

Exploration of School Principals' leadership styles of two secondary schools in Imati Ward in Maphumulo Circuit

By

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Master of Education degree in the Educational Leadership, Management and Policy Discipline, in the School of Education

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Durban, South Africa

December, 2012

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

As candidate's supervisor I agree / do not agree to the submission of this dissertation

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I.....declare that:

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is especially dedicated to my late parents, Busisiwe Ntuli (mother), Shadrack Mafutha Mthembu (father), my late sister Khululiwe, and my eldest son who passed on in a horrific accident, Swelihle.

Secondly I dedicate this to my wife Simangele for her encouragement and understanding. Lastly I dedicate this dissertation to my young children Afika, Sithembele and Sinethemba who could not enjoy quality time with me because of my studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank the Good Lord for being with me all the way through thick and thin. If it was not for Him I would not have made it this far.

Secondly, I wish to thank all my family members both from my mother's side as well as father's side. Special thanks to my cousin **Rev. Christopher Zibuse Khoza** who kept on encouraging me when I felt down.

My principal, **Mr E.H. Sithole** and colleagues are also deserving of a big thank you for being so understanding when I had to be away for the success of my study. Two of my colleagues **Mr S.A. Khanyile** and **Mr T Khuzwayo** deserve a special mention for assisting me with their technological expertise.

Participants in my study, the principals, the HODs and teachers of the two schools are also worth mentioning for assisting me during the study.

Last but definitely not least; a special and big thank you to my supervisor, **Dr T.T. Bhengu** for being so patient with me and for being a source of encouragement. Your guidance and support during the study never went unnoticed, especially when I experienced some setbacks in my family. This is what **Dr T. T. Bhengu** had to say when I was devastated after my mother had passed on:

“Don't despair, rather all these life shocks can be used positively; you have to push even harder, in the end happiness will outshine the setbacks and all”.

ABSTRACT

There is an assumption that effective styles of leadership lead to effective schooling which is evidenced by, among other things, high pass rate. This study explored principals' leadership styles in two secondary schools in Imati ward in Maphumulo Circuit. The study was conducted in two neighbouring secondary schools situated within a rural context. The two secondary schools were purposefully selected because of the disparities of learner achievement in the two schools. One school had produced very good Grade 12 results in the last five years and the other school had not performed as good, yet both schools are from the same area experiencing relatively similar challenges.

Without relegating the influence of many other contextual factors, the study seeks to explore leadership styles practised in these schools. The study recognises that leadership is a process and does not dwell in an individual (Gunter, 2001; Nothouse, 2001; Halinger & Heck, 2003).

The study adopted a qualitative approach and was located within an interpretivist research paradigm. This approach was deemed appropriate for this study whose objectives were to provide an understanding of the multi-realities from principals, HODs and teachers. Data in this study was generated using mainly semi-structured interviews and document analysis. These interviews were conducted with principals, HOD and teachers (one per school). Every possible effort was made to ensure that ethical issues pertinent to the study were considered at all times. The trustworthiness of the study was also considered in terms of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability asserted in Rule and John (2011). The study findings suggested that there was evidence of leadership being distributed to teachers at the better performing school. It was further found that the principal of the school did not stick to a particular leadership style, but considered the demands of the situation.

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ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

“It is one of the life’s great ironies: Schools are in business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other. If they ever discover how to do this, their future is assured” (Fullan, 2001, p.1).

The above quotation Fullan (2001) depicts the reality that we experience in many of South African schools even today. There are some schools in our circuit that are faced with similar challenges. These are characterised by, amongst others, learner ill-discipline, high rate absenteeism by the learners, truancy, high failure rate, and drug abuse, to name just a few. Some schools are managing to deal with this situation, while others in the same area are struggling. However, those schools that experience difficulties in handling this situation do not consult or seek help from their neighbours.

The main concept that frames this study is leadership, a concept that is at the core of discussion of educational leadership issues and a concept that has been widely researched (Fullan, 2003; Early & Weindling, 2004; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Bush, 2007; Davies, 2009). The success of any organisation or community structure depends on leadership. Such leadership needs to be efficient in order to yield the expected results (Fullan, 2001). For instance, a business venture that is poorly led will head for bankruptcy (Koh, 1995). Similarly, a school whose principal cannot lead and who is inefficient is unlikely to get good results for his or her organisation. This view is shared by Van Deventer (2003) who argues that the quality of leadership determines the success or failure of a school.

According to Bush (2007), the great interest in educational leadership is based on the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to the school and student outcomes. The fact that there is mention of quality implies that leadership is not the same; it differs from one institution to another. I believe that different people in different contexts experience and practice leadership differently. However, in any form or style, leadership remains a

cornerstone of an organisation (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010). In view of this point one can argue that school leadership, notably by principals, plays a key role, especially in motivating teachers and creating conditions and an organisational culture where effective teaching and learning occurs.

“In many parts of the world, including South Africa, there is recognition that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners” (Bush, 2007, p. 401). This therefore suggests that for schools to achieve what they had set themselves to achieve, they should have sound leadership. This, in turn, is likely to influence the success of the learners (or the lack thereof) in those schools.

The focus of this study is to explore the principals’ leadership styles in two rural secondary schools. The assumption is that effective styles of leadership lead to effective schooling which is evidenced by, among other things, high pass rates among the learners. I had set a benchmark of a pass rate of 70% and above in National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination as high and anything below that as low a pass rate. The study was conducted in two rural secondary schools in the Imati Ward in the Maphumulo Circuit.

The two schools were selected because of their history and reputation for achieving high pass rates in Grade 12 learners. The said schools are in the same area where I work. Bush (2007), states that South Africa has one of the most diverse education systems in the world, ranging from city schools to very poor schools without access to most basic facilities, such as water, power and sanitation. He concedes therefore, that it will be unwise to prescribe one universal approach to school leadership and management. He goes on to suggest that it is much better to equip principals with a ‘tool kit’ of skills and the wisdom to know which approaches should be applied in the particular circumstances they are required to manage (Bush, 2007).

1.2 Purpose statement

As indicated in the previous section, the thrust of this study is on the exploration of leadership styles used by two principals. The study also explores the extent to

which their respective styles contribute to effective schooling which ultimately results in improved learner achievement. To explore this phenomenon of leadership styles of two secondary schools located in close proximity to each other, a qualitative research approach was used.

1.3 Research questions

Two critical questions that underpin the study are presented below.

1. What are the leadership styles that are used by the two rural secondary school principals in the Imati Ward?
2. How do the principals' leadership styles contribute to effective teaching and learning in the two rural secondary schools in the Imati Ward?

1.4 The rationale of the study

I started this research project because I became interested in the subject of learner achievement in secondary schools which is where I am presently working. However, learner achievement does not take place in a vacuum; it occurs within a school which has effective leadership (Matar, 2010). The study focus was on exploring that connection between leadership styles and effective teaching and learning which is usually depicted by maintaining high pass rates in Grade 12 examinations in secondary schools. These results are regarded by many people in South Africa as a key entrance requirement to institutions of higher learning and potential employment for Grade 12 learners. National Senior Certificate (NSC) results announcement paints a picture of what has been happening at schools during the course of the year under the leadership of a principal.

My own experience as a teacher for ten years and as head of department (HOD) for two years and deputy principal for another ten years has convinced me that a principal of the school has an important role to play in bringing about the desired organisational culture within the school. A school can engage in different activities such as sports, cultural activities, but the core function of the school remains, teaching and learning. Therefore, it is critical that such an awareness remains at the fore of the principals' thinking.

A school can perform exceptionally well in extracurricular activities, but what matters most is the learners' academic achievement. Secondary schools in particular with Grade 12 are always judged with the pass rate of their Grade 12 learners. Obviously the principal does not teach all the learners at school and therefore cannot be expected to achieve this single handedly. However, the principal's leadership style plays an important role in creating conditions that are conducive for effective teaching and learning. Having taught in three different secondary schools in different contexts; serving at different levels, I believe that principal's leadership style needs to be looked at in terms of its role in creating conditions suitable for learner achievement.

It has always disturbed me to see neighbouring rural secondary schools with learners from the same feeder primary schools, experiencing similar socio-economic backgrounds, but experience poor levels of achievement while their counter parts do not. Some of these learners come from child headed households because of parents have either died or their whereabouts are unknown. Given the existing similar conditions experienced by these learners, one would not expect such disparities in terms of their academic achievements, hence the need for this study.

In terms of Section 4.2(a) (ii) of Employment of Educators Act 76, (1998), the principal has to provide professional leadership within the school. This section also mandates principals to participate in agreed educator appraisal processes in order to regularly review their (teachers') professional leadership practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management. This indicates that the principal as a leader has an influential role to play in the teaching and learning process.

In addition, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has been widely quoted in the media as having warned principals, whose schools continue to under-perform in terms of Grade 12 results, that they will be demoted Whether the DBE will carry out such a threat, and whether or not this is an appropriate method of handling under-performance in schools, is subject of another debate. However, what comes out clearly is the fact that principals are expected to play a pivotal

role in creating conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning. Such conditions are more likely to contribute to improved learner pass rates.

I believe that such a study can assist with providing an understanding of some of the leadership styles that can contribute in effective teaching and learning.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The theories that frame the discussion and analysis of the study are contingency theory and collegial model of leadership. These theories are discussed in details in Chapter Two of the study.

Research cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum, even though it may be exploratory (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). This study focuses on principals' leadership styles in the two rural secondary schools and their contribution to the provision of suitable conditions for effective teaching and learning. The main argument being advanced here is that there is no institution or organisation that will succeed without sound leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 2006). Clearly, an organisation like a school is made up of a number of members who are capable of playing leadership roles. They practice this leadership at different levels, for instance, as subject teachers, class teachers, as convenors of various committees, subject heads, departmental heads, deputy principals and principals. "If schools are to operate as learning communities, then they cannot do so with the leadership of a single person or with a singular leadership strategy" (Harris, 2002, cited in Hilty, 2011, p. 229). Therefore teacher leadership, in addition to principal leadership, becomes an important consideration if the success of the school is to be realised. In order for all other members to practice their respective leadership effectively, the principal's leadership style is critical.

The notion of dispersed leadership is currently topical. Hilty (2011) for instance, maintains that schools that are improving in terms of learner achievement, leadership is fluid and emerging rather than fixed. Earley and Weindling (2004) agree that head teachers who share leadership responsibilities with others are less subject to burnout compared to those principals who attempt the challenges and complexities of leadership alone. "Leadership is a process of influence to the

achievement of desired purposes. It involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of a vision for the school that is based on clear personal and professional values” (Bush & Glover, 2003, p.10, cited in Earley & Weindling, 2004).

Many theories have been advanced over the years to explain how leaders lead, whether in schools or elsewhere. Bush and Glover (2003) developed a typology of leadership consisting of eight broad theories, namely; instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, post-modern leadership, interpersonal leadership and contingency leadership (Earley & Weindling, 2004).

1.6 Research design and methodology

This is a qualitative study which is meant to solicit a better understanding of the phenomenon under the gaze. A qualitative study is a study presented largely in a language and is about the meaning constructed from the language that presents the data (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). According to (Henning, van Rensburg & Smith, 2000, p. 41), “qualitative approach research design is employed to gain understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather outcomes in discovery rather than confirmation”. The detailed procedures of how the study was conducted, who was involved and why, is addressed fully in Chapter Three.

1.7 An outline of the study

Here we are taking a short tour into each chapter of the dissertation which provides a glimpse into what is contained in it.

Chapter One

This chapter serves as an orientation to the study. It deals with a number of issues such as the background and rationale of the study, research questions and theoretical or conceptual framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Two

This chapter takes the readers through a literature that relates to the issues of leadership styles and their links with the performance of the learners. It presents the views of established researchers on this topic. It also includes arguments and gaps identified in the literature reviewed.

Chapter Three

This chapter describes the general research design and methodology that was used in the research. It also lists all the steps that were followed in the process of carrying out the research.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four discusses the data presentation that was generated in the two secondary schools that participated in the study.

Chapter Five

This chapter presents the summary of the study and findings thereof. It also makes recommendations and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

“There is great interest in educational leadership in the early part of the 21st century because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes” (Bush, 2007, p. 391).

Drawing from the above extract, it is clear that leadership plays a significant role in organisations such as schools. Different schools have different principals with different approaches in the way that they lead them. The great interest in educational leadership, according to Bush (2007), is because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes even though there is less clarity as to which behaviours are most likely to produce favourable outcomes. The fact that there is a mention of quality implies that leadership is not the same. However in any form or style leadership remains the cornerstone of an organisation (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010).

No matter what approach or style the principal applies, he or she is expected to play a pivotal role in leading the school going forward. According to Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006), leadership is not necessarily the only factor that makes a difference in a school, but it remains an important one. Leadership is not an important issue only in schools but even at the national level. This is evident in the mission statement of the Department of Basic Education which states that it aims “to provide leadership with respect to provinces, districts and schools in the establishment of the South African education system for the 21st century” (Department of Education, 2005).

When one undertakes a journey to the unknown, one has a number of options to consider. One way of reaching the destination is to enquire or gather as much information as possible from those who have travelled the journey before you. Likewise, in undertaking a study that explores principals’ leadership styles and effective teaching and learning may require, amongst other things, that the literature and studies conducted around the topic and the findings thereof are

reviewed. This may assist to find out what and how much work has already been done on the related subject, and also to establish if there are any gaps in the field of knowledge relating to the interest area.

This chapter therefore reviews literature on the subject, and discusses current debates on issues of leadership styles of school principals which provide conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning. The chapter commences with the theoretical framework which frames the study. The chapter also unpacks some of the key concepts used in the study.

2.2 Theoretical framework of the study

Since the dawn of a democratic dispensation in the country after the first 1994 national elections, democratic values have been emphasised and have started to emerge in South African communities. These democratic values have filtered through all spheres of society including schools and how they are led and managed. Educational reforms have become part of the total reform in the country (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Because of these new values emerging in the society, the schools have no choice but to follow suite (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Principals' leadership styles are put into test as they are challenged from all angles.

2.2.1 What informs this theoretical framework?

This study explores principals' leadership styles in the two secondary schools and the manner in which they provided conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning. Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004) assert that research cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum, even though it may be exploratory. The premise is that there is no institution or organisation that will succeed without sound leadership. I believe that an organisation like the school consists of a number of staff members who are capable of playing a leadership role in one way or the other. They practice leadership at different levels - as subject teachers, class register teachers, convenors of committees, subject heads, departmental heads, deputy principals and principals. For purposes of this study, the focus is on leadership that is practised by school principals.

2.2.2 Understanding theory

Many theories have been advanced over the years to explain how leaders lead, whether they are in schools or elsewhere. These theories have been advanced, one after another. Usually, the next theory is proposed based on the shortcomings of the previous one. According to Le Compte and Preissle (1993), theories are statements about how things are connected. Their focus is on explaining why things happen as they do. Other theories, however, focus on the understanding and interpretation of meaning of certain constructs rather than explanation of phenomena. Wallace and Poulson (2003) for instance, view theory as a coherent system of connected concepts that may be used to prescribe what could be done to improve an aspect of the social world.

Bush (2008) asserts though that there is no single all-embracing theory of educational leadership. Bush (2011) asserts that practitioners tend to be dismissive of theories because of their alleged remoteness from the 'real' school situation. But I believe that theories are very important because it is from them that we begin to make sense of what we eventually experience in practice. Contrary to many positive views about theories, Holmes and Wynne (1989) are sceptical about the value of theory in informing practice. These scholars believe that some practical situations would not materialise if theories were to be followed to the letter. Bush (2011) asserts that theory serves to provide a rationale for decision making. The dominant theory eventually comes under challenge by the emergence of new facts which the current dominant theory cannot explain. Subsequently, a new theory may be postulated which adequately explains these new facts (Bush, 2011). Theories tend to be normative; tend to be selective or partial in that they emphasise certain aspects at the expense of other elements and are often based or supported by observation (Bush, 2011). Notwithstanding, this author, is quick to point out that theories of education and the social sciences are very different from scientific theories. Most contemporary theories of leadership suggest that leadership cannot be separated from the context in which leadership is exerted, that is, leadership is contingent on the setting, nature of social organisation and individuals involved (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

2.3 The theories that frame the study

The study is located within a particular theoretical framework. The theories framing the study are contingency theory and collegial leadership models. The context of a school is not rigid therefore, it is important for principals to adopt contingency theory as it acknowledges the diverse nature of school contexts (Bush, 2011). The significance of collegial leadership model in this study is the recognition of different people's contribution in decision making and leadership possibilities for the betterment of the school.

