learners from houses along the busy highway. The other one sits by the gate and assists in opening and closing of the gate for anyone who gets into and out of our school.

PSS reported on how beneficial it was to work with former teachers to try and improve learners' results. This is what he said:

There is a retired English teacher who assists in giving remedial classes to those learners who lag behind in this subject. The classes are conducted every Tuesdays, Thursdays (in the afternoon) and on Saturday mornings. All this is done at no cost to assist learners on their academic work to improve.

Moreover, PSS reported on working with SAPS to bring safety to the school so that teaching and learning take place smoothly and this was his comment:

We cannot work alone as teachers, other stakeholders are the part of the system, meaning they have a role to play, for example the SAPS protects the community including the schools.

Regarding the gathered information, working with and for the community yields good results. Engaging further with the participants on how beneficial it was to work with and for the community, I got different comments. Amongst the comments, PSS commented on the production of leaders and said:

It is beneficial because there is the production of future leaders.

Moving forward, PAS reported on schools becoming safest places to be and had this to comment about:

It is beneficial in the sense that the school becomes the safest place to be, and both teachers and learners become safe.

For PRS, she raised the issue of developing the school for the benefit of the community and said:

It is advantageous both to the school and community to work together because the school is in the community, so if we develop the school the community will develop also. If all the communities are developed, the world will be a better place to live.

PJS reported on the elimination of social ills and said:

The advantages are that social ills are eliminated, for example, burglary, vandalization of school furniture and there is that smooth working togetherness between the school and its community.

The participants further clarified upon our engagement as to the importance of stakeholder engagement in achieving the educational goals of a school. This is how they stated their comments and PES had this to report about:

Stakeholders have to be there as they are a parent component. Children come from families and these families have parents. Education is like a three-legged pot, where there is a child/learner, a teacher and a parent. If one leg is broken, the pot cannot stand, so it is important that there is this good relationship of working together for the benefit of the child especially.

PRS reported on stakeholders supporting the vision of the school and said:

Stakeholders are very important because they are supporting the vision of the school, and they are making sure that the dreams of the school principal and learners come true. It is the duty of a school principal to ensure that all the stakeholders are involved in the development of each and every school so as to get good results. For example, SASSA is important to cater for wellbeing of the learners.

In a similar way, PJS reported on stakeholders supporting the needs of the school and had this to say:

Stakeholders are needed to support the needs of the school therefore we cannot do without them. We need parents as never before so that we can achieve our educational goals. We need their participation in the SGB.

Regarding the above-mentioned theme, schools worked with their communities. For example, schools worked with different structures like war veterans, churches, clinics and SANCO to keep an eye to school infrastructure. In the case of war veterans, schools provided a place for holding meetings and alternatively, war veterans ensured school safety when things got out of hand. The same goes for different churches, schools became places of worship and pastors provided prayer to learners during morning devotions. This in turn assisted by building a basic strong faith guiding them throughout their lives. Regarding this information, I see good management.

Also, schools worked with clinics to ensure that learners' health was taken care of. That led to the promotion of healthy eating habits that impacted positively on their lives. It also led to the fostering of a culture of well-being. In this regard, findings reveal some kind of awareness into learners' health.

In addition, I see the involvement of the community in schools during celebrations like Heritage Day. This encouraged learners to pride themselves of their origins, for example, to be proudly South Africans. In this regard, I find recognition of cultural diversity.

Further, community meetings were held in school yard and sometimes in classrooms to indicate good working relationship between schools and communities, which in turn safeguard the school and its infrastructure. The findings reveal a lack of creativity as the community still relies on old methods when holding meetings. For example, playgrounds and classrooms were mostly used to hold meetings. To show improvement, WhatsApp groups, Zoom and Microsoft Teams could be used. Even the sports games against schools and parents indicated good working relationships between school principals and different stakeholders. Regarding this, future soccer players, netball players and athletes are moulded at an early age in schools and this portrays good management skill.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented and analysed data generated from semi-structured interviews. The presentation was based on the data developed from the research questions and the literature that the study cited. Based on the data generated, this chapter revealed leadership and management skills amongst school principals. Being seen as able to form good relationships with their stakeholders and communities, contributes to effective teaching and learning. The next chapter (Chapter 6) to look at is the conclusion of the thesis, which presents the lessons learnt in the research journey regarding the interface between policy and practice in the work of a school principal.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING FROM THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I reflect on the research journey regarding the interface between policy and practice in a school principals' work. To do that, I first summarise the chapters paying attention to the crucial aspects in each case, for example, in the case of chapter 1: the study's background, the statement of the problem, critical research questions and the rationale for the study. This is followed by highlights of the key findings of the study. Thirdly, I tackle the main part of the chapter, namely the learnings from study.

6.2 THE RESEARCH JOURNEY I TRAVELLED

The inspiration to conduct this study came from an observation that most South African public schools fail to deliver decent educational outcomes. That prompted me to study the work of school principals as leaders and managers of these institutions. This entailed researching the policy-practice interface of school principalship. From my experience as a teacher, having served for three decades, there seemed to be a big gap between policy and practice regarding school principals' work. The study was premised on the conviction that the quality of a school principal plays a major role in the quality and quantity of school improvement possible. Thus, the study involved developing a deep understanding of school principals' experiences of implementing the school principalship policy.

This research report comprises six chapters that provide a map of the study journey.

In Chapter 1, I reported that South African school principals are guided in their work, by a detailed policy on school principalship as enshrined in the policy on South African school principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2016b). I argue that, despite the rich policy, it appeared that many public schools in the country were failing to deliver measurable educational outcomes. This inevitably raised questions in my mind as to what the policy-practice interface of school principals' work looked like. I thus declared this as the knowledge gap the study sought to address. In seeking to study the interface, one research question sought to understand reasons as to why the interface was what it was. Regarding what I viewed as my thesis question,

I asked what can be learnt regarding the extent to which the school principalship policy is implementable.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature, paying attention to five broad concepts. The chapter unfolds by clarifying the concepts of leadership and management. I define the term leadership as the process of influencing others on what to do to achieve shared objectives (Yukl, 2012) and management as the attainment of organisational goals in an effective manner through planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling (Daft & Samson, 2014). These two concepts are intertwined. These are the roles that school principals are expected to fulfil as leaders and managers of schools. When combined, they speak directly to what the interface between policy and practice in a school principal's work is. Through clarification, it emerged that the concepts of leadership and management are interdependent, hence, a discussion of the relationship between them. With regards to that, it also transpired that the work of a school principal is somehow challenging. I then presented a discussion of the eight key areas of school principalship. However, the eight key areas require a school principal to perform these two functions simultaneously. Literature reveals that leading and managing schools entail five kinds of leadership. Further, I gave some viewpoints as to what my observations in this study were. On top of this, based on the information I gathered from the eight key areas, instructional leadership is regarded as the main function in leading teaching and learning in a school as it looks at improving the academic performance of learners. To add, it also transpired through literature that a school principal is a strategic leader, an executive leader, a cultural leader and an organisational leader.

