

University of Kwazulu -Natal

Title of Research study: Reflections teacher leaders -What can we learn from their journeys?

A case study

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Lungelo Felicia Mshololo declare that:

- (I) This research dissertation is entirely my original research.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been written for any other purpose other than research nor has it been submitted to any other institution.
- (iii) The pictures used in this dissertation have not been used without the permission of people in the pictures.
- (iv) This research report has used other researchers' work however, the researchers' names have been mentioned as references, where their direct words or ideas were read and written by myself then quotation marks and references were used.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the author.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate all my efforts to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gives an assurance in His word that I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

My kids: Nkanyezi, Mpilwenhle and Nozibusiso whom I wish to inspire to always focus on their God-ordained purpose. I also dedicate this work to my father who was Master's graduate and a passionate teacher leader who changed many livelihoods through his passion to educate underprivileged learners.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My mom was a constant pillar of strength during the most strenuous time of writing my Master's thesis under the many challenges and anxieties of Covid 19.

My Dad who set the example by attaining his Masters. degree and remains a role model that all goals can be achieved.

My Children without whom the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

## **ACRONYMS**

IQMS- Integrated Quality Management system

ELO –Extended Learning Opportunity

SACE- South African Council of Educators

LRC- Learners Representative Council

PL1- Post level 1 Educator

SRC- Students Representative Council

SGB –School Governing Body

DBE- Department of Basic Education

SMT-School Management Team

F and M theory-Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory

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## **Abstract**

The case study attempted to explore the journeys of novice teachers to teacher-leaders to extract knowledge from their reflections. It investigated the constructs of the teacher leader, both personal and professional, their role in and outside of the classroom.

This case study is a qualitative study of five purposefully- selected teacher-leaders who speak as teacher leaders, reflecting on of their experiences. The research was undertaken using: semi-structured interviews as the data collection method.

The responses of the participants were categorised into themes as follows: Challenges of teacher-leaders, Institutional culture, family support and professional development.

The main findings were that being a teacher leader requires that the teacher leader commits and invests personal time and resources in their personal and professional development to remain at the relevant and effective as leaders in their schools. It was found that teacher leaders could surpass negative school circumstances to inspire positive learner outcomes., and that they must have values of leadership value in order to overcome personal – professional challenges.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **SETTING THE SCENE**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

#### **1.2**

School leadership has been the subject of engagement for many decades with much of its scholarship being focused on principals as leaders. Several theories have been developed around school leadership globally and the quest for more insights continues as schools become increasingly complex, especially within performativity and accountability regimes. With a high premium on school education within a very competitive and growing environment, more is being demanded from school leadership. Harris (2005, p.204) makes a compelling argument that school leadership influences learner outcomes. In the current context of career choices, access to higher education, a saturated job market with a very high unemployment rate, learner outcomes through school education are crucial. Schools,

themselves are concerned about their learner performances and as such strive to achieve positive learner outcomes. A positive learner outcomes of individual schools serves several purposes including, amongst others, recognition for excellence, marketization for new recruits and status, hence school leadership has become a key concern in learner outcomes. Traditionally school leadership was largely located within the office of the principal. More recently, school leadership extends beyond the office of school principals.

Nappi (2014.p.33) reports on the need for leadership transition by articulating that leadership within schools is not only in the hands of principals, but that the present educational and financial environment demands that others within the school assume leadership responsibilities. In this respect, leadership within schools has been extended to the school management team (SMT) and Heads of Departments. More recently acknowledgement of teachers as leaders within the school context has come into vogue as a means to lead and manage the complex school environment with its accountability regimes. In this dissertation, teacher leadership is the focus of engagement.

The current view as proposed by Daniëlsa ,Hondeghema and Dochy, (2019.p.6) is that principals should distribute leadership responsibilities and support teachers to take on leadership roles. This will result in increased effectiveness of the school body requiring that the teachers themselves awareness of teacher leadership.

Hitt and Tucker (2016) report that principals are perceived as the most influential and factor with regards to the learning of teachers and learners through their leadership of teachers, and in the controlling of organisational processes and policy. However, according to Stringer and Hourani (2015), the responsibilities of the Principal, H.O.D and SMT go beyond monitoring of the daily operations in schools but involves other duties such as:

- Managing new educational technologies in the transfer of the curriculum and in establishing the efficiency of school organisation.
- Working within the school budget to ensure allocation of all school resources.
- Creating leadership strategies and processes for school improvement
- Executing and applying changes according to the school vision

The above extensive duties of the Principal and SMT imply that there is a great need for teacher leadership, as alluded to by Hudson (2012) because schools that possess

extraordinary leadership capacity are those that promote leadership for all. This assertion suggests that teachers should be included in the school leadership category.

This chapter, therefore, presents a background to the study on teacher leadership with a nuanced focus on being a teacher leader at a school. The background for the study is developed from an engagement on leadership in schools that advocates for teacher leadership as a necessary and crucial component of school leadership within the complex and demanding school environment. Drawing from the background of the study, this chapter presents the focus and research questions that guide the study, followed by clarification of key concepts that are used in this dissertation. The chapter concludes with a summary of the forthcoming chapters.

## **1.2 Background for the study on teacher leadership.**

Daniëlsa et.al (2019) report that school principals are highly engaged and are also assuming growing responsibilities and the accountability-driven circumstances they work in, has accentuated the need to distribute leadership to teacher leaders. As the principal's job in schools is becoming more multifaceted, it is clear that school leadership can no longer be vested in one person, as reported by Searby and Shaddix (2008). This means that leadership roles must, therefore, be cascaded down from the principal to school managers and also to teachers. In present reality, post-level 1 (one) teachers do shoulder additional responsibilities, both in formal and informal leadership roles in their schools. Watson and Myers (2007) agree with Searby and Shaddix (2008) in reporting that Post-Level 1(one) teachers also apply influence directly among their colleagues and or indirectly by being supportive to the principal's vision, goals, and initiatives. This scenario sets the background of how teacher-leadership develops within schools.

It is firstly important to find clarity on the concept of a teacher leader, this links to my first research question so that teachers recognise and understand their roles and responsibilities for teacher leadership and build on their capacity to be teacher leaders by identifying and attaining the necessary distinguishing characteristics of a teacher leader. This links to the third research question of how teachers become teacher leaders.

### **1.2.2 The Concept of Teacher Leadership**

Wenner and Campbell (2017.p.13) proposes the notion that teacher leaders have been spreading their leadership further than their classroom walls, supporting professional learning, partaking in decision making, and co-operating with administrators to work towards improvement and change for the whole school. Literature from Wenner and Campbell (2017.p.5.) suggests that leadership does reside in teacher leaders.

Firestone and Martinez (2007) and Harris (2003 p.10) report that the variety of teacher leadership tasks is as varied as teacher leadership roles. Some teacher leaders are involved in administrative work such as deciding on standards for student behaviour, the allocation of budgets, and addressing personnel issues. Some are liaisons between administrators and teachers. Teacher leaders are also leading participants in issues of curriculum and instruction and how to help their peers improve their own teaching.

Derrington and Angelle (2013.p.3) highlight the notion that teacher leaders prefer influence to control, suggesting that teacher leadership does not require the power of control policies but requires the ability of a teacher or teachers to influence the school community for a positive change. This suggests that teacher leaders are those teachers that have taken up a broad variety of responsibilities beyond that of a Post Level I (one) teacher's role to teach, whether they have a formal leadership title or not, to positively influence the school community.

Newton, Riveros and da Costa (2013 .p.3) and Ozsezer and Saban (2016) concurs with several dispositions identified by the Brundett and Rhodes (2006) study undertaken in the UK, English West Midlands district in 12 contextually diverse urban primary schools, exploring the head masters' and middle leaders' understanding of leadership talent identification, it's growth, succession and retaining. This study revealed that there are factors and skills central to the development of teacher leaders. Further, Brundett and Rhodes (2006) identified skills that teacher leaders require in order to lead effectively. Some of these skills are more appropriately described as dispositions. Disposition refers to the outlook, temperament, nature, and character of the teacher leader. According to Brundett and Rhodes (2006), these dispositions are the following: to seek self-empowerment, to not be afraid of taking risks and opportunities nor of investing in personal confidence-building to experience other educational contexts outside of their school environment. Jackson and Weatherall (2010) also added that the roles of teacher leaders are often centred around coaching and

facilitation roles. While there seems to be a consensus among the various authors that it is the personal characteristics that define teachers, however, Jacobs, Gordon, and Solis (2016,p.385) recognized that most of the participating school heads measured multiple experiences and ability to work collaboratively with others as paths for participation in leadership.

In a scholarly argument against Jackson & Weatherall (2020) and Jacobs, Gordon & Solis (2016,p.385) suggests that principals and subject heads measure leadership using benchmarks such as multiple experience, ability to work collaboratively with others, and personal characteristics, as opposed to mainly the personal characteristics and disposition suggested by Yildizbas (2017.p.216), Newton et al., (2013 ,p5) and Ozsezer and Saban (2016).There is a notion that principals incline towards having a deeper trust in mature members of their staff due to experience, tenure and professional relations span, Therefore the specific standard of the teacher leadership benchmark does vary somewhat but is generally centred around domains of good values, good dispositions, ,and experience.

### **1.2.3 The movement of Teacher Leadership thinking**

There have been four waves of teacher leadership thinking as reported by Levin and Schrum (2016) and Saunders (2017). The definition and concept of a teacher leader have evolved, primarily from a concept that defined teacher leaders as only those in traditional formal roles such as Chairs and Heads of the Department, then in the second wave teacher leadership comprised of positions that often took teachers out of the classroom. In the third wave, the teacher leader concept was broadened to include teachers serving as mentors and advisors including both those in formal and informal capacities. The current wave of thinking about teacher leadership includes many informal roles of post level 1 (one) teacher leaders, recognising leadership in teachers who act as influencers of school culture, either to maintain or to change it, as teacher leaders.

While the concept of teacher leadership is relatively new, Cheung, Reinhardt, Stone and Little (2018) report that teacher leaders help relieve the workload from traditional school leadership but the real value of teacher leaders is that they can influence colleagues to understand educational reforms and contribute by helping their colleagues align reforms with their values, skills, and expertise. It is assumed that teacher leaders shouldered a greater and greater degree of ownership and engagement in their efforts to improve curriculum and

instruction. Teacher leaders are mostly the ones responsible for the improvement in learner results in districts, therefore their role is important for the vision of the education sector.

#### **1.2.4 The Concerns about teacher-leadership**

In the mainly hierarchical school structure, there is no evidence of school policy on teachers having leadership. It is true, therefore, that it is the lacking of teacher-leader policy that leads to an oversight to creating supporting structures for practicing teacher-leaders and a delay in the acceptance of teacher-leaders within the school system.

It is difficult to connect the concept of teacher leadership in school leadership, as alluded to by Margolis and Huggins (2012,p.976) who report that teacher leaders' interactions with colleagues are because of the lack of policy guidelines, and administrator communication. Because of the blurred descriptors or definitions and authority of the teacher leaders, teacher leaders often find themselves positioned between their pedagogical principles and the instructional initiatives of administrators and other teachers. In order to negotiate or navigate the conflicts of the teacher leader as a concept, it is imperative to study the experiences of teacher leaders and understand how they negotiated conflicting views of the practice of teaching with their colleagues and administrators and overcome barriers and challenges in their school contexts.

Cheung et al .(2018) reports that schools have long been comprised of a democratic ethos, in which colleagues view themselves as belonging to one level in the organizational hierarchy, and as such giving a special role to some teachers as teacher leaders can easily lead to strain and conflict among peers. This begs a question as to what kind of formal authority do teacher leaders have? The other teachers may interrogate the basis of the selection of the teacher-leader, provoking a power struggle and tension between the teacher leader and other teachers and also between teacher leaders and administrators.

This combination of tensions between teacher leaders and teachers, and teacher leaders and administrators leave South African schools and districts with the predicament of not knowing how to capitalise on the benefits of teacher leadership, drawing from the veteran teachers' deep knowledge and expertise, while reducing the possibility of potential for conflict with teachers and reducing confusion about the responsibilities of teacher leaders. This is the dilemma of the South African school system.

Despite the assertions among researchers made by, namely Jacques, Weber, Bosso, Olson and Bassett (2012), and McManus (2018) regarding the importance of teacher leadership, it is still an under-theorised and ill-defined concept.

School systems and their leaders have come to understand that there is a need to contemplate discussing greater professional independence to teachers, one of which may include leadership responsibilities as part of professional responsibilities. Mulford (2003 p.2) has found that leadership amongst teachers does raise the attractiveness of the teaching profession as teachers are attracted to and stay in the profession to the extent that they feel a sense of belonging and believe they are adding value by contributing to the success of their school and its students' reports. The leadership roles that teachers play in schools, therefore, is an ongoing research interest. This study, therefore, contributes to this ongoing research interest to better understand this concept of teacher leader and how teachers can become teacher leaders. The poorly-described nature of the teacher leader role means that teachers themselves are not clear on the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders, this notion was found by both Feeney (2009) and Margolis and Huggins (2012). The poorly defined concept of teacher leaders means that teachers who may have taken on leadership roles in schools may be overlooked and reduced, discounting their usefulness to the school community. While teacher leaders' experiences are varied and unique to each school context, a study on these experiences of teacher leaders looking back on how they have become teacher leaders, would serve useful in creating new knowledge from emerging patterns and links found from the varied aspects of teacher leaders' lives.

This research contributes to our understanding of the fourth wave of leadership as it is reflections from teachers who mainly lead from their classrooms because this research study is a collection of reflective narrative experiences of teacher leaders describing how they became teacher leaders. Teacher leadership is a new concept in education theory and as such, there are no formal programmes conducted in schools to develop leadership for teachers. Therefore, it becomes crucial to have a record of teacher leader experiences as to how they have become teacher leaders and are taking on leadership roles in schools so that future interventions and strategies can be made to develop teachers as teachers within the school. The purpose of this study is to create knowledge, from the experiences and insights of teacher leaders based on how they became teacher leaders, to fill the literature gap on the development of teacher leadership and draw some theory for the advancement of teacher leadership in schools

A case study approach was selected for this case study to gain rich and meaningful insight into the experiences of being a teacher leader. The experiences of the teacher leaders allow us to conceptualise teacher leadership, how teachers overcome systematic and personal challenges, how they take up opportunities, and how they became teacher leaders. However, the sample of this research was composed of 5 teacher leaders with a formal title at the school, it did not include informal teacher leaders. Therefore, further research is still required to understand the leadership experiences of informal teacher leaders who play a leading role in the improvement of learner performance in school districts.

### **1.2.5 The purpose of the study**

The focus of this study is on teacher leadership with the specific purpose of exploring the experiences of teacher leaders in a school context. My study aims to explain why the concept of teacher leaders is important for policy makers, administrators, and teacher leaders themselves to advocate for policies, systems, platforms and support for the development of teacher leaders.

Teacher leadership happens amid a complex context of policy, content, students, peers, and administrators, and its enactment remains far messier than the literature has revealed. Despite a call by York-Barr and Duke (2004) for more theory-driven, empirical research, teacher leadership remains a largely undertheorized field. This is a view held by Wenner and Campbell (2017.p.2), and therefore there is still a need to understand the supports necessary to enact teacher leadership professionally.

To this end, my research on the experiences of teacher leaders serves a purpose to enable the emergence of new knowledge of the phenomenon of teacher leadership.

### **1.2.6 Research questions**

The critical research questions that structured my research were as follows:

What are the characteristics of a teacher-leader?

What personal and professional challenges and opportunities do teacher leaders experience as teacher leaders in a school?

What professional developmental activities do teachers engage in to become teacher leaders?

What lessons and insights can teacher-leaders pass to novice teachers?

### **1.2.7 Key concepts used in this study**

Two key concepts are utilised in this study that need elaboration and which will serve to frame the way these concepts are used within this dissertation. These concepts are school

leadership and teacher leadership; Teacher leadership has been discussed in section 1.2.2. An engagement on the Concept of School leadership follows:

### **1.2.8 The Concept of school leadership**

Literature has held a traditional view that school leadership resides centrally in the school principal. Papantoniou (2015) is in sync with traditional scholars on school leadership, asserting that school leadership is associated with principals as the central power of a school. However, Addi-Racah (2015) posited that principals can allocate leadership by managing external teacher agencies by providing direction and structuring or balancing the factors that influence schools, suggesting a shift away from this centralised view of school leadership. Giving direction as a support to teachers suggests that teachers within the school environment are nurtured as leaders through the distribution of responsibilities within the school. This may be constituted as a form of teacher-leadership. Daniëlsa et al., (2019) reports that school principals are subject to assuming growing responsibilities, and as such, there is a need to not only distribute leadership across the school teaching staff but to also guide, support and nurture teacher leadership

## **1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.3.1.1 Personal- Social rationale**

When I initially began teaching, I was given a duty load showing the grades of the classes I was allocated to teach, teaching aids, which simply were textbooks, the annual teaching plan for a matric class and some chalk. I felt like I had been thrown into the ‘deep end’ of a murky river because literally on my first day, I was expected to ‘hit the ground running’ and issued with a duty load to teach a matric class after just having recently completed my PGCE at Edgewood, UKZN in. It’s been almost 5 years that I have been teaching and it is only in the recent months that I fee

I have gained teacher leadership skills that are adequate for me to apply for formal teacher leader roles through the Department of Basic Education.

