

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS ON THE POSITION OF DEPUTY PRINCIPALS  
IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF UMLAZI DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**(213542025)**

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discipline of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy, School of Education,  
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## DECLARATION

I, Phumlani Samuel Mnikathi, declare that:

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- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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**Researcher:** [REDACTED]

**Date:** 25 February 2022

Phumlani Samuel Mnikathi.

## SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation is submitted with my approval

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** 24.03.2022  
Dr. SB. Blose

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my mother, Thobile Joyce Mnikathi. This study is for you mother.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals in five selected township secondary schools. Three research questions guided the study, these research questions are; What are principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools? How do principals deploy deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools? And why do principals deploy deputy principals the way they do? Local and international literature on the position of deputy principals was reviewed. A distributed leadership theory served as a theoretical framework for the study and was used to understand the perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals. A multiple case study was employed as a research methodology as it is a research style that is used where two or more cases are studied concurrently to generate a broader understanding of the research at hand. The findings of the study first revealed that principals perceived deputy principalship as a two-pronged position in township schools; it involves administrative and academic roles. Secondly, principals perceive deputy principals as leaders who are not absolved from the teaching role, and this is in keeping with the job description of deputy principals. The findings of the study also showed that principals assign deputy principals in the management of schools through fostering collaboration amongst their deputy principals and between themselves and deputy principals. Furthermore, principals assign deputy principals to deputise in their absence and use collaboration and deputising as strategies to prepare their deputy principals for the principalship position.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DBE	Department of Basic Education
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
IRP	Independent Research Project
KZNDoE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
QMS	Quality Measurement System
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA-SAMS	South African School Administration and Management System
SGB	School Governing Board
SMT	School Management Team
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Education furnishes people with knowledge and skills to access job opportunities that will give them satisfaction and contribute to a country's economy (Biesta, 2015; Idris et al., 2012). In South Africa and other contexts, formal basic education is offered in schools; primary and secondary schools. In these schools, children are called learners. Each school has its own vision, mission, objectives, and goals which it aims to accomplish. For a school to achieve these, a principal who is a senior leader in a school must work with many stakeholders, including, among others, deputy principals, departmental heads, teachers, parents, and learners. This dissertation centres on school principals and it aimed to understand their perceptions of the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools. Given that deputy principals are second in command, the study sought to explore how principals deploy them as their assistants in school management and why do principals deploy deputy principals the way they do.

This chapter aims to provide an introduction and orientation to the study; to this end, I begin by presenting the introduction and background of the study, rationale for the study, problem statement, and the significance of the study. Following this, the location of the study, the clarification of terms, the overview of chapters, and the chapter summary are presented.

#### **1.2 Background to the study**

Leadership is defined as a process by which an individual influences others to achieve the objectives of the organisation (Aldrin & Gayatri, 2014; Bush & Glover, 2003). This occurs through a leader enacting practical activities to influence others (Blose & Naicker, 2018) and ensuring that this influence runs in all structures of the organisation (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). When leadership occurs in a teaching and learning organisation like a school, it is referred to as school leadership (Blose & Naicker, 2018). According to Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012, p. 92), when you "mention the term school leadership," most people straight away think of principals. This is because, in schools, the leadership role of principals is pivotal. Among other things, principals in schools are responsible for leading instructional programmes,

working on school educational projects, ensuring the safety of teachers and learners, and managing school budgets (Chirichello, 2003). In addition, they supervise staff members, interact with parents, and manage the school facilities (Chirichello, 2003). This shows that principals are the orchestrators of the schools; they are responsible for what is happening, and they can go beyond that and be aware in advance of all the problems that might emerge (Scoggins & Bishop, 1993).

Principals in the school leadership hierarchy are positioned at the apex; underneath them are deputy principals who are second-in-command incumbents. In schools, deputy principals are responsible for performing tasks that principals determine for them (Arar, 2014; Harvey & Sheridan, 1995). This involves ensuring that the school's activities are happening and structures and functions of the schools are operating. Under the deputy principals in the school leadership hierarchy are departmental heads who are responsible for guiding general educators in their overall instructional role in the classrooms. Although deputy principals, departmental heads, and other school leaders (e.g., teacher leaders) contribute to school leadership, principals play the most vital role as most senior leaders in schools, and their position cannot be ignored (Chikoko, Naicker, & Mthiyane, 2015). For this reason, most school leadership and management literature centres around principalship, its challenges, instructional role, contribution to the school success, and student outcome and triumph, among other things (Abrahamsen; 2018; Chitamba, 2019; Cranston, Tromans, & Reugebrink, 2004; Gaston, 2005; Shaked, 2020; Shore & Walshaw, 2018).

The above shows that in the scholarship of educational leadership and management, scholars have sought different ways to understand the position of principals in schools and that principals have many responsibilities to perform to make their schools function. However, for principals to enable their schools to operate and realise goals, they must have solid support from and great leadership relationship with their assistants and co-leaders, deputy principals (Arar, 2014; Veerasamy, 2019). The way principals may deploy or co-lead schools with their deputy principals is different. For example, in some cases, principals collaboratively lead schools with their deputies by distributing leadership responsibilities between them and their deputies to realise the goals of their schools (Jansen & du Plessis, 2020; Lim & Pollock, 2019). While in other cases, principals utilise their deputies' strengths to realise the goals of their schools and grow them by enabling them to perform leadership tasks of the principals (Hughes & James, 1999; Lim & Pollock, 2019; Ribbins, 1997). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) refer to this approach as transformational leadership. In this leadership approach, leaders inspire others

to realise their potential and contribute to their commitment, development, and performance in the organisation (Bass, 1990; Gillespie & Mann, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). I note that the way principals lead schools with their deputies is not limited to the approaches I mention here.

This study sought to explore principals' perspectives on the position of deputy principals who are second-in-command and who co-lead with them and deputise for them when absent. The study aimed to reveal principals' views of the position of deputy principals; also, the way they deploy deputy principals in schools and why they deploy them the way they do.

### **1.3 Rationale for the study**

The rationale is the justification presented as a logical argument for the research study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). A rationale details the genesis of the research study and why it is essential to carry it out (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Likewise, Vithal and Jansen (1997) provide that a rationale shows how the researcher developed an interest in the research topic and why they trust it is worth conducting. Therefore, for these reasons, below, I show how I developed an interest in principals' perspectives on the position of deputy principals (the focus of the study) and why I trusted this study was worth conducting.

When I applied to the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) to read for the master's degree (Full-Research) full time, I intended to conduct a research study based on the teacher leadership approach. The reason for this is that I was familiar with the teacher leadership approach as I conducted my Independent Research Project (IRP) at the honours level on the teacher leadership approach. However, on being accepted at UKZN to read for this degree, my supervisor, Dr. Sibonelo Blose, proposed that I widen my knowledge by considering something different from my IRP. He suggested that I read on other issues puzzling me around educational leadership, management, and policy; he gave me some time to think about this. As I was reflecting, I discovered the literature that focuses on the deputy principals' perspectives on their position. However, in discovering this literature, I recognised that scholars in the educational leadership and management scholarship have widely explored deputy principals' views on their position.

Firstly, the literature revealed that deputy principals perceive their position involving administrative and management responsibilities, the teaching role, and other numerous

additional tasks they perform like facilitating morning assemblies, looking after learner discipline, and managing student teachers (Ara, 2014; Brinia, Mastora, & Psoni, 2020; Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2018; Cranston et al., 2004; Jansen & du Plessis, 2020; Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Shore & Walshaw, 2018). Secondly, the perspectives of deputy principals showed that they experience challenges in their position like finishing all tasks assigned for the day in a timely and efficient manner, balancing professional and personal lives due to workload, and uncommitted staff (Clayton & Bingham, 2018; Craft, Malveaux, Lopez, & Combs, 2016; Lim & Pollock, 2019). Lastly, deputy principals' perceptions revealed that principals, to some extent, determine what they perform in their schools (Arar, 2014; Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2018; Gaston, 2005; Harvey & Sheridan, 1995; Jansen & du Plessis, 2020). I, therefore, started asking myself if principals, to some extent, determine what deputy principals do in schools, why their views on the position of deputy principals are neglected in the scholarship of educational leadership and management? I, also, asked myself if principals and deputy principals are engaged in a leadership relationship that provides direction for their schools (Ho, Kang, & Shaari, 2020); why is this leadership relationship neglected? Owing to these questions, I developed an interest in wanting to know what principals think of the position of deputy principals in schools and how they work with them. By this, I mean, according to principals, I wanted to know what deputy principals do in schools? How do they deploy deputy principals, and why do they deploy them the way they do?

Now, I discuss why I trusted this study was worth conducting. According to Arar (2014), principals in schools cannot lead and manage alone. They need professional assistance from deputy principals (Arar, 2014). This entails that deputy principals, as assistants of principals, contribute to the vision principals have with their schools (Ho et al., 2020). This study selected five secondary school principals to comprehend their perceptions of the position of deputy principals. Furthermore, how they deploy deputy principals in the school's management and why they do so. Plomp (2013) provides that one of the aims of education research is to provide insights and contributions to improving practice and policy in education. Therefore, even though this study was small in scale, it was worth conducting because it hoped to provide an insight to policymakers about the realities of school leadership between the principal and the deputy principal to improve practice when making policy regarding how principals should work with deputy principals.

## **1.4 Problem statement**

The functioning of the position of the deputy principals in schools is mostly influenced by principals pertaining to the tasks the deputy principals do. In the scholarship of educational leadership and management, the available literature shows that scholars have largely focused on deputy principals' insights to understand what their position entails (Vladika, 2010). This includes among other things, understanding the duties that the deputy principals do, the way deputy principals engage in their school management responsibilities, and the working relationship between the deputy principals and principals (Arar, 2014; Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2018; Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017). However, we know little from the principals as incumbents who most influence the duties that the deputy principals do as co-leaders and second-in-command in schools. Therefore, this suggests that our understanding of the deputy principalship is shortened as this position is not only connected to deputy principals only but also principals as individuals who most influence its functioning. Thus, this study focused on principals and it intended to explore their perspectives on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools; the intention was to establish principals' perceptions on the position of deputy principals, how they deploy them, and why they deploy them the way they do.

## **1.5 Aim and focus of the study**

This study focused on five selected secondary school principals under Umlazi district. It intended to explore their perspectives on the position of deputy principals. The following research objectives and questions guided this inquiry.

### **1.5.1 Research objectives**

The objectives that guided this study are:

1. To understand principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools.
2. Explore how principals deploy deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools.

3. To understand why principals, deploy deputy principals the way they do.

### **1.5.2 Research questions**

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools?
2. How do principals deploy deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools?
3. Why do principals deploy deputy principals the way they do?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study intended to understand principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools. To this end, the study explored how principals deploy deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools and why principals deploy deputy principals the way they do. The findings of this inquiry may be of benefit to principals as they can draw lessons that can enable them to improve the professional development of deputy principals in schools. Secondly, the findings of this study may also benefit deputy principals to better understand their current leadership roles and contribution to school leadership in schools in terms of making schools function and attain teaching and learning; also, to understand the intention behind the way principals engage them in school tasks. Lastly, the findings of this inquiry may assist the policymakers in shaping the professional development of deputy principals in schools through programmes that fit the way principals engage deputy principals in school leadership responsibilities.

### **1.7 Location of the study**

The location of this research project is Durban, Umlazi district. Umlazi is one of the largest townships in South Africa. It comprises many public primary and secondary schools. For this study, five secondary schools in this district were selected.

## **1.8 Clarification of key terms**

In this section, I am clarifying two key terms of the study. Additional terms, which are leadership and management, will be explained in the next chapter.

### **1.8.1 Township**

A township is a non-white neighbourhood in which black people reside and it is without any substantial urban elements as witnessed by its “rudimentary infrastructure (public services, recreation, industry, transport, green spaces)” (Jürgens, Donaldson, Rule, & Bähr, 2013, p. 256). In addition, what characterises a township is low-cost housing developments (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011), poverty, violence, and crime (Zulu, Bhengu & Mkhize, 2019). Therefore, the selected secondary schools in this study exist in situations I mention here.

### **1.8.2 Position**

An organisation exists because it wants to accomplish particular goals and objectives. For this to occur, it must have what is referred to as agents (Fox, Barbuceanu, & Gruninger, 1996). Agents perform activities for and of the organisation to enable it to attain its goals. For example, agents in an organisation can be people (Fox et al., 1996). These people, in an organisation, fill in positions that are different from each other for it to serve its intention (Aldrin & Gayatri, 2014). According to Fox et al. (1996), a position refers to a particular authority a person has in an organisation. It comprises a set of responsibilities and tasks a person carries out to accomplish organisational goals (Fox et al., 1996). Therefore, in this study, deputy principalship is perceived as a position. With this, I mean that individuals who are deputy principals have a set of responsibilities and tasks they perform to enable their schools to achieve goals and objectives.

## **1.9 Outline of chapters**

This inquiry comprises five chapters. Below I outline each chapter.

### **Chapter one**

Chapter one serves as an introduction and orientation to the study. The chapter provides the introduction and background to the study, the rationale for the study, the problem statement, and the aim and focus of the study. Additionally, the chapter presents the significance of the study and location of the study, clarification of terms, and the outline of chapters

### **Chapter two**

Chapter two presents a detailed discussion on the review of national and international literature that relates to the research topic. Additionally, it provides a discussion on the distributed leadership theory, which is the theoretical framework in which this study is framed.

### **Chapter three**

Chapter three offers the research design and methodology of this study. Firstly, it provides the research paradigm, followed by the research design, research methodology, and sampling procedures. Also, a discussion on data generation and analysis methods is presented. Lastly, it discusses the issues of trustworthiness and ethics.

### **Chapter four**

Chapter four discusses data in three sections which represent the key research questions of the study. These sections are perspectives of principals on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools, principals in deploying deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools, and principals' vindication of deputy principals' deployment.

## **Chapter five**

Chapter five provides the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Firstly, it provides the summary of the study, followed by the conclusions derived from findings and presentation of recommendations.