2.3.1 Contingency theory

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the notion of the importance of the context within which leadership was enacted was beginning to come to the fore (Earley & Weindling, 2004). Fiedler's contingency theory and Blanchard's notion of situational leadership gained prominence during this time (Earley & Weindling, 2004). Contingency theory perceives leadership as the conjunction of person and the situation, and gives consideration to the following major situational variables to determine whether the situation is favourable to the leader, namely, the power of the leader, structure of the task and leader-led relationship. Wallace (1990), states that Fiedler is the father of the contingency theory. Within this theory, Hersey and Blanchard (1988), cited in Coleman and Earley (2005), has developed a complex model of four leadership styles, namely, delegating, supporting, coaching and directing. These styles or levels depend on such factors as the level of support needed, and the development level of team members. For instance, delegating a lot of responsibilities to the experienced and committed staff; directing the inexperienced staff and coaching or supporting the experienced but less committed staff. The development level of individuals is said to depend on the commitment and competence of the team members. Maile (2002) and van Deventer (2003) emphasise the significance of delegating, saying that no principal can exercise leadership successfully without delegating some of his responsibilities; however, they caution principals against the dangers of over-delegating.

Situational leadership therefore means that the leader (at any level in the organisation) chooses the right style of leadership behaviour to suit both the

development level of the team member and the task. Stoner and Freeman (1992), argue that there are factors in each situation that affect the effectiveness of a particular leadership style. These factors include the leader's personality together with past experiences and expectations. For instance, a leader who has been successful in exercising little supervision may be more prone to adopt an employee-oriented style of leadership.

Situational leadership stresses that leadership is composed of both a directive and a supportive dimension, each to be applied appropriately in a given situation (Earley & Weindling, 2004). The essence of situational leadership demands a leader's matching his or her style to the competence and commitment of the subordinates. Therefore situational leadership requires flexibility on the side of the leader. Bush (2007) emphasises that contingent models of leadership provide an alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership to a particular situation, rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance. South Africa has one of the most diverse education systems in the world. It ranges from well-resourced city schools, comparable to the best in the developed countries, to very poor schools without access to the most basic facilities, such as water, power and sanitation (Berger, 2011).

Given such disparities, it is unwise to prescribe one universal approach to school leadership and management. This reflexive approach is particularly important in periods of turbulence when leaders need to be able to assess the situation carefully and react appropriately rather than relying on a standard leadership model. I therefore found it relevant to use this theory in this study as situations in schools at different times are not static. Different situations call for different solutions that may be deemed suitable for that particular situation.

2.3.2 Collegial model of leadership

Collegiality entails a culture of mutual support and shared decision making, ideally by consensus between colleagues in professional organisations (Coleman & Earley, 2005). According to Bush (2011), the implementation of collegial leadership approach in secondary schools has been slower and more piecemeal than in higher education. This slow pace could be emanating from the reluctance that in the formal position, the principals alone have been responsible for the

leadership of schools. In collegial models of leadership, the nature of decision-making processes is different from other leadership models such as bureaucratic or formal ones.

“If schools are to operate as learning communities, then they cannot do so with the leadership of a single person or with a singular leadership strategy” (Harris, 2002, cited in Hilty, 2011, p.229). Therefore teacher leadership in addition to principal leadership becomes imperative to the success of the school. Hilty (2011) goes on to say that schools that are improving in terms of learner achievement, leadership is fluid and emerging rather than fixed. Earley and Weindling (2004) concur with the view that head teachers who share leadership responsibilities with others are less subject to burnout compared to those who attempt to deal with the challenges and complexities of leadership alone so as to be seen as heroes or heroines.

Heroic leadership may be seen as inappropriate when influence is widely distributed (Bush, 2011). Southworth (2009) asserts that distributed leadership is about developing other learning-centred leaders who make a positive difference to what happens in the classrooms. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also emphasise that distributed leadership inspires staff members, students and parents to seek, create and explore leadership opportunities that contribute to the deep and broad learning for all the students.

Transformational leadership, participative leadership and distributive leadership are all linked to collegial models of leadership (Bush, 2008 & 2011). Harris (2002) identifies distributed leadership with the collective leadership of teachers working together to improve classroom practice and consequently effective teaching and learning. Coleman and Earley (2005) assert that it is better for leadership to be shared rather than to be vested in one person. In transformational leadership, tasks are delegated, but supportive monitoring is offered which enhances the interaction between the principal and the staff. Leithwood and Jantzi (2009) assert that increased capacities due to the implementation of transformational leadership are assumed to result in extra effort and better results.

Distributed leadership is not simply a way of sharing out tasks amongst colleagues but it is an approach to leadership in schools which aims at involving many more staff in the leadership activity (Jackson & Street, 2005). According to Harris

(2004) cited in Bush (2011), distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise whenever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal role. This indicates that leadership should not be expected from particular individuals such as principals alone but everybody within the school who possesses leadership qualities. Dimmock (2012) warns though that whether or not principals and school leaders need to reshape their leadership style to foster distributed leadership depends on the degree to which they have a natural propensity to share. According to Caldwell and Spinks (1992), cited in Bush (2011), transformational leaders succeed in gaining the commitment of followers to such a degree that higher levels of accomplishments become virtually a moral imperative. It is therefore crucial that school leaders gain the commitment of staff members if schools are to achieve its collective goals.

According to Hoyle and Wallace (2005), participative leadership will increase school effectiveness when it is based on democratic principles. Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008) assert that engaging the school management team or other teams in participative leadership can ease the burden on principals. That will ensure that more time is made available to monitor and improve effective teaching and learning and ultimately learner achievement. Sergiovanni (1984) cited in Bush (2011), asserts that the importance of participative approach is bonding staff together and in easing the pressures on principals. Duignan (2006) argues that for participative approach to be practised successfully, educational leaders need to be secure enough to freely share and distribute what was previously their sole responsibilities.

When these collegiality models are in practice in a school situation, it is likely that the principal and staff will work harmoniously with high levels of commitment from them. This results mainly, from the fact that distributed leadership for instance, allows everyone involved to have a say. Decisions about what to do and how it should be done are reached by consensus. Therefore, everybody takes ownership of such decisions and thus works towards the attainment of collective goals.

Empirical research suggests that there is time and place for sharing leadership for effective teaching and learning (Van Deventer, 2003; Bush, 2007; Dimmock,

2012). When leadership is shared learning outcomes will be differentially effective across school context (Hallinger, 2011). Collegial models of leadership, particularly distributed leadership, are very important for this study as it seeks to explore principals' leadership styles and the provision of conditions that are conducive for effective teaching and learning.

2.4 Some key concepts in the study

The section that follows discusses some of the key concepts that are used in this study. These concepts are learning, teaching, effective teaching and learning and leadership.

2.4.1 Learning

Learning may have different meanings to different people. For the purposes of this study word learning is used in a restricted sense to refer to the learners' classroom or outside classroom interactions with their teachers as part of curriculum provision. Learning is seen as a change in behaviour which is an outcome or end product of some process (Rogers, 2003). Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) regard learning as quantifiable measure of outcomes which are often associated with the school effectiveness.

2.4.2 Teaching

According to Woolfolk (2010), teaching is not confined to classrooms but it occurs in homes and hospitals, museums and sales meetings, therapists' offices, and summer camps. This therefore suggests that teaching can occur anywhere as long as there are people involved. However for this study, teaching refers to teachers' planned classroom or outside classroom activities which form part of their curriculum delivery that occurs at school. It involves that conscious interaction between the learner and the teacher through a subject matter.

2.4.3 Effective teaching and learning

Schools are some of the institutions which are generally known for the process of teaching and learning. This process in general involves teachers who are expected to teach and learners on the other hand who are expected to receive what has been taught. In some cases these expectations are not achieved. In a situation where

these expectations are realised, then the assumption is that the process of teaching and learning has been effective.

2.4.4 Leadership

The concept of leadership is quite complex with many researchers giving varying definitions of what it is. According to Bush and Glover (2003) and Bush (2008), leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. It involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of a vision for the school that is based on clear personal and professional values (Dimmock & Walker, 2003). Leadership is a process of influence to the achievement of desired purposes. Bush (2011) concurs with the view that the central concept of leadership is influence rather than authority and is independent of positional authority. Maile (2002) asserts that one cannot begin to influence others if one does not have good rapport with them. Christie (2010) emphasises that leadership is characterised by influence and consent rather than coercion.

There are many ways of conceptualising what leadership is, but we can isolate a number of components that are central to the phenomenon of leadership. One of such components includes viewing it as a process rather than just an act. Northouse (2001) also agrees that leadership is a process. Leadership is not a linear, one way event but an interactive one between the leader and his followers. Leadership involves influence without which the phenomenon of leadership would not exist. Leadership also occurs in groups. Leaders influence these groups to achieve or work towards a common goal. Harris (2002), cited in Hilty (2011, p. 229), emphasises this point in saying that, ‘if schools are to operate as learning communities they cannot do so with the leadership of a single person or with a singular leadership strategy’. Gunter (2001) has the same view that leadership is not located within just one person.

2.5 Departmental policy demands

Having heard what leadership is about or should be and having read some theories involved, the principal however, cannot afford to abdicate his or her responsibilities for the sake of involving other teachers. The principal has the ultimate accountability as the head of the institution. In terms of Section 4.2(a) (ii)

of Employment of Educators Act 76, (1998), the principal has to provide professional leadership within the school and to participate in the agreed educator appraisal processes, in order to regularly review their (teachers') professional leadership practice. All such activities are done in order to improve teaching, learning and management goals. This indicates that the principal as a leader has an influential role to play in the teaching and learning process. In some schools this appraisal process does not take place on a regular basis.

Resolution 8, of 2003, also requires that there should be Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in schools. The IQMS is a policy that was agreed to by the Department of Education (DoE) and Teacher Unions to be used in assessing and developing the teachers in their daily interaction with teaching and learning. However, my view is that IQMS is not done properly in some schools. Some teachers at some schools get very high scores which do not correlate with the learner achievement. This raises questions about whether IQMS process serves the purpose for which it was meant.

According to a consultative paper presented by the Department of Basic Education, Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025, p.1; school principals are to “ensure that teaching takes place as it should. Through responsible leadership, principals promote harmony, creativity and sound work ethic within the school community and beyond”. This is a draft action plan that is intended to improve the quality of education in public schools. This is yet another good visionary initiative by the DoE which, when properly implemented, can bring about change in some schools. In addition, the Department of Basic Education has warned the principals whose schools continue to achieve low pass rates in the NSC that they will be demoted. This further indicates that school principals are expected to play a pivotal role in the provision of conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning and ultimately high pass rates.

2.6 Current debates in the school leadership and its effects on learner achievement

In the past leadership of schools has been seen as the sole preserve of a single person, the principal (Dimmock, 2012). This gave the principals the feeling of ownership of the schools. Historically the principal's role was that of manager,

which included responsibilities of maintaining safe schools, overseeing the budget, completing and submitting reports, coping with teacher and learner behaviour issue (Portin *et. al.* 1998, cited in Walker, 2009). The responsibilities and duties of a principal continue to increase with the new ones added without removing any. The focus on one individual had to gradually change. By the late 1980s this heroic leader of the school were being challenged (Hallinger, 2003). This therefore necessitated the emergence of a paradigm shift in defining the concept of school leadership. The importance of leadership and its influence on learner performance has been discussed in the previous sections. Some research conducted which relates to this issue will be discussed in the next paragraph. However there are on-going debates around this issue of leadership and effects on learner achievement.

There has since been a shift from individual leadership to team leadership. In South Africa for instance, there were no HODs in rural schools until the late 1980s. After the dawn of democracy in 1994, a new concept of the School Management Teams (SMTs) emerged, and this concept suggested that the principal had to share the leadership of the school with this team. Eventually there was an introduction of subject heads to assist with monitoring the specialisation area. In addition to that the Department of Education introduced the concept of Senior and Master Teachers respectively. This was done in order to minimise the brain drain of teachers in pursuit of higher positions at the expense of learner achievement. According to Louis *et. al.* (2010), these efforts to promote school-based management often included formal representation of teachers in decision making processes.

Current debates indicate that, that kind of shift is not enough. For instance, reform proposals in many countries recommend the inclusion of teachers in leadership roles (Louis, *et. al.*, 2010). Dimmock (2012) asserts that in the same way as new visualisations of teaching and learning have materialised, so too is the need for new conceptualisation of leadership. One of the leadership models, that is held at high esteem because it takes everybody on board in decision-making, is shared leadership (Bush, 2011). This is based on the assumption that when the staff members are directly involved in decision-making they tend to own the repercussions of such decisions. The performance rate of the teaching staff is also

improved (Van Deventer, 2003). West-Burman (2008) holds transformational leadership at high esteem as he argues that the purpose of transformational leadership is to achieve improved results, higher productivity and better performance of the organisation. However other researchers such as Dimmock (2012); Leithwood *et. al.* (2006) argue that instructional leadership is the way to go for improved learner achievement.

Dimmock (2012) claims that instructional leadership is three or four times the impact of transformational leadership. Hallinger (2010) argues though that instructional leadership consumes a lot of time for principals as it sometimes involves working with individual learners and also doing observations and walkthroughs. In defence of instructional leadership, DuFour (2002) asserts that there should be a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning. Principal should not be asking 'what are the teachers teaching' rather 'what steps can I take to give both learners and teachers the additional time and support they need to improve learning?'

However, Marks and Printy (2003) argue that effective principals exercise both transformational and instructional leadership simultaneously. Their findings suggest that schools with integrated leadership have higher pedagogical quality and academic achievement compared to other schools with low levels of one or both leadership styles. Another debate is that schools should now be regarded as centres of research (Dimmock, 2012). He argues that learning is increasingly a function of new knowledge created by the user, rather than transmitted by the teacher. Teachers should be engaged in research which involves learners for their own benefit. Singapore is one example where already at least one teacher in every school is trained in action research (Dimmock, 2012). So in the process of schools being centres of research, schools will begin to learn more about themselves thus being better equipped for the future.

The other debate is that principals come and go, and new principals bring about too many changes that may even affect effective teaching and learning; and ultimately improve pass rates at schools. The debate therefore to address this situation is that schools should have a leadership succession plan (Cranston, 2008). This succession plan is meant to groom those who are within the school so

that when the principal leaves the school; the culture of the school is not lost but there is continuity. All these different debates point to the same direction though; that is, the importance of the principal's leadership within the school that has positive effects on learner achievement; whether directly or indirectly. The difference in these debates though is how or what type of leadership style is being practiced in the school. How other stakeholders with interest in the education of the learner are involved and what impact their voices are allowed to make becomes important in this kind of discourse. The next section focuses on a number of research studies that have been conducted in various socio-economic contexts, including the developed and the developing world.

2.7 Research conducted with reference to the influence of leadership styles and effective teaching and learning

A number of research studies have been conducted around the area of influence of leadership styles used at schools and effective teaching and learning and ultimately learning outcomes. Most of these studies such as (Koh & Steers, 1995; Leithwood *et. al.*, 2008; Louis *et. al.*, 2010; Matar, 2010; Supovitz *et. al.*, 2010), to mention but a few, have been conducted outside the borders of South Africa. Supovitz *et. al.* (2010) further indicates that Hallinger and Heck (1998) synthesised 43 studies conducted between 1980 and 1995 around school leadership and student outcomes. There is one related study that I have come across within the South African context though, however that study had not been conducted in a rural context. The following section reviews some of these studies.