Also, the literature argues that parents and the community should work with school principals in order to bring about positive results in learners' academic work. Besides this, it also emerges through literature what school principals ought to do to oversee the implementation of the curriculum. What I also learnt through literature is that school principals as accounting officers should account for the performance of their learners and schools. School principals need to meet teachers' and learners' needs, and this is a major focus of this study. The contribution that parents make in a school is of vital importance in a number of ways, which amongst others is to work with school principals in supporting their learners through sports. Moreover, I learnt through literature that school principals should manage their multiple roles and assist teachers in sharing ideas with the aim of enhancing their teaching. In addition to this, the literature reveals that intervention strategies on how school principals can be assisted to work with

parents and the community should be implemented. This will assist in producing good academic results for learners. In Chapter 3, I discussed the theoretical framework of the study. The framework comprises two theories namely, Transformational Leadership Theory by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Management Functions, consisting of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. Transformational leadership is about helping people to rise and perform greater such as improving the academic performance of all the learners in a school. Transformational leadership also entails building relationships between leaders and followers such as the SMT, SGB, teachers, learners, the community and all other stakeholders. This is why the theory is also called a relationship theory. Management functions serve the purpose of ensuring the smooth functioning of an organisation. School principalship is about both leading and managing, hence the combination of the two theories.

In chapter 4, I discussed the study's methodology, the study is locating it in the interpretivist paradigm. Therein I argue that the ontological assumption of this paradigm, is that knowledge is subjective, depending on those in a given context. Thus, the selection and involvement of five public primary school principals to generate varied opinions regarding the policy-practice interface. The epistemological assumption of the interpretivist paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed, hence my use of the in-depth interviews as the means for data generation. Regarding methodology, the interpretivist paradigm assumes that participants in qualitative research are people who are well informed about their situations and can construct their own meanings of the situations, hence, the selection of participants with significant lengths of time of service in school principalship. In the chapter, I report my adoption of a six-step thematic data analysis approach, namely: i) familiarise self with data, ii) generate initial themes, iii) search for themes, iv) review themes, v) define and name themes and vi) producing the report. I further report that the study adopted three forms of trustworthiness, namely,,: credibility, which involves interpreting and concluding, using data received from participants, to see whether the work of a school principal is of good quality or not; dependability, which entails comparing studies of different participants in order to find out why there may be variations, if there are any; and confirmability, that involves exploring whether all studies have sufficient information for a reader to check whether similar conclusions are reached.

In Chapter 5, I presented and discussed the data from the study. The chapter is organized into four themes, namely: i) relationships in the targeted schools, ii) kinds of leadership, iii) management in schools, and iv) community partnerships. These themes encapsulate all the

eight key areas of the school principal's prescribed functions. The four themes emerged out of the data analysis. In the presentation of these themes, the chapter focuses on both what the evidence revealed, and how it 'spoke' to the research questions of the study. Out of these processes, the following emerge as the key findings of the study.

6.3 KEY FINDINGS

6.3.1 Relationships in the targeted schools

Drawing from school principals' experiences, findings reveal that relationships amongst learners were fraught with conflict. They fought over petty issues like stealing money, food and writing materials from one another. However, not all schools were affected by conflict, as in others, learners played together and were always in a happy mood. For teacher-teacher relationships, the findings reveal that there was conflict amongst teachers based on personal issues. In most schools, relationships were poor because of gossip, money lending and competition over fasion, particularly amongst female teachers. There was only one school principal who maintained that the relationship amongst her teachers was characterised by teamwork, that is, teachers did lesson plans together and they even attended workshops together. Regarding the relationship that school principals had with their SMTs, the findings reveal conflict and jealousy as big problems between the two. One school principal mentioned that her DP was after her position and was a bad influence amongst other teachers. The other one mentioned that the relationship with his SMT comprised people who were hungry for positions and not work. Added to this was a school principal mentioned that in his school, there were more conflicting ideas amongst SMT members. The DH did not want to take any instructions from him and there was no way forward. Also, there was a good relationship between school principals and their teachers. It consisted of teachers who were willing to work. One school principal reported that she interacted with her teachers during break time in that they ate together, they shared their food and prayed together. Further, another school principal argue that he listened to his teachers and whatever discussions he had with them, would be kept confidential. The policy under scrutiny requires school principals as executive leaders to create an environment of discipline and trust for effective teaching and learning to occur. Looking at the results, the findings show that the relationship that school principals had with teachers was characterised by respect. Moreover, school principals had good working relationships with SGB members. All school principals reported that their relationships with SGB was good and

perfect. It was overshadowed by respect, working together nicely; they offered support to teachers and learners, and they understood one another.

6.3.2 Kinds of leadership

Regarding instructional leadership, the policy requires school principals to improve learners' academic results. However, the findings reveal a lack of motivation from teachers. The first participant complained of learners who came from another school who cannot read nor write. Another school principal stated that it is so embarrassing to receive a learner from another school who cannot read. The second participant considered telling her teachers to respect and honour their teaching periods because there were those teachers who would dodge classes. The other participant complained of the Social Sciences curriculum that is so outdated. Further, higher positions in the teaching profession are occupied by people who have never been to teach before; as a result, they do things as they please. All these show a lack of motivation from teachers; however, there is one school principal who appreciated her teachers and learners by celebrating Awards Day, where trophies and certificates were issued to learners who performed well.