### **1.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter intended to provide the introduction and orientation to the study. To achieve this, I began by presenting the introduction and background to the study, followed by the study's rationale. I discussed the genesis of this research and why I believed it was vital for it to be carried out. After this, I provided the problem statement, which highlighted why principals' perceptions of the position of deputy principals should not be disregarded. Thirdly, I discussed the aims and focus, and significance of the study. Lastly, I offered the clarification of key terms and the outline of chapters. The next chapter discusses the literature review based on the research topic and the theoretical framework in which the study is framed.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the literature review and the theoretical framework. A literature review is an objective, thorough summary and critical analysis of the current state of research relating to the topic that a researcher is studying (Carnwell & Daly, 2001; Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008; Denney & Tweksbury, 2012; Rowley & Slack, 2004). While a theoretical framework is the “blueprint” for the entire research study (Grant & Osanloo, 2016), it serves as the direction on which one builds and supports their study. It also gives the structure on how one will approach the research in terms of finding answers to answer research questions (Grant & Osanloo, 2016). This chapter starts by presenting the clarification of key concepts, followed by the local and international literature review that focuses on the position of deputy principals, which is organised in themes; following this, the theoretical framework, namely distributed leadership theory, which constitutes this study is presented.

#### **2.2 Clarification of key concepts**

Below I clarify two important concepts in this study, namely leadership, and management.

##### **2.2.1 Understanding leadership**

In any organisation, leadership is crucial because it enables an organisation to yield its objectives. Upon reviewing the literature on the term ‘leadership,’ it appeared that leadership involves influence. For example, Gabriela and Dorinela (2017) view leadership as a process whereby a leader influences his or her followers and redirects their efforts to accomplish organisational goals. This entails that leadership involves a leader’s ability to influence their followers through their organisational power, inspiration, and accountability within the organisation (Gabriela & Dorinela, 2017). This leadership perspective of Gabriela and Dorinela (2017) concurs with that of Aldrin and Gayatri (2014), who defines leadership as a process by which an individual influences others to achieve the organisation's objectives and directs an organisation to be coherent and cohesive. They further mention that this influence process is

carried out by the leader's attributes, such as skills, knowledge, character, values, beliefs, and ethics (Aldrin & Gayatri, 2014). Likewise, Day and Antonakis (2012) perceive leadership as a process of influencing which happens between a leader and followers to achieve goals; the influence process may involve leader's dispositional characteristics and behaviours, follower perspectives and attributions of the leader, and the context in which the influencing process is happening.

Other scholars hold notions that in an organisation, not only one person exerts leadership influence on others. For example, Christie (2010) maintains that leadership influence can be exercised formally and informally in an organisation. This means that it can be exercised at most levels in an organisation and most tasks (Christie, 2010). Likewise, Yukl (2013) considers leadership as a shared and distributed phenomenon, where one individual (a leader) in an organisation is not the only one who exerts leadership influence. Noureen, Shah, Zamir (2020) also maintain that leadership in an organisation cannot be linked to just one individual; fundamentally, it is the collection of different influences and efforts.

This is also the case when looking at leadership from the school perspective. For example, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) provide that leadership encompasses a set of functions and tasks that many different individuals may do throughout a school. In support of this Pont et al. (2008) state that leadership does not reside only in one individual but can be distributed among different persons within and beyond the school. This entails that leadership in a school encompasses people occupying several leadership tasks and functions such as a principal, deputy principal, School Management Team (SMT), School Governing Board (SGB), and school-level staff (Pont et al., 2008). Sharing similar sentiments is Ali and Abdalla (2017) who maintain that leadership is not the provenance of one person but a group of people who provide leadership in the school and, by doing so, give support and motivation to others to accomplish the best for the learners in their care. Therefore, in this study, like the scholars above, leadership is viewed as any activity and influence that any school stakeholder can perform to contribute to attaining school goals.

### **2.2.2 Understanding management**

Like leadership, management also plays a critical role in yielding organisations' objectives. Upon engaging with the literature on the term 'management,' it appeared that management

happens through people (as resources) and other organisational resources. For example, Certo and Certo (2012, p. 7) state that management is “the process of reaching organisational goals by working with and through people and other organisational resources.” Likewise, Musingafi, Zebron, Kaseke, and Chaminuka (2014) define management as an act of coordinating the efforts of people to achieve desired objectives and goals using available resources. Akpan’s (2016) definition concurs with that of Certo and Certo (2012) and Musingafi et al. (2014) as he states that management is the process of working with and through people and a systematic arrangement of organisation resources to make them productive to accomplish objectives and goals.

Scholars provide that management in the organisation occurs through the following functions: planning, organising, directing, and controlling (Ali & Abdalla, 2017; Certo & Certo, 2012; Musingafi et al., 2014). Planning is where the organisation's direction is established (Schraeder, Self, Jordan, & Portis, 2014). It involves choosing tasks that must be done to accomplish organisational goals, outlining how the activities must be performed, and indicating when they should be done (Certo & Certo, 2012). Organising is assigning the activities developed under the planning function to various people and groups within the organisation (Certo & Certo, 2012). This means organising “creates a mechanism to put plans into action” (Certo & Certo, 2012, p. 7). Directing is a process of communicating with, supervising, guiding, and inspiring people (sub-ordinate) in the organisation to ensure they work effectively and efficiently to achieve the organisational goals (Musingafi et al., 2014). As the last function, controlling is the process that ensures whether the resources are acquired and used efficiently in accomplishing the organisational goals (Musingafi et al., 2014). This includes checking the performance of employees to assess whether they are achieving the planned performance or not (Musingafi et al., 2014).

When looking at management from the school perspective, scholars see it differently. For example, Christie (2010) views management in school as a structural position, as principal and deputy principal positions. She states that these structural positions carry standard responsibilities and accountabilities (Christie, 2010). She further mentions that management is unlike leadership; that is, management is based on the school's position, and leadership is based on the person him or herself. Ali and Abdalla (2017) view management as the realisation of the school's policies and the effective and efficient maintenance of its current activities. Therefore, given all the above, this study views management as any activity that consists of planning, organising, directing, and controlling to attain school goals.

### **2.3 The position of deputy principals in schools**

Deputy principals, as second-in-command in school leadership and management, perform many functions. They are responsible for the management and administrative responsibilities in schools, as the study by Bulawa and Mhlauli (2018) in Botswana suggests that deputy principals have a responsibility of managing academics, coordinating teachers' development, and managing school finances. Furthermore, deputy principals assist teachers in their teaching areas and are also responsible for ensuring that learners take their studies momentous (Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2018). In New South Wales, Australia, deputy principals' management and administrative duties included keeping law and order in schools, the school calendar, teachers' supervision, welfare, and allocations, and ensuring that learners follow school rules (Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017). In the South African context, the deputy principals' administration duties and responsibilities are stipulated in the document called the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM), which the Minister of Education determines in terms of the Employment of Educators Act 1998 (Department of Basic Education, 2016a). On page thirty, PAM provides that deputy principals' administration duties and responsibilities involve the school calendar, managing the school functions, duty roster, and admission of new pupils (DBE, 2016a). Furthermore, making arrangements to cover absent educators, handling school finances, school maintenance, and conducting class visits (DBE, 2016a).

As it is in the international context, deputy principals in South Africa are recognised as holding a formal position in school leadership and management. However, deputy principals are still expected to teach in schools. For example, in Botswana, Bulawa and Mhlauli's (2018) study shows that deputy principals have classes to teach as ordinary teachers do. This is also the case in Ioannina, Greece, as Brinia, Mastora, and Psoni (2020) maintain that deputy principals are not exempted from their teaching responsibilities or duties and are obliged to be full-time teachers. In this way, they simultaneously undertake administrative and teaching roles (Brinia et al., 2020). In the South African context, PAM stipulates that deputy principals must engage in-class teaching as per the workload of the school's relevant post-level and needs (DBE, 2016a). Furthermore, they must evaluate and record the achievement of learners taught (DBE, 2016a).

Apart from the duties mentioned above, studies by Abrahamsen (2018), Ara (2014), Bulawa and Mhlauli (2018), and Nieuwenhuizen (2011) have reported numerous additional

responsibilities that deputy principals perform in schools. Deputy principals are responsible for facilitating morning assemblies (Shore & Walshaw, 2018), they manage learner discipline (Ara, 2014; Jansen & du Plessis, 2020), they manage extra and co-curricular activities (Jansen & du Plessis, 2020; Shore & Walshaw, 2018), and also they manage student teachers (Jansen, 2019; Jansen & du Plessis, 2020). Apart from this, deputy principals are responsible for addressing the conflict between staff members (Cranston et al., 2004; Jansen, 2019), meet with parents regarding their learners' progress, and liaising with relevant government departments on behalf of the principal (DBE, 2016a). They also mentor teachers (Shore & Walshaw, 2018; Jansen & du Plessis, 2020) and deputise for principals when they are not available at school. The duties that deputy principals perform are not limited to the above mentioned, they vary according to the school needs (Barnett et al., 2012). Harvey and Sheridan (1995) note that the additional responsibilities deputy principals perform contribute to the school's stability and order of the day-to-day operation.

#### **2.4 The position of principals in schools**

Principals, as first-in-command in school leadership and management, are responsible for performing many tasks. They are responsible for the management and administrative responsibilities in schools. For example, the study by Oliver III (2013) suggests that principals' management and administrative duties in New Jersey are to provide the essential resources to staff members to meet their goals, deal with paperwork, scheduling, school budget, and day-to-day operations of the school. This is also the case in the study of Brandt (2003) conducted on four principals to understand their position. Brandt (2003) found that principals' management and administrative tasks involved managing the school budgets, dealing with parents, allocating adequate resources to staff members, and ensuring that the whole school is operating. Like deputy principals, principals' management and administration responsibilities are stipulated in PAM in the South African context. Their duties involve the professional management of the school, putting into effect all the educational programmes and curriculum activities, and managing all teachers and support staff (DBE, 2016a). In addition, safekeeping school records, giving proper instructions and guidelines for timetabling, admission, and placement of students, and making regular school inspections to ensure that the premises and equipment are being used appropriately and that good discipline is being maintained (DBE, 2016a).

Apart from the leadership role principals hold in schools, principals are still expected to teach in many contexts. For example, in his study conducted on four principals, Brandt (2003) found that principals still need to teach as general teachers do. They had to be in classrooms to have regular contact with kids to understand what classroom life is all about to be able to create and maintain a robust learning environment (Brandt, 2003). The findings of Brandt (2003) resonate with Pont et al. (2008, p. 74) who state that, in some other countries, school principals still need to teach “so that they can better understand and support teachers and keep up with teaching methods, tasks that can hardly be undertaken if the principal is detached from classroom life and educational experience.” This is also the case in the South African context; principals still need to engage in class-teaching as per the workload of the relevant post-level teacher and the school's needs and assess and record the achievement of students taught (DBE, 2016a).

Apart from the duties mentioned above, principals are still responsible for other responsibilities in schools. Firstly, they are responsible for instructional leadership tasks (Achoka, 2007; Brandt, 2003; Oliver III, 2013; Sebastian, Camburn, & Spillane, 2018; Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). These tasks consist of work that has to do with strengthening teaching and learning in school (Jansen, 2019; Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop, & Zeitoun, 2003; Usdan et al., 2000). Secondly, they are responsible for communication responsibilities (Brandt, 2003; Oliver III, 2013; DBE, 2016a; Sebastian et al., 2018). This involves developing relationships with stakeholders to achieve school objectives, meeting with parents regarding their children's progress and conduct, and maintaining contact with social, cultural, sports, social, and community organisations (Brandt, 2003; Oliver III, 2013; DBE, 2016a). Thirdly, principals are responsible for personnel duties or decisions (Brandt, 2003; Oliver III, 2013; DBE, 2016a; Sebastian et al., 2018). This includes ensuring that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff members, providing professional leadership within the school, and guiding, supervising, and providing professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school (Brandt, 2003; Oliver III, 2013; DBE, 2016a). Lastly, principals must provide visionary leadership in schools (Brandt, 2003; Jansen, 2019; Oliver III, 2013; Pont et al., 2008; Usdan et al., 2000). This involves being innovative, demonstrating energy and commitment to others, taking risks when necessary, fostering collaboration by endorsing cooperative objectives, building trust, and motivating staff to become capable in what they do and strengthening them by sharing power and information (Brandt, 2003; Jansen, 2019; Oliver III, 2013; Pont et al., 2008; Usdan et al., 2000). I note that the responsibilities of principals I mention here are not limited to this as they may vary according to school needs.

## **2.5 School principals in determining the duties of deputy principals**

In a school, a principal cannot lead and manage alone; he or she needs “professional assistance from a skilled colleague” (Arar, 2014, p. 96) who can assist in leading and managing the school. The position of deputy principals is to provide professional assistance to principals (Arar, 2014). Deputy principals in schools perform tasks or duties that principals assign to them (Arar, 2014; Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2018; Gaston, 2005; Harvey & Sheridan, 1995; Jansen & du Plessis, 2020; Jubilee, 2013; Lim, 2016). These duties may be defined by the needs of the school and how much power principals are willing to share (Flowers, 2014). For example, this sharing of power is evident in the study of Lim (2016) in the Canadian context. Lim (2016) found that principals shared their responsibilities with their deputy principals to motivate or encourage them in their role. Gaston (2005) states that principals sharing some of their responsibilities with deputy principals enable them to gain a better perception of the position of principals and this could prepare them for the principalship.