2.7.1 International context study

The following section discusses some of the studies conducted outside the borders of South Africa which are related to the study under the microscope. Three international studies are briefly discussed. In addition to that the summaries of the key findings on literature concerning successful school leadership will be discussed.

2.7.1.1 Research by Koh, Steers and Terborg

The study was conducted by Koh, Steers and Terborg and took place in Singapore in 1990. The study was about the effects of transformational leadership on student academic performance, and it was similar to the one that had been done in the United States of America.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of transformational leader behaviour by school principals as it related to organisational commitment (OC), organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), and teacher satisfaction with leader, and student academic achievement.

Methodology used in the study

The research project was carried out in secondary schools in Singapore. Out of 123 eligible secondary schools, 100 were randomly selected and surveyed. A school was considered eligible if its principal had been there at least one year and had 10 teachers in the sampling frame. From the selected schools, teachers who had been there for at least one year formed the sampling frame for the selection of the teachers. Twenty teachers were selected from each school. Ratings of leadership and outcomes variables were obtained using split sample technique to avoid common source variance. Ten teachers responded to the questionnaires which measured satisfaction with the leader and organisational commitment. The other 10 assessed the leadership styles of the school principals.

Findings of the study

Ninety of the 100 secondary schools responded to the study. A total of 844 teachers representing a response rate of 90% completed the (multifactor leadership questionnaire) MLQ, while 846 teachers completed the OCQ and IOR. The data was analysed and thereafter the post hoc analyses was conducted. The findings suggested that transformational leadership had significant and substantial add-on effects on transactional leadership in the prediction of OCB, OC as well as the satisfaction with the leader. Results also suggested that transformational leadership had little direct impact on student academic achievement. It was

however noted that the influence that could happen was through principals' influence on teachers.

Implications of the study

The study examined the influence of a particular leadership style to learner performance and the findings suggested that there was no direct influence except for indirect influence through the teachers. This is therefore significant for the study that is reported here because leadership cannot be expected directly from an individual. This implies that the principal alone cannot be expected to be the lone voice in the school, but the teachers who are in direct contact with learners are expected to assist with the direction the school takes in terms of learner achievement.

2.7.1.2 Research by Supovitz, Sirinides and May

The study by Supovitz, Sirinides and May (2010), was conducted in an urban south eastern school district in the United States of America using teacher survey and student achievement data in 2006-2007.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of principal leadership and teacher peer influence on teachers' instructional practice and student performance.

Methodology used in the study

The literature on the effects of school leadership on student learning dates back to at least 40 years and the accumulation of that literature suggests that principals can have a detectable effect on student outcomes. In more recent literature survey indicates that leadership enacted by teachers also has tangible influence (Supovitz *et. al.* 2010). In their study, Supovitz *et. al.* (2010) combine the two trends and examine the effects of both the principal leadership and peer influence on teachers' practice and student learning. This was a quantitative study.

The data to address these research questions was generated as part of an on-going study of educational leadership from an urban district. The district consisted of 52 schools: 30 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 8 high schools and 4 speciality

schools. Two data sources used included teacher surveys which had 81% response rate and student achievement data on English Language Arts and Mathematics. Student achievement data for 2006 and 2007 were collected and linked using a district-provided unique student identifier. The records were then linked to teachers using a teacher identifier for 2007. The surveys provided measures of both leadership practice and peer influence on teachers.

Findings of the study

The findings of the study demonstrated a positive association for both principal and peer influence with teachers' change in instructional practice in both ELA and Mathematics. The structural path from principal leadership to peer influence was also shown to be significant in both subjects (English Language Arts and Mathematics). It was further found that principal leadership was a positive and significant predictor of a teachers' change in both the ELA and Mathematics. This suggests that principals who focus on instruction, foster community and trust, and clearly communicate school mission and goals are associated with teachers who report making a greater degree of changes to their instructional practice. It was found that the largest and most significant relationship was the effect of principal leadership on peer influence. The findings peer influence had a higher direct association with change in instruction than did principal leadership.

Implications of the findings

The findings of this study (Supovitz *et. al.*) emphasise the significant role played by the type of leadership prevailing within the school. The study provides additional evidence to the findings of other researchers' work on leadership and learner achievement. It is also similar to my study in terms of its focus, but is also different in the sense that it encompasses principals and teacher peers. Another glaring difference is that the study was conducted in an urban setting and involved a large sample of 52 schools. The study under the microscope was undertaken in a different context; a rural setting in the Maphumulo Circuit. Supovitz *et. al.* (2010) agree that context is also acknowledged to play an important role in identifying the essential activities of school leadership. Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996), as cited in Supovitz, *et. al.* (2010) also emphasise that the context

facing the school, must be considered when attempting to identify leadership practice.

2.7.1.3 Research by Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins

Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) provide interesting findings from the research regarding leadership and learner achievement, from the article titled 'seven strong claims about successful school leadership'. Amongst the seven claims, three of them which shed some light in this study are school leadership. This is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. Thirdly, school leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed. The first claim is based on a number of justifications: one is a qualitative case study evidence which reported very largely on leadership effects on pupil learning and outcomes, though this could not be generalised being a case study. Another study was a quantitative research which focused on the effects of leadership on learner outcomes. The conclusions reached were that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership on pupil outcomes are small but educationally significant which accounted for about 5-7% (Leithwood *et. al.* 2008).

Further studies regarding influence of leadership on learning were based on the effects of total leadership. By total leadership, Leithwood *et. al.* (2008) refers to leadership provided by many resources such as individual teachers, staff teams, parents, and heads of departments, deputy principals as well as the principals themselves. The most significant results of this study were the indirect effects of total leadership on student learning and achievement. Total leadership accounted for 27% of the variation in student achievement across the schools. According to Leithwood *et. al.* (2008), this is two or three times much higher than is typically reported in studies of individual principal effects. This therefore emphasises the importance of leadership that does not reside in an individual but a team or teams.

2.7.2 South African context study

Ngcobo (2010) conducted her study in which the relationship of two South African township secondary schools of varying academic achievement was studied in 2005. It is indicated in the study that the literature suggests that leadership is crucial in the development, maintenance and or change of school cultures. The link between positive school cultures and academic achievement has also been highlighted. With the aforesaid in mind the purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between academic achievement, school culture and leadership in two South African township schools.

Methodology used in the study

The study employed an ethnographic design which was framed by grounded theory. The explorations were both interpretive and relativist. The schools' selection was based on their Grade 12 results because the 'the performance at this level reflects good results'. The data for the study was generated through classroom and staffroom unstructured observation, informal conversations, semi-structural interviews, short questionnaires and document analysis. Participants included principals, influential teachers and learners in Grades 8, 10 and 11. Data generation process lasted about three school calendar quarters. The schools were named 'Fundiseka' an 'Umzamo' respectively (pseudonyms used for ethical considerations).

One school reflected good academic achievement whilst the other school had a history of poor learner achievement. Leadership in this study referred to all individuals who, irrespective of whether or not they occupied formal positions of authority, were identified as being influential at these schools (Ngcobo, 2010). Once again the question of leadership being distributed amongst other teachers in addition to the principal comes into the fore. Culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by itself (Schein, 2004, cited in Ngcobo, 2010).

It is clearly indicated that the research questions were not aimed at generating cause-and-effect truths, rather, they were informed by an assumption that certain

leadership features are more likely to be associated with a school culture which, in a given context is enabling or disabling for participation in activities associated with good academic achievement.

Findings of the study

The findings in this study were divided into three categories namely; school culture that support good academic achievement; organic leadership and leadership diversity. Findings in this study suggested that school cultures that are potentially enabling for good academic achievement are those that are characterised by negotiated communal ownership. The communality was characterised by common understandings about matters of value to the school.

Regarding findings on leadership, leadership emerged organically at the well doing school and that leadership was also diversified. At Fundiseka whilst the principals' leadership was more relationship oriented, the Deputy Principal leaned towards task orientation. Influential individuals who were not necessarily occupying formal positions of authority served in various committees that provided them with opportunities to exercise their influence. This could not be said about the other school called Umzamo. The school did not depict any sense of communal ownership. Whilst at 'Fundiseka' they talk about 'our school', 'our teachers' or 'our learners', this is not found in 'Umzamo school'. This indicates that leadership that is all inclusive brings about ownership and motivates everybody involved to do well thus improving performance on teachers which rubs off to learners to perform better as well.

Even conversations in the well performing school were, "our school", "our teachers" or "our learners" (Ngcobo, 2010). The different influential individuals that were identified conveyed a situational style of leadership. This is in line with Ramsey's view, cited in (Ngcobo, 2010), that 'no one leadership style works all the time. That's why some successful administrators favour an eclectic (situational) approach that uses "whatever works" under the circumstances.' This therefore means that, principals or any other leader for that matter should guard against sticking to one leadership style no matter what.

Implications of the study

The study conducted by Ngcobo is similar to this study because both explore the leadership role on learner academic performance. However, the context differs in that hers (Ngcobo, 2010) was conducted within a township while this one was conducted in a rural context. Literature reviewed so far does not indicate any study undertaken in the rural schools of South Africa. The particular sample and context of my study gives it a distinctive character. That is some gap that I have picked up in the research done.

2.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed the key terms used in the study. I went on to discuss relevant leadership theories. I further discussed what literature says about leadership styles in relation to effective teaching and learning. Lastly I interrogated the research work done both internationally and locally on the topic. Most research indicates that leadership that does not reside in an individual but in a team yields better results.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature review on the principals' leadership styles and effective teaching and learning. This chapter, as highlighted in Chapter One, provides the general description of the research design and methodology that was used in carrying out the research. It lists all the steps that were taken in the research process. The chapter further speaks to the methods that were used for the selection of participants. It is in this chapter that methods used to elicit data from the participants, analysis of such data, and measures of ensuring trustworthiness of the findings, are outlined. The chapter then concludes by discussing the ethical issues that were considered during the entire research process.

3.2 Research design and methodology

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) argue that planning research is not an arbitrary matter, but that there are different research designs for different types of research. It is therefore crucial to use the most appropriate design. The study under the microscope adopted a qualitative approach and was located within the interpretivist paradigm. This design and approach to inquiry were deemed appropriate for this study whose objectives were to provide an understanding of the multiple-realities from the principals and teachers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This approach was deliberately selected because it had the potential to allow for thick descriptions of the influence of principals' leadership on effective teaching and learning.

Nieuwenhuis (2010) describes qualitative research as an attempt to generate rich descriptive data in respect of particular phenomenon or context with an intention to develop an understanding of what is being studied. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also add that qualitative studies are important for theory generation, policy development, as well as, improvement on educational practice. This therefore comes in handy as the findings in this study could assist in understanding how the practice of school leadership could be improved. Henning *et. al.* (2004) add that qualitative research is a study that is presented largely in language and is about the

meaning constructed from the language that presents the data. Mason (2002) describes qualitative research as most commonly associated with the interpretivist sociological tradition hence it was selected for the study.

The study consisted of two rural secondary schools which were studied in order to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved (Henning *et. al.* 2004). This study sought to explore the phenomenon of leadership style and how these styles contributed in creating conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning in the two rural secondary schools. To achieve this outcome, the study documented stories narrated by the principals, the HODs and the teachers.

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004) define research methodology as a coherent group of methods that complement one another in order to satisfy the needs of the study. These methods have potentials to produce data and findings that answer the critical questions, and therefore the methods should be in alignment with the research purpose. She further argues that methodology is not simply a collection of methods, but more importantly, methodology is about what these methods are capable of achieving (Henning *et. al.* 2004). This implies that any methodology is not necessarily good or bad. McMillan and Schumacher (1993), Le Compte and Preissle (1993), concur with this notion, and that methodology is closely related to the underlying paradigm. In this study narrative inquiry methodology was adopted and it is congruent with the paradigm used.

Van Rensburg's view, cited in Henning *et. al.* (2004) is that, in interpretivist paradigm, there is no generalising but the generating of meaning is of vital importance. The objective of this study was about understanding the principals' leadership styles as experienced in the two secondary schools and how these assisted in providing suitable conditions for effective teaching and learning. Cohen *et. al.* (2011), further assert that interpretive paradigm is characterised by the concern for an individual and its central endeavour is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) indicate that the strength of the interpretive paradigm lies in the fact that it provides the views of the participants in their own voices and that it is directly associated with qualitative research methodology.

3.3 Sampling of research sites and participants

Sampling is a very critical phase of any study. According to Cohen *et. al.* (2011), the quality of research, not only stands or falls by the appropriateness of methodology and instruments used, but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy used. Sampling in this study is divided into two categories; sampling of research sites and sampling of the participants.

3.3.1 Sampling of research sites

Purposive sampling method was used in the study since it sought information rich cases which can be studied in-depth when one wants to understand something about those cases without needing to generalise to all such cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Lodico *et. al.* (2006) emphasise that such sampling can give those cases that one can learn a great deal about the issue of central importance to the purpose of the research. In purposive sampling, which is a feature of qualitative research, researchers hand-pick the cases to be included on the basis of possession of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

I indicated in Chapter One that the study was informed by the levels of pass rates of learners in the two rural secondary schools. Rule and John (2011) argue that the size of the sample of participants is influenced by the purpose of the study and the resources available. Two neighbouring secondary schools in Imati Ward in the Maphumulo Circuit were identified for this study. These schools were sampled on the basis of their history and reputation. The selection of the two schools was based on their Grade 12 examination pass rates over a five year period. Both schools are from the same area experiencing relatively the similar social challenges but their learner pass rates in NSC were consistently different.

The schools were then given fictitious names; Isolezwe Secondary School (ISS) and Elangeni Secondary School (ESS) respectively. This was done in order to protect the schools from being identified.

3.3.2 Sampling of participants

“It is often impossible for a case study researcher to consult everyone involved in a case. The researcher therefore has to choose people who can shed most light, or different lights, on a case. This is known as purposive sampling where the people selected as research participants are deliberately chosen for their suitability in advancing the purpose of the study” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 64).

Selected participants in the study were principals from the two schools, one head of department (HOD) per school and one Post-level One educator per school. Both HODs represented the departments of Mathematics and Sciences in their respective schools. Both Post Level One educators taught English at Grade 12. The term Post-Level One educators and teachers are used interchangeably in this study to refer to those educators that do not occupy promotional positions such as HOD or deputy principal. The three different categories were selected because of the different roles they were expected to play in the teaching and learning situation. Bak (2004) indicates that one of the questions to be addressed in the research is, how many participants will be involved and why that number. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Lodico *et. al.* (2006) explain that the researcher needs to examine his or her foreshadowed questions and use them as a basis for the selection of participants.

The sample should give the researcher access to data that will allow him or her to develop an empirically and theoretically grounded argument about something in particular (Mason, 2002). The participants in this study were therefore selected in alignment with the research questions. The principals of the two secondary schools were selected with regards to exploring the leadership styles that they used in their respective schools as they are the ones who are expected to provide leadership. The HODs in the schools were in the forefront in terms of providing guidance and leadership to teachers regarding the delivery of curriculum in class. One HOD per school therefore, was selected to participate in the study. First preference was offered to those that had served in the schools in question, the longest.

In terms of Section 4.4 (d) of Employment of Educators Act, the HOD is responsible for the effective functioning of the department. It is therefore expected that the HOD is well versed with what takes place in the department and is assumed to be in charge and control of the department. One teacher per school was also selected to participate in the study so that I could obtain a balanced view about the life in the school in terms of the principals' leadership.

The use of different participants at different levels of leadership within the same school was also done for triangulation purposes. Triangulation refers to the process of using multiple sources and methods to support propositions generated in a case study (Henning *et. al.* 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Cohen *et. al.* 2011; Rule & John, 2011). More than one strategy or source may be used in generating data for a particular question. Data from a variety of sources or instruments assist in providing the necessary checks and balances in the research (Vithal & Jansen, 1997). Triangulation has been suggested by researchers doing qualitative studies as “a vehicle for achieving high quality, rigorous and respectable research” (Rule & John 2011). It is always important to get all sides of the story for balance purposes and reliability, especially because case study is an in-depth form of inquiry (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Henning *et. al.* 2004; Lodico *et. al.* 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 & 2011, McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Rule & John, 2011).