During my initial teaching months as a new teacher, I felt no support from either the formal or informal structures in our school and finding my feet was my personal endeavor. The social school culture was very competitive. The school system of operating was rigid and was also very top-down in its approach, with the senior teachers and teacher-leaders working in silos, leaving me alienated and overwhelmed by the new responsibilities of being a matric teacher. I undertook this study to unpack the roles of being a teacher -leader.

### **1.3.2. Contextual rationale**

Lowery-Moore, Latimer and Villate (2016.p.3) report that it is both the internal impediments (within the personal domain of the teacher) and external impediments (outside of the teacher's personal domain), that make the change from "just a teacher" to "teacher leader" more challenging. It is argued that this is due to the many demands placed on a traditional school leader (being the school principal) which are mounting and becoming more complex. Above there is a lack of clarity of what constitutes teacher leadership within schools, therefore this transition from teachers to teacher leaders become challenging and, as such more research is needed to clarify this concept. Hence the ongoing need for further research into this concept.

According to Lieberman and Miller (2005,p153), researchers should explore and understand practices that nurture teacher leadership skills. Collay (2006) suggests that teachers start to perceive their work as an act of socially engaged leadership that leads to growing a powerful expert identity. This links to my first research question as to what are the characteristics of a teacher leader. The aim of this study is to explore the beliefs, practices and behaviours of teacher leaders, in order to advance the understanding of teacher leadership with the purpose of contributing towards teacher leadership practices to fill the literature gap on school-based grooming and training for teacher leaders.

It is in this light that I carry out my research to explore the actual experiences of current teacher leaders, and the aspects of their personal –professional experiences that supported them to being the teacher leaders that they are today.

### **1.3.3 Methodology**

Maree (2011) describes a paradigm as a set of ideals, assumptions or beliefs about essential factors of facts, or aspects of reality that lead to a push towards a particular worldview. My study was situated within an Interpretivist paradigm as I described the beliefs, meanings, and understandings of teachers as school leaders through their experiences of being teacher leaders. An Interpretivist paradigm is usually used by researchers who are interested in people and how they understand the world they live in. I chose the Interpretivist paradigm as I interpreted what my participants' views are in a natural setting. Methodology is not reducible to method; and it is not the sum of methods. Rather, it provides the (philosophical) basis for claims that are made for the methodical production of knowledge and the use of particular methods.

The research information was informed by what is happening naturalistically in the environment of a teacher leader and on their past experiences of being teacher leaders. The study took on a qualitative research approach as it focused on the lived experiences of participants in a natural environment of a school context. As teacher leadership is relative to a school context, this study took on a case study research methodology, bounded by its particularity or uniqueness of the school context. Merriam (1998) describes a case study as an extensive holistic account, explanation and evaluation of a single-occurrence phenomenon. The case study allowed me to obtain a well-balanced analysis of five teacher leaders' career journeys of development from their interpretation of their reflections on experiences of being teacher leaders. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) report that in a case study the researcher purposes to portray or describe the reality of the participants' experiences and thoughts as accurately and truthfully as possible about a particular situation. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate the data from the purposively selected sample of teacher leaders. The data was analyzed using narrative analysis techniques. The specific details and rationale for the methodological decisions taken as part of the research design are presented in chapter three of this dissertation.

#### **1.3.4 LIMITATIONS AND CREDIBILITY**

The concept of teacher leader is an emerging concept and as such may not be a well-understood concept amongst teachers and teacher leaders. Hence the information provided by the participants as part of the data generation process may have been influenced by their personal understanding of this concept and as such may have influenced the outcome of the research intent of understanding this concept more deeply. To minimise this limitation, I presented examples of why teacher leadership might be during the interviews. These examples may also have influenced their conception of teacher leadership.

#### **1.4. OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

My research study was to explore and understand teachers' journeys to being teacher leaders. In aiming to achieve the aim of the study, the dissertation is presented across five chapters, the first of which has been presented above and which described the context, rationale, purpose and research questions that directed this study. The research outline is a five-chapter thesis

as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to my research study and the purpose of the research study.

Chapter 2: Literature review on the phenomenon being explored: a discussion on the literature that I reviewed on teacher leadership development to deepen the understanding of the teacher leader concept and to explore its links to teacher leadership theoretical framework.

Chapter 3: Research methodology: A presentation of the research design that produced the data for the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data and findings: A detailed presentation and discussion of data and findings. Closing with responses to the research questions, recommendations and conclusions

Chapter 5: Recommendations from findings.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I began by introducing the background scene, and the personal-social rationale of teacher leadership for the study. I explained the key concept of a Teacher leader and the movement in teacher leadership thinking. I explained the purpose of the study and the research questions that were linked to the research objectives. I introduced the interpretivist methodology. I also briefly described the limitations of the study and how credibility would be achieved. I closed with an outline of the topics of chapters to follow.

The next chapter will discuss the literature review.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rowe (2014) explains that a good literature review summarises the past literature, then discusses it critically to examine contributions of past research, identifying research results and methodological problems. It, points out research gaps, showing alternative views of past research and finally indicating the gaps in research

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews and discusses the literature on teacher leadership. The chapter aims to provide an understanding of what teacher leadership is and to draw knowledge from the past research that has been conducted on the development of teacher leadership. The literature will be discussed to convey the following:

- Firstly, the literature will focus is on how teacher leadership values are developed in the person of the teacher leader, designed and the various types of professional development that teachers engage in;
- Secondly, the literature will centre on the experiences that shape teacher leaders, in terms of challenges, institutional culture, and personal-professional personal contexts impacting teachers as they develop into teacher leaders.
- Thirdly, the focus is on how teacher leaders evolve and what we can learn from the reflections of teacher leaders looking back at their journeys from novice teachers to teacher-leaders.

To draw returns from teacher leadership, a teacher leader must understand the dynamic interactions between personal values and systematic school culture in nurturing the development of teacher leaders. Because the theory of teacher leadership is a new concept, it is the experiences of practising teacher -leaders that need to be studied to create reliable theory on this topic. The question of what can we learn from the journey of being a teacher leader, becomes significant for the understanding of the theory surrounding teacher leadership and the support required to effect sustainable teacher-leadership in schools.

## 2.2. What are the characteristics of a teacher leader?

This question is central to this study and while it may seem to be a simple question, the response to this, as gathered through the literature, is essential, complex, and has many ambiguities and multiple interpretations. To understand the magnitude and depth of the concept of teacher leadership, it is necessary to explore how this concept has developed over time. Therefore, in this section of the literature I will discuss how teacher leadership has evolved to be a complex concept that has different and overlapping interpretations, processes of engagement and purposes.

Collinson (2012) described teacher- leaders as teachers who personify learning, innovate, build relationships and networks for their own learning and development. They then extend their learning and development for a positive influence on others.

Margolis and Huggins (2009) found that one of the most positive properties of teacher leadership is the result of self-leadership as teacher-leaders monitor and achieve personal goals, professional aspirations and moral imperatives The benefit of teacher leadership is firstly personal development which positively effects the professional development of the teacher-leader. The professionalism of the teacher leader enriches their practice within and outside of the school community. The development of teacher-leader values and dispositions

occurs in the personal domain, but are augmented through integral practice with senior teachers and management in schools. The personal development of teacher-leaders is jointly shaped and nurtured by their dispositions, and the fundamental support and culture from other teachers and SMT.

In Hunzicker's (2017,p1) report, which was based on a study conducted on practicing teachers who were undertaking a two-year leadership academy, it was found that teacher-leadership is a stance that is comprised of dispositions, beliefs, attitudes, and values about teaching, learning, and leadership. This notion of teacher leadership as a stance or an attitude is supported by teachers themselves who described teacher- leadership as neither positional nor role bound, but can rather it is a stance that be practiced by any teacher, at any time, and in any place – including the classroom. Carver(2016) reports that teachers thought that a stance-based view of teacher leadership was liberating, as it allowed them to keep their identity as a teacher while preparing to be leaders. While recognizing teacher-leadership as a stance indicates a breakthrough in the understanding of teacher leadership, it still unclear how teachers experience being a teacher-leader.

To bring some clarity on how teachers describe their experiences of being teacher- leaders. Sinha and Hanuscin (2017.p.2) proposed that two different constructs are to be used when studying teacher-leaders. The first construct was leadership practice, using a multiple-case-study approach with three teacher- leaders. The second construct was identity based on social roles and how one interacted with and related to groups of people. Sinha et al., (2017.p.14) suggest that leadership was where one's leadership practice or actions, leadership identity, and one's views and beliefs about leadership all converged.

Brundett and Rhodes (2006) also concur with Hanuscin and Colleagues (2012) and Yildizbas (2017.p.216) with the view that there are skills, dispositions and practices that coincide to form a teacher leader.

Newton et al., (2013) and Ozsezer and Saban (2016) concur the Rhodes and Brundett (2006)'s report stating that there are dispositions more central to the development of a teacher- leader. Further, Newton et al., (2013) identified skills that teacher -leaders require to function in these roles. While Newton et al., (2013), Ozsezer and Saban (2016) all concur that the personal domain of the teacher-leader requires the possessing of good dispositions, values, ethics and the development of interpersonal skills. However, there are diverse and somewhat opposing views on the nature of the teacher -development process with Kelchtermans (2009,p.1 ) proposing that teacher leader development is a personal

responsibility by discussing how teachers experience development in their teaching careers through reflecting and consciously thinking about their daily teaching experiences. This results in a lifelong developmental learning process known as 'professional development. Newton et al., (2013), however, suggests that the improvement of teacher- leaders is more than an automatic process, rather it is a planned structured process within areas of influence in their teaching profession.

These areas of influence are termed “spheres” of influence under the Fairman and Mckenzie Theory (2012).Hunzicker (2017 p.1) described the conceptions of teacher leadership as leadership that is trending away from formal title and positions to embrace a more informal, integrated approach in line with the notion of teacher- leaders leading in multiple areas through their influence as suggested by the Fairman and McKenzie theory (2012). Even though the definitions of teacher- leader values and dispositions provide clarity on the distinguishing values found in a teacher leader, there is still a challenge because these values and dispositions are not tangible nor quantifiable factors. This makes identifying and nominating a teacher-leader very much a subjective process which is open to bias from the School Management Team.

Angelle and De Hart (2011.p.149) described teacher leadership as sharing knowledge of pedagogy and classroom management with colleagues, willingness to accept leadership opportunities when asked, and routinely stepping beyond required teaching duties to serve students and the school. Whether teacher leaders hold official positions or simply step-up when needed, teacher leadership is essential in the school body. Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon (2016.p.310 ) assert that teacher leadership demonstrates its sustainability as a solution for sustaining systemic teacher quality and school improvement efforts. Wenner and Campbell (2017.p.2) stated that leadership is a component important to reform. Even so, the concept of teacher leadership remains elusive. Helterbran (2010) observed teachers themselves had not answered the call for teacher leadership to a large scale. One of the reasons for this is that teacher leadership remains elusive. This may be related to the growing agreement among scholars that teacher- leadership is an attitude, stance or way of thinking, as opposed to a set of behaviours.

Wilson, Almerico, Johnston and Ensmann conducted a thorough review of research related to effective dispositional behaviours of educational leaders with extensive input from subject

matter specialists in 2017. This research highlights twenty actionable behaviours associated with successful leadership in educational settings. These leadership dispositional behaviours identified in this study are suggestive of promoting positive student outcomes, supporting the professional development of teachers, and creating progressive work conditions for faculty and staff.

Wilson, Almerico, Johnston and Ensmann (2017.p.1) report that leadership dispositions that lead to performance-based growth and development in schools highlight the need to address how postsecondary institutions can better prepare educational leadership candidates using sound measures. Adding to the body of educational leadership research, the Educational Leadership Disposition Assessment tool (EDLDA) was developed in this study using a systematic analysis of dispositional performance expectations in the discipline.

Struyve, Chloe, Meredith and Gielen (2014 p.210) state that the teacher must be fully developed in the personal understanding domain. This comprises of five interpersonal professional domains which are: self-knowledge, self-image, self-esteem, job motivation and task perception. This suggests that a teacher-leader must pursue self-development to be in a position to initially lead them self before pursuing to lead others. The self-leadership of the teacher-leaders results in the self-efficacy that assists teacher-leaders to find motivation for their tasks and supports them in other areas of their teacher-leadership development.

Frost (2010,p.11) reports that self-efficacy emphasizes inner, cognitive processes such as: ethics, values and non-verbal behaviour as tools for self-efficacy. Therefore, for a teacher to have self-efficacy they must possess inner, cognitive processes such as ethics, values and positive non-verbal behaviour.

Güven and Demirhan (2006) cited in Yildizbas (2017.p.216) further extended the significance of teacher leader values by suggesting that possessing good self-leadership values helps the teacher to display good interpersonal skills. Frost (2010.p.211) has a scholarly agreement with Yildizbas (2017.p.216) on the notion that teacher leadership is formed on the supports of good personal characteristics, ethics and values of being accountable, collaborative, trustworthy, reflective; and have: good intentions, a clear vision, and a positive attitude. The teacher-leader must being intrinsically motivated, selfless, sensitive to others' needs; and being a positive role model. Frost (2010,p.219) further expresses that a teacher leader must also be a learner who can reflect on how he or she learns, innovate, and evaluates their actions to improve the capacity for further learning.

De Villiers and Pretorius (2012) established that school heads consider teaching experience and expertise as the primary avenues for participation in leadership among teachers. In a scholarly argument against Jackson and Weatherall (2010), De Villiers and Pretorius (2012) suggests that principals and subject heads define leadership using benchmarks such as: maturity, experience and expertise as opposed to coaching, facilitation or the personal characteristics and disposition suggested by literature ((Yildizbas, 2017.p.216; Newton et al., (2013) and Ozsezer and Saban (2016)). There is an assumption that the principals also have deeper trust in mature members of their staff due to experience, tenure and, their professional relations span.

For a teacher to be a leader, they must be recognised and accepted as capable of leading. There is still a grey area on the factors that have the most significance in the acceptance, recognition and respectability of a teacher as a leader by leadership structures in schools. This can be an area of further research in the future.

### 2.3 The experiences that shape teacher leaders.

The experiences of being a teacher-leader include a myriad of challenges and opportunities for this research study. I have arranged these experiences into themes of: challenges, institutional culture, family support, and professional development.

#### 2.3.1 The Challenges of Teacher leaders.

It is proposed by Beam, Claxton and Smith (2016 p.148) that the challenges facing teacher-leaders included a range of general broader challenges. These challenges include: paperwork, parent relations, teacher relations, personal leadership style, faculty relations, policy and legal issues. Student discipline was also one of those spaces where teacher leaders felt the most challenged. Although most agreed that student discipline consumed a substantial portion of their time, it was one of the rare duties for which they had a clear expectation, especially having been on the faculty side of collaborating with administration on student discipline issues in the past. There are, however, psychological and emotional challenges which are part and parcel of teacher leadership. Lowery-Moore et al., (2016.p.3) report that Internal and external obstructions to teachers being leaders make the transitions from just a teacher to a teacher- leader difficult. The new challenges brought on by the shift from a teacher to a teacher- leader require that the level of development in the personal domains can support the teacher leader to navigate and overcome the challenges of being a teacher leader.