Flowers (2014) and Gaston (2005) argue that principals at times assign to deputy principals the duties that they do not have time to perform or are not interested in doing. Contrary to this, Jansen and du Plessis (2020) found that principals use distributed leadership in assigning the tasks to deputy principals in the South African context, in Pretoria. Principals encourage their deputy principals' inputs and involve them in school decision-making (Jansen & du Plessis, 2020). This study further depicts that the duties principals assign to their deputy principals enable them to lead their schools collaboratively because leadership in their schools is seen as a collective endeavour rather than an action performed by the principals alone (Jansen & du Plessis, 2020). Similarly, in the Canadian context, Lim and Pollock (2019) found that principals determine the tasks and duties of their deputy principals collaboratively with them. The findings of Lim and Pollock (2019) show that this involves principals deciding with deputy principals what duties and tasks deputy principals must handle. Also, considering the workload fluctuation during the school year several times to ensure deputy principals do not perform several time-consuming tasks concurrently (Lim & Pollock, 2019). The findings of Jansen and du Plessis (2020) and Lim and Pollock (2019) resonate with what Gaston (2005, p. 56) states: the duties of the deputy principals should be “solidly defined and delineated through a true team approach.”

Apart from principals using distributed leadership or collaborating with their deputy principals to assign tasks to them, principals also determine tasks for their deputy principals based on their strengths (Ribbins, 1997). For example, Hughes and James (1999) in South Wales found that the duties of deputy principals were assigned to them by their principals based on their attributes and expertise. The findings of Hughes and James (1999) concur with that of Jansen (2019). In South Africa, in the Tshwane south district of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), Jansen (2019) found that principals in schools determined their deputy principals' duties according to their strong points, expertise, specialties, and experience. These two studies resonate with the findings of Lim (2016) in Ontario, Canada. Lim (2016) also found that principals assign their deputy principals' tasks based on their strengths. Further, principals also see where their deputy principals are interested in performing leadership and need growth (Lim, 2016) which are the same findings Lim and Pollock (2019) found in their study in the Canadian context.

## **2.6 Relationship between the principal and deputy principal**

The enormous question in schools is what can the deputy principal do to assist the principal in making teachers, learners, and other school stakeholders work toward the same objective? (Michel, 1996). The answer to this question is that the deputy principal needs to be a significant bridge between the principal's vision and teachers, learners, and other school stakeholders who are important for the realisation of this vision (Ho et al., 2020). This may be possible if principals and deputy principals share the same vision and collaborate in achieving it (Ho et al., 2020). To this end, the principal and deputy principal, as first and second in command in school leadership and management need to be in a good working relationship (Veerasingam, 2019). The relationship between the principal and deputy principal is significant and crucial (Doring, 1993; Hughes & James, 1999). This is because it enables the principal and deputy principal to achieve school objectives and goals (Doring, 1993).

Mattocks (2016) notes that it is up to the principal to determine the style of working relationship between him or her and the deputy principal. For example, the principal and the deputy principal can be in a working relationship that is not hierarchical (Mattocks, 2016), where they share leadership responsibilities (Blöse, 2018; Jansen, 2019). Singletary-Dixon (2011) views this relationship of the sharing leadership responsibilities as a mentoring relationship between the principal and deputy principal. Similarly, Wong (2009) perceives it as a mentor-learner

relationship. This is where the principal trusts and empowers the deputy principal in various leadership roles (Singletary-Dixon, 2011) and grooms and utilises the skills, knowledge, and talents of the deputy principal in a broader capacity in school leadership and management (Hilliard & Newsome, 2013).

Another way the principal can be in a working relationship with a deputy principal is by offering emotional support and availability in the deputy principal's work (Cohen & Schechter, 2019). A deputy principal has a unique position in school leadership and management, and he or she ends up experiencing spikes in the workload (Veerasley, 2019), which can sometimes lead to stress (Doring, 1993). Therefore, during these times, the principal becomes a professional figure who is accessible and emotionally available to share difficulties and feelings and offers the deputy principal a sense of safety and assurance that the deputy principal is professionally capable for the position (Cohen & Schechter, 2019).

I concur with Veerasley (2019) that the relationship between the principal and deputy principal cannot be overemphasised. It plays the role of determining the school's success because if the principal and deputy principal can share leadership and support each other, other school staff members themselves alone can imitate the same trend in their work (Veerasley, 2019). This relationship is also essential and helpful to the deputy principal in preparation for the principalship. This is because the principal and deputy principal's relationship provide the learning experience the deputy principal cannot obtain anywhere else (Oliver III, 2013).

## **2.7 Principals' role on the professional development of deputy principals**

Professional development is an essential part of deputy principals' continued growth and training (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011). According to Blose (2018), professional development plays a vital role in enabling deputy principals to cope with their responsibilities. Barnett et al. (2012, p. 96) are of the same view as Blose (2018) that professional development assists deputy principals to "handle the mounting complexities of the job." Also, as deputy principals help and sometimes deputise for principals, professional development enables deputy principals to execute new strategies from increased duties and responsibilities they perform when the principal is away (Flowers, 2014). Therefore, all of this suggests that the professional development deputy principals receive focus on developing their skills to cope with responsibilities that come with their position.

Barnett et al. (2012) provide that principals have the power to give relevant or meaningful growth and development opportunities to their deputy principals. This can happen in two ways: principals arranging development programmes for their deputy principals and mentoring their deputy principals. For example, in Sydney, Australia, Leaf and Odhiambo (2017) found that for principals to professionally develop or meet the professional development needs of their deputy principals, they took them to council meetings, conferences, work with academics and work with the school budget. In contrast, in New York, Nieuwenhuizen (2011) found that some deputy principals who requested to attend professional development programmes from their principals were being denied the opportunity to do so because their principals could not approve the time off or expense involved with the professional development.

As provided above, principals can also professionally develop their deputy principals through mentoring; Veerasamy (2019, p. 23) states that mentoring offers a deputy principal “constructive learning opportunities.” This is because these learning opportunities serve the individual deputy principal's needs (Veerasamy, 2019). That is, they occur in real-life situations and are coordinated by the school principal (Veerasamy, 2019). For example, Leaf and Odhiambo's (2017, p. 42) findings in Sydney, Australia, depict that principal mentoring to deputy principals included opportunities for deputy principals like “relieving principals, participating in growth coaching and explicitly discussing their career development.” While in Alabama, in the United States, Searby, Browne-Ferrigno, and Wang (2017) found that deputy principals needed their principals to mentor them in instructional leadership. This involved instructional programmes, pedagogy, setting school direction, and developing staff (Searby et al., 2017).

Principals should continuously provide professional development to deputy principals (Oliver, 2005). Further, in any way that it is offered, it needs to move beyond merely providing information but motivate deputy principals to “step outside the box” and enable them to perform instructional leadership (Oliver, 2005).

## **2.8 Conflict and ambiguity in the duties principals assign to deputy principals in schools**

Generally, the term conflict means ‘clash.’ Things clash because they are coinciding and must not; they operate differently and do not aim to the same end. In schools, principals make deputy principals experience conflict because they want deputy principals to achieve many tasks

concurrently (Celik, 2013). As deputy principals enact various responsibilities, these tasks overlap and conflict with one another (Byrd-Poller, 2013). According to Stewart (2020), an example of this is where principals assign deputy principals to deal concurrently with paperwork, professional development of educators, learner discipline and resistant educators, being visible in classrooms (teaching) and hallways, and developing positive relationships with learners.

The position of deputy principals in schools in terms of responsibilities and tasks they perform does not have a well-defined job description (Stewart, 2020). This leads to what is called ambiguity (Stewart, 2020). Ambiguities are the responsibilities and tasks that principals assign to deputy principals and they consist of many grey areas (ill-defined), inconsistency, and at times incoherent (Marshall, 1991). According to Lim and Pollock (2019), ambiguity in the duties that principals assign to deputy principals occurs mostly because principals get transferred to other schools every few years, thus deputy principals' tasks vary based on the expectations of the new principals they work with. For example, a recent study conducted by Ho, Shaari, and Kang (2021) in Singapore, shows that deputy principals face ambiguity in duties they perform each time they work with different principals because principals do not make explicit expectations regarding what deputy principals must do (Ho et al., 2021). This is also the case in Ontario, Canada. Deputy principals took on tasks at the whim of the principals (Mitchell, Armstrong, & Hands, 2017). This means deputy principals' task portfolios changed as the principal changed in their schools, thus, creating ambiguity and a lack of clarity in what they do (Mitchell et al., 2017).

## **2.9 Theoretical framework**

This study is framed within the distributed leadership theory. Bolden (2011) propounds that several concepts are cited when one tracks the theoretical origins of distributed leadership theory. However, in the scholarship of educational leadership and management, the most notably mentioned concepts are the distributed cognition and activity theory; scholars such as Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) and Harris (2008), among others, have contributed to the distributed leadership construct. Distributed cognition indicates that learning happens through interactions within and across several teams (Harris, 2008), while the activity theory implies that human behaviour is contextualised in a situation and actions (Hermann, 2016).

Therefore, distributed leadership theory draws from both these concepts because they underscore how context influences human learning, activity, and interaction (Harris, 2008).

According to Bush and Glover (2014), the essential starting point in comprehending the distributed leadership theory is to disconnect it from positional authority. Chang (2011) also explains that the distributed leadership theory belongs to post-heroic leadership belief; it stipulates that a team's performance is better than that of the leader working individually. From this leadership approach, the distributed responsibility, establishment of collective responsibility, and teamwork are significant (Chang, 2011). The distributed leadership theory is proposed as a rejection of hierarchical or heroic structures for “leaders who can help design a culture in which leadership is distributed in an emergent and benevolent way” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008, p. 232). This means that the distributed leadership theory decentres the leader from positional or hierarchical authority or role (Harris, 2003). This decentralisation of the leader allows leadership to be distributed to people in an institution (Hermann, 2016).

Distributed leadership theory recognises that all people in an organisation can exercise leadership (Harris, 2008). Thus, the involvement of people in the organisation is promoted as they should contribute to the enactment of leadership (Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014). Distributed leadership theory also focuses on the interactions of those in designated and informal leadership positions rather than their actions (Harris & Spillane, 2008). These interactions are perceived to result in leadership practice, as Spillane (2004) defines leadership practice as the product of interactions of leaders, followers, and their situations rather than the actions of an individual leader. Leadership practice is also centred on each leader’s and follower’s knowledge and skills (Spillane, 2004). It is also what people do, how and why they do it, and can be spread across two or more people working separately yet interdependently (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Spillane, 2005). For example, principals and deputy principals in schools have different knowledge and skills that they apply in carrying out their tasks; in their leadership positions, they work separately but depend on each other for their schools to function well.

In practice, the core of distributed leadership is engaging many individuals in leadership activity (Harris, Muijs, & Crawford, 2003). This means that in practice, distributed leadership requires those in formal leadership positions to give power and control to others (Harris, 2002). However, in an organisation like a school, for example, an increase of the power and influence of other people does not reduce the power and influence of the principal (Pont et al., 2008) but offers growth and developmental opportunities to those whom power and control are

relinquished upon (Storey, 2004). As this occurs, leadership capacity increases, and succession planning and management occur throughout the school (Pont et al., 2008). That is why Harris (2002) is of the view that in practice, in a school, distributed leadership leads to school development. In a similar vein, Pont et al. (2008, p. 82) maintain that “distributed leadership is an enactment of leadership tasks across leaders, followers, and situations” transforms teaching and learning in a school by enabling the knowledge, expertise, and skills of others contribute to school leadership. Likewise, Harris and Spillane (2008) maintain that research evidence provides that distributed leadership positively affects school outcomes and learner learning. Therefore, the above shows that organisations are subject to change from traditional leadership styles to leadership with a “greater influence on organisational” (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 33) collaboration, development, and effectiveness.

Like any other approach, distributed leadership is not without critics. In theory, for example, distributed leadership has diverse meanings and appears to share certain characteristics with leadership that is dispersed, devolved, teamed, shared, and democratic (Pont et al., 2008). Harris and Spillane (2008, p. 32) believe that this accumulation of allied terms serves to uncertain meaning and also presents a real danger that distributed leadership is simply used as a catch-all term that describes any form of “devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice.” Likewise, Hartley (2007) mentions that the concept, distributed leadership itself, has no agreed-upon explanation. Apart from this, he also says that distributed leadership is not warranted by any evidence that it directly influences school achievement levels but the only difficulty in its functionalisation in schools (Hartley, 2007). This is evident in the study of Storey (2004) titled ‘the problem of distributed leadership in schools.’ This research shows that through distributed leadership, multiple leaders (the principals and other leaders) came increasingly into conflict as they had competing ideas of success, visions, good practice, and suitable performance measurement procedures at the individual, departmental, and whole-school levels (Storey, 2004). That is why Timperley (2005, p. 417) states that “distributing leadership over more people is a risky business.”

Apart from critics, other scholars offer their suggestions so that there can be an improvement in distributed leadership in practice. Like Williams (2011), he states that in schools where distributed leadership is implemented, measures must be in place to evaluate the correlation between leadership success and improved student outcomes. However, means of evaluating leadership success or effectiveness beyond student achievement should also be determined (Williams, 2011). This suggestion entails that measures in schools must be in place to assess

the effects of distributed leadership on organisational outcomes, like organisational commitment or the job satisfaction of people in the leadership team in schools and the educators performance or well-being (Hulpia, Devos, & Rosseel, 2009).

Therefore, given all the above, in this study, I acknowledge that principals, deputy principals, and departmental heads are all perceived as leaders in schools, and distributed leadership theory allows all these individuals, including teachers, to contribute to the enactment of leadership. As Harris (2008) puts it, under distributed leadership, individuals in formal leadership positions and those in informal leadership positions contribute to the enactment of leadership. In distributed leadership, “multiple leaders can exist in a team, with each leader assuming a complementary leadership role” (Harris, 2008, p. 174). Duties are split apart, shared, and rotated among leaders (Harris, 2008).

Although principals and deputy principals are formal leaders in schools, this study views principals as senior leaders and deputy principals as the first layer of followers of principals. Spillane (2004) maintains that from the distributed leadership perspective, leadership practice is a product of interaction between leaders, followers, and context. In this study, the principals whose perspectives were examined were perceived as leaders, deputy principals were perceived as co-leaders also as principals’ followers, and the context was their school contexts. In framing this study within the distributed leadership theory, firstly, it enabled me to investigate through principals’ perspectives what do deputy principals in their position do, how, and why. Secondly, since principals play a crucial role in allowing for distributed leadership within their schools (Harris, 2008), I also assessed and established how principals deploy deputy principals and why they deploy them the way they do in the management of their schools.