Regarding strategic leadership, the policy expects school principals to support teamwork and promote cohesion. Based on that, the findings reveal that there were collaborative practices that school principals implemented with their teachers such as holding meetings frequently in a school like SMT and staff meetings. The other participant reported staff development meetings that were held every Thursdays. There were grade and phase meetings that the participants reported. Moreover, teachers were encouraged to be PLC members. The collaborative practices were successful, for example, during staff meetings everyone's views were acknowledged, and teachers were able to make decisions, depending on what has been discussed. Further, regarding transparency, the policy requires school principals to create a suitable climate for learning and collaboration. There were some satisfactory levels of understanding and engagement between school principals and the SGBs regarding school financial matters. They ensured that working together was on top of their priorities. Moreover, regarding visibility, the policy requires school principals to be visible in and outside the school. The findings reveal that school principals were dedicated and committed to their work because they were always moving around the verandas, and they ensured that their schools were led. One school principal mentioned that she talked with parents, she joked with them and parents also saw that she was an approachable person. Another school principal reported that he was the first citizen of the

school, so he made sure that he came early and was the last one to leave. He further insisted that it should be like that all the time. Regarding cultural leadership, the findings show a lack or limited understanding of different cultures, for example, all school principals reported that their schools were monocultural. However, there was one school principal who reported that she had two white learners in her school. Instead of treating them differently, that is, to be taught in their mother-tongue, learners were taught in Isizulu because that was the language that was dominating in the school. In addition, school principals are required to comply with policies. In that regard, the findings reveal awareness and recognition of important documents from the DBE. However, for complying with directives, the findings reveal poor management of time and a lack of leadership by school principals. As far as school budget is concerned, school principals are expected to carefully manage its operation. As I previously stated, there was understanding between school principals and SGBs regarding finances. One school principal mentioned that, as an accounting officer, he attended financial workshops to ensure that the SGB and finance committee understood the functions and responsibilities of different members in the committee.

Concerning the recruitment of teachers, school principals are expected to ensure the recruitment and retention of quality staff. With regards to that, the findings reveal that school principals were excluded. The gap is huge because school principals no longer recruit teachers, instead the DBE relies on online applications. A variety of responses were raised regarding recruitment especially, for example, another school principal mentioned the use of the database system, and the other school principal talked about teacher unions as key in the recruitment of teachers. Further, school principals are expected to manage conflict. However, the findings show that they failed because, in most schools, conflict between learners is still rife. Conflict amongst teachers and between school principals and SMT was always at its peak. Further, one school principal mentioned conflict between teachers and parents. The course of conflict between learners was due to stealing and fighting as well as personal matters like jealousy amongst teachers. Regarding management functions, all school principals regarded the management functions as very important. Moreover, school principals are expected to promote the interest of learners and staff in a school. Regarding the interests of the learners, one school principal referred to the South African School's Act (SASA) document that learners' rights should not be interfered with. School principal mentioned visiting classes and talking to learners as a way of acknowledgement. Further, another school principal mentioned going down to their level of communication and understanding. The findings reveal a lack of professionalism in teachers.

For example, two school principals mentioned that teachers are no longer acting as professionals, therefore their job descriptions, SACE principles and codes of conduct should be read to them. However, one school principal reported that she did not want to see teachers coming to school if they are sick. That is how she ensured professionalism in her teachers.

6.3.3 Management in schools

Regarding managing the school as an organisation, the policy requires that improving the performance of structures and functions is a key requirement. To some extent, the school principals tried to network with other stakeholders such as the SMT and SGB to improve schools. Findings show that, on one hand, there were poor working relationships between school principals and their SMTs. On the other, their working relationships with the SGBs were good. Thus, there was incoherence in the way these important structures functioned. The policy requires school principals to equitably deploy resources and maximise their use. In this regard, provision of textbooks featured as one thing most principals achieved. However, resources were short, resulting in some principals using their own money to buy food for learners. The findings reveal school principals' commitment to support learners.

Moving forward, the policy requires school principals to oversee curriculum implementation. However, findings suggest that the school principals faced difficulties in this regard. There was high teacher absenteeism. As indicated above, teaching and learning resources were limited. There was improper staffing of educators in many cases. Further, the policy requires school principals to manage the South African School Administration and Management System. In this regard, some school principals reported on being successful in SASAMS because of the assistance of their administration clerks whereas others experienced challenges due to lack of training. The lack of training can delay entering of learners' marks in the system and can have a negative bearing on the overall performance of a school. In this regard, the findings suggest the existence of inadequate support of school principals by the DBE. Still on technology, school principals are required to promote knowledge of computer literacy amongst teachers and learners. The findings suggest that the school principals themselves had limited understanding and appreciation of the importance of computers, resulting to most teachers and learners remaining illiterate in that regard. The inadequacy of resources made the situation worse.

Regarding the management of human resources in the schools, contrary to policy, the school principals felt excluded by the DBE in the process of filling vacant educator posts. Regarding ensuring equitable workloads amongst teachers, most school principals regarded this issue as

very sensitive, which required them to always refer to policy guidelines such as the PAM document. The same situation applied with regard to guiding staff on labour issues, although, in this case, school principals did not find the relevant policies as readily available. Regarding the addressing of disciplinary problems, school principals succeeded to some degree, by drawing on disciplinary committees. In that regard, findings reveal commitment and collaborative practices between school principals and such committees.

The policy requires school principals to enable the offering of extramural activities. In this regard, school principals offered wide varieties, for example, soccer, netball and the reed dance, as well as encouraging their teachers to teach learners through body movements and play. However, due to financial constraints, the targeted schools did not have proper sport fields and teachers had to rely on other means for survival. For example, sports teachers used an open area in the school and sometimes negotiated with neighbouring schools to use their sport fields, which were in better conditions than theirs. However, the offering of sports impacted negatively on teachers' workload. For example, one school principal mentioned that the offering of such activities called for teachers to do less teaching because they do extra-mural activities. Also, another school principal highlighted that educators used to complain because they were doing so much regarding such activities, in addition to teaching and learning. Contrary to this, another school principal commended the offering of extramural activities and mentioned that it did not have a bad impact on teachers' workload because teachers volunteered to be sport members.

6.3.4 Community partnerships

Regarding community partnership, the policy requires school principals to build collaborative relationships. In this regard, the schools in question seemed to do just the basics such as working with clinics to take care of learners' health. To some degree, this promoted a culture of well-being. Also, school-community interaction happened during annual celebrations such as Heritage Day. This encouraged learners to pride themselves of their origins, for example, to be proudly South African. However, school-community interaction seemed to be restricted to such special days, suggesting a very limited relationship.

Further, community meetings were often held on school campuses, sometimes in classrooms. While this was largely a one-sided relationship, to some degree it safeguarded school facilities and infrastructure against vandalism and theft. Some semblances of school-community relations were evident in sports.