3.3.3 Biographical representation of participants

The participants in the study are shown in the following schematic representation. This represents their composition in terms of their gender after purposive sampling had been conducted.

| Schools | Isolezwe Sec. School | Elangeni Sec. School | Total |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Principals | Male | Male | 2 |
| HOD | Male | Male | 2 |
| Teachers | Female | Female | 2 |
| Total | Three | Three | 6 |

Table1: Biographical representation of participants

3.4 Piloting the instrument

Data generation process was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of the pilot study phase and the other one entailed the main data generation process. Pilot study phase is a very significant and crucial phase in the research as it affords the researcher the opportunity to revisit the instruments to be used in the main research phase. Lodico *et. al.* (2010), state that piloting should be regarded as a dress rehearsal for the research instrument. I was not sure whether the research instrument was ready to elicit the required data; hence I conducted this pilot study. The rationale was to put the instrument into test. I wanted to check if the interview questions would yield any rich data. I wanted to make adjustments in case I did not get what I was looking for. Cohen *et. al.* (2011) concur with this view when they say that the pilot phase can assist in fine tuning and making final adjustments. I did the pilot interviews with my colleagues at my place of employment; that is the principal, head of department and a Post-level One colleague. I was nervous at the beginning especially with the principal's interview. However as the interview progressed, I gained confidence. Piloting assisted me a great deal in preparation for the main data generation phase. Pilot phase taught me that without asking probing questions I might not be able to generate the required data. I also gained confidence in conducting interviews which I had experienced for the first time in a formal situation and for research purposes.

3.5 Data generation methods

Rule and John (2011) list questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and participants' observations, as the main methods used in most research texts written for education and social sciences. This study used only the semi-structured interviews and document analysis as methods for data generation. The semi-structured interviews were used as the main method and the document analysis as a complementary method for data generation. There are different types of interviews that can be used in qualitative research. These types of interviews differ according to the source the researcher is reading. For instance, Le Compte and Preissle (1993), enumerate six types of interviews; standardised interview, in-

depth interview, ethnographic interview, elite interview, life history and focus group interviews.

Guthrie (2010) puts emphasis on three types of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. Rule and John (2011), who write more about case studies and their experiences in using them, put emphasis on structured interviews, semi-structured, in-depth interviewing and focus groups. I decided to use semi-structured interviews and document analysis in this study. The rationale for such a choice of the interview and the use of document analysis is explained later in the chapter when discussing the method of data generation used in this study.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interpretive approaches rely heavily on naturalist methods such as interviewing, observation and analysis of existing texts and these methods ensure an adequate dialogue between the researcher and those with whom they interact in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality (Mouton, 2001). Interviewing has long been the most popular method for data generation in qualitative research (Seidman, 1998; Mouton, 2001; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). I indicated earlier on in this chapter that I used semi-structured interviews for data generation. A semi-structured interview involves a set of pre-set questions which initiate the discussion, followed by further questions which arise from the discussion (Rule & John, 2011). I opted for the semi-structured interviews because I felt that the method was the most appropriate for the study because of its flexibility and strengthening of the relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants (Henning *et. al.* 2004). This style of interviewing provides space for flexibility during data generation and allows participants to express themselves freely (Kvale, 1996; Arksey & Knight, 1999; Cohen *et. al.* 2007; Guthrie, 2010).

Lovell and Lawson (1981) assert that this kind of interview enables the interviewer to explain the purpose of the study and can ensure that the participants fully understand what is required of them. According to Cohen and Manion (1989), one advantage of an interview is that it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data generation. I conducted these interviews at different places and at different times of the day in accordance with the

arrangements agreed upon by various participants. This was in alignment with the confirmability of the participants when being interviewed (Creswell, 1998). Principals and the HODs were interviewed at their respective schools. One teacher preferred to be interviewed out of school.

3.5.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is one of the methods of generating qualitative data that I used in this study. According to Rule and John (2011), document analysis is a standard method for data located in various stored forms. Henning *et. al.* (2004) argue that any document, whether old or new, whether in printed format, hand written or in electronic format and which relates to the research question may be of value. I could not afford to rely on the semi-structured interviews only; hence I also used document analysis as well. Lodico *et. al.* (2006) assert that documents and records can be a valuable way to corroborate data from other sources and that document analysis is a data source that overlaps with the other methods.

The documents that I analysed at the schools were the computer generated Grade 12 mark schedules for the past five years. The purpose for analysing these documents was to ascertain the pass rates against those given by the principals of the two researched schools. I also wanted to establish the principals' thinking about the pass rates as they appeared on the documents, whether they regarded them as high or low, given the benchmark I used in Chapter One of 70% and above pass rate as high. I used the two strategies for data generation for triangulation purposes as asserted in Guthrie (2010) that triangulation uses different techniques to study the same issue from different varied angles.

3.6 Data recording

Recording the generated data is one of the important stages of the study. The data that has been generated needs to be recorded accurately so that it contains what actually transpired during the discussions. The data was generated using document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews though took the centre stage as the main method and complemented by document analysis method for triangulation purposes. The description of how the data was generated using the two methods is presented below.

3.6.1 Recording interviews

Henning *et. al.* (2004) suggest that there should be two audio recorders, a notebook, a suitable private venue with comfortable seating, spare batteries for the recorder and consent form before commencing with the interview. Before the interview sessions could begin, I asked for each participant's permission to record interview using a digital recorder and two cell phones. I informed the participants that such recording was only meant to ensure accurate record of the content of the discussions and would be used for such purposes only. Henning *et. al.* (2004) emphasise that a participant needs to be comfortable with whatever mode of recording that is being used.

I firstly tested all the recording devices whether or not they were in working condition before the recording of the actual interviews; as suggested in Henning *et. al.* (2004). I then recorded all the interviews using a digital recorder and two cell phones in order to capture the accurate account of the interviews. I also had spare batteries for the digital recorder in case anything went wrong with the recorder. When I conducted the interviews for the pilot project, alluded to earlier on in the chapter; one of the devices I used for data recording just went dead. This was a very devastating experience being a novice researcher. However, an important lesson was learnt from this unpalatable experience. It is for that reason that I used three recording devices for the main research project for back up purposes. Lodico *et. al.* (2006) emphasise the importance of using recording devices as many qualitative studies include *verbatim* responses as part of data analysis. I also took notes on the note-book without losing eye contact with the participants as per Wolcott's (2001) recommendations.

I transcribed the data from interview soon after each interview session. Henning *et. al.* (2004) advise that the transcriptions of the conversation should commence as soon as possible. This was important as it allowed me to easily fill in all the gaps that relate to non-verbal communication. Cohen *et. al.* (2011) assert that use of voice recorders affords the researcher time to take note of such non-verbal communication cues.

3.6.2 Recording document analysis

I indicated earlier that I also took down some notes during the interviews (Lodico, *et. al.* 2006). These were written on a note-book. I used the very same note-book to record the document analysis. The computer generated mark schedules were the documents that formed part of the document analysis. These documents are issued to schools at the beginning of the year containing the Grade 12 results for each school. I was more interested in the last page of the document which encapsulates all the results per school. I then recorded specifically these scores of results as they appeared on the document. Mason (2002) asserts that a researcher should only record what he or she requires. I then used these to corroborate the results which had been verbally given by the principals (Mason, 2002).

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis of qualitative data within the interpretivist paradigm involves the construction of ideas and theories about what is being studied. Dey (1993) cited in Henning *et. al.* (2004) describes data analysis as a process of resolving data into its constituent components. The data generated helps the researcher to shape his or her thinking in terms of preconceived ideas. In the process of transcribing the generated data, I also engaged in the process of analysing the data. I listened to the voice recorded data for several times to make sense of what the participants had to say. I then engaged myself in reading the transcripts for several times as well in order to categorise the data.

I highlighted the groups of words and organised them into codes and themes according to the issues that emerged from the two chosen sites. I then looked for similarities and differences in each research site. What I had heard and read was then reported in the form of narratives. Data for each respondent was analysed. The study was more to understand what was happening in the respective schools in relation to the learner performance and their experience. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000, p. 22), interpretive paradigm is with the understanding that “people interpret events, contexts and situations, and act on the basis of those events”.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the research

Conducting sound, defensible research in the quest to improve knowledge and practice in education and the social sciences should be a goal for all researchers; irrespective of research tradition they embrace (Rule & John, 2011, p.106).

Researchers within qualitative research have attempted to ensure quality through the development of alternative measures and processes, including use of different terminology to that of quantitative research. Guba (1981) cited in Rule and John (2011) offers the concept of trustworthiness as an alternative to reliability and validity which promotes the values such as transparency and professional ethics. Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest that the trustworthiness of qualitative studies is achieved by giving attention to the study's transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability. Steps that were taken to ensure trustworthiness of the findings are presented in the section that follows.

3.8.1 Credibility

The concept of credibility according to Guba (1981), refers to the extent to which a case study has recorded the fullness of the case reality. According to Rule and John (2011), credibility is an alternative to internal validity. In this study I used a variety of methods to enhance credibility. These included the use of multiple data sources; the use of different data generation methods, and also ensuring easy access by the participants to the data that had been generated. In this study, I used a number of sources of data through triangulation to corroborate the researcher's conclusions for credibility purposes. These different data sources were principals, HODs and Post-level One educators. Different writers such as Yin, (2003); Lodico *et. al.* (2006); Guthrie, (2010); Rule and John, (2011), all emphasise the use of different methods to ensure that the findings of the study enjoy credibility within research community.

Besides the measures explained in the previous paragraph, I also assured the participants that the discussions were voice recorded so that I could capture exactly what was discussed. I assured the participants of their option to see the interview transcripts for verification purposes. Rule and John (2011) asserts that

getting the participants of the study to verify the accuracy of what has been written about them, gives credibility to the study. They refer to this technique as 'member-checking'. I also informed the participants that the report of the study would be made available to them.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research discourse is an alternative to generalisability of the study (Rule & John, 2011). This was a case study and the findings of the study are not generalisable to all other situations. However, I believe that the lessons learned in this particular study and particular setting, can be useful to others, and this can be regarded as transferability. However, Lodico *et. al.* (2006) argue that transferability refers to the degree of similarity between the research site and other sites as judged by the reader. Rule and John (2011) further assert that case study research is not fit for the purpose of statistical generalisation but for purposes of generating in-depth, holistic and situated understandings of a phenomenon. I provided a profile of each school when writing the report; for the deeper understanding to the readers regarding the context in which the sites were situated.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is viewed as a substitute for reliability which measures replicability (Guba, 1981). On the other hand, Lodico *et. al.* (2006) see dependability as referring to a situation where one can track the procedures and processes used to generate and interpret the data. For this study, I used triangulation both in terms of methods and data resources. I made use of semi-structured interviews together with document analysis. I also interviewed participants from three different levels of leadership at school; principal, head of department and post level one educator.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is offered by Guba (1981) as a way of addressing concerns about the researcher's influences and biases on the study. To address this issue I went back to my participants and discussed with them my interpretations of what they had told me. In this way, they confirmed or in some instances, clarified what they

meant by what they had told me. In this way the trustworthiness of the study was enhanced.

3.9 Consideration of ethical issues

“The research product is not the only aspect of research that pertains to quality. Ethical relationships and practices are also key aspects of the quality of research. Conducting research in an ethically sound manner thus enhances the quality of research and contributes to its trustworthiness” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 111).

The above quotation captures the essence of the importance of observing ethical practice during the research process. It cannot be overemphasised that all participants in the study should participate voluntarily without being coerced into the study. Before even beginning with the empirical study, I explained the purpose of the study to the potential participants and explained to them how they were selected as participants. I then gave them consent letters spelling out that the research would not cause any personal harm to them and that they would not receive any monetary compensation for participating in the study. Mason (2002) asserts that participants should give their full consent and be fully informed about the research before they can participate. Protection from harm of participants is one of the most basic of ethical concerns (Henning *et. al.* 2004; Lodico *et. al.* 2006; Cohen *et. al.* 2011; Rule & John 2011).

I initially submitted letters to the principals of the two schools involved in this study, requesting to conduct the research in the respective schools; who confirmed by appending their signatures and affixing the schools’ stamps. I also requested to examine certain documents for the research which the principals agreed to. Mason (2002) asserts that permission to scrutinise any documents should be sought beforehand.

I further informed the participants, after I had been granted permission to conduct the study, that I would be interviewing them to generate data and that the interviews would be voice recorded. I also guaranteed the confidentiality, saying that whatever would be discussed would remain between us. I clearly informed them that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and that they

could tell me if they were not comfortable with the discussions being voice-recorded, as recommended in Lodico *et.al.* (2006). I further ensured that the names of the participants and the names of their schools remained anonymous so that no one could identify them when reading the research report.

I applied for ethical clearance certificate from the University's Ethics Committee to ensure that all ethical issues were observed accordingly. I also applied for permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct the study. It became clear that I, as a researcher, had to go through a number of gatekeepers in order to attain ethical clearance certificate. The principals of the researched schools and participants were among those from whom permission was sought. Mason (2002) emphasises that researchers should be as concerned to produce a moral and ethical research design as in producing an intellectually coherent and compelling one.

3.10 Limitation of the study

This particular study was conducted with a small sample of two secondary schools, thus the findings cannot be generalised to other secondary schools. However, making sure that thick descriptions of the phenomenon of principals' leadership styles were provided helped minimise this problem. Minute books which could have confirmed that staff meetings and departmental meetings are held at the as contemplated in the interviews were not perused. This could have made a strong case of whether or not such meetings were held.

3.11 Coding of the schools and participants

I have already indicated the importance of protecting the identity of the participants and their institutions. A research report was written without the use of real names of the participants or their institutions. Instead, pseudonyms were used and these are explained below.

Coding the schools:

The following codes were used to hide the identity of the participating secondary schools in the Imati Ward.

- Isolezwe Secondary School refers to the first school studied.
- Elangeni Secondary School refers to the second school studied.

Coding the participants:

The following codes were used to hide the identity of the individual participants in each of the schools.

- Princ-A refers to the principal of Isolezwe Secondary School.
- Princ-B refers to the principal of Elangeni Secondary School.
- HOD-A refers to the HOD of Isolezwe Secondary School.
- HOD-B refers to the HOD of Elangeni Secondary School.
- PL1-A refers to Post-Level One educator from Isolezwe Secondary School.
- PL1-B refers to Post-Level One educator from Elangeni Secondary School.

3.12 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed the understanding of research design and methodology in general, and then the design and methodology relevant in this study. This also included significant issues in the research process such as data generation and recording, data analysis, steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study as well as the ethical issues that were observed during the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data that was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews as the main data generation method. Document analysis was also used to supplement interviews. Data was generated from the two secondary schools and both were located in the Imati Ward within the Maphumulo Circuit. These schools had been identified to have significant differences in terms of Grade 12 end of year results. One was consistently obtaining high NSC average pass rate of about 80% over a period of five years. The other school was obtaining inconsistent NSC average pass rate of about 60%.

The two secondary schools were given fictitious names in compliance with ethical practice whereby issues of anonymity and confidentiality have to be observed. The school that appeared to be performing better is called Isolezwe Secondary School (ISS) and the other school seen not to be performing as well is called Elangeni Secondary School (ESS). The data presentation starts with the provision of the profile of the two schools, followed by the tables indicating the fictitious names of schools and participants' names together with their biographical details. The main presentation of the data focused on the discussion of the themes that emerged when analysing the data on principals' leadership style influence on learner performance.

4.2 Profile of the two research sites

This section presents a site-by-site profile of the two research sites which formed part of the study. It is not peculiar to this study to begin data presentation by describing each research site of the study. In fact is a normal practice (Mason, 2002; Henning *et.al* 2004) This practice assists the readers to have a clear picture about, not only the data, but also the site from which the data was generated. Profile of each site follows below; starting with the first site to be visited called Isolezwe Secondary School and followed by Elangeni Secondary School.