## **2.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter aimed to provide a literature review relating to the research topic and the theoretical framework within which this study is framed. To this end, it started by discussing the clarification of key terms, followed by the literature review which was presented in themes. Following this, a discussion on the distributed leadership theory which formed the theoretical framework that framed this inquiry was presented. The next chapter provides the research design and methodology for this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter three outlines the research design and methodology for this inquiry. This chapter firstly presents and rationalises the choice of the paradigm and research design for this study. Secondly, it offers the research style, sampling, and a data generation method this study used. Thirdly, the chapter presents the data analysis method employed to analyse the generated data. Lastly, it discusses the trustworthiness criteria used in this inquiry and ethical considerations that were attended to in the study and provides the chapter summary.

#### 3.2 Research paradigm

A paradigm comprises the following components: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology (Cresswell, 2009; Scotland, 2012; Wang & Zhu, 2016). Firstly, ontology is concerned with what comprises reality, that is..., what is... (Scotland, 2012). In research, a researcher needs to take a position about his or her perspectives of how things are and work (Scotland, 2012). Secondly, epistemology is concerned with how knowledge can be made, acquired, and communicated, that is, what it means to know. In research, epistemology means how we come to know something, how we know facts, truths, or reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thirdly, the methodology is concerned with the logic and flow of the systematic processes followed in organising and carrying out a research project, and in gaining knowledge about a research problem (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Lastly, axiology refers to ethical issues and considerations of the research; it involves how the researcher defines, evaluates, and comprehends right and wrong behaviour about the research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore, all of these components orient or determine the paradigm a researcher may adopt in a research project (Kafle, 2011; Wang & Zhu, 2016). There are numerous research paradigms, within which a researcher can locate him or herself to conduct research, this includes among others, positivist, post-positivist, interpretive, and critical. A researcher must be clear in terms of which paradigm within which he or she positions him or herself (Wang & Zhu, 2016). In this study, I positioned myself within the interpretive paradigm to engage with the perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals, which were informed by their experiences.

I positioned myself within the interpretivist paradigm for four reasons. Firstly, because the interpretivist paradigm ontological position is relativism. Relativism is a belief that reality is subjective and dissimilar from individual to individual (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This means that “reality is individually constructed; there are as many realities as individuals” (Scotland, 2012, p. 11). Secondly, I positioned myself within the interpretive paradigm because of its subjective epistemological stance (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This means that the researcher, informed by the interactions with participants, makes meaning of the data obtained from these interactions through their thinking and cognitive processing (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The intention is not to generalise but to explore the meanings participants place on the world (Cresswell, 2009; Phothongsunan, 2010). Thirdly, I positioned myself within the interpretive paradigm because of its naturalist methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This means that the interpretive positioning aims to comprehend phenomenon from an individual’s perspective (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012) and processes of interaction among individuals; it also focuses on contexts in which individuals live and work to comprehend their historical and cultural settings (Cresswell, 2009). Lastly, I positioned myself within the interpretive paradigm because of its balanced axiology, that is, the results of the research mirror the researcher's values (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

In this research project, I intended to explore principals’ perspectives on the position of deputy principals. The interpretive paradigm allowed me to understand and make meaning of how principals see the position of deputy principals. Secondly, with this research project, I aimed to find out how principals assign deputy principals’ management and leadership responsibilities in their schools and why they do this the way they do. In this way, the interpretive paradigm enabled me to discover the lived realities: experiences, behaviours, and actions of principals in their schools about the position of deputy principals.

### **3.3 Research design**

Education research is a disciplined effort to solve problems or address questions by collecting and analysing primary data to describe, explain, generalise, and predict (Anderson & Arsenaault, 1998). To this end, the researcher must have a research design that serves the research purpose. A research design depicts a suitable framework for a study (Sileyew, 2019) or a plan or strategy of action (Crotty, 2003). It shapes the choice and use of specific methods and links them to the desired results (Crotty, 2003). Similarly, Jelagat and Murei (2019) provide that a research

design informs the arrangement of the conditions for the generation and analysis of the data in a way that intends to combine relevance to the research objective. A research design is determined or controlled by the research intentions (Crotty, 2003); that is, the type of problem the researcher is exploring determines the choice of research design the researcher utilises (Ngcobo, 2019).

In this study, I adopted qualitative research, which is often referred to as naturalistic because the researcher regularly engages with participants in their contexts, where their events occur (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative researchers explore participants in their natural settings; they attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings the individuals bring to them (Jones, 1995). Therefore, qualitative research aligned with the intentions of my research project. I intended to investigate principals in their schools. I aimed to understand and make meaning of their perspectives on the position of deputy principals in their schools. Qualitative research contrasts quantitative research. While qualitative research presents data in texts, quantitative research shows data in numbers (Kuper, Reeves, & Levinson, 2008). This means quantitative research intends to answer what, how much, and why research questions, whereas qualitative research focuses on answering what, how, and why research questions (Kupe et al., 2008). In line with this view, this study was guided by the following research questions: what are principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools? How do principals deploy deputy principals as their assistants in the management of the school? And why do principals deploy deputy principals the way they do?

The qualitative design enabled me to answer these research questions textually as answers entailed principals' perspectives based on their real-life experiences and behaviours on the position of their deputy principals.

### **3.4 Research methodology**

When a researcher intends to conduct research, before he or she thinks of how the data will be gathered to reach the purpose of the research, he or she must first have a way of “doing research” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 41). A research style mirrors the beliefs (refer to sub-heading 3.2) about the most practical or essential way of acquiring the knowledge the research intends to gather (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This research project took a qualitative research design; qualitative researchers inquire about participants' experiences and

behaviours that are embedded in the contexts or settings they live in or work. Therefore, to carry out this research project, I adopted a case study methodology. Rule and John (2011) provide that a case study is a systematic and in-depth research of a single case. The objective is to arrive at a detailed description and comprehension of the case (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010) in which “social action takes place” (Hood, 2009, p. 690). A case could be an institution, person, or group of individuals (Ary et al., 2010).

The case study methodology enabled me to answer the research questions that guided this research project. Baxter and Jack (2008) state that if researchers intend to use a case study as a research methodology and are determined that it will help to best answer the research questions, they must consider what type of case study they will employ. In my research project, the type of case study I used is a multiple case study. A multiple case study is where two or more cases are studied concurrently or sequentially to generate a broader understanding of the research topic (Campbell & Ahrens, 1998; Crowe et al., 2011). Principals that I selected to participate in this study came from different secondary schools with their own experiences. As I have provided above, a case in a case study research could be a person; like in this research project, five principals were selected and were individually treated as a case. I engaged with these principals independently in their schools since I understood that they had their own experiences with their deputies in leading and managing their schools. In support of all of this, Baxter and Jack (2008) provide that a multiple-case study is required if a research study contains more than a single case. Therefore, using a multiple case study enabled me to generate data from the principals that I selected to be compared against each other, thereby increasing my understanding of my research topic.

### **3.5 Sampling**

For the research study to obtain data and answer the research questions it intends to answer, the researcher must sample participants. A sample is a small group being investigated or from which data are acquired (Ary et al., 2010; McMillan, 1996). In research, a sample is a part of or portion of what is called a population (Ary et al., 2010). A population is described as “all members of any well-defined class of people, events, or objects” (Ary et al., 2010, p. 148). Since it is impossible to investigate the whole population, the researcher must choose a sample that will sufficiently represent the population so that what is explained in the sample will also be true of the population (McMillan, 1996).

Where every item in the population has an equal possibility of being included in the sample, a researcher conducts what is called probability sampling (Ary et al., 2010; McMillan, 1996; Taherdoost, 2016). However, if the research intends not to generalise to a population but achieve insights into a specific phenomenon or individuals, or events, then the researcher conducts what is called non-probability sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Omona, 2013; Taherdoost, 2016). There are different types of non-probability sampling, including, convenience, quota, dimensional, purposive, and snowball sampling (McMillan, 1996). In this research project, I utilised two sampling methods, namely: convenience and purposive sampling.

Convenience sampling occurs when a researcher selects participants based on availability or expedience (Baltes & Ralph, 2021; Omona, 2013). Convenience sampling involves selecting the nearest individuals to serve as participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) or individuals are selected to be in the sample because they happen to be situated near to where the researcher resides (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Therefore, I utilised the convenience sampling because I am a full-time master's student at UKZN and I reside at Umlazi district. My research project intended to find the perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals and how and why principals assign responsibilities to deputy principals the way they do in school. I selected five secondary school principals at Umlazi district to research because it was easy for me to access them. One may argue that I might have used participants who did not assist this research project to find answers to its research questions. To counter this argument, convenience sampling was used alongside purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is where a researcher purposively picks participants that will answer the research questions (Cohen et al., 2007). This means purposive sampling is the intentional choice of participants "due to the qualities" (Etikan et al., 2015, p. 2) they possess. For this study, I selected principals with a minimum of ten years of experience in leading schools and have deputies with a minimum of three years of experience serving as their assistants and co-leaders. Principals who possess such experience were selected because they know what their leadership role and that of their deputies entail. They had gained good practical experience in school leadership to understand the dynamics of school leadership and how to cope with them.

### **3.6 Data generation**

I used interviews to generate data from the five secondary school principals I selected. Generally, an “interview is a face-to-face encounter” (Lou & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 248). In the research field, an interview involves asking questions and obtaining answers from participants (Kabir, 2016). A researcher can use different types of interviews to generate data; this includes structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. Firstly, structured interviews are, necessarily, verbally administered questionnaires (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). A number of predetermined questions are asked in a fixed order, with little or no variation and no scope for follow-up questions to responses that necessitate further elaboration (Gill et al., 2008). Secondly, unstructured interviews do not reflect any preconceived ideas, and it uses open-ended questions, with little control over participants’ responses (Kabir, 2016). This type of interview progresses primarily upon initial response to the open-ended question the researcher asks the participant (Gill et al., 2008).

Lastly, a semi-structured interview, which was employed in this research project, allows a researcher to prepare predetermined open questions. The interview unfolds in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are essential based on the questions the researcher asks (Longhurst, 2003). This means that participants offer subjective responses about a specific situation or phenomenon they have experienced (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Participants answer open-ended questions as they wish, and the researcher may probe the participants’ responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). I used the semi-structured interviews because, as an interpretive researcher, I was aware that “individuals understand the world in varying ways” (Lou & Wildemuth, 2017, p. 249). With this, I mean that I comprehended that the participants may have different views on the position of deputy principals; also, they may have deployed them differently. The semi-structured interview enabled the principals to express their perspectives on the predetermined questions I asked them (which was the way data was generated). In this way, I tapped into principals’ knowledge of how they perceive the position of their deputy principals and also understood their experiences and actions embedded in their schools in terms of the position of deputy principals. In instances where principals offered responses on the questions I asked them, and I saw that I needed clarification because their answers could contribute to the research objectives, I made them elucidate more because a semi-structured interview allowed for such.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis is a crucial part of the research study. This is because data analysis is where the researcher makes the research study serve its intention by answering its research questions. As mentioned above, in this research project, I generated qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative data is generally dependent on interpretation (Ibrahim, 2012). Hence, it requires numerous explanations (Ibrahim, 2012). This is because huge amounts of qualitative evidence are often gathered during data generation (Ibrahim, 2012). Each qualitative research study must analyse generated data in a particular way as there are different methods of analysing data. For the purposes of this research project, I used thematic analysis to analyse data.

The thematic analysis was used to analyse the data generated through semi-structured interviews. I state this because Braun and Clarke (2006) provide that thematic analysis is used when the researcher intends to find experiences, meanings, and the realities of participants. Clarke and Braun (2017) are of the similar view that thematic analysis is used when a researcher intends to identify patterns of meaning within and across data set about participants' lived experiences, perspectives, practices, and behaviours (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This suggests that the thematic analysis is for the research that attempts to find out and comprehend what participants think, feel and do (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Before discussing how data was analysed in this study, I would like to first state how I approached data and analysis in this study. This is because Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, and Braun (2017, p. 11) state that in thematic analysis, a researcher must "make deliberate choices about their approach to data and analysis." That is, a researcher must approach data either inductively or deductively and can analyse data either at a semantic or latent level (Terry et al., 2017). Firstly, an inductive approach in the thematic analysis is where the researcher in the coding process does not try to fit the data in any pre-existing frame or conception, whereas the deductive approach is more driven by the study's research questions and theoretical framework (Majumdar, 2019). Secondly, an analysis at the semantic level is where the codes typically stay "close to the content of the data and the participants' meanings" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 61). At the latent level, the codes capture implicit meaning such as assumptions, concepts, meanings, and ideas that are not explicitly stated. This means that the latent codes identify "meanings that lie beneath the semantic surface of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 61).

Therefore, in this study, the way I approached the data was deductive, and the way I approached the analysis was at the semantic level.

Now, I discuss the process the data generated went through in the process of analysis. The data generated through semi-structured interviews were collected for a period of a month; following this, I transcribed each semi-structured interview using the online Microsoft word dictate function and the transcribe function (Ibrahim, 2012). I saved all the transcribed semi-structured interviews on my computer. The transcriptions were then read multiple times against their original audio recording, and I fixed errors where necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2012). After this process, I started familiarising myself with the entire data sets (all transcribed semi-structured interviews). This enabled me to immerse myself into the entire data sets by reading them repeatedly in an active way and making casual observational notes (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017; Terry, et al., 2017). When I got familiar with the entire data sets, I started reading the data for coding purposes.