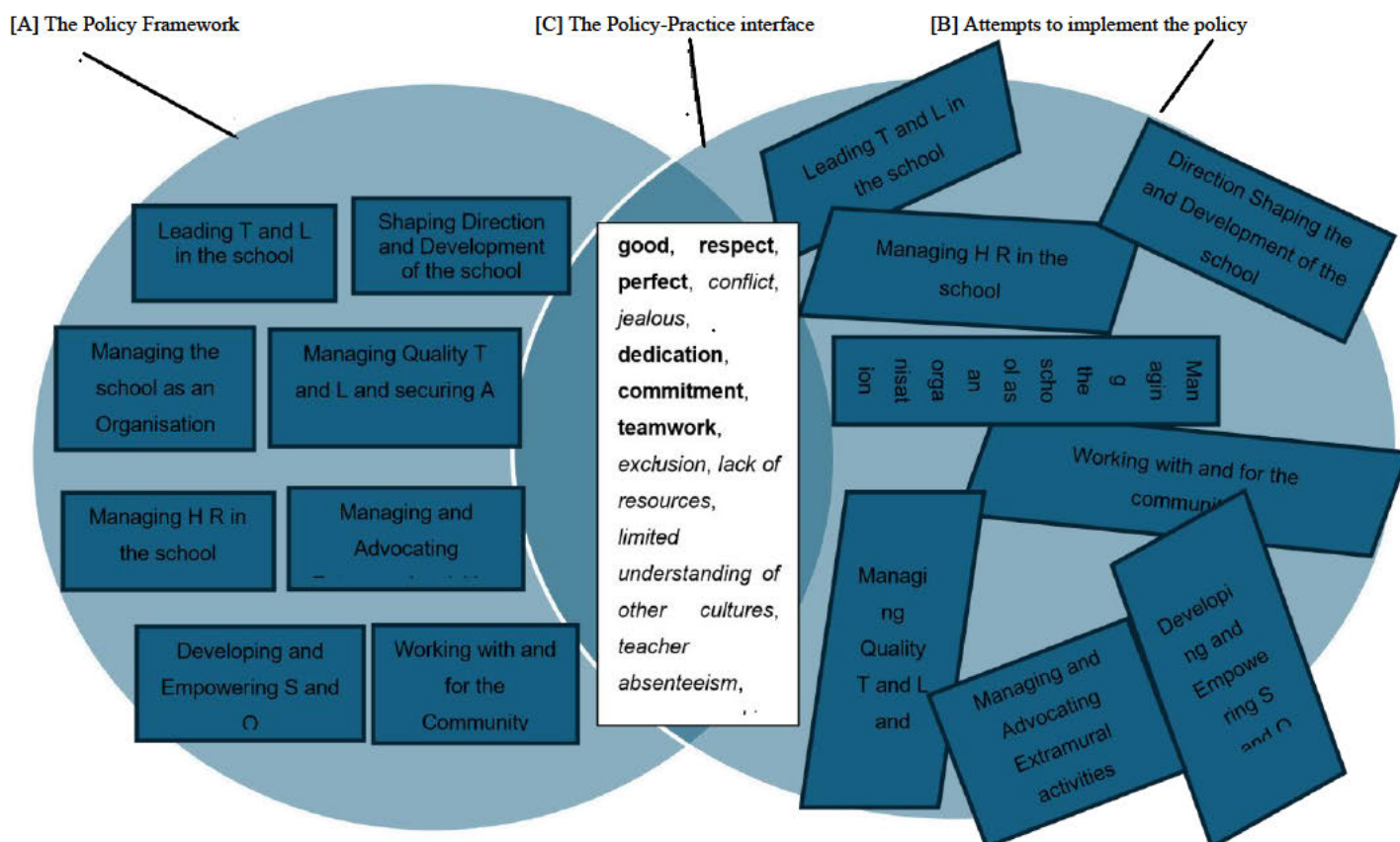
Moreover, the policy requires that school improvement and community development complement each other. As stated previously, community refers to but is not limited to the following stakeholders: parents, business community, neighbouring schools, former teachers, the Department of Health (DoH), SASSA, SAPS and the church, all stakeholders that the schools work with for the benefit of the learners. Regarding the responses from the targeted school principals, they reported a good working relationship. For example, with former teachers that schools have produced, amongst them, there were those who assisted young children by offering them remedial classes in case they were lagging behind in particular subjects. There are nurses in communities who work for local clinics. Those nurses were produced by the schools in the surrounding community. What they did was to give back to their communities by offering health services to learners, for example, child vaccination. Further in communities, there are policemen and women who were produced by schools. They assisted by ensuring safety in schools for effective teaching and learning to take place.

6.4 KEY LEARNINGS

The key learnings emerge from the eight key areas. It is in the data chapter where I condensed all the eight key areas into four themes, namely, i) relationships in the targeted schools, ii) kinds of leadership, iii) management in schools, and iv) community partnership.

The diagram below presents the key learnings that emerged from the two intersecting circles, showing the relationship between the policy framework and the attempts on how the policy can be implemented.

Figure 6.1 The Policy-Practice interface



Key:

T and L = Teaching and Learning

HR = Human Resources

S and O = Self and Others

A = Accountability

6.4.1 The policy framework (Circle A)

Figure 6.1 depicts two intersecting circles, 'A' and 'B'. Circle 'A' shows the policy framework of school principalship as stipulated in the Gazette (Department of Basic Education, 2016b). The study looked at the interface formed by the implementation of this policy by school principals. As previously stated in Chapter 1, these eight key areas describe explicitly the roles a school principal must perform, for example, leadership and management roles. The implementation of all the eight key areas is expected to lead to the successful running of schools by school principals. As described in Chapter 1, this policy is so rich in information as it clearly details the requirements a school principal should possess. Circle 'A' has regular-shaped boxes.

These mean the set practices that need to be followed by school principals to achieve the desired goals of increasing and improving school performance.

6.4.2 Attempts to implement the policy (Circle B)

Circle 'B' is about what the school principals attempted to do in seeking to implement the aforementioned policy framework. Looking at the diagram, Circle 'B' is populated by skewed boxes. This indicates that school principals were aware of the policy framework, and they made attempts to implement it. However, during implementation, they succeeded in some areas but faltered in others.

Despite the richness of the policy, the school principals in the study faced difficulties in successfully implementing it. This might be caused by a variety of reasons or factors. For example, looking at the first key area, leading teaching and learning in a school, some school principals did their best to improve learners' academic results, whereas others struggled. This was shown by poor results that were produced by some schools, for example, it is stated in Chapter 1, that the DBE delivers poor literacy and numeracy results, which also seemed to be the case in some of the schools studied. Regarding the manner school principals interacted with staff and SGB members, their relationships were good and conducive to successful teaching and learning. Where relationships are sound, teaching and learning is expected to succeed.