Yiildibaz (2017) reports that teacher-leaders felt lonely in their positions because they were positioned as no longer fitting in to the teachers' zone by other school factors. Nias (2005)

also concurs with the notion that new teacher- leaders feel isolated and alienated. This shift in positions also influences the cognitions that teacher- leaders have about themselves in their job. Teacher leaders reported that they struggled to obtain obtaining recognition for their expertise and responsibilities from their teacher colleagues. This all has an impact on their self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective. Due to an increased work load, teacher- leaders reported having very little time to spend on their teaching responsibilities. Therefore, it is critical as suggested by: Newton, et al., (2013) and Ozsezer and Saban. (2016) and Fairman and Mckenzie (2012), that teacher-leaders need to have a high self -esteem and expertise to diminish the pressure from colleagues when they reach the platform of being a teacher-leader. Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008) propose that one of the structures to guide teacher- leaders is the availability of a mentor as mentoring can help alleviate feelings of isolation and alienation which early career faculty experience. However, the reality of the matter is that it is not possible to always find a suitable mentor in the school. Therefore, Allan (2020) encourages the notion of self- mentors as an alternative to the traditional mentor to ease feelings of alienation felt by the new teacher-leader. Teacher-leaders work in a school that is by tradition bureaucratic and politicised, therefore, teacher-leaders finds themselves in a space where they must balance micro-politics at play which Struyve at al., (2014) discussed. The view from a micro-political perspective demonstrates how teacher leadership introduces new structures of interactions in schools that make teacher leaders find themselves continuously juggling between two different agendas of professional interests. These interests are: obtaining recognition as a teacher-leader from their colleagues while maintaining their socio–professional relationships with these colleagues. Conflict management and being a problem solver are a few of the personal traits that mitigate inevitable conflict that a teacher leader will have to manage. There is social pressure from colleagues to maintain the status quo and may work against the professional interests of the teacher- leader. Nguyen (2013.p.127) identified even more social expectations working against empowering specifically female teacher leadership. Cheung and Halpern (2010)’s report based in the Vietnamese context found that the social expectations of women to be dutiful wives and mothers are strong and served to impede their career progression into leadership roles. To counteract this barrier against women, appropriate policies and measures must be developed to lessen the time demands of women's domestic work and childcare so that women can invest as much time as men in their career progress.

Simpson and Lewis (2007) and Liu, Liu and Wang (2015) have a scholarly conversation where Liu et al., (2015) introduces the notion of a male bias in the workplace and in teacher leadership by explaining that there is an internalisation of a perceived preference or bias concerning male teachers leads to a lower assessment of female teacher leader abilities. The preference of male teacher leaders may also lead to the social culture of male leadership dominance at the organisation of the school. The bureaucratic nature of the school system as reported by Simpson and Lewis (2007) cited in Liu et al., (2015), who state that the ideas of male teacher leaders received greater attention than those offered by women, further enforces a male dominance in school leadership. The social culture results in females becoming less willing to take risks on new projects within organisations, and particularly in a bureaucratic school system. Female teacher leaders may be dispossessed of leadership opportunities because of a negative social and institutionalised culture.

Therefore, it seems that the decision to pursue leadership for women is more complex than it is for men as it is affected by many factors, a significant portion of which is gender-based. To this end, female teacher-leaders need to remove internal barriers such as : the need to conform to societal stereotypes that places the female role as a wife and mother first. This notion places a judgemental against women who pursue leadership roles. Men in the traditional leadership roles need to assist balance the playing field for both their female and male teacher-leaders.

Overcoming such barriers may be challenging for men as Cutbill and Brown (2003) report that as a consequence of the imposition of traditional male hegemony at the socio-political and organizational level, the result is that women undergo internalisation of barriers which may also contribute to their under-representation in management as a silent institutional culture.

### 2.3.2 Institutional Culture can act as a barrier to the development of a Teacher Leader.

Schools are still governed using a long history of customs, dominant cultures, belief systems, preferred public policies and established social practices. This is the institutionalised culture that resists and undermine the efforts at transformational change. This suggests that teacher-leader development practices may not be adopted if they go against the institutional culture and practices. Teacher- leaders may also be disempowered by the same institution from making an impact for institutional change. The irony found by Darling-Hammond (2010), Yusof, Osman and Noor (2016.p.274), however, is that where there is a strong school institution founded on values that is present, there is also evidence of strong organisational

development present. This shows that teachers are involved directly and indirectly in the development of the organisation, through the school's administration and management processes. Angelle and De Hart (2011,p.145) hold a view that teacher leader participation allows the school management to be more effective and channels the school to achieve its education goals.

Personal commitment in ones' career would serve to inspire the teacher leader to seek professional development.

Darling-Hammond (2016,p.11), also reports that where the school culture is positive, the teachers can work in a mutually supportive group in developing the aspects of education and learning. Ghani (2013) reports that a professional learning community is a school programme that needs teachers' support to make it functional, and that this programme has merit because it has an impact on teachers and also provides opportunities for them to work with mentors, learn and understand relevant policies in education programmes. It is also useful for the distribution of information and ideas to be applied as best practices,

Darling-Hammond et.al (2016),however, suggested that there are even more factors that can affect school culture and teacher leadership such as headmasters' leadership style, the location of the school, local community's culture and beliefs and also morals and behaviours of the students. A comprehensive review of these factors enables the authorities to take necessary steps either to change and study the factors that hinder and retard the conducive school culture and teacher leadership. And so in line with Fairman and Mckenzie (2012), it is the teacher leaders who join forces with each other, the SMT, the SGB, LRC, learners and parents collectively to address the behaviour of the learners to revitalise and re-culture the school into a school of excellence. Teacher leaders are the game-changers or change-makers that make the moves to drive a positive school culture. While Darling-Hammond et.al (2016,p.11)highlight the notion that it is the leadership style of the principal that drives the culture of the school, however, Anfara and Angelle (2007) state that influence on student learning is more of collegial accountability where teachers share the obligation for learner and teacher learning. There is the underlying implication that creating a new culture is a learning curve for the teacher leader professional.

#### 2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lowery-Moore et al., (2016.p.3) conducted a study in which they analysed the final reflective papers of an online teacher leadership program. Researchers analysed participants' perceptions of personal and professional growth in knowledge, skills, and dispositions, as

well as confidence in abilities as change agents who positively influence school environments. Participants in the study reported increased confidence and ease in their current roles and a desire to have more influence throughout their schools and districts, as a result of the knowledge, skills they have gained from the teacher leadership program.

#### **2.4.1 The skill-set of teacher leaders and how it is acquired.**

Derrington and Angelle (2013.p.3) emphasise the notion that teacher leaders use influence instead of control. This statement suggests that teacher leadership does not require the authority of control policies but it is determined by the ability of the teacher to influence the school community for a positive change. To do this, teacher leaders take up multiple responsibilities beyond that of a Post Level I teacher's role to teach, whether they have a formal leadership title or not.

Newton et al., (2013) and Ozsezer and Saban (2016) agree on the dispositions identified in the Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) report and that it is dispositions that are central to the development of teacher leaders. Disposition refers to the outlook, temperament, nature and character of the teacher leader. Brundett and Rhodes (2006) report that teacher-leader dispositions are as follows: (a) empowerment, (b) support, (c) risk-taking, (d) confidence-building, and (e) opportunities to experience other educational contexts outside of their school environment. Jackson and Weatherall (2010) also added that the abilities and roles of teacher leaders are often constructed around coaching and facilitation roles.

#### **2.4.2 Depth in content knowledge leads to a change in teacher leader practice.**

Professional development situated on content knowledge leads to increased teacher knowledge and can lead to changes in teacher practices. This view is theorized by several authors (Desimone, 2009; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman, 2002; Garet et al., 2001 and Kennedy, 1999) and is, therefore, inferred that content is important for the teacher to have their practice so as to improve learner performance, which is one of the roles of a teacher leader.

#### **2.4.3 The concept of Professional Development**

##### **Figure 2.4.1 Problem-solving cycle of Professional development**

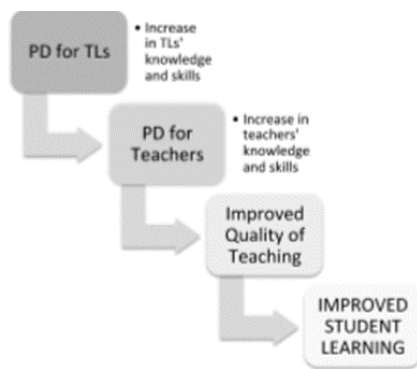


Figure 2.4.1 depicts the relationship between the professional development for teacher leaders and the professional development of teachers leading to improved student learning. It is known as the Problem –solving cycle of Professional development used by teacher leaders. In a study done by Borko (2012) on mathematics teacher leaders, it was established that a central component of a suitable professional development model is sustainable and adaptable to local contexts. For site-based professional development, building the leadership capabilities of the program developers, without strong leaders, professional learning is likely to be ineffective and not result in increased learner performance. A notion discussed in the study was that despite its importance, developing the knowledge base, skills and leadership of local teacher leaders is often a missing component of teacher reform. This suggests that content knowledge and professional development must be supported by teacher leadership to yield improved student performance.

#### **2.4.4 The importance of investing in Professional development as a Teacher-leader**

According to Helterbran (2010), teachers must reject the “just a teacher” mantra (p. 363). Teachers must be leaders who identify the barriers to student success and take the initiative in overcoming the roadblocks.

Khan and Malik (2013) emphasized that promoting teacher leadership programs can aid in recruiting, motivating, and rewarding accomplished teachers. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007) described the financial and personal cost of failure to retain teachers: “Teacher attrition is high, with 46% of teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years”, a finding stated by Holland, Eckert, and Allen, (2014). Training teacher leaders is necessary for teachers to understand the informal and formal responsibilities of the teacher-leader role. Buchen (2000) argued that it would only leadership of teachers that will make a difference as it is teachers alone who know what the day-to-day problems are and how these problems can be solved. Nappi (2014,p.33) cited the Wallace Foundation study conducted by Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010), which founded that

training can encourage teachers' willingness to initiate positive changes in their schools. The study revealed that teacher leadership programs can move teachers outside of their comfort zone to embrace the idea of exerting influence on school reform as teacher leadership programs can nurture the development of teacher confidence (Helterbran, 2010; Uribe-Florez, Rawashdeh, Morales 2014.p.12). This suggests that it is through professional development that teachers assume their responsibility to become masters of content and be masters of their practice, going beyond the standard norms of a good teacher.

Fairman and McKenzie (2012) posits that the spheres of knowledge of practice and knowledge of content are important spheres of influence in the teacher leader development process.

It is in the spheres A and B of the Fairman and Mckenzie theory that the teacher leader has influence to improve practice as she or he has encountered new relevant knowledge of his or her subject, as well as new skills and different strategies for delivering and assessment of knowledge as a result of professional development. Professional development includes all forms of knowledge that will lead to improved professional practice as a teacher. It is important therefore that a teacher leader invests in the development of their content knowledge so as to support improved practice for learner performance as suggested by Fairman and Mckenzie (2014).

The teacher leader may also experiment with different instructional techniques as reported in the OECD (2009) report such as “direct transmission beliefs about learning and instruction” and “constructivist beliefs about learning and instruction”.

The school time table dictates what activities teachers are supposed to be engaged in and it does not cater for onsite professional development activities that are necessary for teacher leadership. There is a high administrative load and policy compliance demands placed on the teachers already, which leaves little room for teacher leader development through onsite professional development activities. The school time-table only caters mainly for teaching and learning time. Therefore, there is no platform to address the professional development needs for teachers and to assist them to gain content knowledge and sharpen their expertise in order to become teacher leaders.

Gray (2020 p.79) suggests that to create a sustained platform for teacher leadership development, schools should re-organise their professional development model to create more school-based professional development sessions. Even if schools do plan these professional knowledge sessions for their teachers, many of them are administrator led and

administrative in nature, not aimed at developing content knowledge or knowledge of practice. This means that if a teacher seeks professional development specific to their subject needs, they need to invest their own money and time for these types of professional development programmes at training institutions outside of the school context. This own investment predicament discourages teachers from pursuing professional development programmes as these are costly in terms of time and money. The other discouraging factor is that there is no other recognition that a teacher, who has undergone professional development would receive above that of another teacher who has not undertaken professional development. Gray (2020,p.18) suggests that there would be more benefit to teachers if professional development was facilitated by other teachers because this would lead to relevant professional development resulting in greater teacher- efficacy. It is at the point where teachers develop efficacy that they feel confident to experiment and grow in other spheres of influence mentioned in the Sphere of influence theory by Fairman and Mckenzie (2012).

## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMING**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

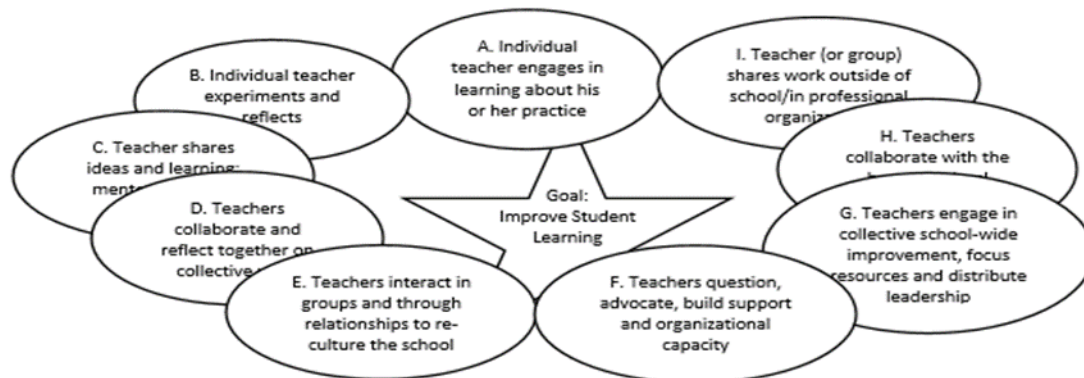
The Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning as proposed by Fairman and McKenzie (2014) discusses how teacher leaders develop leadership in many broad and diverse spheres of influence, beginning from the personal domains of teacher practice, personal experimentation and learning to a wider sphere of external collaboration and networks. In a qualitative case study done by Fairman and Mackenzie (2014) of seven schools in Maine, USA, they formulated the nine spheres and scopes of teacher leadership action for learning. This model was expanded from Teacher Leadership for Student Learning (York-Barr and Duke, 2004), which states that teachers play a pivotal role to lead their schools in the path of improving teaching and learning in diverse and various ways.

The nine spheres of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) model offers a deeper understanding of various ways teachers apply, influence and relate to leadership by developing teachers' own professional learning and practice to improve student learning. Above this, the Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning model explains where and in what way teachers; individual or in a group, formal or informal act, support and encourage their colleagues to improve student learning. Their research study looked into the concept of collaboration and mentorship, both of which serve as support for a case study on teachers looking for footing in their careers.

Research done by York-Barr and Duke (2004) found that the development of teacher leadership is nurtured in the environment of a learning community. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) had a scholarly conversation with York-Barr and Duke (2004) by stating that teacher leadership emerged within many divergent and diverse contexts; individual and collective efforts, informal and formal actions, narrowly-focused and broader school-wide improvement efforts, a school climate of isolation and mistrust or one collegiality, shared vision and trust. There was no one, linear or clear path to teacher leadership development. This view of diverse and divergent contexts playing a role in teacher leadership development is also found in this research study as I explore the institutional culture, the personal and professional development, and barriers that impact on the development of teacher leadership in schools. The Fairman and McKenzie (2012) model, which describes teacher influence in spheres of influence, from sphere A through I, that teacher leadership continuously occurs from a narrow focus or sphere which is improving teachers' learning and practice in the classroom to a wider spectrum of goals of improving teachers and student learning.

**Figure 2.5.1**

Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012)



2.5.2 Sphere A of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory: The teacher learns about his practice.

Teachers leaders in the sphere A area of influence in Fairman and McKenzie (2012) model resolved to further, expand their professional knowledge and skills. These teachers demonstrate a commitment to take part in professional learning and in the construction and creating of professional expertise in preparation for making instructional changes in their classrooms. The research participants were all chosen based on formal leadership roles and functions and all had achieved various levels of teaching excellence.

Wieczorek and Lear (2018) suggest that part of improving teacher practice lies in moving closer to specific instructional improvement and capacity- building concepts. Smylie and Eckert (2018) report that other models of teacher leadership have explicitly stated teacher leadership domains and competencies that define effective teacher leadership practices and behaviours, however, these distinct perspectives and models of teacher leadership demonstrates how teacher leadership definitions and expectations are still evolving and may not be centrally focused on classroom instruction improvement. This view is in line with Fairman and McKenzie (2012) model suggesting that there are nine divergent spheres of influence for teacher leadership development.

### **2.5.3 Sphere B of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory**

Teachers experiment with new practice methods that were encountered through professional development, Teacher leaders innovate, pioneer and invent teaching techniques that suit their learners' needs. Teacher leaders reflect and consider their beliefs as well as on the efforts to change or modify practice in classrooms to improve student learning. Teacher leaders realise the lessons gained from reflecting on their own beliefs and practice and constantly evolving, seeking for ways to achieve improved teaching for student learning.

Derrington and Angelle (2013 p.3) also reinforce the notions of reflection described in Sphere B of Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory, and report that teachers' pedagogical competence affects student learning through their instructional practices and this is closely tied to the teachers' ability to modify their instructional practice when the teachers face struggling students in danger of failure. Teacher-leaders exert greater effort, rather than surrendering by deeming that the causes for failure to be beyond their control. This self-belief, motivation to persist, and ability to modify the teacher leaders' experimentation and reflection on same is likely to positively impact student achievement.