The coding process concerns identifying and providing the entire data with label features or ‘tagging’ them with pithy phrases because they are potentially relevant to the study’s research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Terry et al., 2017). In this study, the coding process on each transcribed semi-structured interview involved identifying texts that were relevant to the study’s research questions and highlighting them. I used a Microsoft comment function to tag each highlighted text. Thus, this coding process left me with many highlighted and tagged texts on each data set which I used as themes. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) state that a theme captures something significant about the data in relation to the study’s research questions and “represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.” In this study, I copied all the highlighted and tagged texts (codes) from each data set that were identified during the coding process to new Microsoft word documents which represented each research question for the study. The highlighted and tagged texts that were extracted from each data set were collated into new documents based on similarity (i.e., based around a specific central idea) and relevance to each study’s research questions. I reviewed and re-read these collated codes at least three times for accuracy purposes before creating themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Majumdar, 2019; Terry et al., 2017). After doing this, I started developing themes according to their relevance to the study’s research questions. When developing and naming themes, I made sure that the name of each theme was concise, punchy, and immediately gave the reader a sense of what the theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

The enormous question in qualitative research is how one can establish confidence in the truth of the findings? (Guba, 1981). The answer to this question, qualitative researchers utilise trustworthiness criteria. Rallis and Rossman (2009, p. 264) define trustworthiness as a set of standards that shows that “a research study has been conducted competently and ethically.” To achieve this, qualitative researchers must meet the following criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981).

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility involves the truthfulness of the investigation’s findings (Ary et al., 2010). It focuses on how well the researcher has established confidence in the research results based on the research design, participants, and context being studied (Ary et al., 2010). This means that the findings of the inquiry must mirror the realities and lived experiences of the participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To achieve credibility in this research project, I did what Guba (1981) refers to as member checking. Member checking is a strategy to share the descriptions and analyses of what a researcher learns with the participants to see if they concur, argue with, or want to add to what the researcher is writing about them (Rallis & Rossman, 2009). Therefore, after obtaining data from principals and analysing it, I went back to each principal to check whether the interpretations I made about them mirror the realities they shared with me.

#### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability concerns the extent to which the qualitative research findings may be generalised or applied to the other contexts (Ary et al., 2010; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). As I have provided above, this research project was located within the interpretive paradigm. It used the multiple case study as a research methodology, as well as convenience and purposive sample methods. This means that there is little room for generalisability in this research project because it sought to understand principals in their own settings. However, readers may do their own judgement in terms of transferring findings. To help readers determine transferability, I provided what Guba (1981) refers to as thick descriptive data (see chapter four). This is where

the researcher provides accurate, detailed, and complete descriptions of the setting and participants (Ary et al., 2010). I gave a thick description of the participants and schools under inquiry because, in qualitative research, it is possible to apply qualitative findings to other individuals, contexts, and times to the degree that they are the same to the people, settings, and times in the original study (Ary et al., 2010).

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability assesses whether the research is judicious in terms of the decisions made by the researcher when analysing the data (Hannes, 2011). Ary et al. (2010) state that there are different strategies to assess dependability in research, these are replication logic, audit trail, code–recoding (coding agreement), stepwise replication, triangulation, and interrater comparisons. This study used a stepwise replication. In this strategy, two investigators involved in the study analyse the data separately and then compare results (Ary et al., 2010). In this strategy, the consistency of findings by the separate researchers offers evidence of dependability (Ary et al., 2010). In this study, two researchers were involved, that is me (primary investigator) and Dr Sibonelo Blose (supervising researcher). I engaged in the analysis and the supervising researcher reviewed the analysis and suggested corrections.

### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability involves the degree to which the research is free from bias in the procedures and the interpretation of findings (Ary et al., 2010). To address confirmability, I showed that the study's findings are derived from the generated data by using participants' exact words (Cope, 2014); it is important for a researcher to use the exact words of the participants through verbatim quotes. This serves as a confirmation of the findings presented in the study.

## **3.9 Ethical considerations**

Before a researcher conducts a research study, he or she must adhere to all ethical considerations. Hallberg (2013) provides that ethical considerations are essential to account for if a research study draws data on human beings. Therefore, firstly, I sent letters to principals I

selected requiring them as school gatekeepers to allow me to conduct research in their schools, and getting them to consent to participate in this research project. These letters provided an overview of the intention of the research project. After receiving permission from principals to conduct research in their schools and to participate in this research project, I then, secondly, applied to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE) as the main school gatekeeper to conduct research in secondary schools I selected under Umlazi district. After receiving permission from the KZNDoE, I then, lastly, applied for ethical clearance at UKZN to be granted permission to research the principals of the secondary schools I selected under the name of the university.

After receiving the ethical clearance, I then started generating data. During data generation, I requested each principal to sign an informed consent, consenting to the participation in the study and method of data generation. Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that individuals comprehend what it means to take part in a specific research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate (Cohen et al., 2000). This letter was written in simple language to ensure that principals understood everything (e.g., research objectives, questions, and a data collection method). I note that in this letter, a “clause stipulating that participation is voluntary and the participants have the right to withdraw from the study” (Halai, 2006, p. 5) was available. Dooly, Moore, and Vallejo (2017) state that researchers should be as ethical as possible when interpreting and presenting the research findings. Therefore, in presenting the findings of this research project, I offered principals and their schools pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

### **3.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter aimed to outline the research design and methodology for this study. To this end, it first rationalised the choice of the paradigm and research design for this inquiry. Secondly, it offered the research style, sampling, and a data generation method this study used. Thirdly, it presented how the data generated were analysed in this study. Lastly, it discussed trustworthiness for this study and ethical considerations that were attended to throughout this inquiry. The next chapter provides the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter offered a discussion on the research design and methodology that was utilised to answer the study's research questions. In this chapter, I thematically present and discuss the data. The discussion involves the literature that was reviewed, as well as the theoretical framework that framed this study. The chapter begins by presenting the profiles of the participants, thereafter, data is discussed in three sections which represent the key research questions. These sections are: perspectives of principals on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools, principals in deploying deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools, and principals' vindication of deputy principals' deployment.

#### 4.2 Profiling participants

This inquiry was conducted in five secondary schools in the Umlazi district of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The five secondary schools are located in a township. In these schools, principals were used as data sources. In the below table, I offer the participants and schools names and after that, I present each participant's full profile.

<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Name of school</b>
Mr Phewa	Jele Secondary School
Dr Mthabela	Lorch Secondary School
Mr Mzimela	Hlatshwayo Secondary School
Mr Hlongwane	Mbuyane Secondary School
Mr Nzimande	Mabalane Secondary School

*Table 1: Names of participants and schools*

#### **4.2.1 Mr Phewa**

The first participant is named Mr. Phewa and he is a school principal of Jele secondary school; these are pseudonyms. Mr Phewa is between fifty-five and sixty years of age and his educational qualifications are a Business Administration degree, an Honours degree in Business Administration, a Master of Business Administration degree, a Bachelor of Education degree, and a Bachelor of Education Honours degree. Mr Phewa has twenty-three years of experience as a school principal; he started in this position in the year 2000. Currently, Jele secondary school has an enrolment of 515 learners and 27 teachers. Jele secondary school is under-resourced and has grounds and buildings that are not well taken care of which is common for a township school. In managing the school, Mr Phewa works with one deputy principal and three departmental heads.

#### **4.2.2 Dr Mthabela**

The second participant is named Dr Mthabela and he is a school principal of Lorch secondary school; these are false names. Dr Mthabela is between forty-five and fifty years of age and his educational qualifications are a diploma in Leadership and Management Studies, a Bachelor of Education degree, a Bachelor of Education Honours degree, a Master of Education degree, and a Doctor of Philosophy (Education) degree. Dr Mthabela has sixteen years of experience as a school principal; he started in this position in the year 2005. Currently, Lorch secondary school has an enrolment of 1215 learners and 40 teachers. Lorch secondary school is fairly resourced with two computer laboratories, one science laboratory, and has clean grounds and buildings that are well-taken care of. In managing the school, Dr Mthabela works with two deputy principals and five departmental heads.

#### **4.2.3 Mr Mzimela**

The third participant is named Mr Mzimela and he is a school principal of Hlatshwayo secondary school. Mr Mzimela is between sixty and sixty-five years of age; his educational qualifications are a teacher's certificate, a Higher Diploma in Education (HDE), and a Bachelor of Education degree. Mr Mzimela has twenty years of experience as a school principal; he started in this position in the year 2001. Currently, Hlatshwayo secondary school has an

enrolment of 1259 learners and 40 teachers. Hlatshwayo secondary school is fairly resourced with one computer laboratory, one science laboratory, and has clean grounds and buildings that are well-taken care of. In managing the school, Mr Mzimela works with two deputy principals and five departmental heads.

#### **4.2.4 Mr Hlongwane**

The fourth participant is named Mr Hlongwane and he is the school principal of Mbuyane secondary school. Mr Hlongwane is between fifty-five and sixty years of age and his educational qualifications are a Bachelor of Science degree, a Higher Diploma in Education, and a Bachelor of Education degree. Mr Hlongwane has fifteen years of experience as a school principal; he started in this position in the year 2006. Currently, Mbuyane secondary school has an enrolment of 1234 learners and 53 teachers. Mbuyane secondary school is fairly resourced with two computer laboratories, two science laboratories, and has clean grounds and buildings that are well-taken care of. In managing the school, Mr Hlongwane works with two deputy principals and five departmental heads.

#### **4.2.5 Mr Nzimande**

The fifth participant is named Mr Nzimande and he is the school principal of Mabalane secondary school. Mr Nzimande is between fifty-five and sixty years of age and his educational qualifications are a diploma in education, a Higher Diploma in Education, a Bachelor of Education degree, an Honours degree in Geography and Environmental Studies, an advanced diploma in Management and Leadership, and an advanced diploma in Human Rights and Values in Education. Mr Nzimande has thirteen years of experience as a school principal; he started in this position in the year 2008. Currently, Mabalane secondary school has an enrolment of 1160 learners and 38 teachers. Mabalane secondary school is fairly resourced with two computer laboratories, one science laboratory, and has clean grounds and buildings that are well-taken care of. In managing the school, Mr Nzimande works with two deputy principals and five departmental heads.

### **4.3 Data presentation and discussion**

The findings in this inquiry are presented in seven themes that emerged from data and these themes are discussed under three main themes representing the study's three research questions. The first main theme is perspectives of principals on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools. The second main theme is principals in deploying deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools. The third and final main theme is principals' vindication of deputy principals' deployment.

#### **4.3.1 Perspectives of principals on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools**

This section presents answers to the first research question of the study. It focuses on the participating principals' views on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools. Below, I discuss the three themes that emerged from the data. These themes are: deputy principalship as two-pronged, deputy principals as leaders and part of school committees, and deputy principals as leaders not absolved from the teaching role (deputy principals must show the way in terms of teaching).

##### **4.3.1.1 Deputy principalship as a two-pronged position**

The majority of principals who participated in this study lead big township secondary schools as they have two deputy principals. For this reason, these principals view the deputy principal position as two-pronged. On the one hand, they have an administrative deputy principal who specifically attends to administrative activities; on the other hand, they have an academic deputy principal who is made responsible for academic activities. Below, I present their views on these roles in separate sub-themes:

###### **4.3.1.1.1 Deputy principals as administrative leaders**

It was noticeable in this study that deputy principals who are responsible for the administrative role perform tasks that keep their schools running and manageable on a daily basis. As scholars put it, the administrative duties of deputy principals are those duties that they are required to do in the daily operations of their schools to ensure smooth operation (Khumalo et al., 2018;

Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013). Deputy principals who are responsible for the administrative role in this study were perceived to be responsible for the screening and admission of new learners, ensuring the attendance of learners, class registers, managing school assets, petty cash, the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS), handling school textbooks, daily reports of teachers, planning for the exams, and recording the submission of question papers from the departmental heads, among other things. Dr. Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school cites administrative tasks performed by a deputy principal responsible for administrative activities in his school:

*We are currently planning for 2022, so the admin deputy principal is the one who is heading admissions of learners and the screening of learners. Also, she controls learner attendance; this involves collecting and checking class registers. She also controls all school assets. If there are small items required at school she is the one responsible for petty cash. So, any administrative work in the school is assigned to her (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Hlongwane who is the school principal at Mbuyane secondary school shares similar sentiments as Dr Mthabela on what the deputy principal does in the administrative leadership role. Mr Hlongwane explains:

*The duties of the admin deputy principal include management of the SA-SAMS, handling of learner admissions, and receiving school assets and record-keeping thereof. Moreover, she controls the staff register on a daily basis, for example, when a teacher cannot come to school and when a sick leave must be filled, the admin deputy principal handles this (Mr Hlongwane).*

Mr Mzimela who is the school principal at Hlatshwayo secondary school shares similar sentiments as Dr Mthabela and Mr Hlongwane on what a deputy principal does in the administrative leadership role. Mr Mzimela had this to say:

*For instance, when texts books are received, the admin deputy principal is the one who makes sure that the number of texts books delivered correspond with the invoice, also, he checks that the delivered books belong to the correct grades. His work goes as far as planning for the exams, recording the submission of question papers from the departmental heads, and being in charge of the admissions of new learners from neighbouring schools. Also, the screening of learners is done by the admin deputy principal when admitting learners coming from other schools (Mr Mzimela).*

Mr Phewa who is the school principal of Jele secondary school shares similar perceptions with Dr Mthabela, Mr Hlongwane, and Mr Mzimela on what a deputy principal does in the administrative leadership role. Mr Phewa had this to say:

*The function of the school rests upon him... Let us take the planning side, now we are heading towards the writing of exams, so, it is on his shoulders to ensure that we have the entire exam timetable on time... again, he is also responsible for handling school material, collecting marks from the departmental heads, and managing class and attendance registers (Mr Phewa).*

Even though all the participating principals are not cited above, they had related perspectives about the administrative role of the deputy principal in their schools. Therefore, from the above data extracts, it appears that the deputy principals who are assigned the administrative leadership role are responsible for all the administrative activities which are significant for school operation. According to principals, deputy principals who are assigned an administrative role ensure that their schools remain operational. The duties such as admission and the screening of new learners, ensuring the attendance of learners, planning for the exams, class registers, and managing school assets, among others, are key for the operation of schools. According to PAM, the duties of a deputy principal include assisting a principal, or, if instructed by the principal to be responsible for the admission of new learners, school functions, school calendar, duty roster, arrangements to cover absent staff, and internal and external evaluation and assessment. Judging from the duties cited by the participating participants in the above extract, it is evident that administrative duties that deputy principals perform are in keeping with duties stipulated in the PAM document. Also, the views of the participating principals on the position of deputy principals resonate with the views of scholars who also perceive deputy principals as individuals responsible for operations that contribute to the smooth functioning, order, and stability of schools (Harris, Muijs, & Crawford, 2003; Harvey & Sheridan, 1995; Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013; Shaked, 2020). Many scholars have argued that deputy principals are expected to carry out multiple tasks and responsibilities, making their work more challenging (Clayton & Bingham, 2018; Brinia et al., 2020; Cohen & Schechter, 2019; Craft et al., 2016; Lim & Pollock, 2019). The practice of dividing the work of deputy principals into administrative and academic seems to moderate their workload, although this is only possible in larger schools that qualify for a second deputy principal. This approach seems to give deputy principals clear tasks and eliminates the vagueness of responsibilities which has

been a major concern about the position of deputy principals in the literature (Ho et al., 2021; Mitchell et al., 2017; Stewart, 2020).