Drawing from the study's theoretical framework, we are learning from the transformational leadership theory that those in authority should assist their subordinates to advance to a higher level. In this study, this refers to a school principal promoting the success of staff members in order to better the results of all the learners in a school. In contrast, the study reveals toxic working relationships between the interviewed school principals and their SMTs. For example, their relationship was full of conflict, gossip and jealous. As depicted in the management functions part of the theoretical framework, the SMT are key to planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. Where relationships are toxic, the implementation of such functions is bound to fail, thus, negatively impacting on teaching and learning. Also, learner-learner relationships were largely characterised by conflict, which is likely to have a negative bearing on their learning. The same applies for teacher-teacher relationships. There was conflict based on personal issues, making it difficult to achieve the school goals of improving the academic performance of the learners. In such contexts, school development and improvement are likely to be hampered. Such toxic environments are likely to be anti-transformation. Therefore, to achieve the best learner results, relationships need to be improved.

Regarding the kinds of leadership, some school principals showed dedication and commitment to their work. This is likely to yield good results for learners. Most school principals practised teamwork, for example, team-building activities, doing lesson plans together, praying together and so forth. One school principal regarded himself as an approachable person. This suggests that collaborative practices are key for the effective running of a school. Further, all interviewed school principals practised transparency in school financial matters. Moreover, they all reported on how important it was to be visible, not only in verandas but to be present in the assembly, to be present during staff meetings, SMT and SGB meetings as well as being active listeners. This seemed to give hope to both teachers, parents and learners. Contrary to this, some school principals felt excluded by the DBE during staff recruitment processes, making it difficult to effectively fill vacancies. This in turn is likely to hinder the progress of the school. The study revealed that the school principals had limited understanding of other cultures because their schools were largely monocultural, resulting to multilingualism being avoided. Further, there was a lack of disciplinary measures by school principals as conflict amongst learners and teachers was still rife. However, some school principals succeeded to some degree by drawing on disciplinary committees to deal with conflict. Therefore, there should be developmental programmes that will capacitate school principals and other stakeholders with leadership skills.

School management teams in schools was characterised by poor working relationships. Some of the interviewed school principals reported very limited teaching and learning resources, including sports facilities and specialised trainers. Further, some school principals reported high teacher absenteeism. This is one significant sign of school dysfunctionality. Additionally, there were many challenges regarding SASAMS usage, in the sense that almost all the interviewed school principals reported of lack of training in that regard. Where there is poor understanding and usage of data, schools are likely to perform poorly. Such lack of proficiency in data usage is inconsistent with the management functions as explained in the theoretical framework of this study. Regarding community partnership, the interviewed school principals reported on limited collaborative relationships between schools and community. As stated previously, community members were present during annual celebrations like Heritage Day. One would have liked to see sustained school-community partnerships.

6.4.3 The policy-practice interface (Intersection C)

Looking at Intersection ‘C’, the items presented in bold represent some of the successes school principals achieved in implementing the policy framework. To illustrate, the respect that prevailed between school principals and SGB was a product of the relationships they built over time. Dedication and commitment prevailed amongst school principals towards their work. This was because of the concern they had to improve learners’ academic results. Further, teamwork prevailed amongst school principals and their teachers to better the academic results and bring about school improvement.

However, the school principals struggled to successfully implement the policy in many cases. For example, the persistence of conflict among learners, teachers, school principals and SMT, as already argued above, is likely to lead to poor school performance. Jealousy existed amongst teachers due to personal issues, and this is likely to result in failure to work together towards school improvement. Failure to engage with each other brings the school into disrepute. Further, exclusion of school principals by the DBE prevailed. This is likely to result to improper staffing of teachers. In turn, this may lead to teachers teaching subjects that they have minimum knowledge of. Lack of resources also prevailed, which impacts negatively to quality results. Limited understanding of other cultures prevailed, and this may prevent learners to thrive in a diverse world. There was also teacher absenteeism that prevailed, which has a negative impact as it is likely to indicate failure to learners’ success. Moreover, limited relationship existed between school principals and the community, and it is likely to indicate a decrease in collaborative endeavours which are important in the achievement of strategic and planned goals.

Overall, the interface shows more areas of failure on the part of school principals than success. It seems that the policy framework, rich as it may be, was rather too complex for the school principals in the study to implement.

What this calls for is a thorough preparation of school principals to principalship positions. This might require looking at their qualifications, to see whether they have formal leadership and management skills.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM UKZN



Ethical Clearance for
PhD for Pinkie.pdf

APPENDIX 2: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KZN SCHOOLS



education

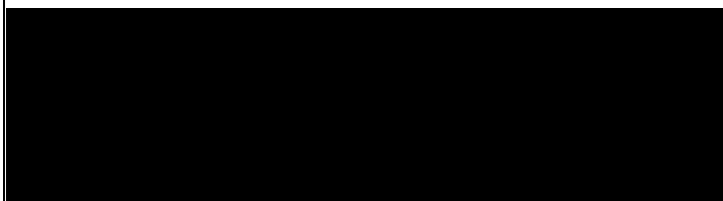
Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Application for Permission to Conduct Research in KwaZulu Natal Department of Education
Institutions

Applicant Details

Title: Prof / Dr / Rev / Mr / Mrs / Miss Surname: Zondi

Name(s) Of Applicant(s): Olivia Pinkie



Proposed Research Title: **The policy-practice interface of principalship in South Africa: A study on public primary school principals.**

	Yes	No
		X

Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoE institutions?

If “yes”, please state reference Number: N/A

Yes	No
X	

Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification?

If “yes”

Name of tertiary institution: University of KwaZulu Natal

Faculty and or School: College of Humanities, School of Education

Qualification: PhD



Name of Supervisor: Professor V. Chikoko Supervisor’s Signature _____

If “no”, state purpose of research: _____

Briefly state the Research Background

The proposed study looks at the quality of the work of school principals through examining the interface between the policy framework and practice. The school principal post is the highest position or rank in a school. This position requires one to possess requisite knowledge and skills to face the daily challenges pertaining to student achievement, budget shortfalls and the increased societal challenges, among others (Eller, 2010). In order to understand the nature of the work a South African school principal is expected to do, it is necessary to describe the policy on South African school principals.