4.2.1 Profiling Isolezwe Secondary School

Isolezwe Secondary School (ISS) is situated in a rural area about 150 kilometres north of Durban. The school is classified as a 'No-fee paying school'. The No-fee paying schools are determined by the national Department of Basic Education taking into consideration the socio-economic backgrounds of the area. The school is located in an area which is under the jurisdiction of Maphumulo Local Municipality within a ward led by a ward councillor in terms of Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998). The area is also under the authority of Inkosi. The two structures (Traditional Leadership and Local Government) work in partnership as contemplated in Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (No. 41 of 2003). The school is about 6 kilometres away the tarred road. Public transport in the form of mini-bus taxis; which is a common mode of transport in most areas including rural ones, is scarce in this community. This is mainly due to poor condition of the roads in the community including the one leading to the school.

ISS does have clean, piped water and electricity which are some of the basic needs. However, the school lacks facilities such as media centre and laboratory, yet learners at the school study Life Sciences and Physical Sciences as some of their core subjects. The school is fenced with wire which is trimmed with razor wire. Access into the school during the day is tightly controlled. There is a security guard at the gate who checks car details for motorists before allowing them in. The school also has a general worker and an administration clerk.

When I requested for the scores of the National Senior Certificate examinations during our interview, the principal called the administration clerk to bring the file with the scores. Responding to the question about whether or not the principal delegated some of his duties, this is what the principal had to say:

Some work is delegated to the members of the SMT; some is delegated to the administration clerk as well as educators. So there is a lot of work to do. One cannot survive without delegating; it plays a very major role in ensuring that work is done properly [Principal-A].

The significance of the above statement was demonstrated when the principal requested the scores from the administration clerk. He did not have to look around for it himself as the delegated person, in this instance, the administration clerk, was readily available to perform the task. According to Kruger (2003), the principal has to delegate the overall office administrative tasks that can be done by the clerk. The principal of Isolezwe Secondary School delegated this task to the appropriate person since this was an administrative task (Maile, 2002).

The scores for the National Senior Certificate examination results for the past five years at Isolezwe Secondary School are as follows:

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 97% | 85% | 70% | 75% | 78% |

Table 2: National Senior Certificate pass rates of Isolezwe Secondary School

4.2.2 Profiling Elangeni Secondary School

Elangeni Secondary School (ESS) is also situated in a rural setting about 155 kilometres north of Durban. The school is also classified as a ‘No-fee paying school’. This school also falls under the jurisdiction of both the Maphumulo Local Municipality and the Traditional leadership. There is a tarred road leading to the school which makes the school easily accessible in terms of transport, unlike ISS which is about 6 kilometres from the tarred road. ESS also has clean, piped water and electricity supply. However, it also lacks facilities such as a library and laboratories, yet it offers subjects like Life Sciences and Physical Sciences. The lack of such facilities and equipment was noted when the HOD from the school said:

So first of all, I lead the science department which is one of the departments that are not performing well in most schools due to the lack of equipment and resources. So the first thing I did when I joined the school was to conduct a school audit, not based on the finance but based on the resources that are needed in order to assist the educators, as well as, the learners as far as the subjects of Physical Sciences, Life Sciences and Mathematics are concerned. Thereafter, I went out to a number of

private companies. I needed them to sponsor us to get all the science kits that are needed [HOD-B].

When I arrived at Elangeni Secondary, I found the gates wide open without any one controlling access to the school premises. This was in stark contrast to what I experienced at Isolezwe Secondary. I guess this was because it was during school holidays. I interviewed the principal of the school during spring holidays in his office. When I asked for the scores of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results for the past five years, the principal immediately indicated that the records were kept by the administration clerk and she was away for holidays. However, he went on to say that he knew the scores for the past five years without referring to any document and wrote down the scores for me. When I looked around in his office; I did not see any certificate hanging on the wall as it was the case with ISS. The scores that I received from the principal of ESS are presented in Table 3 below. I must also hasten to say that there were no supporting documents that these scores were extracted from.

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 79% | 76% | 48% | 59% | 49% |

Table 3: National Senior Certificate pass rate of Elangeni Secondary School

4.3 Participants' biographical details

This section presents and discusses biographical details of the participants. Biographical details of participants are important because they assist the reader to have a clearer picture regarding the participants' personal contexts as reflected in for instance; in their gender, age group and the amount of experience in the job they do.

4.3.1 Participants from Isolezwe Secondary School

| Position | Gender | Code | Age group | Years as teacher | Years in this position | Years at current school |
|-----------|--------|-------------|-----------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Principal | Male | Principal-A | 45-60 | 29 | 14 | 19 |
| HOD | Male | HOD-A | 35-45 | 17 | 11 | 17 |
| PL1 | Female | PL1-A | 25-30 | 06 | 06 | 05 |

Table 4: Participants from Isolezwe Secondary School

The biographical details of the above indicate that the principal of the school is the most experienced of the three participants; having taught for almost 30 years. The table also indicates that the principal has been to other schools before becoming the principal at the current school. The table further shows that the HOD started his teaching career at the same school, and that when he was promoted to his current position, he was still working at the same school. He has served more than 10 years as an HOD. Post Level One educator was the least experienced of the three participants with only six years of teaching. According to the table she served only one year at another school before joining her current school. The tables also indicate that she was the youngest participant of them all. But when speaking to her during an interview she was very eloquent and passionate about her teaching experiences and what she does in preparing improved learner achievement.

4.3.2 Participants from Elangeni Secondary School

| Position | Gender | Code | Age | Teaching Experience | Years in this position | Years at current school |
|-----------|--------|-------------|---------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Principal | Male | Principal-B | 45 – 60 | 28 | 10 | 28 |
| HOD | Male | HOD-B | 30 – 35 | 12 | 08 | 05 |
| PL1 | Female | PL1-B | 30 – 35 | 07 | 07 | 07 |

Table 5: Participants from Elangeni Secondary School

The second table seems to follow the same trend as in the first one. The principal is the most experienced of the three participants. He has been teaching at the same school his whole teaching career. However, he is both less travelled and less experienced as a principal when compared to the principal of Isolezwe. The HOD in the second table is also less experienced both as an HOD and in terms of total experience in the field of teaching; compared to the HOD in the first table. Post-Level One educator has only served 7 years at the school, which is only a quarter of his principal's experience at the same school.

4.4 Themes emerging from the generated data

After analysing the interview transcripts and the notes that were taken from document analysis, ten main themes emerged. These are as follows: leadership displayed by principals of the two schools for effective teaching and learning; parents and outside community and effective teaching and learning; provision of an enabling environment for good learner achievement; inclusive decision-making and effective teaching and learning; delegation of duties by the principals; significance of holding regular meetings; involvement of the teachers in leadership roles; principals' support for teaching and learning situation; monitoring of teachers and learners' work; participants' attitudes towards the teachers' initiatives. All these themes are discussed below.

4.4.1 Leadership displayed by principals of the two schools for effective teaching and learning.

Schools in different contexts have different demands at different situations. Therefore, leadership in schools needs to be accommodative of such different situations. Bush (2007) emphasises that contingent leadership models provide an alternative approach, recognising the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership to a particular situation rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance. This reflexive approach is particularly important in periods of turbulence when principals need to be able to assess the situation carefully and react appropriately rather than relying on a standard leadership model. Therefore, situational leadership requires flexibility on the side of the leader. This is what HOD-A had to say regarding leadership style in his school in relation to learner achievement:

The leadership of the principal is informed by the situation. So the principal employs various ways of leadership which suites a particular situation. The principal involves the educators in making decisions which are related to learning. At the same time in situations where the principal has to follow the rules or policies which are stipulated by the Department of Education without diversion, he also does so in the way that helps the educators and the educators understand because they also know the policy [HOD-A].

The above statement was corroborated by PL1-A when she said that her school was led in such a way that leadership style that is used enables the teachers to perform well. She said this when she was asked about the relationship between the way the school was led and the achievement of learners in the school. Stoner and Freeman (1992) argue though that there are factors in each situation that affect the effectiveness of a particular leadership style. As we concluded our discussion with a teacher from Isolezwe, he highlighted the following:

Referring to my knowledge as a Business Studies teacher, I can say that when you`re a leader the leadership style you use doesn`t have to be the same. It depends on a particular situation. Sometimes, you might find that you don`t have to always go back to your subordinates and make consultations. It depends on the type of task that has to be done. As a leader you are free; sometimes you are given those powers to just act without having to go back to your sub-ordinates. If they feel that they are part of the decision making and they feel that the leadership style that you use also involves them, then the performance would be great [PL1-A].

What transpired from the teacher and HOD from ISS is that the principal of the school involved them in leadership of the school. This is typical of collegial model of leadership which embraces all stakeholders (Bush, 2011). The principal was also informed by the situation in taking a responsible, relevant and informed decision which is known for situational leadership style (Bush, 2007).

There seems to be a different situation in ESS as far as the principal's leadership style is concerned. The principal believed that everybody is a leader in his or her own right. The principal had this to say:

HODs are principals of the departments they lead and they make things lighter where he cannot personally be [Principal-B].

However this view was disputed by one of the teachers from same school. This teacher argued that (as teachers), they were not part of decision making. Included in this argument was the view that, in fact, there was also a lack of delegation of duties by the principal and that this could possibly be attributed, among other things, to the lack of trust between the principal and his staff members.

4.4.2 Parents and outside community and effective teaching and learning

In terms of the South African Schools Act, parents are obliged to support the teaching and learning of their children. In fact, the Act emphasises that parents should play a significant role in the governance of the schools as members of the School Governing Bodies and/or through this structure. In support of the Act's stipulation, the Department of Education issued Circular, 19/03/2012 to principals of public schools and chairpersons of school governing bodies (SGBs) reminding them, amongst other things, that principals and the SGBs should also engage parents in discussions around factors outside the classroom that impact on learner performance (Department of Education).

Teachers that participated in this study also agreed that parents had an important role to play in supporting teaching and learning. However, the data indicates that parental involvement in the school's activities depended on whether the school leadership embraced parental involvement or not. This is what HOD-A had to say regarding parent involvement in the school's activities:

Here in our school, we promote parental involvement by inviting them to the school whenever we issue the report cards for the learners. We call parents to school so that we will explain to them why the learners didn't perform well and what the parent as the controller of the child can do at home to help the child so that his/her marks can improve [HOD-A].

PLI-B indicated that learner achievement in ESS had improved after they had solicited the services of an individual outside the school community, who came to the school and motivated the learners. This is what she had to say:

I think the highlight on the performance of the learner relies mostly on the motivation that the learner receives. So at the beginning of the year, I am the one who started the initiative that, as much as we have our own motivation sessions in the school, we should also get someone from outside the school community. So, we invited someone from outside, and that person spoke to the learners vigorously on how important education is. And we felt that if you look at this years' quarterly results; our March results are better compared to other quarters. Based on the fact that learners were involved, they were able to raise their concerns freely to someone from outside; I think that has assisted us a lot [PL1-B].

HOD-B also confirmed the view about the significant role that can be played by outside community when he indicated that the equipment for Life Sciences and Physical Sciences was donated to the school by an outside person. The purpose for that donation was to contribute to the improvement in learner achievement. These were his views on this issue:

The first thing that I did is that I went out to a number of private companies. I needed them to sponsor us to get all the science kits that are needed. That was due to the fact that as from 2000 till 2010 the school was a Section 20 school..... Therefore, I went out and I got a sponsorship from World Vision with which we managed to buy the science kit for Physical Science and also for Life Sciences. I think that was in 2009. Then again in 2010, World Vision also assisted us because the material that we had in 2008 was not enough [HOD-B].

While both the teacher and the HOD talked about the changes that had occurred after they had invited stakeholders outside of the school, the analysis of the document in the school did not indicate this. For instance, the NSC results showed that ESS last achieved the NSC pass rates above 70% in 2007 and 2008. Between 2009 and 2011, the school obtained 48%, 59% and 49% respectively. Despite the discrepancy between what the two participants said and the records kept at the school, the need to promote partnerships between the school and the parents on one hand and the business community on the other remains important. Grant and Ray (2012) acknowledge the need for parents, educators and community members

to share responsibility for the learners' academic and social growth. All schools are located within the communities that they serve. These communities are also expected to have an interest in education (Bhengu, 2013).

4.4.3 Provision of an enabling environment for good learner achievement

The data shows that the teachers were happy in sacrificing their time in order to support learners with their subjects. Both the teachers and the principals maintained that the provision of an enabling environment for improved learner achievement was critical, and school leadership played an important role in providing such an environment where the teachers were willing to provide extra lessons at no extra pay for them. These extra lessons took place early in the morning before normal classes commenced, and also after school day. The classes also took place over the week-ends and also during the school holidays. Such a practice is in line with the Motto of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE), which says “*Dedicated to Service and Performance Beyond the call of duty*”. However, teachers were not paid for these extra efforts to improve learner achievement. It must be noted that while principals in the researched schools motivated the teachers and encouraged them to observe this KZNDoE motto, some teachers expressed strong reservations about not being compensated by the provincial department of education for their sacrifice. In fact, PL1-B lamented that they put all these extra hours without any payment. This particular teacher also appreciated the fact that the principal also came to school when they offered these extra classes. This is what she had to say:

It is encouraging to see him [the principal] there because it shows that he appreciates what we do as you know that we do not get paid for extra classes [PL1-B].

The above citation concurs with Gerber *et. al.* (1998), cited in Prinsloo (2003, p. 148), that “*salary merely serves as an incentive to make people act, it does not motivate them*”. Therefore, for all this to happen there should be an existence of a conducive or an enabling environment within the school which motivates the teaching staff to go an extra mile. PL1-A had this to say regarding these extra classes:

I think that the most important thing that the school does to make sure that we don't just do what is normally expected, which is to teach normal hours, is that it tries to encourage the educators to go an extra mile by means of having morning classes and afternoon classes, which invariably, are done voluntarily by the subject teachers in order to try and ensure that the results are consistently better [PLI-A].

The question of extra classes that were held as a way of enhancing the provision of an enabling environment was also supported by HOD-A when he said:

In our school we help the learners by giving extra lessons. Another thing is that we, as educators, who are really dedicated to our work, are motivated. However, our motivation doesn't start with the learners only but it starts elsewhere. Usually our principal would call us to a meeting in which educators are encouraged, motivated and are commended for the good work which they have done [HOD-A].

This view expressed above was corroborated by the principal of ISS. This is what he had to say:

There are a number of people who play a role, not only the principal, but members of the SMT also play an important role to ensure that better results are achieved. But coming to the motivation part, every educator who has done well is appreciated in the sense that whoever is the member of the SMT acknowledges the effort that a particular educator has done. So this alone inspires the educators to work harder because they know that they are appreciated if they have done something good. This has a positive impact on the work rate on the part of the educators [Principal-A].

The extract from Principal-A above is significant in that ISS was the school that has consistently been achieving NSC pass rates which were above 70% for the past five years and it was selected on the basis of that historical perception. In addition, my impression of the school, based on what I heard and saw, is quite consistent with this finding. It is evident that leadership in the school is making some efforts in creating an environment where learners can learn effectively and ultimately achieve good results. When asked about the role of leadership in

creating and sustaining conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning, the HOD from ESS also concurred with the views expressed by this principal and the HOD from ISS. This is what the HOD from ESS had to say:

First of all, we are encouraging educators together with the learners in not to only using the normal hours but also to use extra hours. So they used to come here by 7 o'clock not as per school time table has which starts at 7h30. In order to motivate the learners, especially Grade 12, they start their lessons at 7 o'clock in the presence of the school principal. Most of the time we work during the weekends, especially on Saturdays. And when it comes to the holidays we are always at school working with the Grade 12 classes including the Grade 11[HOD-B].

Motivation can play a significant role in the process of utilising human abilities, and motivation can be viewed as the willingness of a person to apply his or her energy to achieve a specific goal (Mathonsi, 2005). Viewed from this perspective, motivated teachers will work beyond the call of duty in order to achieve the objective of for instance, maintaining high NSC pass rates. Loggerenberg (2002) emphasises this point by saying that motivation energises the teachers towards attaining curriculum reforms. It is therefore, imperative that in the absence of any remuneration, teachers are always appreciated for the work they do as a way of providing effective teaching and learning in their schools.