### **2.5.4 Sphere C: Teachers share ideas and learning.**

It would seem that the sharing of ideas and learning from each other as teachers matches with collaboration, for it is in the spirit of mutual learning that sharing of practice experiences, information, ideas that teachers can lay a foundation to begin to see the gains of collaboration for collective work. At this level, the sphere of influence can lead to sphere D of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory.

Margolis (2020) states that teacher leadership has the potential to afford school systems and educators both information and processor of information they would not otherwise have.

Teacher leaders in flexible and inflexible roles can carve out intentional spaces on the edge of chaos to promote professional learning and communication that formal school leaders may not. is founded in Sphere C of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory.

According to Helterbran (2010) cited in Lowery-Moore et al.,(2016 p.3) emphasises that teachers must reject the “just a teacher” mantra .Teachers must be leaders who identify the barriers to student success and take the initiative in overcoming the roadblocks., It is to achieve student performance as a school that teachers must share ideas and learning on a myriad of issues such as teaching strategies for weaker learners, discipline management, assessments and many other challenges that teachers may encounter on a day to day basis.

### **2.5.5 Sphere D: notion of teachers reflecting collectively and collaborating.**

Nuri and Cephe (2017.p.64) report that reflection is a subject that receive great interest recently and is usually described by using a cyclical model in self-learning and that based on several definitions in the literature, reflection can be defined as engaging both cognitively and affectively with practical experiences in such a way as to make sense of problematic classroom events beyond a common -sense level with the view to learning and professional development (Brookfield, 1995; Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004; Zeichner and Liston, 1996). During the annual IQMS process, teachers are required to receive professional criticism from their senior and peer educators to gain a professional perspective of which areas they need to work on, therein is an opportunity for personal reflection and professional development planning on the part of the teacher being evaluated in the IQMS. Teacher-leaders do not wait to reflect during the IQMS but also reflect on a daily basis to evaluate their beliefs, their classroom instructional practices and relative learner performance to change their practice to be most effective based on the outcomes of experimenting and to also model correct values and attitudes to their learners and other teachers.

Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent, and Richert (1996) cited in Searby and Shaddix (2008) examined the importance of “leader behaviours” that classroom teachers can adopt, even though they are not in formal leadership roles. They report that teachers emerge into new and continually expanding roles by the very nature of learning to see themselves differently and therefore behaving differently. This suggests that the outcome of reflection can result in a teacher adopting leadership behaviours in their classrooms and in the greater school community.

The findings of Korthagen and Vasalos (2005.p.1) support making deliberate efforts to set up reciprocal collegial conversations as part of the professional culture, and the core reflection

process as a valuable tool to do so. As Korthagen and Vasalos (2005.p.7) argued, identification of a person's core qualities or "character strengths" function as a link between the individual and their learning context or environment promotes a sense of "this is who I am" as reported by Korthagen and Vasalos (2005.p.13)

The notion that reflection is necessary for teacher leadership, founded in the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) is in congruence in effect implies that teachers need to reflect on what they are currently doing to motivate and inspire their colleagues as teachers may feel on the receiving end of endless requirements from national authorities. School leaders need to devote intellectual energy by way of reflection and also create the time, and space to building a professional learning community.

**2.5.6 Sphere E: Teachers interact in groups and through relationships to re-culture the school,** Teachers work with and through various groups and relationships in the school to influence a change in norms, pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Teacher leaders work with and through several teacher learner and parent groups and relationships in the school to bring about a change in norms, educational beliefs, and practices. My research explored the importance of group work within the available structures of department teams, subject clusters and with the general school body to understand the benefit or effect of group interaction and maintaining good socio –professional relationships as supports to being a teacher leader.

Yusof et al., (2016) suggested that the factors that can affect school culture and teacher leadership such as headmaster's leadership style, the location of the school, local community's culture and beliefs and also morals and behaviours of the students. A comprehensive review of the factors enables the authorities to take necessary steps either to change and study the factors that hinder and retard the conducive school culture and teacher leadership. And so in line with Fairman and Mckenzie (2012), it is the teacher leaders who join forces with each other, the SMT, the SGB, LRC, learners and parents collectively to address the behaviour of the learners to revitalise and re-culture the school into a school of excellence. Teacher leaders are the game changers or change makers that make the moves to drive a positive school culture. While Yusof et al., (2016) highlight it is the leadership style of the principal that drives the culture of the school, however, Anfara and Angelle (2007) state that influence on student learning is more of a collegial accountability where teachers share the obligation for learner and teacher learning. There is the underlying implication that creating a new culture is a learning curve for teacher leaders

A school culture is formed by the ethos, shares practices based on the school's vision. It is the collective group values of the school body. It is the system by which collective practices, principles and values are maintained and engrained. Good teacher relationships are necessary to re-culture the school whereby there will be collective efficacy to improve the entire school's performance.

To re-culture the school for collective efficacy which will lead to performance, a teacher-leader must encourage certain actions and discourage others having initially gained an understanding of the school's values and norms as reported by Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) cited in Derrington and Angelle (2013.p.3). To this end, teacher leaders will influence their peers to change and adopt the right actions and abandon those actions not in line with the school's pursuit of a culture of excellence.

An outcome of collective efficacy is the concept of collective responsibility. Walstrom and Louis (2008) cited in Derrington and Angelle (2013.p.4) who define this concept as teachers' belief that they not only have influence on student learning but the shared responsibility to influence learners. This collective responsibility is a type of collegial accountability, one where teachers share obligations for both teacher and student learning Taylor and Angelle, (2007) concurs with Lee and Smith (1996) who consistently found that schools with high collective responsibility for learning not only had students who learned more but were more equitable schools, particularly in terms of social characteristics.

A report from Kiesling (2019.p.14) reported that there is no boundary between the community and education. Each needs the other to ensure student success on their life journey, however, being involved in community work with students and parents is never easy and smooth even though its impact is lasting and immeasurable. Kiesling (2019.p.13) also reported he had to be students' ardent advocate in the school community, sometimes addressing their mistreatment and various misunderstandings (with other students and other teachers). Kiesling (2019.p.14) suggested that the students' roles and teacher leaders' responsibilities impact students' learning and identity beyond the school walls. Kiesling (2019.p.14 ) concluded that teachers develop professionally beyond what is required to deliver curriculum in the classroom and that professional reflection extends beyond course and school context into personal agency and cultural identity.

2.5.7 Sphere F: Teachers question, advocate, build support and organizational capacity.

In Sphere F of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory, Teacher Leaders interrogate current existing practices in the school, openly campaign and advocate for change, and build support

for change, unite for school-wide change, thus building a system and principle - foundation for distributed leadership capacity. My research looked at the broader policy, the institutional culture, the socio political climate in the Department of education and in the wider education system in place to primarily to understand if the teacher leaders would receive support for advocating for distributed leadership as is suggested by the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory. Teacher leaders work with and through several teacher learner and parent groups and relationships in the school to bring about a change in norms, educational beliefs, and practices. My research explored the importance of group work within the available structures of department teams, subject clusters and with the general school body to understand the benefit or effect of group interaction and maintaining good socio –professional relationships as supports to being a teacher leader.

Yusof et al., (2016) also reports that where there is a strong institutional culture present, there is also evidence of strong organisation development present. It shows that teachers are participating directly and indirectly Teacher in the organisatio nal development through school’s administration and management processes. Through the curriculum committee, the students’ affairs and co-curricular that participated by teachers in the school, range of activities and meetings are conducted such as Staffs’ Meetings, Academic Meetings, Financial Meetings, Co-curricular Meetings and other activities which become a platform for the teachers to voice out their views and determining the results. This happens in a school where the leadership style of traditional leadership values the voice of the teachers and can practice a system of distributed or shared leadership against the grain of hierarchical traditional school leadership. This area of influence, described as sphere F of the also allows the school management to be more effective and able to advance the school to achieve the education goals. This means that as an organisation, it is important to know how you are performing, the perceptions you have about your image as a school against the reality of your organisation.

I have chosen to focus primarily on teacher leadership within schools as my main focal point and to this end, I have omitted Sphere H and I which expand to teacher leaders working outside of schools. Sphere G has been omitted and the reason for this omission being that the focus and title of the research is: Narratives of being a Teacher Leader, what can we learn from their journeys? with a focal point on the journey of the individual teacher leader as opposed to the collective journeys of a group of teacher leaders, as discussed in Sphere G, Sphere G describes How teacher leaders collectively distribute leadership.

### **2.5.8 Closing Comments:**

The theoretical framing used for this research study was the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory. The Fairman and McKenzie theory and the literature review looked at the influences that play on the development of a teacher leader. The influences discussed in this literature review were as well as theoretical framework were the teacher's knowledge of practice, the challenges faced by teacher leaders, and the processes that counteracts on these challenges such as professional development, reflection and development in the five personal domains. The notion of the teacher leaders' changes of practice through the ongoing process of experimentation and reflection, the impact of institutional culture was discussed from literature. The literature gaps found were as follows: it is important to encourage certain actions and discourage others having initially gained an understanding of the school's values and norms as reported by Goddard et al., (2004) cited in Derrington and Angelle (2013). To increase collective efficacy. therefore, teacher leaders will influence their peers to change and adopt the right actions and abandon those actions not in line with the school's pursuit of a culture of excellence, this means that teacher leaders are able to change the institutional culture of a school positively, however, literature is silent on how teachers can influence leadership in authority at the higher end of the educational system.

For a teacher to be a leader, they must be accepted as capable of leading. There is a grey area of the factors that have the most significance in the acceptability of a teacher as a leader from the teachers and leadership structures in schools, this can be an area of further research in the future.

Literature provides definitions of leadership values and dispositions that should be present in the teacher leader but it is not mentioned clearly, however, how a teacher leader develops or acquires these interpersonal skills, values and dispositions, but want to pursue teacher leadership. This research explores the experiences of teacher leaders to find insight as to the manner in which experiences shape the development of the teacher leaders they become.

## **2.6 CONCLUDING COMMENTS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMING FOR THE STUDY**

The theoretical framing for the study is useful in that it brings to focus knowledge on the process and how to develop teacher leadership. It discusses the how they lead and how their leadership begins in the personal domain and expands into the teachers' practice and has influence in various aspects of school life as the teachers develop from teachers to teacher leaders.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I discussed the literature that I had reviewed on teacher leadership commencing with an explanation of what teacher leadership is and the various ways and forms it can be found in a profession is and how professional development is related to being a professional. In this engagement, I interrogated conceptions of teacher leadership values. This literature review provided the basis for exploring teachers' experiences of school-based professional development activities that were the focus of this study. The chapter concluded with the presentation of the spheres of teacher leaders' influence within the classroom and school community, with a view of understanding the teachers' reflection on their experiences from novice teachers to teacher leaders. The next chapter presents the research design through which the data for the study was produced.

The next chapter will discuss the research design or methodology utilised for the data generation process.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 2, I presented a literature review on teacher leadership. In this chapter I present the research design for the study. The study intends to explore the different trajectories of teachers into being teacher leaders. As such, the participants of the study included school teacher leaders, the details of which are presented in the various sections of the research design.

The following critical research questions guided the methodological decisions taken in the study:

The critical research questions that structured my research were as follows:

What are the characteristics of a teacher -leader?

What personal and professional challenges and opportunities do teacher leaders experience as teacher leaders in a school?

What professional developmental activities do teachers engage in to become teacher leaders?

What lessons and insights can teacher-leaders pass to novice teachers?

### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Cohen et al., (2017) reports that research design is a blueprint for the generation of data for the study. This chapter presents the various elements of the research design and a rationale for the methodological decision taken for each element of the research design. The research design includes the epistemological stance taken in the study, the research approach, research methodology and process followed in generating the data. The chapter concludes with an engagement of issues of credibility and trustworthiness, issues of researcher bias, research ethics and methodological limitations.

### **3.3 INTERPRETIVIST METHODOLOGY WITHIN MY STUDY**

Kamal (2019) and Thanh and Thanh (2015), report that qualitative naturalistic research can be interpreted, hence the term ‘interpretivist’ approach, as a method for exploring and having empathy, understanding the meaning individuals or groups assigned to a social or human problem. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2015) concur with the claim that interpretivist researchers discover reality through the participant’s views, their background and experiences. Since my research focuses on interpreting the past experiences and reflections of teacher leaders’ development from novices to teacher- leaders, I have found the interpretivist approach appropriate for this study.

Babones (2016); Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, (2015) concur with Thanh and Thahn (2015) and Kamal (2019) with the notion that an attempt to understand the world from the perspective of its participants is not effective without the interpretative effort of the researcher. In agreement, Willis et al., (2007) as cited in Thanh and Thahn (2015), interpretivism usually seeks to understand a particular context, and the core belief of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. To meet the interpretivist criteria of undertaking research interpretation, I conducted interviews to hear the teacher leaders’ experiences and probe for their reflections of the professional and personal experiences of teacher leaders’ developmental journeys in order to interpret their views. The data required that I formed themes that shaped meaning for new knowledge from the participants’ reflections and responses.

Thanh and Thanh (2015) also assert that we do not live in a singular social reality but rather in multiple socially constructed views of social reality. So it was therefore important to understand the unique and multiple realities of the journeys of teacher leaders through an interpretivist inquiry approach. The research approach chosen should also be in line with the interpretivist approach. This study is qualitative research using an interpretivist inquiry because the nature of the data creation requires interpretation of multiple realities of qualitative data generated with my five (5) research participants. Thanh and Thanh (2015) suggest that the interpretivist stance is aimed at understanding occurrences from an individual's viewpoint or perspective, inquiring on connections among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts in which people live. To this end, my study focuses on the teacher-leader individuals' views and reflections on their unique journeys which began when they were novices to teacher-leaders to make connections of their experiences to create an interpreted understanding of the multiple realities about the phenomenon of teacher leadership development. I, therefore, chose the interpretivist epistemology within my study as it allowed me to interpret the unique experiences of the selected teacher leaders to form connections for new knowledge.

### **3.5. RESEARCH APPROACH**

#### **3.5.1 Qualitative research**

Krogh, Bearman and Nestel (2016) hold the view that in qualitative studies, researchers seek to understand the human experience. They report that people's perspectives and experiences inform how we conceptualise learning, teaching and other educationally related social phenomena. The aim of qualitative research is to seek deeper understandings of the human experience.

Babones (2016); Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, (2015) and Heale and Twycross (2020) posited that a qualitative study is a study of reality and perception of the world to construct knowledge composed of multiple realities. Krogh et al., (2016) explains that qualitative research is when social phenomena is expressed systematically as an object of the study. This includes experiences, understanding, interpretations of individuals.

Therefore, in line with these features of a qualitative case study described by scholars (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2015; Babones, 2016; Heale and Twycross, (2020)), my research study interpreted multiple realities of five (5) teacher-leaders to understand the multiple experiences of their journeys from novice to being teacher-leaders. This interpretation was done to seek deeper understanding of the human experience of these

teacher-leaders as suggested by Krogh et al., (2016), to construct new knowledge on the phenomenon of teacher leadership. Therefore, a qualitative research design was the most appropriate research design for my study as it allowed me to understand the multiple experiences of leadership journeys of the 5 research-participants. The qualitative research design enabled me to make meaningful interpretations of their diverse and multiple leadership experiences to construct new knowledge consistent with the notion proposed by Babones (2016) that a case study interprets multiple experiences to construct knowledge as described

### **3.6 CASE STUDY METHOD FOR RESEARCHING TEACHER LEADERS.**

Lincoln and Guba (2013) posits that the fundamental question related to methodology is that of how one goes about acquiring knowledge. They explain methodology as the method used in conducting the investigation.

Tuli (2010) is also in agreement with Lincoln and Guba (2013) by suggesting that the selection of the research methodology depends on the paradigm that guides the research activity, the ontology, the theory of knowledge that informs the research epistemology, and how that knowledge may be gained is methodology. Nayak and Singh (2015,p.2) report that methodology is the primary theory and analysis of how research should be done.

Heale and Twycross (2020) report that a case study is a research method, typically seen in social and life sciences. In line with Heale and Twycross (2020) my research looked into the topic of teacher leadership in the social science area. My study focus was the transitional experience from novice teachers to teacher leaders. The study took place at the school, namely, Hlanganani High School(pseudonym), situated in Umbumbulu, KwaZulu- Natal. Units of analysis in case studies as reported by Çakar and Aykol, (2020) can be composed of a diverse range of elements. Flick (2009) and Yin (2003) report that persons, social communities, organizations, and institutions could become the subject of a case analysis The unit of analysis in this case study was teacher- leaders. The school context forms part of the subject of analysis for this case study.