The Policy Framework for South African School Principals

The policy on South African school principals (Department of Basic Education, 2016) identifies key roles a school principal must perform. It is organized into eight key areas or key purposes for the successful running of schools. The eight key areas consist of (a) leading teaching and learning in the school (b) shaping the direction and development of the school (c) managing the school as an organisation (d) managing quality teaching and learning and securing accountability (e) managing human resources in the school (f) managing and advocating extramural activities (g) developing and empowering self and others and lastly (h) working with and for the community. Each of these, is briefly presented.

- . Leading Teaching and Learning in the school---this comprises five kinds of leadership: strategic, executive, instructional, cultural and organisational leadership
- . Shaping the Direction and Development of the school---work with SMT, SGB and parents to implement school vision and mission
- . Managing the School as an Organisation---to oversee curriculum implementation
- . Managing Quality Teaching and Learning and Securing Accountability---to ensure there is quality teaching and learning in a school
- . Managing human resources in the school---to ensure equitable workloads amongst staff
- . Managing and advocating extramural activities---to enable offering of extramural activities in a school
- . Developing and Empowering self and others---to encourage continuous professional development
- . Working with and for the community---to build collaborative relationships with the community

What is the main research question(s):

The proposed study will address and seek to answer the following questions:

1. What does the policy-practice interface of school principalship in the selected public primary schools look like?
2. Why is the interface the way it is in the selected schools?
3. What implications do the nature of the interface and the reasons thereof have for improving the work of a school principal?

Methodology including sampling procedures and the people to be included in the sample:

The study will adopt two data generation methods namely, individual face-to-face interviews and documents reviews. Interview schedule and document review schedule will be used as the research instruments. A semi-structured interview is a meeting of people face-to-face, especially for consultation. It can also be described as a question and answer session (Vogl, 2013).

I used an interview schedule that had a list of questions to be asked. Prescott (2011) argues that an interview schedule is a construction of a schedule with questions about every element of the course content. Therefore, using semi-structured interviews in this case will help in gaining a deeper understanding of the interface between policy and practice, which in turn will determine the quality of the school principal's work. Document review refers to a qualitative research method for generation of data that requires the methodological assessment and evaluation of documents in both printed and electronic format (Bowen, 2009). Data generated through document analysis can be used to channel lines of inquiry that can be pursued through direct interviews (Patton, 2002). Using the document reviews schedule, the documents that I will be analyzing include staff meeting minutes, school policies, log book, time book, leave register, QMS document and early departure & late arrival document. These are the key documents regarding the work of a school principal.

The selection of five public primary school principals will be purposive. In this proposed study, it will be purposive in that only primary school principals in public schools will be selected as the participants.

What contribution will the proposed study make to the education, health, safety, welfare of the learners and to the education system as a whole?:

The proposed study shows that there is a need to transform schools for the better in the country of South Africa. If schools are transformed, it is likely for learners to achieve excellence.

KZN Department of Education Schools or Institutions from which sample will be drawn – If the list is long please attach at the end of the form

Bavumile Primary School		
Fundakahle Primary School		
Khalipha Primary School		
Umgijimi Primary School		
Zimisele Primary School		

Research data collection instruments: *(Note: a list and only a brief description is required here - the actual instruments must be attached):*

. Interview schedule---The interview schedule has a list of questions to be asked. Prescott (2011) argues that an interview schedule is a construction of a schedule with questions about every element of the course content. Therefore, using semi-structured interviews in this case will help in gaining a deeper understanding of the interface between policy and practice, which in turn will determine the quality of the school principal's work. The questions asked allow the participants to give open-ended answers where they are free to talk about the topic under investigation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

Procedure for obtaining consent of participants and where appropriate parents or guardians:

The consent of the participants will be obtained by identifying public primary schools with the high pass rate. After identifying those schools, I will wait for Ethical Clearance from the University and also Permission to conduct research from the DoBE. Once all that information is gathered, I will then ask the participants to fill in the informed consent letter and sign.

Procedure to maintain confidentiality (if applicable):

I will obtain Ethical Clearance from the University. Also, I will obtain Permission from the DoBE as well as the Informed consents from the participants. I will also guarantee the participants' safety by using pseudonyms instead of their real names and those of their schools.

Questions or issues with the potential to be intrusive, upsetting or incriminating to participants (if applicable): N/A

Additional support available to participants in the event of disturbance resulting from intrusive questions or issues (if applicable): N/A

Research Timelines:

ACTION	DATES
Proposal Defence	30 November 2021
Chapter 1. Introduction and Background to the study	5 December 2021
Chapter 2. Literature Review---draft	January 2022-March 2022
Ethical Clearance Application and Permission letter to the Department of Basic Education	February 2022
Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology--draft	March 2022-May 2022
Data generation	May 2022-August 2022
Data analysis	September 2022-November 2022
Chapter 4. Data presentation and Discussion	December 2022-February 2023
Conclusions and Recommendations	March 2023
Submission of full draft thesis to supervisor	April 2023
Submission to the Language Editor	May 2023-July 2023

Submission of final thesis	August 2023

Declaration

I hereby agree to comply with the relevant ethical conduct to ensure that participants' privacy and the confidentiality of records and other critical information.

I, Olivia Pinkie Zondi, declare that the above information is true and correct



26/01/2022

Signature of Applicant

Date

Agreement to provide and to grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish a summary of the report.

I/We agree to provide the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application.

I/We grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using the print or electronic media.



26/01/2022

Signature of Applicant(s)

Date

Return a completed form to:

Phindile Duma [REDACTED]

Office of the HOD; KwaZulu Natal Department of Education **Hand**

Delivered:

Office 318; 247 Burger Street; Anton Lembede House; Pietermaritzburg; 3201

Or Ordinary Mail

Private Bag X9137; Pietermaritzburg; 3200

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX 3: PERMISSION LETTER FROM KZN DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200

Pietermaritzburg, 3201 **Email:**

Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger
Street, buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Tel: 033 392 1051

Enquiries: Buyi Ntuli Ref: 2/4/8/7246

Mrs Olivia Pinkie Zondi

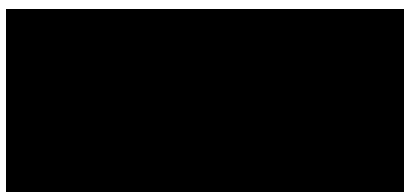
Dear Mrs Zondi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“THE POLICY-PRACTICE INTERFACE OF PRINCIPALSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA: A STUDY ON PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS”**, 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 February 2022 to 31st December 2024**.
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 above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.