4.4.4 Inclusive decision-making and effective teaching and learning

Teachers feel valuable and important when they are involved in decision-making processes in their schools (Crawford, 2009). They believe that they should not only be involved in the implementation of the decisions that they were not part of their making (Dimmock, 2012). They believe that if they are involved from the beginning, then they should take ownership of those decisions, including those relating to the process of teaching and learning. This implies that their morale can be boosted and the ownership of the process can be enhanced. This ultimately contributes to improved commitment to high and improved learner achievement (Bush, 2011). Collegial theorists argue that active support for change is more likely to be forthcoming where the teachers have been able to contribute to the process of policy formulation (Bush, 2011). When discussing the issue of high

pass rates in the NSC and the leadership of the school at ISS, this is what PL1-A had to say:

The school manages or leads, most of the times, by being democratic and inclusive, which means that the teachers are given a platform to share their views on the key issues. They are not just fed with the decisions that have been taken. But where possible, they form part of the decision-making processes because where teachers are part of decision-making, it becomes easier for them to work voluntarily and can be able to motivate the learners to work harder [PL1-A].

The principal of ISS concurred with PL1-A regarding the issue of the inclusivity of all stakeholders in the decision-making processes. It therefore became clear that this is the practice of the school. In confirming what PL1-A had already said, the principal of ISS shared the following view:

It is a collective effort in the sense that we have got members of the SMT who are hard workers. So, one cannot attribute any success to just one individual. That is why I often highlight the notion of the 'collective'; this is because different people contribute in a number of different ways to ensure that learner achievement gets improved. This even includes Post-Level One educators because they also work very hard. Sometimes they make suggestions that increase or have positive impact on the performance of the learners [Principal-A].

This is in line with the views of West-Burnham (2009, p. 44) who says that “*if leadership is perceived as one manifestation of the democratic process, it has to be seen as a collective capacity rather than personal status*”.

In response to the principal's leadership practices' contribution to effective teaching and learning, this is what the HOD from Isolezwe Secondary School had to say:

The principal involves the educators in making decisions that are related to teaching and learning. So, I think this makes the educators to feel free to communicate with the principal if there is a problem [HOD-A].

Research conducted by Brown, Boyle and Boyle (1999) in England about collegial models of management in 21 secondary schools, one participant who was also a principal, made a similar comment. That principal said that “*you need the collective support of your staff to implement any worthwhile change, so their involvement in the decision-making process is vital*” (Brown *et. al.* 1999, p.322). This quotation further indicates the importance of inclusivity in decision-making processes. The principal’s voice should not be the only voice to be heard, but inputs of other members of the staff are of vital importance.

The principal of Elangeni Secondary School emphasised that every teacher within the school is a leader in his or her own right. The HODs for instance are the principals of the departments which they lead. This was an indication to me of leading in silos rather than in inclusive decision-making scenarios. In this regard this is what (Principal-B) had to say:

They are also the principals of their departments and they make things lighter for the principal where he cannot personally or rather help they are there to help [Principal-B].

The teacher from Elangeni Secondary School emphatically indicated that there was lack of collective leadership in her school which resulted in them not included in school decision making processes. This is what the teacher had to say:

Collectiveness always bears best results, but this is not happening in our school [PL1-B]

4.4.5 Delegation of duties by the principals

Inclusive decision-making and delegation of duties are viewed as closely related in that both entail the participation of different people, other than the leader or manager, in carrying out certain duties. There are different categories of delegated duties. There are generic ones which are delegated by the principal to the HODs by virtue of their positions of being HODs. These include the support and the monitoring of the delivery of curriculum by the teachers in their respective classrooms. Some duties are delegated to the teachers such as being class teachers whilst others are delegated to the administrative clerk. Maile (2002) and van Deventer (2003) emphasise the significance of delegation in that no principal can

exercise leadership successfully without delegating some of his or her duties to the subordinates. However, the principals need to consider guarding against over-delegating. With regards to the importance of delegation, the principal of ISS had this to say:

One cannot survive without delegating; it plays a major role in ensuring that work is properly done. Duties that we delegate are departmental work. Some duties are delegated to the members of the SMT. For instance, running or managing the department, curriculum delivery as, I have often referred to, is delegated to the members of the SMT. This duty cannot be delegated to the Post Level 1 educators. Post Level 1 educators are involved in extracurricular activities for instance, some of which are managed by them, such as cultural activities [Principal-A].

Both PL1-A and HOD-A from ISS corroborated what the principal had to say regarding the delegation of duties. This is what PL1-A had to say confirming the views of her principal:

I think that, to a very great extent, the principal does delegate the duties to the teachers. For an example, sometimes you will find that there is something to be drawn up, maybe a spring class timetable, the principal would ask one of the teachers to help in drawing that timetable. Also with delegation, it gives a person who is being delegated, exposure to certain things and experiences; in addition, he or she feels being part of decision making [PL1-A].

However, at ESS, only the HOD held similar views about delegation of duties by the principal. It appears that this particular HOD had different experiences. There was an indication that such delegation took place only when somebody had approached the principal and made him aware of a situation that needed to be addressed, that he began to give a go-ahead. For me that kind of delegation was not proper, because for one to delegate, one should have foresight of the task(s) at hand and proactively delegate someone to do them. One does not have to wait for someone to push anyone in the direction of delegating. This is what HOD-B had to say when asked about how the SMT assisted the principal:

Mr Gumede [not his real name] is not that kind of a principal that you cannot approach. So it becomes easier for all of us to identify areas that need attention as far as the principal management style is concerned. So, whenever we see that there are gaps in whatever is left undone, then we approach the principal and most of the time the principal delegates
[HOD-B].

The principal of ESS had this to say when the question of delegating the duties was raised:

I can't do everything. For instance late coming, as a principal, you are not always there first in the morning. Maybe in the morning, I have to attend a meeting or I have got to go to the circuit office, but there must be a person who is delegated to attend to the issue of late coming if there is late coming. So, you delegate, but also, you give support and monitor so that you make people aware that they're also part and parcel of the school
[Principal-B].

The PL1-B emphatically denied existence of any delegation of duties by the principal. This is what she had to say when she was asked whether the principal delegated some of his duties to members of staff:

If this is to be an honest and confidential thing, then I can say no! That is just one part that he lacks in his leadership. I think that is one part where principals should understand that, as much as they are the heads of the school, but they should also delegate some of the duties. Delegating takes away a lot of stress
[PL1-B].

When asked about her own view about delegation, this is what a Post-Level One educator had to say:

.... if you think that you are going to run the school alone, surely you are going to need ten pairs of hands. So, it is important that you find other people to assist you, because as a leader, you are able to identify your staffs' strength. Collectiveness always bears best results
[PL1-B].

The teacher from ESS maintained that delegation did not happen in her school. This is despite the fact that the principal argued differently and was supported by the HOD from the same school. This raised questions about the practice and experiences of delegation in the school. Besides the contradictions expressed in the extracts from the ESS participants, I have made my observation regarding delegation concept. I have noted that when the principal spoke about delegating his duties, he only made mention of just one example; which is, controlling late coming at the gate. He mentioned that he is sometimes not at the school in the morning because of other commitments such as having to go to the circuit office. This for me implied that the principal only delegates when he is away, hence the above response by the PL1-B.

There was another contradiction that I picked up on the delegation issue. When I asked HOD-B about the leadership role of teachers this is how he responded:

There is something that as management we were not noticing. Most of the learners were always coming late to school. We never noticed that because most of the times early in the morning, we have to make sure that we check educators work. Then we were so happy last time when we saw educators controlling late coming at the gate. They were not instructed to do that. I am not sure how they came to that one..... When they raised that issue, they said we are worried about the late coming or the rate or the level of late coming of learners in the school, so as educators in the staff room, there is something that we have designed which we hope, it can assist the school [HOD-B].

I found this statement as a contradiction to what the principal had said regarding delegating some duties. He said that he delegated the controlling of late coming at the gate because he is not always there in the morning. But on the other hand, HOD-B refuted all that. He said that, that was the teachers' initiative which the SMT was not aware of. So, for the principal to claim that he is the one that delegated the teachers to attend to late coming is confusing. Nevertheless, the interpretivist approach, in which this study is embedded, makes space for multiple-truths or realities to emerge (Mason, 2002; Cohen *et. al.* 2011). It is

therefore possible to have these different views on one issue because what the principal regards as delegating may not necessarily be viewed as such by the teachers because of perspectives about different levels of leadership at which different participants of ESS are.

However, with so much work that needs to be done at schools by principals, I am inclined to concur with the view that it will almost be impossible for the principal to do all the work himself without delegating. Principals of both schools made it very clear that they delegated some of their duties to the teachers, although in some instances, contradictions also emerged.

4.4.6 Significance of holding regular meetings

The data indicated that the practice of holding regular meeting was important. The meetings referred to here are inclusive of all relevant stakeholders within the school. That is, meeting between the principal and teachers, between the principal and SMT, between the HODs and teachers in his or her department and among members of particular committees that are directed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Meetings with different stakeholders within the school were seen as an important tool for common understanding regarding what constitutes effective teaching and learning. When HOD-A was asked about how he got to know and understand what was expected of him as an HOD this is what he had to say:

We attend in-service training sessions which are organised by the Department of Education. The principal allows us to go there, and internally at school, there are meetings of that nature as well. We hold meetings with principal where the principal explains the roles and responsibilities of each member and every member of the SMT. We also hold meetings in which we read circulars which come from the Department of Education as well as some policies which are read and explained so that each and everyone know what is expected of him/her
[HOD-A].

Meetings seem to be playing a significant role in the flow of information within the school. It is where teachers, at their different levels of leadership, can get

feedback of what has been achieved or lack thereof which will eventually indirectly has a bearing on teaching and learning. Teachers are able to express their views on important issues affecting them within the school and mobilise support. HOD-B had this to say regarding significance of meetings:

As an SMT once in two weeks we have an SMT meeting. So in that SMT meeting there are two areas that we normally concentrate on. One, we check whether are we functioning as per our job descriptions. So each and every time when we go to our SMT meeting, that becomes the first area that we look at. Two, whenever there are decisions that were taken before then, on that particular meeting we ask each member the question; how far have you gone as far as that decision is concerned? So each and every time we get the instructions through that particular meeting and sometimes if maybe there are those issues that are urgent, then we do not wait for that fortnightly meeting. We convene a special meeting for that urgent matter [HOD-B].

Regarding the significance of regular meetings; this is what the principal of ISS had to say:

Sometimes members of the SMT are called to meetings where their duties and responsibilities are spelt out. Then in addition to those meetings, there are circulars that are sent to the schools which also help in capacitating each member of the SMT. So, the successful delivery of the curriculum depends on these regular meetings that members of the SMT hold. Workshops that SMT members attend also play a major role [Principal-A].

The principal of ESS concurred with what principal the ISS had to say. This is what he had to say:

We as management have got to meet just to check not only that we have to meet when there`s a problem only. Even if there is no problem, just to check that things are okay or if there are areas of concern that need to be attended to. Even if things are okay just to check whether there are other aspects of curriculum delivery that need to be improved. Of course

circulars, because circulars are a way of communicating with one another if there are new developments just to make everybody aware of what the situation is how they can they improve with whatever performance that they`re dealing with in terms of curriculum delivery [Principal-B].

It is also noticeable that the principals of ISS and ESS as well as HODs from the two schools emphasise the importance of holding regular meetings. In fact the data indicates that subject focus meetings were held in the two schools. However records indicate that NSC results have been consistently high at ISS and mediocre at ESS. This raises questions about the usefulness of these meetings. Perhaps there are other factors that are at play that contribute significantly to the differences in NSC pass rates in the two schools.

It is important in institutions like schools where there are different people who are at different levels of leadership as well to have continuous communication. Meeting therefore is one forum that where such communication can take place. Supovitz *et. al.* (2010) concluded that principals, who communicate clearly, are associated with teachers who make a greater degree of improvement in their instructional practice, and thus, improving the ultimate result of teaching and learning. Everybody should know what is expected of him or her and there should also be a platform for exchanging of views. This need not be a one way direction of information but both sides need to feel part of the discussion. Meetings are one of the ways in which teachers and principal can discuss matters that concern them as a school. A Handbook for SMTs (2009) emphasises that meetings are an essential means of communication and even stipulates the minimum number of meetings per category to be held per term.

4.4.7 Involvement of the teachers in leadership roles

The involvement of teachers in leadership occurs where teachers lead various committees as chairpersons. They also lead in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as cultural activities. Working in committees is one of the strategies that were used to involve teachers in the school decision-making. Through working in committees, teachers in the researched schools felt empowered. Hilty (2011) asserts that schools that are improving in terms of learner achievement, leadership is fluid and emerging rather than fixed. Van

Deventer (2003) concurs with this view in that leadership is no longer the prerogative of the principal and the SMT, but is increasingly about the individual responsibility.

Working in committees is one of the strategies that were used to involve teachers in the school decision-making. This is what principal of ESS had to say regarding involvement of teachers in leadership:

...for instance there`s a timetable committee. That one is not necessarily led by SMT; it is led by an educator. That person has got a right to make decisions; if for instance, there`s anything that needs to be done in the timetable to inform the principal and that person convenes a meeting and leads the meeting. So that person is actually a leader; they then have to report to the management as to what transpired from whatever meeting that they were having in terms of whatever activity that the committee is involved in [Principal-B].

Post-Level One educator from ESS concurred with her principal in terms of teacher involvement in leadership. She highlighted her involvement in a number of committees; but this is what she had to say about a particular committee:

I will start with the development committee because that one has a huge impact on the performance of the learners. We have been able to identify the things that have been a hindrance in terms of learner performance such as furniture within our school. Our roof had holes which affected our learners to such an extent that some learners would not want to be part of this school anymore because they get wet in class when it rains. The development committee has been the highlight of the committees I have served in, because of the impact it had on the learner achievement [PL1-B].

Post-Level One educator from ISS spoke the same language as her counterpart from ESS. This was her version of teacher involvement in leadership:

I think I have been involved in leadership activities because I believe that if you are an educator you are at some level a leader, a leader in your class. I have been involved in committees where I am involved in decision-

making processes on the part of the committee that I am a member of. So I think those are some of the leadership roles or activities that I have been involved in [PL1-A].

This view was shared by all participants in the study. The principal of ISS concurred with his teacher when he said that:

Educators are members of various committees. Some of them are members of the examination committee, some are members of the school development team (SDT), and some are members of the sports and cultural committee to name but a few. So the involvement of Post-Level One educators takes place at committee level, because for a school to succeed, it cannot depend on the members of the SMT alone. The resuscitation of committees plays a major role in ensuring that everybody gets involved in something worthwhile within the school [Principal-A].

“If schools are to operate as learning communities, then they cannot do so with the leadership of a single person or with a singular leadership strategy” (Harris, 2002, cited in Hilty, 2011, p. 229). In view of this statement, it is evident that teacher leadership, in addition to principal leadership, is imperative for the success of the school. Earley and Weindling (2004) concur with the view that head teachers who share leadership responsibilities with others are less subject to burnout compared to principals who attempt the challenges and complexities of leadership alone so as to be seen as heroes or heroines. The data has demonstrated that both principals encouraged their staff to participate in the leadership roles. However the successes of the two schools have remained different.

4.4.8 Principal’s support for teaching and learning situation

The data suggest that the principals’ support for teaching and learning situation was crucial. Teachers in the study felt supported by the SMT, including the principal, in their teaching and learning activities. They felt encouraged to do more for the learners. This is in agreement with the view expressed by Hallinger *et. al.* (1996), cited in Supovitz *et. al.* (2010), that the principal should actively support instructional improvement in the school. This is what PL1-B had to say regarding support from the school:

In our school, the principal does not have a class to teach, but he makes time to assist. He is there to give us support even during these extra classes that I have mentioned. It is encouraging to see him there because it shows that he appreciates what we do [PL1-B].