Since my research aimed to capture the phenomenon of multiple realities of the reflections of the teacher leaders' journeys and the insights drawn from their leadership development journeys, it fulfilled the description of a case study. Cohen et al., (2017) report that a case study must describe the actual experiences and what it is like to be in a situation and also that the researcher aims to capture the reality of the participants' actual experiences and thoughts

about a particular situation. In a case study, the researcher must capture the multiple realities of the participants' lived experiences and thoughts about a particular situation. To this end, the case study methodology seemed to be most appropriate for this of teacher leader experiences.

### **3.7. SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS**

#### **3.7.1 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING**

Rule and John (2011) state that a purposive sampling strategy is when the people selected as research participants are chosen deliberately for their suitability in advancing the purpose of the study. Etikan and Bala (2017) also agree with Rule and John (2011) on the point that the purposive sampling design is formed on the judgement of the researcher as to who will provide the best information for the objectives of the study to be achieved. To this end, the person conducting the research needs to focus on people that have the required information and be willing to share it. I made use of purposeful sampling by choosing participants who were deemed to be very knowledgeable teacher-leaders, have experienced the journey from novices to teacher-leaders.

Cohen et al., (2002) explained that since researchers cherry-pick the cases to comprise the sample based of their judgement of their possession of particular characteristics being required purposely for the study. In this way, they compile a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. To this end, the research participants were hand-picked in the recruiting process as described in paragraph 3.7.2.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) report that purposeful sampling increases the benefit and usefulness that the researcher can receive from the data collected. To this end, the purposeful sampling technique thus seemed to be the most appropriate choice for collecting data for my research. The study focus was on teacher leaders' journeys into leadership, therefore, only teacher-leaders were purposefully invited to be part of the research participants sample that would participate in the study.

#### **3.7.2 RECRUITING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Recruiting teacher leaders began by seeking out the individual teachers who fulfilled the purposive selection criterion of being in leadership positions at Hlanganani High School. The I encouraged the 5 hand-picked teacher-leaders to participate in the study and informed them of the nature, purpose, and intention of the research. I also explained the nature and extent of

their participation, and their rights during participation in the research process. All of the five (5) research participants were agreeable and available to participate in my research study in line with the notion suggested by Creswell (1999, p.11) when he stated that one should find participants “who are accessible and willing to provide information as well as those who can shed light on issues being explored”

All due ethical processes were followed in selecting the participants to participate in the research process.

Below is a table indicating the leadership positions of the selected teacher-leader participants.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Leadership Position</b>
Thulisiwe	33	Female	10	District Subject Co ordinator
Nosisa	59	Female	33	Deputy Principal
Simphiwe	30	Male	8	Department Head
Mphathiswa	32	Male	8	Subject Specialist
Malibongwe	55	Male	31	Department Head

### **3.7.3 A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHER LEADER RESEARCH - PARTICIPANTS’ RECRUITED.**

It was important for me to know the teacher leader research participants would because this would assist to understand how they teach, what their challenges are and what professional support they would need to teach effectively. Profiles of the teacher-leader participants were requested at the first interview with each of the participants.

#### **3.7.3.1 Profile 1-Simphiwe**

Simphiwe studied for his B.Ed degree at UKZN Edgewood Campus after completing his matric at Mehlomlungu High School. He was born in a rural area at Kranskop, matriculated in 2009.

Simphiwe is an is Zulu educator at Hlanganani High School. He has eight years of teaching experience.

He completed his Bachelor of Education Degree in 2012, after which he commenced with his teaching career in a suburban secondary school where he was positioned by the department.

He is a Fundza Lushaka bursary recipient and this bursary compels the Department of Basic Education to employ him as a qualified teacher. After a year, he transferred to Hlanganani High school, where he continues to teach. In 2020, he received a promotion for the position of a Department Head for the Languages department.

#### **3.7.3.2 Profile 2-Thulisiwe**

She is a 33-year-old female teacher, serving as a Cluster Co-ordinator for English First Additional Language for the Umbumbulu central district. She is also a Site steward for SADTU and has been teaching since 2005 at Hlanganani Secondary. She is the middle child in a family of 5 children and is unmarried. She has 10 years teaching experience.

### **3.7.3.3 Profile 3-Nosisa**

She is a Deputy Principal at Hlanganani High school. She is 59 years old and has been teaching since 1988, holds a teaching diploma from the University of Zululand from 1987. She read for a Certificate in Management course through Mancosa in 2000. She is married to a Principal placed at another school. Together they have 6 children. Her teaching specialisation is English First Additional Language. She has also undergone the Columba Leadership program and serves as a Values Champion to the school learners under the Columba Leadership program. She has 33 years of teaching experience.

### **3.7.3.4. Profile 4 -Malibongwe**

He is a 55 year- old male, appointed as a Head of Department for Social Sciences since 2004. He was born in Umbumbulu and started teaching in 1990. He has headed the Discipline Committee and has driven the school's food and nutrition program since 2019. He is reading for a Master's degree in Theology. He is the Pastor of UCC (SA), Umbumbulu branch. He holds an Honours degree from UKZN. He is married to a teacher from another school and has two boys. He has 31 years of teaching experience

### **3.7.3.5 Profile 5-Mpathiswa**

He is currently undertaking his B. Ed (Honours) studies at UKZN (Edgewood) college. He was awarded the "Teacher of the Year" award from SADTU in 2019. He is also part of the Yale Program for graduates. He was born at Ulundi where he completed his matric and moved to UKZN to complete his first degree in Geology. Mphathiswa completed his degree in 2014 and was employed as a teacher in the same year at a primary school in Ulundi. He then moved to Umbumbulu in 2015 when he found a post to teach Geography. He is the youngest entrepreneur, single male, currently doing a B. Ed (Honours) degree at UKZN, born at Ulundi, the youngest son of a family of 5 children. He has received many awards for matric results since 2015. He also crowned as the SADTU model of the year 2020. He has 8 years of teaching experience.

### **3.8 GETTING TO KNOW THE SCHOOL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH**

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

This section contains a detailed analysis of the researched school site, the participants, the professional development activity that the participants engaged within and outside of the school, their experiences through their transition from teachers to teacher leaders, their limitations, strengths, facilitators, opportunities and how all of these impacted or enriched their teacher leadership journey.

##### **3.8.1. Information source**

The school Facebook page contained all the information relating to the location, teacher and learner dynamics, the description of the school and past school events. The school organogram, which is placed at the school reception area, was useful in assisting me with information on leadership numbers and the gender analysis of these teacher leaders. The more personal details around professional development, years of experience and responses on their teacher leadership transition were sourced from the interview participants to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the data. The learner profile was ascertained from the administrator from the 'lurits' document available on the South African School Management system database (SASAMS),

##### **3.8.2 School location and information**

###### **Hlanganani High School**

Hlanganani High School (pseudonym) is a High school in the heart a rural area of Umbumbulu in KwaZulu-Natal. It is a fee- paying school. Currently, the school has a large enrolment of 1783 learners (2020 statistics). This comprises 1070 girls and 713 boys. The staff comprises of 59 members. The SMT comprises of one principal, one deputy principal, one acting deputy principal, and five heads of department as follows: commerce, languages, technology, humanities and the sciences subjects. There are fifty-eight permanently employed teachers, one is paid by the SGB. There are also non-teaching staff, four clerks, six school cleaners (two to clean the classrooms indoors and two to do all the work outdoors and two clean the staffrooms and SMT offices), and three security guards (one at the gate during the day, two who works only at night). The school has learners from grade 8 till grade 12. At the time of the study, each classroom had an average of 60 learners which was divided into half due to Covid-19 social distance regulations. The learners in these classes were from varying

backgrounds and mainly Christian religious groups. About 60 percent of learners came from very low or no-income households.

Many parents, caregivers or guardians are not working and rely on the grant that the government offers them. Only around 40 percent of the caregivers, parents or guardians were in professional occupations.

The school was built in 1844, by Lucille Hall, who was a missionary. She had realised a need for a school in the area and had built it after receiving permission from the Queen of Umbumbulu, Sibusisiwe Makhanya. Dr. O.T Dlomo also contributed towards the school's expansion from a block of 4 classes to a school of 10 blocks and 30 classrooms.

The school was recently painted on the celebration of Mandela day; educators and some local businesses got together and painted the school. The school has a concrete fence around it. It has two gates but only one is operational as there is a guard who controls the gate throughout the day to ensure the safety of the school body. The educators enter through this gate to park their cars in the parking lot. The parking lot then leads to the administration block. The administration block has an entry door which then leads to a reception area and a waiting area. The waiting area is decorated with trophies, old school photographs of past award ceremonies that took place at the school. There are also pictures of esteemed leaders of our country and dignitaries on their visit at our school.

Behind the waiting room is a small passage led to the office of the secretary. The secretary's space had three chairs and three small tables, three laptop computers, a telephone, a printer and shelves with documents. On the right-hand side of the secretary's office was a larger office for the principal. This office had a laptop and a telephone.

Further down the passage were two other offices that belonged to the two deputy principals. Each of these offices had a laptop and a printer. Across the deputy principal's office was a kitchenette with a bar fridge.

Hlanganani High School is situated in a poverty-stricken rural social context. Most learners who attend the school are raised by their grandparents and older-siblings who often do not speak English well. Hence their opportunity to communicate in English at home is minimal. The medium of instruction at school is English.

### **3.8.3 Learner academic performance**

Below is a Table of the matric results for grade 12 learners of Hlanganani High School from 2011 to 2015. This matric results' table Indicates that despite the social poverty of a semi-

rural, low- income school, there is concrete learning as a result of effective teacher leadership.

97.3% (2015)

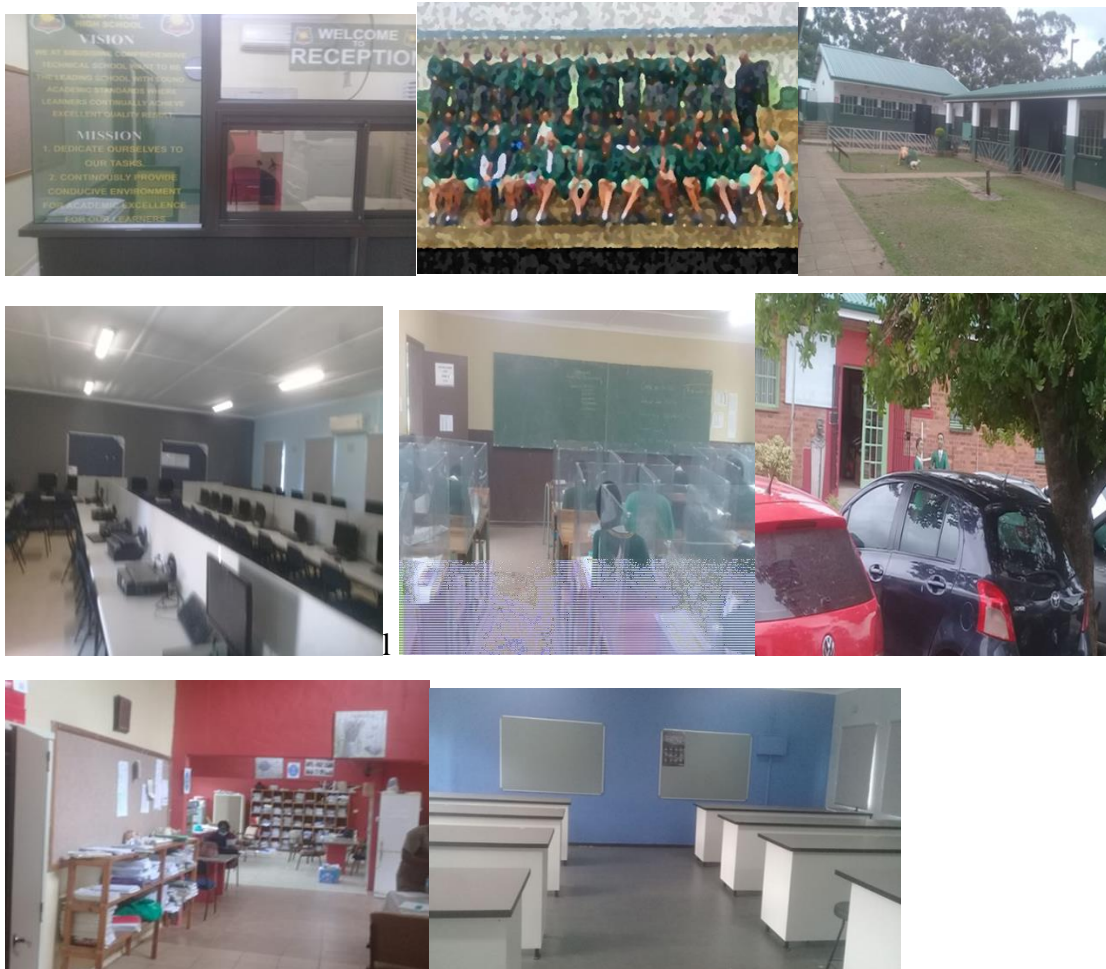
98% (2016)

91.8% (2017)

98.3% (2018)

Source: [the data was retrieved from google](#)

The following pictures of the classroom and school premises are presented to illustrate the teaching and learning context of Hlanganani High School.



### 3.9 DATA GENERATION PROCESS

After selecting suitable participants as discussed in the recruitment process, I needed to follow a data generation plan discussed in 3.9.2 to produce research data. A suitable data

collection method was sought. Krogh et al., (2016) report that interviews offer a relatively easy way to collect data.

### 3.9.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Kale (2017) who was cited in Krogh et al., (2016) points out, an interview is an exchange of views, hence the name inter-view. Research -participants may have multiple views and diverse ideas about what is meaningful or important besides that which is on the interview schedule. For this reason, it is important to understand that conducting a semi-structured interview is frequently a matter of improvisation. A semi-structured interview is full of moments where the interviewer needs decide what point is significant and should be lengthened and what particular thread to follow. Therefore, good questions are which that allow the interviewer to adjust the questions and make these impromptu decisions, rather than the rigid interview schedule. To this end, I opted to use the semi-structured interviews questions to allow for some flexibility in the questions to accommodate the multiple research participants' views.

### 3.9.2 Data Generation plan

Research question	Data generation method/ instrument	Participants and how selected	Data source	Timeline
1) What are the characteristics of a teacher -leader?	Semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher.	5xTeacher Leaders Purposive sampling.	Teacher leaders	1x semi-structured interview on three different days per participant.
2)What personal and professional challenges and opportunities do teacher leaders	Semi-structured interviews conducted	5xTeacher Leaders Purposive sampling	Teacher leaders	1xsemi-structured interview on three different

Research question	Data generation method/ instrument	Participants and how selected	Data source	Timeline
experience as teacher leaders in a school?	by the researcher.			days per participant.
4)What professional developmental activities do teachers engage in to become teacher leaders?	Semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher.	5xTeacher Leaders Purposive sampling	Teacher leaders.	1xsemi-structured interview on three different days per participant
5) What lessons and insights would you like to impart to novice teachers?	Semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher.	5x Teacher Leaders Purposive sampling	Teacher leader	1xsemi-structured interview on three different days per participant

I interviewed the 5 research participants between the months of August 2020 and December 2020. The interviewees were the teacher leaders as profiled on Table 1.2. All interviews were given pseudonyms. The interviews lasted for a duration of between 21 and 35 minutes.

I used electronic mediums such as WhatsApp to conduct the semi-structured interviews. In line with the findings of Jentoft and Olsen (2019), the WhatsApp interviews were appropriate as they also facilitated frequent eye contact throughout the interview, along with the active use of body language like nodding, smiling and facial expressions. Both through active listening and relevant follow-up questions, contact with the interviewee is maintained. I used follow-on questions to probe participants for further details on their experiences. I used an audio-recorder on my cell phone function to record our cell phone discussions with the participants. I took notes of the responses and transcribed these notes onto my laptop, where they are saved as a word document. I gave the participants written interview questions prior to the interviews. This enabled them to prepare ahead and recall more details of their leadership experiences rather than merely responding to the main questions prior to the interview. Prior to recording the interviews with the participants, I informed them of their right to withdraw from the interview if they needed to.

### **3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THIS STUDY.**

According to Ingham-Broomfield (2017), Research Ethics refers to the moral principles that guide our decision-making and behaviour when undertaking a study and the processes followed throughout the study. Fiesler and Proferes (2018) further assert that the Research Ethics report laid out the following three guiding principles: (1) respect for persons; (2) beneficence (minimizing harm); and (3) justice.

I personally conducted all the interviews to ensure that the data was carefully and correctly recorded and that the probing questions had been answered. Prior to recording the interviews with the participants, I informed them of their right to withdraw from the interview if they needed to and ensured that their signed consent forms were in hand.

#### **3.10.1 Obtaining the Principal's permission**

I visited the principal's office on the 11th of January 2020 and approached him to request a short meeting with him. I informed him of my research project and requested his permission to conduct the research using a selection of his teacher-leaders. After his verbal consent, I asked him to read and sign the gatekeeper letter that I had issued to him. I have attached this gatekeeper letter to my report. (see Appendix C- in-hand).