Dr M.J.B. Mthembu
Acting Head of Department: Education
Date: 10th February 2022

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

APPENDIX 4: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM GATEKEEPER

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

16 February 2022

The Ward Manager
Department of Education
Phumelela Circuit
Umlazi
4031

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Olivia Pinkie Zondi. I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am studying the policy-practice interface of school principalship in South Africa. The study is about how South African school principals fare in their work in relation to policy.

I request permission to conduct research in five schools, under your ward. The schools are: Badelile Primary, Bavumile, Khuthala, Umgijimi and Zimisele Primary school. This research will involve interviews with the school principals as my participants and reviewing of some documents. There will be two interview sessions with them, each lasting for two hours because of the length of the eight areas of focus in the policy framework. The documents I will be reviewing include: staff meeting minutes, school policies, log book, time book, leave register, QMS document as well as early departure and late coming document.

If school principals are willing to participate, please note that:

- Their confidentiality is guaranteed as their input will not be attributed to them in person but reported only as a member's opinions.
- Any information given by them will not be used against them, and the data collected will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.

APPENDIX 5: CONSENT LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS (SCHOOL PRINCIPALS)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear prospective participant

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Olivia Pinkie Zondi. I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am studying **The policy-practice interface of school principalship in South Africa: A study on public primary school principals**. The study is about how South African school principals fare in their work in relation to policy.

I request you participate in the study.

If you are willing to participate, please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a member's opinions.
- The interview may last for one to two hours on two occasions.
- Any information given by you will be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

Equipment	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

I can be contacted at:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

My supervisor is **Professor Vitallis Chikoko** who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

email: chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: 031 260 2639

[REDACTED]

Email: [hssrec @ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssrec@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

If you are willing to participate in the study, kindly complete and sign the declaration below.

APPENDIX 6: DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANTS



Declaration by school
principals.pdf

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule For School Principals

ALL SCHOOLS (PES, PAS, PRS, PJS, PSS)

This is an interview between a researcher and a school principal (participant). The researcher wants to find out from a participant about the interface that exists between policy and practice in the work of a school principal.

SECTION A: Background Information

1. For how long have you been a teacher?
2. How many years have you been a school principal?
3. For how long have you been a principal in this school?
4. How big is your school, in terms of the enrolment?
5. How many teachers are there in the school?
6. In what quintile is your school?
7. How would you describe learner-learner relationships in the school?
8. How would you describe teacher-teacher relationships in the school?
9. How would you describe your working relationship with the School Management Team?
10. How would you describe your working relationship with the staff as a whole?
11. How would you describe your working relationship with the School Governing Body?
12. How would you describe this school's relationship with the community?

SECTION B: Leading Teaching and Learning in the School

Leading teaching and learning, involves a number of inter-related activities. Let us begin with Instructional Leadership

a) Instructional Leadership:

An important component of instructional leadership is staff empowerment.

1. In what ways does the school involve staff in decision-making?

2. Please take me through the school's ways of running professional development activities.
3. What do you do to facilitate staff empowerment in your school?

(ii) A second component of instructional leadership is about improving teaching performance

4. How is teaching currently organised in the school?
5. How would you rate the current teaching performance in the school?
6. What are some of the areas of teaching that you think need to improve?
7. What strategies are there to improve teaching?
8. How successful has the school been in improving teaching performance?

(iii) A third component of instructional leadership is to do with improving learner academic performance.

9. How would you describe the current learner academic performance in the school?
10. What factors would you say have contributed to the current learner academic performance in the school?
11. What would you say needs to be done to improve learner academic performance in the school?

(iv) A fourth component of instructional leadership is about curriculum improvement.

12. What can you suggest to improve the curriculum?
13. How do you develop a curriculum that best support students' needs?
14. What factors influence the effectiveness of curriculum improvement?

b) Strategic Leadership:

An important component of strategic leadership is about ensuring that there is teamwork in a school.

15. How are teachers encouraged to work in a team?
16. What makes a good team?
17. How do you overcome barriers to teamwork?

(ii) A second component of strategic leadership is building trust with teachers

18. Tell me some of the strategies for building trust.
19. How does practising trust motivate your teachers?

20. How are you showing trust in your teachers?

(iii) A third component of strategic leadership is stakeholder wellness

21. Who do you consider as the school's key stakeholders?

22. How would you rate your level of success in ensuring stakeholder wellness? c)

Executive Leadership:

(i) An important component of executive leadership is transparency.

24. How do you encourage transparency in the school?

23. What are some of the key areas in which transparency is necessary in the school?

(ii) A second component of executive leadership is to create a common school identity.

24. How would you describe the identity of this school?

27. How successful have you been in this regard?

(iii) A third component of executive leadership is for a school principal to be visible throughout the school.

28. Do you consider it important to be visible? Why?

d) Cultural Leadership:

An important component of cultural leadership is embracing cultural diversity in a school.

29. How do you attend to learners with different cultures in your school?

30. How do teachers create a positive classroom climate that embrace and celebrate cultural diversity?

(ii) A second aspect of cultural diversity is ensuring that there is tolerance in a school

31. How do you exercise tolerance in a school?

32. What role should teachers play in creating a tolerant environment for learners?

33. How can you encourage tolerance and respect for diversity in this school?

e) Organisational Leadership:

An important aspect of organisational leadership is to carefully manage the school's operational budget.

34. How do you experience your role in financial management?
35. How successful have you been in working together with the SGB?
36. How do you attend to problems experienced regarding the management of school finances?
- (ii)** A second aspect of organisational leadership is for a school principal to ensure the recruitment and retention of quality staff.
37. How do you ensure the recruitment of quality staff?
38. How do you secure a teacher's long-term commitment to the school?
- (iii)** A third aspect of organisational leadership is managing conflict in an organisation.
39. Give examples of conflict that you come across in your school.
40. What strategies do you employ to deal with conflict in your school?
41. How do you make sure that conflict with staff members is avoided?
- (iv)** A fourth aspect of organisational leadership is to communicate with stakeholders regularly and efficiently.
42. How do you make communication effective between your school and other stakeholders?
43. Can you highlight the barriers you come across with when communicating with your stakeholders?
44. How do you address those barriers?
- (v)** A fifth aspect of organisational leadership is for a school principal to comply with policies and directives.
45. How important is it to you to follow policies in a school?
46. What factors do you consider as important for implementation of educational policies?
47. What role do you play in the school governance?
- (vi)** A sixth aspect of organisational leadership is to establish implementable management systems.
48. How important are the management functions to you?
49. What challenges do you encounter in performing your management functions?