#### **4.3.1.1.2 Deputy principals as academic leaders**

Deputy principals who are responsible for leading academic activities perform tasks that are related to the core business of school which is teaching and learning. Deputy principals who are responsible for the academic role were perceived to be responsible for SA-SAMS, issuing of report cards to parents, period registers, departmental heads, running of exams, exam schedules, timetables, and parents' meetings. For example, Dr Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school stated the following on the academic leadership role performed by one of his deputy principals:

*So for the academic deputy principal, you know, now we are using the SA-SAMS, he is responsible for ensuring that the marks and results analysis for grade twelves are entered. The academic deputy principal also ensures that the report cards are issued to parents and he is also responsible for monitoring teachers' files; he also checks if teachers do attend to classwork exercises. Also, he is responsible for period registers; this involves checking teachers who do not go to classrooms. In addition, he coordinates the departmental heads; when there are some deadlines or marks to be submitted, he makes sure that the departmental heads submit the marks on time so that they can be punched into the system (referring to SA-SAMS) on time (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Mzimela who is the school principal at Hlatshwayo secondary school shares similar views with Dr Mthabela on what a deputy principal does in the academic leadership role. Mr Mzimela said the following:

*Let us take the case of Integrated Quality Management System, these days it is called QMS (Quality Measurement System). It is a process of uplifting or identifying areas of improvement from teachers; to say, a teacher is good in this area, these are the strengths, and these are the weakness... So, QMS is delegated to the academic deputy principal... as I said, the issue of running the exams is delegated to him. When we speak of the schedules after writing the exams, schedules showing the performance of learners must be compiled. This is done by the academic deputy principal. Also, the issue of issuing reports, it is a duty of the academic deputy principal (Mr Mzimela).*

Mr Hlongwane who is the school principal of Mbuyane secondary school shares similar sentiments with Dr Mthabela and Mr Hlongwane on what a deputy principal does in the academic leadership role. Mr Mzimela had the following to say:

*When it comes to the academic deputy principal, the departmental heads report to her the daily attendance of teachers in classes... She is the one who draws the timetables, she is the one who organises more especially when we are trying to motivate the grade twelves, so she calls parents' meetings to check on the progress of grade 12 learners... So, she is responsible for all the academic stuff (Mr Hlongwane).*

From the above data extracts, it appears that the deputy principals who are assigned the academic leadership role are responsible for all the academic activities in the schools. The views of the participating principals suggest that deputy principals – academic are largely concerned with the core business, which is teaching and learning. Their work includes among other things, SA-SAMS, issuing of report cards to parents, period registers, departmental heads, QMS, running of exams, exam schedules, timetables, and parents' meetings. The academic duties that these deputy principals perform are in line with deputy principals' duties stipulated in PAM. According to this document, the duties of a deputy principal include assisting the principal in properly promoting the education of pupils, meeting with parents regarding their learners' progress, guiding and supervising the work and performance of staff, and being responsible for curriculum and teaching and learning activities like timetabling.

The views of the participating principals on the position of deputy principals suggest that these deputy principals are instructional leaders. DeMatthews (2014) states that instructional leadership is leadership relating to teaching and learning, particularly the duties and responsibilities performed by leaders every day to aid teachers and learners toward educational excellence. The views of participating principals also resonate with what Bulawa and Mhlauli (2018) state, that is, deputy principals play a very important role in schools in that they are actively involved in the function of being head of academics. Looking at the perceptions of participating principals from the distributed leadership perspective, it seems that the academic leadership role is distributed to deputy principals in the participating schools. I state this because Harris, Muijs, and Crawford (2003) mention that distributed leadership engages individuals of the organisation in leadership activities. This is supported by Larsen and Rieckhoff (2014) as they mention that distributed leadership promotes the involvement of people in the organisation to contribute to the enactment of leadership. Thus, in this study, this

entails that deputy principals in the participating schools are distributed power and control to lead and manage the instruction (teaching and learning). This is contrary to the view of Nieuwenhuizen (2011) and Nieuwenhuizen and Brooks (2013) who believe that deputy principals in schools are not given enough opportunity and time to lead teaching and learning activities.

#### **4.3.1.2 Deputy principals as leaders and part of school committees**

It was apparent in this study that even though the participating principals assign their deputy principals to their designated administration and academic roles, their deputy principals have additional responsibilities they undertake in school committees which they are part of and lead. These committees include special events committee, a disciplinary committee, an exam committee, a COVID-19 committee, an assessment committee, an irregularity committee, a sports and recreation committee, a timetable committee, a fundraising committee, and a data capturing committee. For example, Mr Hlongwane who is the school principal at Mbuyane secondary school stated the following about his deputy principals on the school committees and the duties they perform in them:

*We have four committees in our school... We have a special events committee, a disciplinary committee, an exam committee, and a COVID-19 committee. So, both of my deputy principals are each part of the two committees on the four we have... So, on the COVID-19 committee, a deputy principal ensures that a school as a whole follows the COVID-19 protocols. On the special events committee, whatever special event that is taking place at school, my deputy principal with members of the committee organise for such events. For example, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, we are opening a computer laboratory so they are organising for this event to happen... Then on the disciplinary committee, it is only me and my deputy principals. On this committee, they are prosecutors, they charge offenders but depending on the nature of the offence (Mr Hlongwane).*

Mr Phewa who is the school principal at Jele secondary school said the following about his deputy principal on the school committees and the tasks he performs in them:

*..., for example, my deputy principal is part of an assessment committee, disciplinary committee, and irregularity committee... As a deputy principal, he is second in*

*command; in an assessment committee, he assesses whether we as a school have covered all the curriculum and whether the exams were written well, and on the disciplinary committee, it is only me and him. On this committee, we only deal with disciplinary matters like when we want to discipline a teacher, he becomes part of that. Then on the irregularity committee, as you know irregularities can happen when teaching, recording marks, writing exams, and assessing curriculum that was not taught; so, my deputy principal in this committee is a prosecutor with me. Also, he stands on behalf of the office by listening to irregularities as the law requires him to do so (Mr Phewa).*

Dr Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school shared the following about his deputy principals on the school committees:

*My deputy principals do extra work besides the one I assign to them. For example, our school has twenty-one committees. We have a sports and recreation committee, a timetable committee, a fundraising committee, a data capturing committee, and so on... So, all of these committees have their coordinators and these coordinators report to the administration deputy principal as she is the head of these committees, and on top of that, the administration deputy principal is part of some of these committees in the school (Dr Mthabela).*

Even though all of the participating principals' views are not cited, they had related views about the deputy principals being part of and leaders in school committees. Therefore, from the above data extracts, it seems that these deputy principals do additional responsibilities in these schools by being part of and leaders in school committees. It appears that these deputy principals in these school committees engage in activities that contribute to the functioning, organisation, and control of their schools as educational institutions and they perform duties that ensure teaching and learning happens in their schools. These committees are a special events committee, a disciplinary committee, an exam committee, a COVID-19 committee, an assessment committee, and so on. The views of the participating principals concur with PAM about deputy principals being involved in school committees. This document mentions that a deputy principal in school is supposed to help the principal with the running of the school by liaison work with all school committees that are critical to the school. The views of participating principals about deputy principals being part of and leaders in school committees also resonate with what Mafora (2013) and Mokoena (2011) found in their studies; that is, even

though deputy principals in schools have their positional roles, they also have responsibilities to do in school committees. This view is supported by Harvey and Sheridan (1995) as they put forward that deputy principals in schools perform additional responsibilities that contribute to the schools' stability and order of the day-to-day operation. However, other scholars have raised concerns about deputy principals doing additional duties in schools. For instance, Barnett et al. (2012), Blose and Naicker (2018), Blose (2018), Brinia et al. (2020), and Craft et al. (2016) maintain that deputy principals are expected to carry out multiple tasks and responsibilities in schools, their work becomes more challenging and unmanageable. On top of this, scholars such as Khumalo et al. (2018) have also raised concerns that as deputy principals do additional tasks or serve in different school committees whose duties take place after school hours; deputy principals experience problems with giving enough attention to their families which may result in problems associated with neglecting family responsibilities.

#### **4.3.1.3 Deputy principals as leaders not absolved from the teaching role (deputy principals must show the way in terms of teaching)**

It appears that all the participating principals perceived deputy principals as leaders that are not absolved from the teaching role. It seems that the deputy principals as co-leaders in schools are still regarded as teachers who must still adhere to their classwork while at the same time meeting the obligations of administration and academic matters. For example, Dr Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school said the following on the teaching role of a deputy principal:

*In some of the institutions, the deputy principals do not teach because of the work they are doing, only to find out that they are only focusing on the daily running and management of the school. However, deputy principals must teach... So, pertaining to their schoolwork they are expected to excel, and about their duties and daily functions as deputy principals they are also expected to excel (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Nzimande who is a school principal at Mabalane secondary school shares similar sentiments with Dr Mthabela on the teaching role of the deputy principal. Mr Nzimande explained the following:

*Deputy principals do teach; they still have the added teaching load to adhere to on top of the responsibility of being a deputy principal to meet the obligations of academic matters and administration matters (Mr Nzimande).*

Mr Hlongwane's view adds and concurs with that of Dr Mthabela and Mr Nzimande about the teaching role of a deputy principal. Mr Hlongwane had this to say:

*... Do you know why deputy principals must teach?... For deputy principals to go to classes puts pressure on teachers especially the ones who share the same subjects as them... Again, if we say the deputy principals must not teach which means their job is office-based whereas they are being classified as teachers (Mr Hlongwane).*

From the above data extracts, it appears that the deputy principals from these schools are not exempted from the teaching role. These deputy principals must still adhere to their classwork while concurrently meeting the obligations of administration and academic duties. The perceptions of participating principals about the teaching role of a deputy principal is an obligation as per PAM. This document states that a deputy principal, one, is expected to be involved in teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and school's needs, and two, to evaluate and record the achievement of students taught (DBE, 2016a). The views of principals who partook in the study resonate with the perceptions of writers on the teaching role of deputy principals. For example, Sepheka (2006) states that the first job of the deputy principal is to educate in class because he or she is trained to be an educator before he or she became the deputy principal. According to Goksoy (2016), this suggests that deputy principals do not only belong to offices but also classrooms. Therefore, even though Brinia et al. (2020) maintain that deputy principals have to separate from their teaching role to be prosperous in their administrative and academic roles, it appears that the deputy principals from the participating schools were expected to be successful in administrative, academic, and teaching roles doing them the same time.

#### **4.3.2 Principals in deploying deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools**

This section presents answers to the second research question of the study. It focuses on how participating principals assign responsibilities to deputy principals as their assistants in the management of their schools. Below, I discuss the three themes that emerged from the data.

These themes are: principals in delegating work according to the specialities of deputy principals (capacity informed delegation), principals foster collaboration amongst their deputy principals and between themselves and deputy principals, and principals assign deputy principals to deputise in their absence.

#### **4.3.2.1 Principals in delegating work according to the specialities of deputy principals (capacity informed delegation)**

It appears that the majority of participating principals assign work to their deputy principals using their capabilities, strengths, knowledge, and skills. Mr Hlongwane who is a school principal at Mbuyane secondary school explained the following on how he assigns work according to his deputy principals' capabilities:

*Sometimes I do compare the capabilities of my deputy principals... for example, when we are running the external matric exams for our learners and other learners from other finishing schools who write their exams here in our school. For these exams to happen, we need classes, seating plans, and so on. So, the admin deputy principal is fast in planning and executing external exams while the one for academics is only capable when its internal exams (Mr Hlongwane).*

Mr Phewa who is a school principal at Jele secondary school shared the following on assigning work using deputy principals' strengths when they are two in a school. Mr Phewa had this to say:

*Strengths of deputy principals makes you assign work the way you do to them... Like when a deputy principal is a good planner, talker, and listener, administration fits him, and when he is more inclined to classwork, academics fit him (Mr Phewa).*

Mr Mzimela who is a school principal at Hlatshwayo secondary school shares similar views with Mr Hlongwane and Mr Phewa on deploying work to deputy principals based on the expertise they possess. Mr Mzimela explained the following:

*Delegation is informed by the particular knowledge and skills we have about that matter. For instance, in a case where one of my deputy principals does not have much expertise to do something and the other one does, I delegate the one who is capable of attending to that matter (Mr Mzimela).*

The other participating principals had different views from the participating principals mentioned here. They relied more on using the job description document of their deputy principals rather than assigning tasks to them based on their specialities. However, from the above data extracts, it is apparent that the participating principals mentioned here do not just assign work to their deputy principals but they compare and delegate according to skills, knowledge, capabilities, and strengths possessed by a deputy principal. This suggests that in schools where deputy principals are two, a deputy principal performs duties that he or she is mostly strong on than the other deputy principal. The views of the participating principals resonate with Harris (2002) and Harris (2008) who mention that distributed leadership allows the members of the organisation to execute tasks by using and capitalising on their individual skills, abilities, and strengths. Likewise, Davison et al. (2014) and Storey (2004) state that distributed leadership allows individuals in the organisation to do tasks for which they have the most capabilities. In contrast, scholars such as Cranston et al. (2004) maintain that the word ‘deputy’ means subordinate, relational, and dependent position to another position; thus, deputy principals do not fully acknowledge their knowledge, skills, and expertise, and experience in their positions. However, the current study shows that the participating principals account for the specialties of their deputy principals when assigning tasks to them.