#### **3.10.2 Applying to UKZN for Ethical Clearance**

I applied for ethical clearance and this was subsequently granted by University of KwaZulu-Natal's Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. (see Appendix A- in-hand).

### **3.10.3 Inviting Participants**

I requested to briefly meet with my selected participants during break. I explained the nature of the research, its intent and purpose and informed all the participants that they would remain anonymous in all reports and publications that result from my study

I issued an information sheet and consent form to each participant. I asked each research participants to sign the informed consent form to participate in the research project and to allow the use of their interview responses for my study (see Appendix D – in hand).

Alshenqeti (2014) stated that research participants have freedom to choose to withdraw at any time. to this end, I informed my research participants that they were free to withdraw their consent and stop participating in the research process at any point during the research without any consequences to them.

### **3.10.4 Use of Pseudonyms to protect the school and teachers.**

I used pseudonyms for the school and the research participants as a procedure to observe and protect the rights of my research participants to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Lunenberg and Samaras (2011) suggested that ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of information sources is the ethical responsibility of the researcher

## **3.11 Data Analysis**

Çakar and Aykol (2020) report that a number of more recent qualitative studies used photographs and movies as visual sources of data. To this end, I also utilized photographs of the school site as a data source.

*Lester, Cho and Lochmiller (2020) report that broadly conceived, qualitative data analyses bring meaning to a data set with qualitative data including a wide range of materials.* In line with this idea, I have also included photographs and transcripts from audio recordings of interviews as data sources in my research report.

Çakar and Aykol (2020) also state that Case study research emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events, conditions, and their relationships, and it has been used as a method for many years in a diverse range of disciplines (Dooley, 2002).

I analysed my data in phases. I recorded the audio from the cell-phone and WhatsApp conversations and saved this audio onto a memory stick and on my laptop as a way to prepare to transcribe the data.

The process of listening to the information from the audio interviews was lengthy. I then transcribed these audios into written notes. I had to listen to information several times to ensure clarity and correctness. I was able to make relevant arguments and descriptions which originated from the data retrieved from the interviews

The next phase I followed was transcribing the data from the audio recordings.

I identified categories that emerged from listening to the ideas that were discussed with the participants. Themes emerged from these common ideas.

### **3.12 Ensuring trustworthiness, validity, credibility, confirmability and reliability**

Rose and Johnson (2020) suggested that trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the systematic rigor of the research design, the credibility of the researcher, the credibility of the findings, and the applicability of the research methods. It is the overall impression of quality associated with a research endeavour. Trustworthiness of research has been achieved by following the four principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Member checking is a process to ensuring trustworthiness.

Member checking as reported by Dwyer (2017) is an ethical practice and process that ensures quality as it underlies the commitments to the story, ensuring integrity to the phenomenon, however, Dywer and Emerald (2017) states that the vulnerability of the participants must be considered. To this end, I asked my participants to review the transcribed interview data as a means to ensure integrity of my transcriptions of the recordings of the interviews.

The above-mentioned four principles of trustworthiness, validity, dependability and conformability were observed to maintain trustworthiness of my research

### **3.13 Dependability**

According to Bitsch (2005), (as cited in Anney ,2014), notes that dependability refers to the immovability of findings over time. Begley (2004) reports that dependability involves the participants' evaluating the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study to ensure that findings are all supported by the data received from the informants of the study. (Cohen et al., 2002; Tobin and Begley (2004) agree that dependability is established using an audit trail, a code-recode strategy, and stepwise replication. Voice recorded interviews do encompass dependability as the data can be stored and confirmed. I have built in

dependability by selected semi-structured interview questions using a criterion- based purposive sampling of teacher-leader participants, have recorded the interview data and have transcribed these and have kept the electronic transcripts to create dependability. I had shown the transcripts to the participants to ensure that the records are correct to ensure that the findings, interpretations and recommendations are supported by data from the research participants. Finally, the analysis and findings can be traced back to the recorded data either in its audio recorded state or in the transcriptions of the recorded interviews. Hence an audit trail of the data is available as the basis to establish the dependability of the study.

### **3.14 Confirmability**

(Anney ,2014) notes that confirmability is the degree to which the outcomes of the research or an inquiry could be confirmed or verified by other researchers. To this end, I have shown the research outcomes to the 5 research participants to indorse that the data interpretation is accurate. Guba (1981) describes confirmability as a way to address concerns about the researcher’s influences and biases on the study. I have not been biased as I transcribed from the recorded interviews. I went to my interviewees to verify and confirm if what I have transcribed is what they said in the interview within a week of the transcription via emails of the transcripts. Anney (2014) cited Tobin and Begley (2004) described confirmability as a notion concerned with verifying that data and interpretations of the findings are not fabrications of the inquirer’s imagination, but are clearly originated from the data. Literature by Bowen (2009) Koch (2006); Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggests that confirmability of qualitative inquiry is attained through an audit trial, reflexive journal and triangulation. According to Golafshani (2003) an audit trail offers and shows evidence—from process to product—that the researcher did not simply discover what he or she set out to find. The audit trail in my research is the voice recordings, WhatsApp’s voice notes, emails and messages.

### **3.15 Limitations of this inquiry**

Haele and Twycross (2017) describes the limitations of case studies as: sheer volume of data, the difficulty to organise and conduct data analysis. They propose that integration strategies need to be considered carefully. They also report that there is also sometimes a temptation to veer away from the research focus. While the case study comprised of a small sample size, there was a lot of transcribing to be done from the interviews responses. To counteract the challenge of the data volume, I resolved to transcribe the data as soon as each interview was completed. I made all endeavours to stay on point concerning the focused research questions.

Covid 19 regulations affected the study in three ways: the first way was that the lockdown period prohibited movement and schools were closed for a period of two months, meaning that the scheduled interviews were impossible to conduct physically and had to be re-scheduled for later time delaying the data generation process by 3 months.

The second way in which Covid -19 affected my research was in the restriction of social distancing, meaning that research interviews could not be physically conducted and had to be done using electronic mediums such as video calls, voice notes on WhatsApp. Using the digital platforms for data generation also posed challenges of network connectivity due to on the part of the participants as well as myself as the researcher. The participants would send me voice notes of responses to questions in the instances when connection dropped.

The third way in which the Covid 19 pandemic served as an impediment was that I contracted Covid 19 and had to be quarantined. This also delayed the research process further, one of my research participants was hospitalised in intensive care for two weeks and had lost an elder son who succumbed to Covid 19. All my participants faced anxiety and stress due to the circumstances they faced at work due to the pandemic. Therefore, participation in the research study was constantly being re-scheduled and fell on the back burner.

Personal Bias - In agreement with Riyami (2015) interpretivism is an ontological view that tends to be subjective rather than objective, my research was affected by my interpretation influenced by my belief system, ways of thinking or cultural preference which created biases in my study, however, I gave my research participants an opportunity to proofread my transcripts to ensure the validity of my transcript interpretation finalising the research report.

### **3.16. CONCLUSION**

The paragraphs in this chapter provided a justification of the interpretivist epistemology, the qualitative methodology selected and the research design using semi-structured interviews, as techniques that were used to produce data of this research study.

I then gave a detailed description of why the purposive sampling procedure had been selected and discussed the reasons for the validity of the instruments used to collect data. I also explained that the ethical considerations and procedures that were followed for the study were deemed ethical and valid. Finally, the several limitations and challenges that influenced the research study were explained.

In the next chapter, I will go into depth of how I undertook to analyse the data that was produced in this study.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 defined the research methodology applied in the study and the data collection methods for this research study. The interpretivist epistemology was used effectively to allow me to comprehend the participants' experiences. There was a focus on the research design chosen, the research participants and the instruments utilised to enable effective data collection.

The current chapter presents the first hand data that was produced through the research design. The data presentation is focused on analysing the data findings to the main research questions. The data was analysed into themes as follows:

The themes in the personal domain of the teacher leader as discussed from the data were: namely Theme 1: The teacher leader's distinguishing characteristics, Theme 2: Professional endeavours of teacher leaders, Theme 3: The Challenges and Opportunities to learn and lead, how Teacher leaders overcome personal challenges and seek opportunities for personal development, and finally Theme 4 :The lessons and insights of teacher leaders and finally how Teacher leaders' lessons and insights can be useful for novice teachers.

### 4.2 Interesting events for the learners.

The school strives to keep a strong culture of learning and discipline among its learners. It maintains learner morale through motivational morning assemblies and interesting functions such as annual prize giving days, matric farewell and inviting motivational guest speakers for Book reviews and Celebrations on Cultural day. Below are a few pictures of such events.



Motivational Morning assemblies (prior to Covid 19 restrictions)



The unveiling of the school lab cultural competition



A visit from the MEC on the first day of schools' re-opening after the Covid 19 lockdown in 2020.

#### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

Thematic data analysis was conducted according to key themes, key words or key ideas that emerged from the responses to the interview questions. Inductive content analysis was utilised to bring about findings founded on the links and key themes discovered. Cohen et al., (2002, p.22) states that an Interpretivist paradigm is all about understanding how “people interpret events, context and situations and act on the basis of those events”. I interpreted the perception of the interview participants in reference to how a teacher evolves from a novice teacher to a teacher leader.

I listened to the interviews and made transcripts of the responses. I then grouped the responses according to common themes. I analysed these themes in reference to research literature readings to understand the responses meaningfully.

A thematic approach was used to present and analyse the data collected. The transcribed data produced from the interviews were collated together and read several times to ensure that I became fully engaged with the data. One of the research participants also spoke about some

of his online teaching projects on YouTube video lessons that were recorded during the covid-19 pandemic. This allowed me to gain insight into their creativity and unwavering work ethic. Themes emerged from the data groupings. The themes were categorised and named.

Each of the theme topics will begin with an analytical statement based on the data findings, followed by a presentation of the data. There will be then a discussion of the analytical statement in terms of literature support, explaining the relevance of each theme to teacher leadership. To conclude each theme topic will be an assessment based on data findings in comparison to literature findings.

These themes were related to each other and this formed the analytical framework which enabled me to analyse the data that was produced.

#### **4.4 DISCUSSION OF DATA AND FINDINGS**

This section will use the data findings from the above themes to create a discussion around the data for new knowledge from the answers to the 4 research questions centred around the understanding the concept of teacher leaders, with regards to their values, the obstacles and challenges they had overcome. These findings would form the basis of the journey of teacher leadership.

The Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory model provided the theoretical framing that supported the discussion of data found on the various paths of leadership influence found and utilised by teacher leaders as they lead in their schools, the Spheres of Teacher Leadership Action for Learning model guided the ways in which teacher leaders lead were found to be both in the personal and professional domains and were categorised as themes. The Spheres of Influences from the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory in line with the paths of Teacher leader development were: Sphere A (The Teacher leader learns about his practise), Sphere B (The Teacher leader experiments and reflect) and Sphere C (The Teacher leader shares ideas). Therefore, Theme 1, wherein I discussed how the teacher leader learns about his practise was framed by Sphere A and C of the F and M theory. Sphere A discussed the distinguishing characteristics of Teacher leader, one of which linked strongly with Theme 1 was that the teacher leader must have a clear concept of himself and his task. Sphere C also linked to theme 1 as it explains how teacher leaders learn and experiments as he learns about his practise.

Sub theme 3 which discussed how teacher leaders seek opportunities to learn to lead was guided by Sphere B of the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory (herein after referred to as the F&M theory) , which explains how the teacher leader learns and experiments.

Lastly, theme 4 which discussed the lessons and insights from teacher leaders was framed by Sphere C of the F and M (2012) theory explaining how teacher leaders share ideas for learning. This theme also consolidated other spheres of sub themes and spheres of influence as the insights of teacher leaders overlapped into different areas of the F and M (2012) theory.

#### **4.5. Theme 1 -Teacher-leader distinguishing characteristics**

Collinson (2012) describes teacher leaders as teachers who walk ahead of ordinary teachers. More specifically, Ozsezer and Saban (2016) clearly suggests that there are distinguishing characteristics in teacher leaders. These include characteristics elements within a personal domain and characteristic elements within the knowledge domain (Yiildibaz, 2017) and characteristic elements that emerge from the context as reported by Yusof et al,( 2016). Each of these characteristics are explored amongst the participants in the sub-themes that follow.

##### **4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: The characteristics of a teacher-leader within the personal domain.**

Struyve, et. al., (2014) reports that it is important that the teacher is fully developed in the personal domain that includes self -image, self - esteem, job motivation and task perception.

**Sphere A of the Fairman and Mckenzie theory also supports the notion that a teacher leader must have a fully developed perception and understanding of his or her task of practise**

Drawing from the data generated through the interviews, it is clear that personal attributes that teacher leaders have do include how the teacher views himself/herself, their drive to excel and the opportunities that they seek and take to lead.

*A teacher leader must know their personal strengths and weaknesses and be willing to work in collaboration with his/her peers to counter his/ her weaknesses. (Thulisiwe)*

*I have always tried to teach effectively, I. Having been a teacher for many years but, I still believe that I can learn by working in a team of dedicated teachers so I think showing respect is important. To be a leader, you must first manage yourself well, manage your time, your attitude, your deadlines It's important that people must respect and trust you as their leader. (Malibongwe).*

*A key aspect of being a teacher leader is gaining the confidence of those you work with.*

*When a learner/ fellow educator shares something with you, maintain confidentiality. Have*

*good work ethics. Being passionate about the work you do, whether there are incentives or not. (Mphathiswa).*

Thulisiwe states that her set of values that are embedded in teacher leaders includes awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, ability to work with others, while Malibongwe brings into discussion the ability to manage oneself well, to have good attitude and good work ethics so as to meet your deadlines. These personal characteristics mentioned by the participants are consistent

with the literature (Struyve, et. al., 2014; Yildizbas, 2017.p.216) on the personal attributes of teacher leaders. More specifically, this finding is in line with Latimer and Villate (2020) who report that Internal and external obstructions to teachers being leaders make the transitions from “just a teacher” to “teacher leader” difficult, but that if teachers do not have the personal characteristics of overcoming these obstructions, they may not become teacher leaders.

The view that passion for teaching must be inherent to a teacher leader is in line with current literature by and Yildizbas (2017.p.216) whose view is that there are certain dispositions that make the teacher leader and these dispositions include the following: work ethic, teamwork, leadership, openness, vision, positive affect, risk taking, and teaching related skills, These sets of listed dispositions are founded on foundation of being passionate about teaching as alluded in Mphathiswa’s response above, while In her response, Nosisa added the notion of having patience for learners and staff , a notion of emotional intelligence which is a factor that lies in the personal domain.

#### **4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: elements within the professional domain.**

*Sphere A frames this theme as it discusses how a teacher leader learns about his practise.*

The responses from the participants suggests that, as teacher leaders, they need to be well versed in the professional aspect of being a teacher and includes other knowledge that teachers require as professional, including emotional work.

*A teacher leader is a person who is dedicated to enlighten learners for deeper understanding of the subject and all aspects of life, she imparts knowledge on the known and the unknown so that that knowledge becomes beneficial in the future of the person being taught. In order for the teacher to teach for preparing the learner for life, they need to know who they are and real purpose as to why they became a teacher. It is also important to know your personality and that of your staff. Sometimes as a human being, you feel demotivated by the conditions you face at school and you need to have self- motivation to teach and feel passionate about your work. (Nosisa).*

*A teacher leader should have Integrity, authenticity, being true to the learners. I believe that every child is an asset, has the potential to become someone in society. Hard work pays off. Being organised and ensuring there is evidence for everything. As a teacher leader, you have to be approachable, be willing to sometimes go beyond the normal (going the extra mile e.g. when assisting learners to fill in an application form and even forwarding it on their behalf to a university. (Thulisiwe)*

*A key aspect of being a teacher leader is gaining the confidence of those you work with. When a learner/ fellow educator shares something with you, maintain confidentiality. Have good work ethics. Being passionate about the work you do, whether there are incentives or not. I must be honest that I am a very shy person and I don't always find it easy to collaborate as most of the teachers in my department tend to keep to themselves so I mainly work and push myself to find exciting ways to deliver content to my learners. I am also shy so I guess that makes it more difficult to approach people and other teachers. (Mphathiswa). It is very important to have a love and passion for teaching. A lead or teacher educator is an educator who has expert knowledge of their subject, someone who has a leading role in all academic matters. It is someone who is involved in professional development programmes and is involved in activities that benefit the learner both in and outside of the classroom. (Malibongwe)*

In Thulisiwe's response, I found the notion that a teacher leader should have integrity in their professional life and believe in the potential of your learners This response attests to literature by Kelchtermans (2009) who distinguished two interrelated domains by identifying professional self-understanding (conceptions held by a teacher of him or herself as a professional) and subjective educational theory. Thulisiwe agreed with the view that a teacher leader must have a conception of a professional self, in her case, her professional identity is a person who embodies integrity, has the ability to see potential in her learners and is willing to go the extra mile in an attempt to help her learners realise their potential.