The above extract from the interviews confirms Leithwood and Jantzi, cited in Davies (2005) that the personal attention devoted by a leader to an employee increases the levels of enthusiasm and indirectly, the performance. The HOD-B concurred with his colleague regarding their views about support they received from the principal. When asked about the contribution of the principal's leadership; this is what he had to say:

It has contributed a lot. Because you know some times, as an HOD, you may have your own strategies but if you cannot get the support from the principal, you may find that your strategies are good but they are not giving you the results that you are expecting. So each and every time, maybe I am lucky because my principal belongs in my department. He is teaching Mathematics. So each and every time when I am having the meeting with my educators the principal is always there [HOD-B].

The HOD and the teacher from the same school (Elangeni Secondary School) made conflicting statements about whether or not their principal was also teaching. I found this confusing as to how could such happen.

When I talked to the principal about the issue of delegating his duties, he indicated that he did not end with delegation, but that he also gave support to his staff. It became clear that the principal indeed supported the staff as both PL-1 educator and HOD had claimed. Confirming what the HOD and the teachers had said regarding principal's support, this is what the principal from Elangeni had to say:

If there are meetings, maybe at some point I have to be out of the premises, but on a normal school day like a teacher myself I move around to make sure that teaching and learning is taking place and no one is experiencing problems in the class situation. Also making sure that the educators feel free to consult me or their HODS with whatever problem no matter how minimal it might appear [Principal-B].

The principal of ISS was very happy with the support that he received from the teachers and the SMT members. He emphasised its significance to effective teaching and learning and ultimately to high pass rates in NSC. This is what he had to say:

I can say a school without members of the SMT, without motivated educators; without educators who are conscientious; that school normally fails to achieve the results or the targets it had set for itself. So one is blessed in that one works in the institution where everybody contributes, where everybody is prepared to be as supportive as possible. If everybody, all participants share a common dream; it becomes very easy for the school to achieve the results it had set itself [Principal-A].

Kruger (2003), cited in van Deventer (2003), asserts that it is necessary for a principal to be able to support teachers when shortcomings have been identified or when requested by the teachers themselves to do so. It is evident that the support that the two school principals provided in ensuring that conditions were conducive to effective teaching and learning did not bear fruits in the same way.

4.4.9 Monitoring of the teachers' and the learners' work

Monitoring of learners' work as well as teachers' work was echoed as an important factor in the leadership of the school for effective teaching and learning. This is what the principal of ISS had to say:

The co-function of the school is curriculum delivery. SMT manages the curriculum; this involves planning, implementing and monitoring the directives that the DoE has given to the schools to ensure that our learners pass at the highest level. So the major role that the members of the SMT play is to implement and monitor this curriculum delivery to the learner which the principal alone cannot do [Principal-A].

The HOD from ISS concurred with his principal with regards to the issue of monitoring of teachers' and learners' work. This is what he had to say:

One of the things which I do as the head of department is to first make sure that planning and preparation is done before an educator goes to teach. That gives direction to what exactly is happening. I also help through monitoring the work which is done by educator, so that if, for instance, an educator is behind with the work schedule or there are some challenges which are encountered, then I can be there to help the educator **[HOD-A]**.

The HOD from ESS also shared his experiences about what they do at their school regarding the monitoring of school work. This is what he had to say:

I used to control two files every day in order to make sure that I understand what is taking place in the classroom. So after I have controlled the teachers' file I used to call the teachers and we sit down and we talk about the challenges that the teacher is facing. And it is so important for the teacher to make sure that he checks whether the learner has managed to solve those problems **[HOD-B]**.

The issue of controlling the teacher's work by the HODs is in alignment with Chapter One, Section 4.4 of the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document. This particular document stipulates that an HOD has to control the work of teachers and learners in his or her department. Work that is given without any follow up or monitoring being made could be left undone sometimes. This then becomes an indictment on the side of school leadership. It therefore becomes imperative that monitoring takes place to ensure that what needs to be done has not only been done, but that it has been done according to the expectations. After all, planning has been done the most crucial step is control and monitoring the action plan (Van Deventer, 2003). It is evident from the data that teachers' work and that of the learners was monitored in both schools. It is also evident that the benefits of conducting such an exercise were different in both schools. I could not establish as to what was recorded in the files because I did not analyse them.

4.4.10 Participants' attitudes towards teachers' taking initiatives

Attitudes are important because peoples' attitudes are likely to influence the manner in which they perceive and think about a particular phenomenon. Attitude

is defined as a way of thinking or settled opinion (Oxford English Dictionary, 1995). Attitude can either be positive or negative. Understanding the importance that participants attach to taking initiative is necessary. This is because the value that participants attach to taking initiative may have an impact on decision making regarding the level of involvement in teaching and learning. The nature or quality of teaching and learning will have a bearing on learner performance (Coleman, cited in Coleman & Earley, 2005).

When the participants (principals, HODs and teachers) were asked about their attitudes towards teachers taking initiative in school activities, they all agreed that it was the right thing to do. However it was noted that most participants felt that this exercise had to be undertaken with caution.

This is what principal of ISS had to say with regards to this issue:

Teachers who take initiatives in school activities make the life of any manager much easier. So my attitude is 100% positive towards teachers who take initiative in school activities as long as that does not disturb other activities which are the co-function of the school [Principal-A].

This view was also held by the HOD from ISS. This is what he had to say about this issue:

There is no problem with educators who take initiative. In fact, it is good to have people who can take initiative in doing something that is constructive that would improve the school as a whole. However, whenever such things are done one needs to monitor to ensure that these initiatives are in line with the goals, aims and the responsibilities of the school [HOD-A].

A Post-Level One educator at the same school also concurred with the views echoed above.

Taking an initiative is good because it helps you as well. When you are doing something at least you know that you have done something for a good cause not to be always resistant on things that needs to be done. You have to take an initiative if you have the time and if you have the

resources; if there are any resources required for you to take that initiative. I think taking an initiative makes the job easier for others as well [PL1-A].

A Post-Level One educator at ESS had different ideas though regarding teachers taking initiative. Her response was as follows:

Part of it is positive but part of it will be negative; because I am sure that if a person is in leadership and knows that there is a need for somebody to do a certain thing, but does not feel that he should delegate, if the person just goes and does that on his or her own; part of it will be a problem and you know these things. A problem will arise if he is asked 'who told you to do that because I am the one who is in charge'. However people do take initiative, they show a sense of enthusiasm in what they are doing [PL1-B].

I found the response of Post-Level One educator at ESS showing some reluctance as far as taking initiative was concerned. She foresaw taking initiative as a possible source for conflict. From the responses given by different participants, it appears that, overall, they all agreed that it is important to take initiative in school activities provided such initiative is going to benefit learners and the school in general.

I must also highlight that the stated attitudes expressed by the participants from both schools do not tell us whether or not the teachers took initiative, except for the situation where the teacher from ESS claimed that the late coming policy at the school was their own initiative. Even in this particular case she did not single out any particular individual who was responsible for it (late coming policy). In view of this, it is impossible to establish whether the attitudes expressed by participants were linked in any way with their practice at school level.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed presentation and discussion of the data. It has made an attempt to paint a picture of what obtains at the selected schools and how the principals and the teachers interacted in an attempt to improve the conditions

under which effective teaching and learning could take place. The next chapter presents and summarises the findings and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the data and also discussed the themes that emerged from that data. This chapter seeks to provide a summary of the study, the main findings and offer some recommendations regarding the manner in which leadership styles contributed to effective teaching and learning. The data of the study was generated through semi-structured interviews and documents analysis. The chapter commences with the discussion of my understanding of analysis, the summary of the study and main findings of the study followed by a brief analysis of the researched schools and the participants. Thereafter the chapter discusses the findings of the study. The chapter then concludes by suggesting some recommendations for future studies.

5.2 Understanding data analysis and findings

I felt it is important that before I get into the details about the analysis and findings of the study, I briefly outline my own understanding of what data analysis entails. My understanding is informed by what various scholars say regarding the analysis of data. In research data analysis entails what researchers do with the generated data in order to develop the understanding of events in relation to the phenomenon under scrutiny (Mason, 2002). It is from these understandings that theories and generalisation where necessary appropriate, can be developed. This study having adhered to qualitative research approaches, an analysis in qualitative research refers to an on-going process which means that the text from interviews and document analysis are interpreted and theorised for the understanding of others (Henning *et. al.* 2004).

This process includes breaking down the data and relating certain data into particular categories which may have been identified by the researcher (Mason, 2002). Cohen *et. al.* (2011) refer to the analysis of data generated as the process that reflects on perceptions, impressions and relationships. Data analysis according to Lodico *et. al.* (2006), should address the key research questions. The study had two questions which were as follows:

1. What are the leadership styles that are used by the two rural secondary school principals in Imati Ward?
2. How do the principals' leadership styles contribute to effective teaching and learning in the two Secondary Schools in Imati Ward?

5.3 Similarities and differences between researched schools

This section discusses the features of each researched school. Knowing the features of these schools may assist in understanding some of the conditions within which teaching and learning occurred in these schools. As much as the focus in this study was on principals' leadership style for effective teaching and learning, other prevailing conditions within the school that may or may not have an impacted on effective teaching and learning, cannot be ignored.

The two schools were both situated in a rural context with economically challenged conditions. Most learners attending these schools came from the neighbourhood. The community within which the schools were situated were poverty stricken. That is the reason why both the schools were declared as Quintile-1 schools. Such schools receive bigger budget allocation because of their needs, which in many instances are dire. The surroundings of Isolezwe Secondary School (ISS) looked more economically disadvantaged in terms of the households. Learners from ISS were also benefiting from the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). This is the feeding scheme for the learners and it was introduced by the former President Nelson Mandela in the poorest primary schools in 1994. This programme has since been extended to needy secondary school learners since 2009. One of the objectives of NSNP was to contribute to enhanced learning capacity through feeding schemes (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The principals were very grateful for this programme emphasising that there had been a decrease in levels of absenteeism since it began. A number of houses around the school were built using river stones and thatched roofs.

There is only one gravel road that leads to the school. However, the school buildings told a different story. ISS had four blocks of classrooms brightly painted in colours that depict the school uniform; it has concrete playgrounds in-between

these buildings. Whenever I arrived at the school, grass was always neatly cut and there was hardly any litter on the ground. The principal, deputy principal and the administrative clerk had their offices in two of these blocks. One classroom had been converted into a staffroom and HODs shared a storeroom with books. ISS also had a computer room which was no longer used for the same purpose because. The reason for that was that, according to the principal, it was “expensive” to continue offering computer applications technology (CAT) as a school subject.

On the other hand Elangeni Secondary School (ESS) had tarred road that leads to the school. The school had two long blocks of buildings which were also painted in colours resembling the school uniform. The buildings looked quite old. In fact, a teacher did indicate that some learners complained about getting wet in class on rainy days because of the leaking roof. The principal, deputy principal, HODs and administrative clerk all had their offices. The school yard was very dusty with some papers visibly strewn here and there. There were some dilapidated buildings on the other side of the school premises that, I was told, were the teachers’ residences. These buildings accommodated teachers who either could not commute or did not want to commute on daily basis. Such buildings also assisted the teachers with accommodation when teaching during the school holidays.

Both schools offered core subjects such as Physical Sciences and Life Sciences which require some practical work. Such practical work is effectively done when conducted in a laboratory with the necessary equipment. However, both these schools lacked these facilities, and such lack could have impacted positively on the learning of these subjects. Both schools belong to Section 21 category, and this means that the school budget allocations from the Department of Education are deposited directly into the schools’ bank accounts. The HOD from ESS did indicate though, that this was a relatively new experience as they had been struggling to secure funds to buy equipment for Physical Sciences.

5.4 Similarities and differences between the principals studied

Principals of both schools were of the same age group and also had similar teaching experience. However, the principal of ISS was more experienced in a principalship position compared to his counterpart from ESS. Secondly, the

principal of ISS had already taught at three different schools whereas, the principal of ESS had never taught at any other school besides the current one. This indicated that ESS principal had not experienced different school context in his teaching career.

Earley and Weindling (2004) assert that principals who share leadership responsibilities with others are less subject to burnout. The principal of ISS was very relaxed and quite enthusiastic about his teachers' involvement in the school leadership activities. He did not fall short of examples of leadership activities which his teachers were engaged in. The same cannot be said about the ESS principal. He was not forthcoming with ways in which he involved his teachers.

5.5 Similarities and differences between the HODs studied

Both HODs that participated in this study were Physical Science educators, teaching at Grade 12 level. This means that they did not only contribute to learner performance as leaders of departments but also had the experience of teaching this grade whose performance was under the microscope. They were both within the same age group and both were males. The HOD from ISS had taught at the same school his entire career and was more experienced as an HOD. On the other hand the HOD from ESS had taught at different schools.

5.6 Similarities and differences between Post Level-1 educators studied

It was interesting to note that both Post level-1 educators were females and they were the youngest in their respective schools. ISS and ESS teachers had a teaching experience of 6 years and 7 years respectively. While PL1-B had served the entire period at the same school, PL1-A had already taught at two schools. However she had only spent one year in her previous school.

5.7 Findings of the study

The findings presented in this section are in accordance with the research questions which were used to guide the study.

5.7.1 What are the leadership styles that are used by the two rural secondary school principals in Imati Ward?

The principal of ISS appeared to be open to suggestions from the members of the staff. He even acknowledged that the success of the school could be attributed to the support he received from the staff. In addition, he emphasises collective leadership as being key to his leadership practice at the school. He also assesses the situation and act accordingly without being too rigid. According to the data he involves all relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes. Such a principal could be regarded as practising collegial model or style of leadership as well as situational leadership style. It is not very clear with the principal of ESS as to which leadership style(s) does he exercise at the school. There are a number of situations where participants from ESS are not in confirmation of each other regarding the principal's leadership style. For instance there were contradictions as to whether or not the principal delegated some of his duties.

The findings of this study in response to the research questions were highlighted on the following aspects in which leadership styles are reflected:

- Provision of an enabling environment to go an extra mile.
- Inclusive decision-making and effective teaching and learning.
- Involvement of teachers in leadership roles at the schools.
- Principal's support to teaching and learning situation.

Provision of an enabling environment

This study has found that teachers in the two researched schools were prepared to go an extra mile in order to assist in ensuring that pass rates in NSC were consistently high. The study found that teachers at the participating schools sacrificed their time during weekends and holidays because the environment that was prevalent in schools was conducive. It also emerged that principals from both schools continuously and consistently motivated and encouraged the teachers to put an extra effort in their teaching and learning encounters with the learners. The study also found that principals of these schools always expressed their gratitude to the teachers for their effort. Principals from both ISS and ESS may have

encouraged teachers but the results were never the same. Possibly it is indicative of the differences in their leadership styles.

Inclusive decision-making and effective teaching and learning

Out of the two researched schools, the study found that the concept of inclusivity in decision-making processes was very prevalent at ISS. It emerged that the principal of ISS involved his teachers in decision-making processes. The study found that teachers owned the decisions taken hence they participated freely in teaching and learning activities. Participants felt that decisions were not imposed on them; they were part of decision-making process and thus it became easy for them to work voluntarily. It also emerged that the participants at ISS spoke in terms of “we”, “the school”, “collective leadership” and “...*the school leads most of the time by being democratic*” (PL1-A).

“It is a collective effort in the sense that we have....” (Principal-A).

It was found though, that at ESS all the participants in most cases used the term “I”, which suggested doing things as individuals rather than a collective. There seemed to be lack of ownership of the school at ESS. This observation at ESS raises questions about the principal’s leadership style. In most cases where there is no maximum participation it is as a result of leadership that is weak. The principal of ESS emphasised that every teacher within the school is a leader in his or her own right. HODs for instance are the principals of the departments they lead. This was an indication to me of leading in silos rather than inclusive decision-making.