This study shares similar findings with other studies conducted on the position of deputy principals. For instance, Hughes and James (1999) in South Wales found that the duties of deputy principals were assigned to them by their principals based on their attributes and expertise. Likewise, Lim and Pollock (2019) in Ontario, Canada, found that principals assigned tasks to their deputy principals based on their strengths. Also, in South Africa, in the Tshwane south district of the GDE, Jansen (2019) found that principals in schools determined their deputy principals’ duties according to their strong points, expertise, specialties, and experience. This suggests that the practice of capacity-based delegation appears not to be peculiar to South African schools as the current study found the same findings.

#### **4.3.2.2 Principals foster collaboration amongst their deputy principals and between themselves and deputy principals**

Although principals who participated in this study delegate different duties to deputy principals, they also create platforms for their deputy principals to collaborate. This means that the deputy principals do not only focus on the duties of their designated administration and

academic roles but they are also encouraged to work together and assist each other on the duties of their designated roles. Among other things, principals cited that deputy principals collaborate on duties like the development of invigilation timetable, academic information, and handling of school assets. It also seems that the participating principals do not only let their deputy principals collaborate but they also foster collaboration between themselves and their deputy principals. It appears that the participating principals collaborate with their deputy principals when assigning duties to them on school management. The principals distribute duties between them and their deputy principals through a team approach. Concerning the collaboration that the participating principals create and allow between their deputy principals, the following are the views they shared. For example, Mr Hlongwane who is the school principal at Mbuyane secondary school had this to say:

*... But usually, with me, they work jointly. For example, when the academic deputy principal is doing an invigilation timetable, you will find the administration deputy principal doing it too by working on it together with the academic deputy principal even though it is not her duty but that of the academic deputy principal. Another example is when the administration deputy principal gets some academic information outside the school that can help us. So, when she receives such information, she shares it with the academic deputy principal or she does that thing in a manner that the academic deputy principal would not feel threatened... The academic deputy principal also does the same to the work of the administration deputy principal; like, when it happens that there is furniture arriving at the school and the administration deputy principal is not present, the academic deputy principal simply takes over of that and does what needs to be done administratively. So, I have promoted my deputy principals to work by assisting each other; they do not operate by only focusing on their administration and academic roles but also the duties of their roles (Mr Hlongwane).*

Dr Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school shares similar sentiments with Mr. Hlongwane on the collaboration that he encourages between his deputy principals. Dr Mthabela explains:

*Let us say an invigilation timetable needs to be drawn which is the responsibility of the academic deputy principal. Because my deputy principals are always sitting together, the administration deputy principal assists in the drawing of the invigilation*

*timetable, ... So, I have created a platform where my deputy principals work together (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Nzimande who is a school principal at Mabalane secondary school shares similar views with Mr Hlongwane and Dr Mthabela on the collaboration that he promotes between his deputy principals. Mr Nzimande had this to say:

*My deputy principals work collaboratively, but for us, it depends on the type of matter that is being addressed. Like if it is an academic matter, the person that is going to take the lead on that is the academic deputy principal but he sources out the assistance from the administration deputy principal. The same applies when it is the administration matter that is being addressed, the administration deputy principal takes the lead and sources out the assistance from the academic deputy principal (Mr Nzimande).*

When it comes to the collaboration that occurs between the participating principals and their deputy principals, below, are the views of the principals. For instance, Mr Phewa who is a school principal at Jele secondary school had this to say:

*I and my deputy principal always collaborate on the duties of the school... like when we have the staff meeting, it can be led by him or it can be led by me. Also, when there are briefing sessions, they can be led by him or be led by me. So, whatever we do, we do it interchangeably because I cannot run the school alone and I do not want it to seem like I am the only one who is running the show (Mr Phewa).*

Dr Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school shares similar sentiments with Mr Phewa on how he distributes school responsibilities to his deputy principals jointly with them. Dr Mthabela explained the following:

*... I believe in a teamwork strategy, whatever I want to implement in the school I always meet and discuss it with my deputy principals as senior management members; after our discussion, we plan as a group who is going to do this and who going to do that (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Nzimande who is a school principal at Mabalane secondary school shares similar views with Mr Phewa and Dr Mthabela on how he collaboratively distribute duties to his deputy principals with them in the management of the school. Mr Nzimande had this to say:

*... we work collaboratively... I and my deputy principals sit down as a team and discuss what needs to be done in our school. When we must execute whatever we discussed, we collaboratively choose who is going to do this and who is going to do that. For example, if it is about us running the exams like we are doing right now, we sit down as a team and decide which deputy principal is taking the internal exams and which deputy principal is taking the external exams... Another example I can make is about the admission of learners, we do this collaboratively with my deputy principals as the school management. I like making it to be not the sole responsibility of any deputy principal but to be a collaborative effort because I know we need to check as a school what are the numbers per grade then that in a way will enforce the intake of learners for the coming year... So, I do not have a situation where I instruct them that who must do what; whatever we do in the school, we do it together (Mr Nzimande).*

From the above extracts, concerning the collaboration that the participating principals foster between their deputy principals, it appears that even though the deputy principals from the participating schools have their designated roles in schools: administration and academics, the principals foster collaboration between them to keep their schools operational on the daily basis and to avoid management vacuum. If one deputy principal can be absent from school, the other would know the duties to perform for the other to keep the school running. Duties like the development of invigilation timetable, academic information, and handling of school assets, among others, enable deputy principals to function in collaboration. The views of participating principals are in line with Harris's (2002) conception of distributed leadership; she defines distributed leadership as a form of leadership that is characterised by collective responsibility in which people work collaboratively on the same duties of the organisation. Likewise, Harris (2004) raises that distributed leadership promotes collaboration between leaders and followers and amongst the followers of the organisation too. This view is supported by Leithwood (2001) who states that distributed leadership enables collective responsibility amongst the individuals of the organisation to work together in the same tasks and objectives. Similarly, Storey (2004) and Chang (2011) state that distributed leadership is a type of leadership that promotes the establishment of collective responsibility amongst the members of the organisation or to commit to working as a joint enterprise. Therefore, all of the above suggests that when a school has two deputy principals and their roles are split into administrative and academic, principals assigning deputy principals in school management through fostering collaboration between

them is another effective distributed leadership that can be used in making a school operational and achieve the core of the business which is teaching and learning.

The data shows that principals do not lead and manage their schools alone, instead, they collaborate with their deputy principals and other stakeholders in schools. Among other responsibilities, the participating principals collaborate with their deputies in carrying out duties such as running of exams, admission of new learners, staff meetings, and briefing sessions. Looking at the perceptions of participating principals from the perspective of distributed leadership, they concur with the views of scholars. For example, Harris (2008) states that in distributed leadership, multiple individuals can exist in a team, where duties are split apart and shared among them. This is supported by Chang (2011) and Goksoy (2016) who mention that distributed leadership is the type of leadership that enables leaders and followers to distribute duties of the organisation as a collective through interacting with each other. That is why Gaston (2005) says that through distributed leadership, the responsibilities of the deputy principals are not given to them merely on the whim of the principal; rather, they are solidly defined and delineated to them through a true team approach. Therefore, the views of the participating principals suggest that the old-fashioned 'lead from-the top' leadership in schools through virtue of power is no longer used (Harris, 2002).

The perspectives of principals who partook in this study also concur with the findings of the studies conducted on the position of deputy principals. For instance, in the Canadian context, Lim and Pollock (2019) found that principals determine the tasks and duties of their deputy principals collaboratively with them. This involved principals deciding with deputy principals what duties and tasks deputy principals must handle (Lim & Pollock, 2019). Similarly, Jansen and du Plessis (2020) found that principals use distributed leadership in assigning the tasks to deputy principals in the South African context, in Pretoria. Principals encourage their deputy principals' inputs and involve them in school decision-making (Jansen & du Plessis, 2020). This study further depicts that the duties principals assign to their deputy principals are for leading and managing their schools collaboratively because leadership in their schools is seen as a collective endeavour rather than an action performed by the principals alone (Jansen & du Plessis, 2020).

#### 4.3.2.3 Principals assign deputy principals to deputise in their absence

It seems that all participating principals in the study assign their deputy principals to deputise for them when they are away from school. It appears that through deputising, deputy principals assume the responsibilities that their principals do. In addition, it appears that the participating principals have mutual trust and understanding with their deputy principals on how they want them to deputise in their absence. For instance, Mr Phewa who is a school principal at Jele secondary school said the following about his deputy principal regarding deputising when he is away. Mr Phewa said this:

*... for example, when I am going to be away for two days, I formally assign him as my deputy principal to be in charge of the school till I am back... So, I and my deputy principal think alike, I know that he will do what he will assume I accept as correct when I am away (Mr Phewa).*

Mr Nzimande who is a school principal at Mabalane secondary school shares similar views with Mr. Phewa about his deputy principal deputising when he is not present at school. Mr Nzimande had this to say:

*Yes, when I am not at school, my deputy principals are principals... fortunately my deputy principals know what I like and what I do not like; so, you cannot find them making extraordinary decisions in my absence... So, they know how I operate and on my side too, I trust them that they cannot do something I would not like when I am not at school (Mr Nzimande).*

Dr Mthabela who is a school principal at Lorch secondary school shared the following about his deputy principals regarding deputising when he is absent at school:

*... between us, me and my deputy principals, as we call ourselves senior management, trust is very important. For example, like now we are running grade 12 exams and on these exams, my status is being a chief invigilator and my deputy principals are deputy chief invigilators. So, if we are running these exams, in my absentia, I allow them to take over the invigilation as I have full trust in both of them (Dr Mthabela).*

From the above data extracts, it is apparent that the principals want their schools to remain operational even if they are away from schools through their deputy principals deputising for them. In addition, it seems that principals instil mutual trust and understanding between them

and their deputy principals in terms of how the deputy principals must deputise for them when they are away from school. The views of the participating principals resonate with what scholars say about deputy principals deputising for principals when they are absent from school. For instance, Khumalo et al. (2018) state that the foremost responsibility of the deputy principals is to help their principals and deputise for them when they are away from school. This concurs with the view of Bulawa and Mhlauli (2018) as they say that when principals get involved in other commitments away from their schools, they often assign their school tasks to their deputy principals.

Looking at the perceptions of participating principals from the perspective of distributed leadership, they resonate with what scholars say about distributed leadership. For instance, Harris (2008) states that in distributed leadership, professional relationships between leaders and followers are vital because leadership can only be performed if there is mutual trust and agreement about the way duties are undertaken. Similarly, Woods, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004) mention that distributed leadership in an organisation is only possible if there is a climate of trust and mutual understanding between leaders and followers. On the contrary, though, Timperley (2005) believes that distributing leadership to other people in the organisation is a risky business. However, the views of participating principals suggest that prosperous distribution of leadership depends upon the rigid establishment of mutual trust between leaders and followers (Harris, 2014).

### **4.3.3 Principals' vindication of deputy principals' deployment**

This section presents an answer to the third research question of the study. It focuses on why the participating principals assign deputy principals in school management the way they do. To address this question, one theme emerged, namely: collaboration and deputising as strategies to prepare deputy principals for principalship. Below, I discuss this theme.

#### **4.3.3.1 Collaboration and deputising as strategies to prepare deputy principals for principalship**

It appears that the participating principals foster collaboration amongst their deputy principals and themselves to prepare them for future leadership roles, including principalship. The

participating principals enable their deputy principals to collaborate in their work because they want them to learn, know, and understand all the facets of management in the school which is important for the principal position. Also, the participating principals perceive the opportunity granted to deputy principals of deputising in the absence of principals as a platform for deputy principals to experience and learn the principalship role. For example, Mr Nzimande who is a school principal at Mabalane secondary school said the following regarding collaboration between his deputy principals:

*... whatever my deputy principals do, they do it collaboratively. I do not want my deputy principals to be strictly academic and administration because when they become principals, they will need to know all the aspects of management (Mr Nzimande).*

Dr Mthabela shares the same sentiments with Mr Nzimande, he had this to say:

*My deputy principals always work together as a team. Once you have such deputy principals who work like this, it becomes easier to prepare them to be principals. Do you know why? When they are principals, they must understand both the roles - academic and administration because as a principal, you are the one who must induct both of these roles... So, I am preparing them (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Hlongwane who is a school principal at Mbuyane secondary school shared the following regarding the need for deputy principals to work together:

*... by working collaboratively they learn and understand both the administration and academic duties... For instance, let us say my deputy principals get to be principals in school environments like this one where there are two deputy principals! So, in a situation like that, they can find themselves being able to manage those schools because they understand both the administration and academic aspects of management (Mr Hlongwane).*

Dr Mthabela also explains his view below regarding deputising as a strategy to prepare his deputy principals for principalship:

*... If my deputy principals are acting principals, let us say I am attending a workshop, so by the time I am absent they take decisions as principals because on those particular events, they cannot say they are waiting for me because I allow them to make decisions*

*when I am away... So, I am preparing them for the future so that they will know and understand how to run their schools (Dr Mthabela).*

Mr Phewa who is a school principal at Jele secondary school had the following to say:

*... When I am away, my deputy principal takes control of everything, he assumes all my responsibilities... So, in my absence, he becomes aware of everything I execute in the school and how to operate the school (Mr Phewa).*

Mr Hlongwane who is a school principal at Mbuyane secondary school shares the same sentiments with Dr Mthabela and Mr Phewa, had this to say:

*... well, lets us say I am going to a meeting, I call both of them and tell them what needs to be done. Then they decide between them who is going to do this task and who is going to do that task. So, by doing that, they get an experience of the things I do which will help them when they become principals (Mr Hlongwane).*

The above extracts suggest that the participating principals have a similar and important reason for fostering collaboration among deputy principals and themselves; this reason is the preparation of deputy principals for the principalship role. The principals enable their deputy principals to collaborate in their work because they want them to know all the facets of management in the school which is vital in a principal position. The perceptions of participating principals resonate with the view that school principals should have mentoring strategies that offer their deputy principals constructive learning opportunities which prepare them for principalship (Veerasamy, 2019). These mentoring strategies must offer learning opportunities to deputy principals' needs (Veerasamy, 2019). In addition, the learning opportunities themselves must occur in real-life situations and be coordinated by the school principals (Veerasamy, 2019). The participating principals reflect features of the distributed leadership; this leadership approach enables individuals of an organisation to develop knowledge and expertise by working collaboratively (Harris, 2002). In addition, distributed leadership allows members of an organisation to engage in collective work, thereby engaging in collective learning concurrently (Goksoy, 2016). Therefore, even though Hartley (2007) maintains that distributed leadership is warranted by difficulty in its functionalisation in schools; it seems that the participating principals through distributed leadership could foster collaboration amongst their deputy principals and themselves, and use that collaboration to facilitate deputy principals' learning.