This response from Nosisa is in agreement with Acar (2001) who emphasises the importance of the personality traits such as their sense of agency, including various elements such as the their emotional and cognitive intelligence, their kindness, respect, confidence and friendliness as having the impact of playing a great role in determining teacher strategies for dealing with problems they face. Nosisa's ability to demonstrate patience with both learners and staff is an indication of emotional intelligence on her behalf The notion of having good relations with

all staff is also underscored by Acar (2001) who proposed that teacher leaders must demonstrate kindness, respect and friendliness.

Malibongwe' response is in line with Brooke, Whitworth and Chiu (2014 p.3) and Diamond (2003), Brundett and Rhodes (2006) who created the notion that expertise content knowledge is a priority in the skills set of a teacher leader, Brooke, Whitworth and Chiu (2014 p.3) is in agreement with Spillane, Hallett and Diamond (2003) in that the content knowledge of teachers plays a critical role in both the quality of instruction and student performance. Professional development founded on a content focus not only leads to increased teacher knowledge but also can lead to changes in teacher practices.

Brooke, Whitworth and Chiu (2014.p.3) and Spillane et al., (2003) suggest that experimenting in the classroom can be an outcome of professional development founded on a content focus. The first element suggests that the individual teacher experiments in the classroom due to increased content knowledge gained as well as through professional development.

Hanuscin and Colleagues (2012) share a notion with Yildizbas (2017.p.216) that suggests that teacher leadership is demonstrated by the conduct and also by personal qualities of a teacher leader, these qualities are namely: being accountable, collaborative, trustworthy, and reflective, having good intentions, a clear vision, and a positive attitude; being intrinsically motivated, selfless, and sensitive to others' needs; and being a positive role model. This describes the multi-layered person of the teacher leader. With regards to the values of a teacher leader as described by Hanuscin and Colleagues (2012) and Yildizbas (2017), Sphere B of the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory emphasises the value of being reflective in a Teacher leader.

The data findings suggest that Teacher leaders themselves create trust and followership from their peers and learners and acceptance as leaders. Teacher leaders must show exceptional content knowledge by doing research and is always seeking self -development opportunities

It is a set of personal values of the Teacher leader that determines their actions, behaviours and inter- relations with their sub-ordinates and school community. A Teacher leader strives to always be exemplary in their conduct and actions and gains confidence from those around him or her.

The common view is that there are specific dispositions that are inherent or learnt by the teacher leader. These dispositions include a good work ethic, teamwork, leadership, openness, vision, positive-effect on others, risk- taking, and teaching related skills. Gabriel (2005) suggests that the most important of these values is that the teacher leader must be

dynamic in the learning process as a life- long learner and assume responsibility for student growth in various ways. There are many challenges that a Teacher leader needs to learn to navigate, therefore it is very important that they are dynamic and adaptive in nature.

#### **4.5.3 Sub theme 3: Ability to seek opportunities to learn and lead**

The extracts from the teacher leaders' data suggests that on-going learning, seeking opportunities for learning, including collaborating with colleagues and taking leadership is ingrained in themselves. Spheres A, C and D of the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory all describe the ways in which a Teacher Leader looks for ways to learn for teacher leadership.

*I have been a Teacher for more than 30 years and the main thing that helped me grow was my ability to learn from other senior teachers and staff because everyone can teach you something positive if you are humble. I have professional friends that are able to keep me updated on changes in the curriculum and policies. As a deputy principal, I am aware that my conduct must always be exemplary to all times, including staff, parents and learners so I try my best to have good interpersonal professionalism all the time. (Nosisa)*

*I have always tried to teach effectively, I. Having been a teacher for many years but, I still believe that I can learn by working in a team of dedicated teachers so I think showing respect is important. To be a leader, you must first manage yourself well, manage your time, your attitude, your deadlines. It's important that people must respect and trust you as their leader. (Malibongwe).*

*I am approachable in my role as a Cluster co-ordinator because I believe it is important to be willing to listen and hear other people's suggestions and ideas on how to teach and assess. But I believe that I must listen to other people especially the young ones. If you are down to earth people begin to learn from you and you can also ask questions by being humble. I believe in networking and sharing ideas in my cluster so I would say that I do see the value of collaboration because it allows you to see things differently. I believe that a teacher is someone who is a lifelong learner, one who does research and continuously undergoes development*

**(Thulisiwe).**

*Being passionate about what you do is very important if you are a teacher and want to produce good results, Creativity is crucial when planning and delivering lessons, You must have a lively personality to keep the learners interested and ready to discover more about your subject .It is also important to remember that learners do not learn from someone they*

*don't like .I try by all means to do things with my learners , like class parties for top achievers to make them feel proud when they do well. (Mphathiswa*

Thulisiwe also concurred with Hanuscin and Colleagues(2012) and Yildizbas (2017.p.216) in reporting that a teacher leader is a person who leads by example. The notion of leading by example seems to have a common thread between Simphiwe and Thulisiwe. This underpins the idea that a leader must demonstrate the personal traits that they want to see in others. Inherent values of the teacher leader as well as personal philosophies are the first building blocks of the person in the teacher leader.

Mpathiswa's response resonated with the idea of having embedded values if you are a teacher leader. In this case the values emphasised were those of being passionate about teaching, the value of being creative in your teaching techniques and strategies was also raised by Mpathiswa.

#### **4.6 THEME 2: The Professional developmental endeavours undertaken by Teacher leaders.**

Sphere C of the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory links to this section of teacher leader professional development as it explains that a Teacher Leader seeks learning. Learning can be formal and informal. Formal or professional development with a focus on content knowledge is one of the ways in which Teacher Leaders learn and gain confidence for experimenting in their classroom.

Within this theme I explore the professional development activities that teacher leaders have embarked upon as part of their personal aspirations.

*I undertook professional development through attending several workshops. I have studied special needs education through the University of Westville, I have conducted several workshops to train newly appointed special school educators. (Nosisa).*

*I paid attention to and prioritised attending departmental workshops as well doing a short course by the Columba Leadership Academy. (Thulisiwe)*

*I chose to focus on developing myself professionally by focusing on attending professional workshops, I also co-ordinate classes for a school for adult learners and the professional networks I have made through that initiative have helped me by providing inter-active learning, planning and collaboration (Malibongwe)*

*I am a teacher educator with 8 years teaching experience), studying B. Ed Honours (UKZN) –Social Science. Enrolled in Education Change-Makers Program (UNISA, YALI and Trevor Noah Foundation, undertook Teacher leaders SADTU workshop (KZN) (Mpathiswa)*

*I have focused on my professional development by attending department workshops, I realised that these workshops were not enough, I decided to join groups that teach me how to become a good leader even in society. One of those groups is Columba leadership. This group [has] got 6 values: Awareness, Focus, Creativity, Integrity, Perseverance and Service. (Simpfiwe)*

Drawing from the about extracts, it is clear that these teacher leaders have taken personal initiatives to develop themselves through various programmes, some further qualifications, some short courses and some workshop attendance. What is clear is that all of them did not pursue leadership courses to become leaders. Rather they sought to develop themselves in a range of areas that they thought were needed by them.

All the research participants held various forms of professional development through additional university qualifications post receiving their initial teaching degree or diploma and also were part of other professional networks. One such participant was Mpathiswa who was a teacher leader with 8 years teaching experience post his degree in Geology and was currently studying B. Ed Honours (UKZN) –Social Science. Enrolled in Education Change Makers Program (UNISA, YALI and Trevor Noah Foundation), an organisation that supports change drivers and future leaders. He also undertook a Teacher leaders SADTU workshop (KZN) as an act of personal ambition to gain skills for professional development.

All participants have prized the importance of professional development and have undergone extensive professional development through university programs and other many avenues. This is testimony of the mind-set and personal philosophy to reach the highest level of development in their content knowledge and also in the development as a teacher.

Due to the reality that the Department of Education does not provide sufficient measures of school based professional development, the responsibility for professional development lies on the agency of the teacher. All the teacher leader participants have sought academic and professional development in one form or another due to their personal beliefs and need to excel as professionals. There is however a void of professional mentorship to help a case study teachers channel their professional development into practise as was reported by Struve, Meredith and Gisele (2014) and, in both Mpathiswa's and Simphiwe's responses suggest there is no evidence of school based professional development opportunities for teacher to aspire to leadership positions.

The data suggest that Learning for a content -knowledge base and Professional Development is important to a Teacher Leader.

Spheres A, C and D of Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory all suggest that teacher leaders engage in learning about his/her practise, Professional Development and the sharing of ideas are all processes that are undertaken by a Teacher Leader.

The DBE offers mainly subject- content orientated workshops at the beginning of each year without follow up workshops to assess and guide whether a case study teachers are coping the profession's overall demands

Cutbill and Brown (2003) suggests that career advancement is also based on her ability to gain the confidence of colleagues and to maintain confidentiality with learners and staff.

Although the source of inspiration can be varied but the personal philosophies of teacher leaders all seem to have similarity of positive personal attributes.

The data findings are such that all the participants stress the importance of professional development as part of Teacher leadership. Taylor, Yates, Yak., Meyer, and Kinsella, (2011) hold the view that differentiated professional development opportunities for teachers' builds leadership capacity that enhances teacher strengths and classroom expertise. It also supports the reinvigoration of educational careers for master teachers whose commitment might otherwise decline. A study conducted by Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) report that teachers who participated in the professional coaching program demonstrated target practices at significantly higher levels. Professional development helps the teacher leader to see themselves as a professional and guides them to conduct themselves professionally in relations with his /her colleagues and subordinate staff in the execution of them to work duties.

The department of Education has created a policy of annual IQMS to allow for professional reflection and professional development planning. The IQMS were designed to promote a common vision of teacher leadership, to address disconnects between the activities that teachers participated in. Teachers are able to work together / collaborate and learn from what each person has learnt from prior experimentation and reflection each on their own as grounded on Sphere B of the Fairman and McKenzie (2012) theory. To this end, the IQMS is an integral part of the annual professional development plan that the teacher leaders partake that is policy driven by the Department of Education.

Sinha et al., (2017.p.9) reports that undergoing professional development results in the teacher gaining confidence to experiment with new learned knowledge and reflect on the successes of the change in pedagogy .This reflection is aimed at understanding the extent to which improvement in teaching practise needs to occur. Kiesling (2019.p14) suggested that

the students' roles and teacher leaders' responsibilities impact students' learning and identity beyond the school walls. Kiesling (2019.p.14) concluded that teachers develop professionally beyond what is required to deliver curriculum in the classroom and that professional reflection extends beyond the course and the school.

#### **4.7 Theme 3: The Challenges and Opportunities of Teacher leaders**

Within this theme I explore the challenges and opportunities that present before teacher leaders as they take on responsibilities as leaders as well as other roles and responsibilities beyond just schooling. There are three sub-themes in this theme that I highlight. These sub-themes relate to personal and professional challenges and opportunities for growth as a professional. While the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory does not distinctly prescribe how Teacher Leaders should overcome challenges, it does provide spheres of influence that serve to support and provide a platform for a Teacher Leader to address their challenges individually or through collaboration. These spheres are ranging from Sphere A, where teachers learn about their practise, Sphere B, where teachers experiment and reflect and Sphere C, where Teachers reflect collectively for collaboration.

##### **4.7.1 Sub theme: The personal challenges encountered by teacher-leaders.**

Drawing from the data it seems that teacher leaders have to juggle their professional responsibilities with family responsibility challenges.

*I am a mother, wife and Deputy Principal and all these roles need my attention, I relied on the assistance of my domestic helper to look after my children and take care of the household as I often am at school until the late afternoons. I was very pressurised during the early stages while my children were young and I was a case study teacher, but I was very fortunate that my husband was a school principal and he understood the demands of teaching and supported me emotionally and also helped around the house. Being in management means you are always dealing with staff conflict issues departmental resource challenges, parent meeting so I have learnt to do what I can and to be patient that not all challenges can be solved instantly so I engage honestly with staff in this regard (Nosisa)*

*I always juggle the balancing of time for family and the time to do the work required (lesson plans, administrative functions, cluster moderations, department monitoring and monitoring LSA). There's a lot of administrative pressures so managing emotions is most important when dealing with stressful deadlines, a challenge or a crisis, responding to a situation instead of reacting to it. I also have to remind myself to take care of my emotional state i.e. not allow stressful situations to overtake me. I am learning to step back from a situation to*

*view it differently and find solution without letting the challenge get the better of me.*

**(Thulisiwe).**

*I always juggle the balancing time for family / time management to do the work required (lesson plans, administrative functions, department monitoring and monitoring LSA).*

*Managing emotions i.e. responding to a situation instead of reacting to it. I also have to remind myself to take care of my emotional state i.e. not allow stressful situations to overtake me. I am learning to step back from a situation to view it differently. (Thulisiwe)*

The myriad of challenges that are found in the data findings cover a wide scope such as juggling family responsibilities, handling conflict between staff, gaining acceptance as a teacher leader from former colleagues, managing a work-life balance as leadership roles have a lot of work demand, both administratively and emotionally. While these challenges may be evident in most of people who are employed, teacher leader carry the additional burden of additional responsibilities that involve conflict management, emotional management and stress management that they personally experience, and as the next sub-theme reveals, of others that they lead. A study conducted in Pakistan on 100 formally working women. Bashir, Ali, Riaz and Barrech (2019.p.153) revealed that working women have to face the pressure both at a domestic level and at the official level too. This double burden is generally disturbing their health. The data also disclosed that most of the respondents were described that they live in an un-balanced life where even flexible schedules are not provided to them. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for today's working women is to maintain the work-life balance. Due to limitations of time and energy, work and family roles are likely to conflict with each other. However, Sengupta and Waldri (2018) suggests that there are some strategies' to achieve a positive work life balance for individuals', among which are learning to prioritise tasks, personal time management and requesting flexibility from your employer. All these factors lie mainly in the personal domain of the teacher -leader. Sphere B of the Fand M theory has an element that states that a Teacher Leader must be reflective, this notion is in line with Sengupta and Waldri (2018), who states that a Teacher Leader must be able to put in a place a strategy that allows them to reflect on their personal challenges and prioritise their tasks,

The conclusion from these reports is while working women may try to achieve a work-life balance, it is not always realistic in the school context and often there will be an imbalance towards one aspect of their lives at the aspect of another., depending on the person's primary

preference of either work or family, however each individual is responsible for managing the extent of the imbalance.

#### **4.7.2 Sub theme 2: Professional challenges encountered by Teacher leaders.**

There are high expectations of being a leader, this is what emerges from the data related to this sub-theme. These high expectations are in terms of workload, academic achievement of learners and accountability and these present as challenges for teacher leaders. In addition, taking of a different role from colleagues also poses challenges of transition, respect and gaining credibility.

*The administration is load can be a lot and working in teams is effective to counteract this. If it's a personal challenge I focus on resolving it as quickly as I can ensure that it doesn't have a negative impact on my ability to teach in good spirits. Another challenging area is learner discipline, especially the FET phase. I am quick to address the issue with the learner and if necessary I escalate it to the Discipline committee or school counsellor on site. Ill –discipline of one learner can disrupt your classroom atmosphere so it's important to find positive ways to manage it. (Mphathiswa).*

*Being in a school where there is a culture of high academic achievement means that I receive pressure from the principal, parents and you feel you must achieve learner performance, especially in matric so I find that even during holidays I have to teach as part of the extended learning programme at school (ELO) sometimes I struggle to have time for friends and family. I am used to it but it does put some strain on my family life as well so I try to reward myself by going away each year on a trip with my friends, like last year we went on a road trip to Pretoria to visit a former varsity friend and stayed for a week as a group of friends (Simpfiwe).*

*When you begin a new teacher leadership role, one of the challenges is gaining the cooperation and respect from the teachers who were previously your colleagues and friends. It's important to work very hard and be knowledgeable. I am not pressured to be anyone other than myself. I listen to good advice from good teachers and I discard the negative It's important to engage with other teachers in different schools and you will realise that your challenges are not unique and they can be overcome. (Malibongwe)*

*At the beginning it was hard for my colleagues and friends to accept or recognise my leadership role as I was their former friend who also happened to be younger than them. I had to work extra hard and be updated all matters regarding policy so as to gain their recognition and respect. I feel that the older teachers do not take me seriously. I am under*

*their observation and feel that I must work hard to gain their acceptance as a leader.*

*(Thulisiwe)*

Mphathiswa mentioned that when he began his new teacher leadership role, one of the challenges was gaining the co-operation and respect from the teachers who were previously your colleagues and friends. There were multiple challenges as presented by Thulisiwe. These include gaining recognition and acceptance. This is a key issue related to leadership. The notion is that even if the teacher has a formal leader title, their subordinates may take some time to accept or recognise them as their leaders. Both Malibongwe and Thulisiwe underscore the view held by (Jacobs et al., (2016.p.378), that leadership is contested ground and that teacher leaders often face challenges of control which Malibongwe and Thulisiwe faced in gaining footing in the earlier years as teacher leaders. Malibongwe and Thulisiwe suggested that there was a time lag in acceptance of new teacher leadership on the part of the new teachers, resulting in teacher leaders struggling to gain footing in their new leadership roles.