(vii). A seventh aspect of organisational leadership is for a school principal to promote the interests of all learners and staff.

50. How do you get the interest of learners in the learning process?

51. How do you promote teacher wellness and professionalism in your school?

SECTION C: Shaping the Direction and Development of the School

Shaping the direction and development of the school involves a number of inter-related components. Let us start with working with the SGB, SMT and parents to create and implement school vision and mission.

52. How did you experience playing your role in the SGB?

53. What does the SGB do to improve the school?

54. How involved are the SGB and parents in the school?

(ii) A second component of shaping the direction and development of the school involves taking into account community and national values.

55. How do you involve the community in the running of the school?

(iii) A third component of shaping the direction and development of the school involves establishing and maintaining effective quality assurance systems.

56. What strategies do you employ to ensure that there is quality teaching and learning in a school?

57. What coping mechanisms do you use to attend to the challenges that go with ensuring quality teaching and learning?

(iv) A fourth component of shaping the direction and development of the school involves accounting to the Department of Education, SGB, parents, staff, learners and community.

59. Please share with me the roles and responsibilities of the SGB.

SECTION D: Managing the School as an Organisation

(i) Managing the school as an organisation involves a number of inter-related components. Let us begin with continuously striving for improved organisational structures and functions.

60. How do you rate the functioning of structures such as the SMT and SGB?

61. How do you deal with the challenges that come with performing your duties?

(iii) A third component of managing the school as an organisation involves overseeing curriculum implementation.

63. What factors affect curriculum implementation?

64. How successful are you managing South African School Administration and Management System (SASAMS)?

(iv) A fourth component of managing the school as an organisation involves knowing technology.

65. What problems do you experience regarding the management of school finances?

66. How do you promote knowledge of computer literacy amongst teachers and learners?

SECTION E: Managing Quality Teaching and Learning and Securing Accountability

Managing quality teaching and learning and securing accountability involves a number of interrelated components.

(i) The first component I would like to start off with involves ensuring that there is quality teaching and learning.

67. How do you ensure quality of teaching and learning process?

68. How would you develop consistency of good or better teaching throughout the school?

69. How are you accountable for ensuring quality education?

70. What are the principles of quality assurance in education?

71. What are the challenges of quality assurance in education?

SECTION F. Managing Human Resources in the School

Managing human resources in the school involves a number of inter-related components. Let us begin with the filling in of vacancies.

72. How do you prioritise the subjects in the filling in of vacant posts?

73. How do you determine the number of teachers in a school?

(ii) A second component of managing human resources in the school is to ensure equitable workload.

74. What strategies do you employ to ensure equitable workload for all staff members?

75. What are the challenges faced by staff in your educational setting regarding the distribution of work?

(iii) A third component of managing human resources in the school is to guide staff on labour issues.

76. Who do you consult with in terms of post-provisioning norm of teachers?

77. Can teachers be dismissed for incapacity?

78. What labour issues are you dealing with and how successful are you in that?

(iv) A fourth component of managing human resources in the school is to report all cases of misconduct.

79. How do you address disciplinary problems in schools?

80. What are conditions that lead to a teacher being guilty of misconduct?

81. How do you engage with the SGB to address instances of serious misconduct by both teachers and learners?

(v) A fifth component of managing human resources in the school is to facilitate regular parentteacher meetings.

82. How do you prepare when conducting a parent-teacher meeting?

83. Please share with me at least three things that contribute to a successful parent-teacher meeting?

84. If a conflict arises during a meeting, what procedures do you employ to handle it?

SECTION G: Managing and Advocating Extramural Activities

Managing and advocating extramural activities involve a number of inter-related components. Let us begin with enabling the offering of extramural activities.

85. How do you encourage learners to participate in extramural activities?
86. How do you manage such activities?
87. What impact does it have on the workload of the teachers?
88. What are the factors affecting the teaching of physical education in schools?
89. What methods do you apply in managing the barriers that hinder the success of physical education?
90. How do you improve the health of learners through physical education?

SECTION H: Developing and Empowering Self and Others

Developing and empowering self and others involves a number of inter-related components. Let us start with embracing the philosophy of *Ubuntu* (Humanness)

91. How do you ensure that teachers act as models of Ubuntu in classrooms with their learners?
 92. In what way can Ubuntu philosophy influence your leadership and management style?
 93. How does Ubuntu impact teachers and learners at school?
 94. How can Ubuntu be used to address some of the problems in schools?
- (ii)** The second component of developing and empowering self and others is to cultivate effective interpersonal relationships.
95. How do you cultivate interpersonal relationships?
 96. What are the major effectiveness of teaching and interpersonal relationship in the school?
 97. What are interpersonal issues in education?
- (iii)** The third component of developing and empowering self and others is to practise participatory decision-making.
98. How do you develop yourself professionally?

99. How do you promote professional development?
100. Why is it so important for teachers or any professional to participate in any continuous professional education program?
101. What are the challenges of implementing and managing continuous professional development?

SECTION I: Working with and for the Community

Working with and for the community involves several inter-related components. Let us start with building collaborative relationships.

102. How do you encourage collaboration in your school?
 103. What kind of collaboration do you build with the community?
 104. How do you ensure that there is effective collaboration in school?
 105. Please share with me what collaboration in education is.
- (ii)** The second component of working with and for the community is to ensure that school improvement and community development complement.
106. What procedures do you consider to ensure that school improvement and community development complement each other?
 107. How does a school contribute to the development of community?
 108. What are the advantages in building collaboration between the school and the community?
- (iii)** The third component of working with and for the community is to know current affairs, the socio-politico-economic context of the school and ways of harnessing stakeholders.
109. What do you consider as the issues confronting our education system today?
 110. What can you say about the current state of education in our country South Africa?
 111. Why do you think the stakeholders are important in achieving the educational goals of a school?

APPENDIX 8: EDITOR'S LETTER

Crispin Hemson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Durban

South Africa 4001

[REDACTED]

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have undertaken language editing of a doctoral thesis by Olivia Mgeyane-Zondi entitled *The policy-practice interface of principalship in South Africa: A study on public primary school principals*.

.

[REDACTED]

21st June 2025

APPENDIX 9: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