Regarding the deputising responsibility as a way of preparing deputy principals for principalship, the data suggest that the principals use deputising as a strategy to prepare their deputy principals for principal positions in the future. The perceptions of participating principals concur with the views of scholars on how deputising enables deputy principals to be prepared to be principals. For example, Gaston (2005) states that for principals to make their deputy principals do some of their responsibilities enables them to gain a better perception of the position of principals and this prepares them for the principalship. Similarly, Jansen and du Plessis (2020) state that principals play an important role in preparing deputy principals to be principals with different responsibilities which includes deputising. This suggests that as deputy principals deputise for principals when they are away from school, it is because they have the potential to become principals (Ho et al., 2020). Looking at the views of principals from the perspective of distributed leadership, they concur with what Bush and Glover (2014) state; that is, distributed leadership has the potential to develop the followers of the organisation into future leaders since they get to perform some leadership responsibilities distributed to them.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has thematically presented and discussed the data. The answers to the three research questions of the study were presented in seven sub-themes of the three main themes representing the three research questions. These sub-themes are, deputy principalship as two-pronged, deputy principals as leaders and part of school committees, deputy principals as leaders not absolved from the teaching role (deputy principals must show the way in terms of teaching), principals in delegating work according to the specialities of deputy principals (capacity informed delegation), principals foster collaboration amongst their deputy principals and between themselves and deputy principals, principals assign deputy principals to deputise in their absence, and collaboration and deputising responsibility as strategies to prepare deputy principals for principalship. The next chapter is the final chapter. It provides and presents the conclusions and recommendations of this inquiry

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter thematically presented and discussed the data as an attempt to answer the study's research questions. Seven sub-themes emerged from the data; these themes are presented around the research questions. This is the final chapter, which brings the study to an end. To attain this, I focus on three facets, namely, the summary of the study, the conclusions derived from the findings, and the study recommendations.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

This study explored the perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools. The report of this inquiry is presented in five chapters. Below, I provide brief summaries of the chapters.

##### **Chapter one**

Chapter one served as an introduction and orientation to the study. The chapter provided the introduction and background to the study, the rationale for the study, the problem statement, and the aim and focus of the study. Additionally, the chapter presented the significance of the study and location of the study, clarification of terms, and the outline of chapters

##### **Chapter two**

Chapter two presented a detailed discussion on the review of national and international literature related to the research topic. Additionally, it provided a discussion on the distributed leadership theory, which is the theoretical framework in which this study is framed.

##### **Chapter three**

Chapter three offered the research design and methodology of this study. Firstly, it provided the research paradigm, followed by the research design, research methodology, and sampling procedures. Also, a discussion on data generation and analysis methods was presented. Lastly, the issues of trustworthiness and ethics were discussed.

## **Chapter four**

Chapter four discussed data in three sections which represented the key research questions of the study. These sections were: perspectives of principals on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools, principals in deploying deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools, and principals' vindication of deputy principals' deployment.

### **5.3 Conclusions derived from findings**

Below, I present the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study. The conclusions are drawn around research questions; for this reason, the research questions are re-stated below to remind the reader:

1. What are principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools?
2. How do principals deploy deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools?
3. Why do principals deploy deputy principals the way they do?

#### **5.3.1 Principals' perspectives on the position of the deputy principals in selected secondary schools**

The school principals who participated in this study perceived the position of deputy principals as two-pronged. This is due to the reason that the majority of principals in their schools have two deputy principals. These principals made one of the deputy principals to be responsible for the administrative duties and the other for academic duties. The principals perceived the administrative deputy principals to be responsible for, among others, screening and admission of new learners, ensuring the attendance of learners, class registers, managing school assets, petty cash, the SA-SAMS, handling school textbooks, daily reports of teachers, planning for the exams, and recording the submission of question papers from the departmental heads. This finding entailed that the deputy principals, in schools, with the administrative role, do tasks that keep their schools operational on the daily basis. The deputy principals who are responsible

for the academic duties were perceived to handle duties including SA-SAMS, issuing of report cards to parents, period registers, departmental heads, running of exams, exam schedules, timetables, and parents' meetings. This finding entailed that the deputy principals who are responsible for the academic role are responsible for the tasks that enable their schools to attain the daily aim of the schools which is teaching and learning.

Apart from the administrative and academic responsibilities, the participants perceived deputy principals as members of and leaders in functional committees. These committees include, among others, an assessment committee, an exam committee, an irregularity committee, and a fundraising committee. This finding entailed that the deputy principals in schools have additional duties they do apart from their administrative and academic roles. In addition, the perspectives of principals suggest that deputy principals engage in activities that contribute to the functioning, organisation, and control of their schools to ensure that teaching and learning happen. The principals also viewed deputy principals as leaders that are not exempted from the teaching role. The principals see deputy principals as co-leaders in schools that are still regarded as educators who must still adhere to their classwork while at the same time meeting the obligations of administration and academic matters.

### **5.3.2 Principals in deploying deputy principals as their assistants in the management of schools**

The findings of this inquiry revealed that the principals delegate work to their deputy principals based on their abilities. This entails that the assignment of tasks by principals to deputy principals is informed by the deputy principals' strengths, knowledge, skills, and capabilities. This study also showed that the principals foster collaboration among their deputy principals and between them and their deputy principals. This finding revealed that the principals create platforms for their deputy principals to collaborate in their work and they distribute duties between them and their deputy principals through a team approach.

In addition, this study revealed that principals also formally assign (through the logbook) deputy principals to deputise in their absence. This finding showed that the principals enable deputy principals to assume all of their responsibilities like taking decisions on behalf of their principals in their absence.

### **5.3.3 Principals' vindication of deputy principals' deployment**

This study revealed that the reason the principals create platforms of collaboration among their deputy principals and between them and their deputy principals is to prepare them for the principalship. The study showed that through collaboration, principals enable their deputy principals to collaborate in their work because they want them to learn, know, and comprehend all the aspects of management in the school which is vital for the principalship position. In addition, the participating principals enabled their deputy principals to deputise in their absence; this also was viewed as a way to prepare them for the principalship position. This entails that as the deputy principals get an opportunity to deputise in the absence of principals, they get to experience and learn the principalship role.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Below, I make recommendations to the Department of Basic Education (DBE), secondary school principals, and researchers. These recommendations are informed by the findings of the study and the conclusions provided above.

### **5.4.1 The DBE needs to constantly invest in the professional development of deputy principals**

The study revealed that the deputy principals have many responsibilities they perform in schools. Principals justified the assignment of duties as a way to prepare deputy principals for the principalship. Since the expectation is that deputy principals are likely to take over from principals, I recommend to the DBE that it constantly invests in the professional development of deputy principals through school leadership workshops and programs that will assist and enable deputy principals to be able to possess skills that will help them cope with the many responsibilities they undertake in their position and prepares them for the transition to the principal position.

#### **5.4.2 External professional development of deputy principals**

This inquiry showed that the main reason the principals assign duties to deputy principals the way they do is to prepare them for future leadership roles. This entails that the principals professionally develop the deputy principals through learning opportunities occurring in the school. Apart from the internal arrangement to prepare deputy principals, I recommend that principals also arrange external forms of professional development for deputy principals.

#### **5.4.3 Further research**

This study investigated the perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools. Due to the focus of the study, it did not investigate the effectiveness of distributed leadership between principals and deputy principals. Therefore, I hereby recommend that future research investigate the effectiveness of distributed leadership between principals and deputy principals in schools.

#### **5.5 Chapter summary**

This inquiry focused on the perceptions of principals on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools. The multiple case study methodology was adopted in this study to engage with the perspectives of five purposively selected participants. This study concludes that principals perceive deputy principalship as two-pronged and deputy principals as second-in-command incumbents who are part of and leaders in school functional committees, and in addition, as co-leaders who are not exempt from the teaching role. This study further concludes that in the management of the school, principals assign deputy principals duties based on their abilities, through fostering collaboration among deputy principals and between themselves and the deputy principals. The study also concludes that the reason the principals foster collaboration among their deputy principals and between themselves and their deputy principals and assign them to deputise in their absence is to prepare them for the principalship role.

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**Interview guide questions:**

1. What do you perceive as the role of your deputy principal(s) in school?
2. Why do you have this perception?
3. What duties do you delegate to your deputy principal(s) in your school?
4. Since this is a secondary school in a township, does this context impact in the manner you deploy your deputy principal(s)?
5. As a school principal, are you satisfied with the work undertaken by the deputy principal(s) at your school? Explain.
6. Since your deputy principal(s) take over when you are away, what duties do they perform in such cases?
7. What informs your delegation of duties to your deputy principal(s)?

**Ethical clearance letter**



22 September 2021

Phumlani Samuel Mnikathi (213542025)  
School Of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear PS Mnikathi,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00003318/2021

**Project title:** Perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools of Umlazi district

**Degree:** Masters

**Approval Notification – Expedited Application**

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 31 August 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 22 September 2022.

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

**Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee**

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

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

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

**Permission letters from principals**

01 July 2021

Dear Phumlani Samuel Mnikathi

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT [REDACTED]**

Your letter titled "Request to conduct research..." has reference. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above-mentioned school.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
01 JUL 2021  
[REDACTED]

11 August 2021

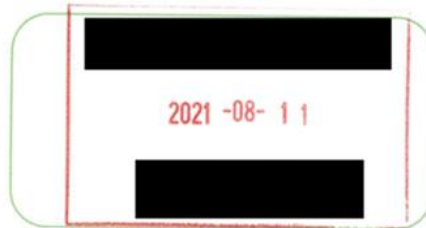
Dear Mr. Mnikathi

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT [REDACTED]**

This is the response to your letter titled "Request for permission to conduct research..." as referenced. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above-mentioned school.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]



11 August 2021

Dear Mr. Mnikathi

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT [REDACTED]**

This is the response to your letter titled "Request for permission to conduct research..." as referenced. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above-mentioned school.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]



12 August 2021

Dear Mr. Mnikathi

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT** [REDACTED]

This is the response to your letter titled "Request for permission to conduct research..." as referenced. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above-mentioned school.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12 August 2021

Dear Mr. Mnikathi

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT [REDACTED]**

This is the response to your letter titled "Request for permission to conduct research..." as referenced. Please be informed that you are granted a permission to conduct your research at the above-mentioned school.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Informed consent letter for participants**



**REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH**

I am Phumlani Samuel Mnikathi and I am conducting a research as a requirement at the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards a Degree of Master of Education. The title of the research is “Perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools of Umlazi district.” The objectives of the study are:

- To explore the perspectives of principals on position of deputy principals.
- To understand how principals assign deputy principals in the management of the school.
- To understand why principals assign deputy principals in the management of the school the way they do.

The study will focus on principals. This letter intends to elucidate the purpose of the study and to request your participation in the study.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview may last for about 1 hour and may be split into two parts depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot 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:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

I can be contacted at:  
Email: samuelmnikathi@gmail.com.  
Cell: 060 325 7342.

My supervisor is Dr. SB Blose who is located at the School of Education, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, he can be contacted at:

Email: [Bloses@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Bloses@ukzn.ac.za)  
Phone: 031 260 1870

You may also contact the Research Office through:  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**  
Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

I hope this letter will find your positive consideration, thanking you in advance.  
Yours sincerely

Phumlani Samuel Mnikathi

-----  
**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SECTION FOR CONSENT OF PARTICIPATION:**  
-----

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the nature and purpose of the study titled: Perspectives of principals on the position of deputy principals in selected secondary schools of Umlazi district. I agree to participate in the study. I am also fully aware that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point should I wish to do so, without any negative or undesirable consequence. I am also aware that there are neither any foreseeable direct benefits nor direct risks associated with my participation in this study. I therefore understand the contents of this letter fully and I do **GIVE CONSENT / DO NOT GIVE CONSENT** for the interviews to be digitally recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Turnitin certificate**

Mr P Mnikathi

ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>researchspace.ukzn.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>www.scribd.com</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ulspace.ul.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Jan B Khumalo, Herman J van Vuuren, Philip C van der Westhuizen, C.P. Van der Vyver. "Problems experienced by secondary school deputy principals in diverse contexts: a South African study", Problems and Perspectives in Management, 2018</b> Publication	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Jeanne Ho, Imran Shaari, Trivina Kang. "Vice-principals as leaders: Role ambiguity and role conflicts faced by vice-principals in Singapore", Educational Management Administration &amp; Leadership, 2021</b> Publication	<b>&lt;1%</b>

**Language clearance certificate**

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**Dr Saths Govender**

---

23 MARCH 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

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

**PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS ON THE POSITION OF DEPUTY PRINCIPALS  
IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF UMLAZI DISTRICT**

by PHUMLANI SAMUEL MNIKATHI, student no. 213542025.

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

Yours faithfully



-----  
**DR S. GOVENDER**  
B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.  
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers  
MPA, D. Admin.