Involvement of teachers in leadership roles

The study found that teachers were involved in leadership roles within the two schools. This emerged in the participation in different committees not only as members but leaders. The leadership in both the researched schools was distributed to the SMT and the teachers. It was not in the hands of the principals alone.

Principal’s support to teachers

This study has found that teachers were not left in the lurch but received all the support they required from their respective principals. ISS teachers were very

happy with the support they receive from the principal. In fact the principal himself acknowledged the support he received from his staff and attributed the success of the school to this reciprocal support. Teachers at ESS felt that the presence of the principal during extra lessons to support encouraged them to engage in the teaching and learning to improve learner pass rates in the school even further. **Section 4.4.7 of Chapter 4** confirms this, '*principal is there to give you support even during these extra lessons*'. This is in alignment with Kruger's (2003) statement that it is necessary for principal to be able to support teachers.

5.7.2 How do the principals' leadership styles contribute to effective teaching and learning in the two secondary schools in Imati ward?

This was one of the research questions that guided the study. Dimmock (2012) asserts that leadership influences student outcomes mostly through indirect means and these effects are at three levels; teacher, classroom and school. The study findings suggested that there was evidence of leadership being distributed to teachers at ISS. It was also found that the principal at ISS did not stick to a particular leadership style, but considered the demands of the situation.

There was unanimous agreement among ISS participants regarding the principal delegating some duties. Teachers felt that this was an indication of trust between the principal and the teachers. **Section 4.4.4 of Chapter 4** confirms this.

However, it was not clear as to the type of leadership approach that was followed at ESS as there were a number of disagreements among participants from the same school. One can surmise that, it may not have been as inclusive and participatory as the principal may have wanted me to believe.

5.8 Recommendations

These recommendations are informed by the findings of the study and are directed to the principals of schools, HODs and Post Level-1 educators.

5.8.1 Recommendations for school principals

Literature and studies conducted have indicated that principal's leadership has a role to play whether directly or indirectly in providing conditions conducive to effective teaching and learning. There is evidence that when teachers are involved

in decision-making their work rate also increases. The recommendation therefore would be for principals to involve teachers in schools' decision-making processes in order to own their decisions.

5.8.2 Recommendations to the HODs

In terms of the PAM document, HODs are the monitors of the delivery of curriculum to the learners by the teachers. It is therefore important that there is clarity of what the HODs expect of teachers to avoid confusion and conflict. The HODs therefore need to have continuous communication with the teachers and constant monitoring of teachers' work for better results.

5.8.3 Recommendations to the teachers

Teachers are the 'foot soldiers' in the process of teaching and learning in schools. It is in the best interest of the school to have empowered teachers. Teachers should make their voices heard. They need to be involved in leadership activities and avail themselves when some duties are delegated to them as this empowers them.

5.9 Chapter Summary

The study has shown that the leadership style that the principal practices in the school will have an effect on the establishment of conditions that are conducive to effective teaching and learning. The study could not establish whether the socio-economic conditions within which the schools are located have a bearing on effective teaching and learning in the two schools.

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APPENDIX 1: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. Box 1946
STANGER
4450
29 JUNE 2012

Attention: The Head of Department (Dr N.S.P. Sishi)
Department of Basic Education
Province of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Sithembiso Ntuli, M.Ed student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). As part of my study, I am conducting research on the *Influence of principals' leadership styles on learner performance*. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in the following secondary schools under your jurisdiction in KwaZulu Natal. The schools are: Ezithabeni Secondary School and Sabuyaze Secondary School (Ilembe District).

The title of my research project is: *An exploration of influence of secondary schools principals' leadership styles on learner performance. Case study of two secondary schools in Imati Ward in Maphumulo Circuit.*

This study aims to explore the influence principals of the selected secondary schools may have on the performance of learners particularly the Grade 12 learners. The study will focus on the principals of the schools, HODs' (one per school) and Post level One educators (one per school). The study will use semi-

structured interviews and document analysis. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes at the time convenient to them and each interview will be voice-recorded.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews and they have been purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Mr S. Ntuli; Tel: 032 4816195; E-mail: sthentuli7239@ovi.com; Cell: 083 560 2363 **OR** Dr T.T. Bhengu; Tel: 031 260 3534; E-mail: bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 083 9475 321.

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr S. Ntuli

APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**Application for Permission to Conduct Research in
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education
Institutions**

1. Applicants Details

Title: Mr Surname: Ntuli

Name(s) Of Applicant(s): Sithembiso Email: sthentuli7239@ovi.com

Tel No:032-481 6195 Fax: 032-481 6195 Cell: 083560 2363

Postal Address: P.O. Box 1946

STANGER, 4450

2. Proposed Research Title: Exploration of Influence of Secondary Schools’ Principals on Learner Performance. Case study of two secondary schools in Imati Ward.

3. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoE institutions?

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| Yes | No |
| | √ |

If “yes”, please state reference Number: N/A

4. Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification?

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| Yes | No |
| √ | |

If “yes”

Name of tertiary institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Faculty and or School: School of Education

Qualification: Master of Education

Name of Supervisor: Dr T.T. Bhengu **Supervisors Signature** _____

If “no”, state purpose of research: N/A

5. Briefly state the Research Background

I have been teaching secondary school learners for the past 23 years. It has always disturbed me to see neighbouring rural secondary schools with learners from the same feeder primary schools, from similar socio-economic backgrounds, performing extremely different for a period in excess of five years. Given the existing similar conditions, one would not expect such disparities, hence my concern. The said performance is based on the matric results as they are accessible to the community even outside the schools concerned.

In terms of Section 4.2(a) (ii) of Employment of Educators Act 76, (1998), the principal has to provide professional leadership within the school and participate in agreed educator appraisal processes, in order to regularly review their (teachers’) professional leadership practice with the aim of improving teaching and learning. This indicates that the principal as a leader has an influential role to play in the teaching and learning process in the school. However a wide range of scholars on educational leadership, advocate that leadership is not about an individual rather a collective. They go on to say that succeeding schools have principals who involve other stakeholders in decision making. It is said that leadership that is all inclusive yields better results than where there is one leader who is ‘know it all’ kind of a leader. Teachers are not likely to participate openly in such a situation thus negatively affecting the process of teaching and learning which eventually affects learner performance.

6. What is the main research question(s): The study has one main question and two sub-questions.

Main question: How do school principals’ leadership styles influence learner performance in the two secondary schools?

Sub-questions: What leadership styles are used by the principals in the two secondary schools?

What is the learner performance like in each of the secondary schools?

7. Methodology including sampling procedures and the people to be included in the sample:

The study will involve principals of the two schools, HODs (one per school), and level one educators (one

per school) who have served the longest in the two schools. Principal is the leader of the school, and the HOD is in the forefront in providing leadership within the department. Post-Level One educators are in the class delivering the curriculum. Data will be generated by using semi-structured interviews. The discussions will be voice-recorded using two tape recorders. This will be done in order to ensure that an accurate record of the content of the interview is kept.

8. What contribution will the proposed study make to the education, health, safety, welfare of the learners and to the education system as a whole?

According to host of writers on school leadership, the principal plays a pivotal role in the school. Principal does affect direction of the school whether directly or indirectly. Findings may assist principals in future with the ways in which they can adjust the way they lead their schools for the successful teaching and learning. If that happens there may be some improvement in the learner outcomes.

KZN Department of Education Schools or Institutions from which sample will be drawn – If the list is long please attach at the end of the form

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Names of schools have been deleted for purposes an anonymity. | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

9. Research data collection instruments: *(Note: a list and only a brief description is required here - the actual instruments must be attached):*

Schedule of semi-structured interviews will be used for the three categories of participants. (i.e. principals, HODs and Post-level One educators).

10. Procedure for obtaining consent of participants and where appropriate parents or guardians:

I will request the participants' participation in the study in writing. Included in the letter will be the consent

form which the participants will be requested to sign indicating that they are willing to participate. Consent form will also inform them that they will participate voluntarily and that they can withdraw from the study without any harm being caused to them.

11. Procedure to maintain confidentiality (if applicable):

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants' real names will not be disclosed when the report is written. Instead, pseudonyms for them and their schools will be used. Participants will be assured that the discussion will be solely used for the purposes of the research and the findings will be made available to them.

12. Questions or issues with the potential to be intrusive, upsetting or incriminating to participants (if applicable): Such questions are not applicable in this study.

13. Additional support available to participants in the event of disturbance resulting from intrusive questions or issues (if applicable): Such support will not be necessary in this study as there will be no intrusive questions.

14. Research Timelines :

Research is expected to be conducted between July and August 2012.

15. Declaration

I hereby agree to comply with the relevant ethical conduct to ensure that participants' privacy and the confidentiality of records and other critical information.

I, Ntuli Sithembiso declare that the above information is true and correct

Signature of Applicant

Date

16. Agreement to provide and to grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish a summary of the report.

I/We agree to provide the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education with a copy of any report or dissertation written on the basis of information gained through the research activities described in this application.

I/We grant the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education the right to publish an edited summary of this report or dissertation using the print or electronic media.

Signature of Applicant(s)

Date

Return a completed form to:

Sibusiso Alwar

The Research Unit; Resource Planning; KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

APPENDIX 3: LETTERS TO PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

P.O. Box 1946

Kwa-Dukuza

4450

30 June 2012

The Principal

Name of the school

Maphumulo

4470

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY:

I am a student currently registered at **University of KwaZulu Natal** for a Master's Degree in Education. I hereby request for permission to conduct a study in your school. My research topic is "*Principal's leadership style influence on learner performance*". The purpose of the study is to find out if Principal's leadership style has any influence on learner performance.

The study will humbly require the participation of the Principal, one HOD and a level one educator in an interview schedule. You are assured that such participation is voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity of names of persons and names of schools involved in the study will always be guaranteed. In addition, you have the right to withdraw at any time during the study without any negative consequences.

Thanking you in anticipation of a favourable consideration of the request.

For any further enquiries or clarity, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor as follows:

Home Tel: 032 551 5182

Cell No. : 083 560 2363

Email : sthentuli7239@ovi.com

OR

Dr T.T. Bhengu (My supervisor)

Work Tel: 031 260 3534

Cell No.: 083 947 5321

Email: bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za

Yours Faithfully

Ntuli S. (Mr)

If you agree to participate in the study please sign the declaration below.

CONSENT FORM

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and nature of the research project. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I wish to do so, without any negative consequences for me.

Signature of participant

.....

Date

.....

APPENDIX 4: LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANTS

P.O. Box 1946

Kwa-Dukuza

4450

30 June 2012

Name of the school

Maphumulo

4470

Dear Participant

REQUEST LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY:

My name is Sithembiso Ntuli. I am a student reading towards a Master's Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I intend conducting a study based on *"Influence of leadership style on learner performance"*. I humbly request for your participation in this study.

The purpose of the study is to explore the influence of leadership style on learner performance. You have been selected to participate in this study because you are either one of the following: the Principal or HOD or PL 1 educator.

I am requesting to have a one on one interview with you which will be voice recorded lasting for about thirty (30) to forty five (45) minutes. All the information that you will provide will be treated with confidentiality. Names of yourself and the school will kept anonymous even in the final report. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time when you so wish and no action will be taken against you.

I do not foresee any harm being caused to you due to your participation in the study. You are also not going to incur any expenses nor will you be compensated for participating in the study. The study is however, likely to be useful in adding to our understanding of leadership and learner performance. The information you will provide will be stored safely at the University for a period of five years after which it will be shredded.

Thanking you in anticipation of a favourable consideration of the request.

For any further enquiries or clarity, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor as follows:

Home Tel: 032 551 5182

Cell No. : 083 560 2363

Email : sthentuli7239@ovi.com

OR

Dr T.T. Bhengu (My supervisor).

Work Tel: 031 260 3534

Cell No.: 083 947 5321

E-mail: bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za

Yours Faithfully

Ntuli S. (Mr)

If you agree to participate in the study please sign the declaration below.

CONSENT FORM

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I wish to do so.

Signature of participant

.....

Date

.....

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS

I will start the discussion by asking the principal to fill-in the table which reflects pass rates in Grade 12 for the past 5 years. My first question will then be based on the statistics provided in the table.

National Senior Certificate results

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | |

- What is it that the school does which enables learners to get such marks?
- [**Probes:** As a Principal, do you play any role in ensuring that learners' achievement is improved? If you do, please explain what exactly do you do? Please briefly describe how your typical school day looks like, in terms of your activities!
- What would you regard as high learner achievement? [**Probes:** How has your leadership practice contributed to the learner achievement?
- In what way is the way you lead the school related to high learner achievement? A principal's day is busy with demanding tasks. What role does the school management team (SMT) play to assist you in carrying out management activities in the school? [**Probes:** How does your SMT become aware of their roles? Is it through meetings, circulars or what, please elaborate on this!
- Do you involve teachers in leadership activities in the school? If yes, how do you do this? What leadership activities are these? [**Probes:** Do you think that it is important to involve teachers in leadership activities? Why is it important to involve them if they are involved?
- Do you delegate some of your duties to the teachers? If so why? [**Probes:** What kind of tasks do you delegate to your staff members? Do you believe in delegating some duties to your staff? If so, please explain why!

- What is your attitude towards educators who take initiatives in school's activities?

If there is anything that I did not ask you about, but you feel I need to know, please share that with me.

Thank you very much for your time, it is highly appreciated.

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HODs

I will start the discussion by asking the principal to fill-in the table which reflects pass rates in Grade 12 for the past 5 years. My first question will then be based on the statistics provided in the table.

National Senior Certificate results

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | |

- What is it that the school does which enables learners to get such marks?
- [**Probes:** As an HOD, do you play any role in ensuring that learners' achievement is improved? If you do, please explain what exactly do you do? Please briefly describe how your typical school day looks like, in terms of your activities!
- What would you regard as high learner achievement? [**Probes:** How has your principal's leadership practice contributed to the high learner achievement?
- In what way is the way is the manner in which the school is led and managed related to high learner achievement? A principal's day is busy with demanding tasks. What role does the school management team (SMT) play to assist the principal in carrying out management activities the school? [**Probes:** How do you as a member of the SMT become aware of the role you are expected to play? Is it through meetings, circulars or what, please elaborate on this!
- In your experience as an HOD in this school, have you seen teachers being involved in leadership activities in the school? If yes, how is this done? What leadership activities are involved here? [**Probes:** Do you think that it is important to have teachers involved in leadership activities? Why is it important to involve them if they are involved?

- Does the principal delegate some of the duties to the teachers? If so why?
[Probes: What kind of tasks does the principal delegate to the staff members? Do you believe in delegating some duties to the staff? If so, please explain why! As an HOD, do you delegate duties to the teachers? If so, why? Please elaborate!
- What is your attitude towards educators who take initiatives in school's activities?

If there is anything that I did not ask you about, but you feel I need to know, please share that with me.

Thank you very much for your time, it is highly appreciated.

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

I will start the discussion by asking the principal to fill-in the table which reflects pass rates in Grade 12 for the past 5 years. My first question will then be based on the statistics provided in the table.

National Senior Certificate results

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | |

- What is it that the school does which enables learners to get such marks?
- [**Probes:** As an educator do you play any role in ensuring that learners' achievement is improved? If you do, please explain what exactly do you do? Please briefly describe how your typical school day looks like, in terms of your activities!]
- What would you regard as high learner achievement? [**Probes:** How has your principal's leadership practice contributed to the high learner achievement?]
- In what way is the manner in which the school is led and managed related to high learner achievement?
- In your experience as an educator in this school, have you been involved in leadership activities in the school? If yes, how is this done? What leadership activities are involved here? [**Probes:** Do you think that it is important to have teachers involved in leadership activities? Why is it important to involve them if they are involved?]
- Does the principal delegate some of the duties to the teachers? If so why do you think the principal does this? [**Probes:** What kind of tasks does the principal delegate to the staff members? Do you believe that some duties need to be delegated to the staff? If so, please explain why!]

- What is your attitude towards educators who take initiatives in school's activities?

If there is anything that I did not ask you about, but you feel I need to know, please share that with me.

Thank you very much for your time, it is highly appreciated.