Struyve et al.,(2014) reports findings similar to the response given by Thulisiwe that from a micro-political perspective, the results demonstrate how teacher leadership introduces new structures of interactions in schools that makes teacher leaders find themselves continuously juggling between two different agendas of professional interests: obtaining recognition as a teacher leader by their colleagues as well as maintaining their social– professional relationships with their colleagues as Thulisiwe suggests that even to-date she still has to learn to step back from volatile situations and not let her emotions and stress overtake her so as to maintain good socio professional relations, while meeting her professional obligations of administrative functions, department monitoring and monitoring LSA. .

#### **4.7.3 Sub- theme 3: Opportunities for development encountered by Teacher-leaders.**

While the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory does not specifically talk about development, however, describe ways in which the person can equip themselves with knowledge and skills in Spheres A to C, and also platforms that the Teacher Leader can gain to position themselves access to further opportunities in Sphere d to I.

Being a teacher leader does expose teacher leaders to unique insights of what is needed in basic education beyond just normal schooling as these participants' reveal. Of significance is their agency derived from their unique leadership positions that they would like to use to give back to education and the community.

*Having managed the school as a Deputy Principal., I feel that I have contributed to our school. After my retirement, I would like to work in the space of creating a skills and training centre for learners with learning disabilities as the Department doesn't have enough support for these learners. (Nosisa).*

*I am most passionate about learner and teacher leadership development, so I see myself facilitating these workshops, I have already facilitated a conflicts- resolution workshop for learners at my school, I hope that I can facilitate even teacher workshops on different professional challenges. I am not quite sure what steps I need to take to do this but I really love to get involved in being a trainer or facilitator for the Department (Thulisiwe)*

*As an IsiZulu teacher, I feel that the love for the language is diminishing as we are focussing too much on being global citizens and our young children don't have enough encouragement to learn isiZulu and our culture, I see an opportunity for me to write isiZulu poems and short stories **that** are more current and that our learners can relate to keep them excited about the language. (Simpfiwe)*

*I am already running a school programme in my personal capacity for repeating matric learners. There is a real need for knowledgeable, committed teachers to teach these learners effectively. I see an opportunity to invest more resources and open up other schools of this nature. Within the Department, I feel I am at the right experience and competence level to assume a principal role or district administrator if a post is advertised. (Malibongwe)*

Drawing from the presented here, it seems that leadership goes beyond school and teaching. It allows the teacher leaders to seek other opportunities to continue with service the public, either in their retirement to continue with supporting teachers and learners, or in additional activities that have benevolence to the community at large. This means that leadership do not stop amongst these teacher leaders.

Musila, Masinde and Maithya (2019.p.395) reports that retired teachers continue to be engaged in their society post -retirement in economic, social and leisure activities. Musila, Masinde and Maithya (2019,p.391) found that retirement was a time of freedom when retirees can constructively invest their time, wealth and energy in ways that bring prosperity to society and themselves. This suggests that teacher leaders can and should invest in their leisure, social and economic activities outside of their teaching responsibilities. The Musila et.al(2019,p.390) report stated that the economic activities they engaged in included business ventures with 49.5% of male and 50% of female retirees operating retail shops, real estate

businesses or supermarkets. This emphasised the value of business to a retired teacher however, a study conducted by Robinson Mwambe and Chisa Mwape in 2016 at the university of Zambia using a mixed study approach, exploring the success of business ventures of retired teachers. Mwambe and Mwape (2016.p2.) report that many of the retired teachers did not desire to survival and entrepreneurial skills to manage their business ventures. This finding indicates while there are opportunities for new business ventures for retired teachers to invest in, teacher- leaders must be mindful of the fact there is a different skill set entrepreneurial and financial literacy required to operating a business venture to that of being a teacher leader in a school context. In order to avoid failed business ventures in their retirement years, there is a need for the DBE to accommodate issues of financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills among teachers as a way of preparing teachers for life after formal employment. as a teacher.

#### **4.8 THEME: The insights and lessons of teacher leaders- what can we learn from the experiences of teacher leaders?**

Spheres A, B, C D, E and F of the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory suggest that the knowledge found in Teacher Leader can be from personal and professional domains. These lessons and insights can aid novice teachers on their journeys to becoming teacher leaders.

Within this theme I explore the insights and lessons that are the product of a teacher leaders' challenges and experiences in the performing of their work, role and responsibilities There are two sub-themes in this theme that I highlight The insight of how to manage staff and the lesson of The insight of being exemplary to your staff in conduct and values

##### **4.8.1: Sub-theme1: The insight of how to manage your staff**

One is considered a leader if there are people who believes, trust and follow directives s/he sets. The below extracts reveals that the management of your staff can be a complex and difficult aspect of the role of a teacher leader. It is found that as a leader, it is important to seek ways to empower staff and to also create an optimistic culture as an individual and also among the team despite the pressurised nature of the work of teaching.

*As a teacher leader there are various roles you are given to play i.e. manage teaching and learning as well as resources. The greatest lesson I have learnt is that managing people is difficult and it is very important to invest in positive relationships with your staff. How well your department performs normally depends on how well your subordinates work so it's very important to always show respect and provide support to your staff .(Thulisiwe).*

*The greatest lesson I can share is to work smart and hard so that you are not pressurised by the departmental deadlines as there are tight deadlines with the school academic year. I always look to empower my team. I try to maintain a sense of hope with the teachers and parents during meetings, so that they can help their learners to achieve despite the challenges in our environment. (Malibongwe)*

*An insight that I have is that as a teacher leader it is important to know that your staff pays attention to your every action and attitude so therefore it is important to be mindful of all your actions, attitudes and words as these have a great impact on how your team feels about you as their leader. Always try to have good relationships with your team. Encourage your staff to work together as opposed to creating a culture of competition. (Mphathiswa)*

Charismatic leadership qualities as suggested by Shamir, House and Arthur (1993) have been noted as important aspect of being a leader. The data suggest that teacher leaders also need and display such charismatic qualities so that they can form positive relationships and inspire others with a view to providing visionary pathways within their work environments to achieve their intentions.

#### ***4.8.2 Sub theme 2: The insight of setting the example of values expected from your staff by being exemplary in your conduct, actions, behaviour patterns and decisions.***

Being a leader means that one needs to have demonstrate ethical conduct and have values above the confidence in what you want to do and ability to do what you need to do. Being confident and bold to do what is required based on principles and values are the earmarks of a leader, as suggested by Smith and Lewis (2012). The data suggests that being a teacher leader requires one to be confident about themselves, have ability to conduct their role and be exemplary in conduct as a reflection of your values to people that you lead.

*A lesson I would share is that you must remain passionate about improving learner results and you remain consistently committed to ensuring that learning and teaching is a priority. To keep learners motivated, I would encourage teacher leaders to be creative when doing lesson plans. It is also important to remember that learners do not learn from someone they don't like so a teacher must try by all means to do things with his/her learners. Personally, I do class parties for top achievers to make them feel proud when they do well; so it's important to encourage and acknowledge learners' performance. (Nosisa)*

*While I understand the importance of values if you are leading people, I have realised that the values of perseverance and service are most important as a teacher leader, Teaching is by nature is an act of service, as in most cases we are teaching learners who are under-privileged, facing personal and financial challenges and I, as a leader must demonstrate the value of service by assisting them to overcome these challenges There are many cases that require a Teacher leader to showcase the value of service such as helping learners to apply for university by holding evening classes and even buying a matric dance suite and a dress for a few of my less –fortunate matric learners. When you set an example of good values through good conduct, your staff is also encouraged to conduct themselves in line with your conduct. (Simpfiwe).*

It is evident from the data findings that there are some valuable lessons and insights that teacher leaders can impart to novice teachers. These lessons are to invest in positive relationship with their team and learners. There are also tight work deadlines to adhere to, so it necessary to work smart and be consistent in meeting work deadlines. There are also numerous challenges that drain the teaching team and learners and it's therefore important to keep a positive attitude and sense of hope with the teachers and parents. It is also noted that teachers, particularly novice teachers' pay attention to the mood attitude, behaviours and words from their leaders or managers or other teacher leaders, to maintain a conducive working environment, therefore a Teacher leader must be mindful of their moods and words when addressing novice teachers.

It is insight, knowledge of the school dynamics and experiences that serve and guides improved behaviours and culture in teacher leadership. The data findings generated the following notions regarding teacher leader insights. These were that teacher leader who were passionate about their role, who invested in their professional development, who could endure the hostility level of transition into teacher leadership. Flores (2004) reports that teacher leaders can learn, improve and make informed decisions with regards to changes in school management and school leadership. Besides the training that have been received, the past occurrences, culture of a particular school may also play an important role in shaping and influencing teacher's personality and leadership skills. Allot of knowledge can be gained from the lessons of senior teacher leaders,

Evidence of the teacher leaders' insight is found in the behaviours, commitment level, attitudes of the school leader participants interviewed. The five participants remained

passionate about their work and continued to seek more opportunities to contribute to the education sector within and outside of the school.

Northfield (2014) describes how new leaders must sometimes overcome leadership perceptions established by previous administration. A new school leader might have to navigate the challenges of establishing credibility among individuals or groups that have obtained formal or informal power within the school and that sometimes negative perceptions of administration can add to the challenges faced by a case study leader. However, with regards to the context of the school in my research study, there was a positive institutional culture of aiming to be excellent and working tirelessly as a collective to that end.

The experiences and insights from experienced teacher leaders contains innovation that could assist the novice teachers or less experienced teacher leaders and make their teaching journeys less challenging and more rewarding.

The Lessons that were highlighted the key points from discussion of findings were as follows:

All the teacher leaders were passionate, hardworking and loved their role of contributing positively to the lives and development of their learners beyond teaching them academically, they were all of the belief that they need to always set the example of leadership in all areas of their lives as learners learn from all their behaviours.

Teacher leaders should invest in their personal professional development as it helped the participants have a self- image of a professional. This will help them define their teaching practises, behaviours and values as teacher leaders.

All the teacher leaders were aware of opportunities for posts that are advertised by the DBE throughout the year, yet however, they directed their own opportunities by drawing from their passions within their teaching specialisations and interests. New teacher leaders should look for ways to become masters at what their passions are and extend themselves to nurturing their passion or even imparting it to other teachers.

Family is a good interface for the demanding societal roles of the female teacher leaders. Teachers must understand how to not create self -imposed barriers, how to use personal resource like hard work, self- confidence and a family interface to overcome barriers.

Summary. The dynamics of being a leader in different context is challenging, a teacher leader must have good interpersonal skills and be able to endure the hostility of leadership transition that may surface from their previous counterparts, through diligence, competence and good inter –personal relationships with all people, the teacher leader must exercise patience and confidence to negotiate confidence from his team.

This chapter discussed the data generated through the selected methodology for the study. The data was analysed according to four themes which formed the structure for the data presentation and analysis. The data was analysed and thereafter key findings of the study emerged and were discussed. The chapter concluded with a theoretical engagement on the key findings. The next chapter will form the conclusion of the dissertation by making reference to what was intended through this study and what had been achieved, through which insights and recommendations are made on teacher leadership strategies.

## **CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, I presented the data produced through the case study methodology relating to teachers' experiences of a school-based professional development activity with a view to determining if teachers had learnt from this activity and if these learnings will reflect in their teaching practices. Having analysed the data according to four main themes, the key findings were discussed and theorised. In this final and concluding chapter, I return to the research questions in order to provide a response to these research questions. In concluding this dissertation, I discuss the significance of the findings

of this study and provide recommendations that can influence the discourses on school-based teacher professional development.

### **5.2. RETURNING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS THAT GUIDED THIS STUDY**

Recalling that the focus of the study was on school-based professional development with a specific purpose of exploring teachers' experiences of these school-based activities, I provide a response to the research questions that guided this study.

The critical research questions that structured my research were as follows:

What are the distinguishing characteristics of a teacher -leader?

What personal and professional challenges and opportunities do teacher leaders experience as teacher leaders in a school?

What professional developmental activities do teachers engage in to become teacher leaders?

What lessons and insights can teacher-leaders pass to novice teachers?

## **5.2.1 FINDINGS THAT AROSE FROM THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **5.2.1 What are the characteristics of a teacher- leader?**

Thulisiwe responded that a teacher-leader must be matured in the personal domain, by initially understanding their strengths and weaknesses. She also states that it is necessary to believe that every child is an asset.

Malibongwe explained that a teacher-leader is someone who is continuously willing to learn, work in a team collaboratively with other teachers and professional networks.

Mphathiswa suggested that gaining confidence of those you work with was important. This suggests that those around you must trust you because you have consistently demonstrated teacher-leader dispositions, as explained by (Yildizbas,2017,p.216).

Nosisa responded that a teacher leader must understand that they are impart knowledge in such a way as to positively impact the learner's entire life and that they must have strong personal motivation to keep doing their best despite the negative school conditions in some schools.

A common value among the respondents was that of integrity, a passion for teaching and investing in professional development.

In responding to this research question, the data analysed supports the definition of a teacher leader in a way consistent with literature, the respondents explained that their understanding of teacher leader is being a teacher who leads by example. As a teacher there are various roles you are given to play i.e. manage teaching, learning as well as resources. A teacher is someone who is a lifelong learner, one who does research and continuously undergoes development. A teacher leader works in collaboration with his/her peers. This collaboration assists in the development of new ideas to delivering teaching content of the curriculum, it offers better ways to teach, but that also teacher leadership goes beyond teaching content knowledge but that they become a motivator and are trustworthy.

A teacher leader is a teacher who practices classroom management, who simultaneously take on an administrative role outside of their classroom to assist in the function of the larger school system. Teacher leadership tasks may include but are not limited to managing teaching, learning and resource allocation.

The respondents responded from varied contexts of age and gender. The teacher leader values and characteristics discussed by the research participants were similar to those found in literature: Margolis and Huggins (2009), Collins (2012) and Hunzicker (2012) who agree that teacher leader dispositions are comprised of qualities such as: seeking opportunities for self-empowerment in the personal and professional domains. Investing in new teaching pedagogy and professional development is an example of how a teacher leader can build personal confidence, meaning that development in the professional domain can affect the personal domain and vice versa.

### **5.2.2 The beliefs and values that are important for a teacher leader**

- Nosisa discussed the value of being humble despite being a Teacher leader as this will mean you can ask for assistance from your team if you are uncertain. Demonstrating professional conduct was also a recommendation for a Teacher leader.
- Malibongwe emphasised the value of trustworthiness and being reliable were very important values that ensured that as a Teacher leader you are consistently doing what you are expected to be doing for the organisation to grow.
- Thulisiwe discussed that a Teacher leader must see each learner an asset, with this attitude a Teacher leader can find the motivation to go the extra mile for his learners.
- Simphiwe recommended that a Teacher Leader must be a person who can be of service as the teacher leader's role requires that they serve their staff, their learners and community in various ways.
- Mphathiswa recommended that a Teacher –leader must be passionate about teaching and meeting learner outcomes as this factor will enable you to overcome all obstacles that prevent positive learner outcomes.

Many of the teacher leaders believed that the value of integrity is very crucial if you are a leader as you are supposed to lead by example especially to young impressionable learners. Integrity, authenticity, being true to the learners was also mentioned by Teacher leaders. Teacher -leaders believe that every child is an asset and has the potential to become someone in society.

One of the teacher-leaders mentioned the value of creativity, suggesting that a teacher-leader needed to sometimes forget themselves and walk in the shoes of the learners going through challenges so that you will have empathy for all the challenges the learners are facing and to also make them feel comfortable to talk to you.

Being passionate about the work you do, whether incentives are there or not was also described as a characteristic of a good teacher-leader. One of the respondents advised that he believed in the notion that as a leader you are in it for the outcome not the income, you are driven by seeing young children becoming something in their families, communities and also becoming an example to others on their ages and to all those who are still growing.

Hard work pays off. Being organised and ensuring there is evidence for everything. As a teacher leader, you have to be approachable, be willing to sometimes go beyond the normal going the extra mile e.g. when assisting learners to fill in an application form and even forwarding it on their behalf. A key aspect of being a teacher leader is gaining the confidence of those you work with. When a learner/ fellow educator shares something with you, maintain confidentiality, and have good work ethic.

### **5.2.3 What professional and personal challenges have you had to overcome on your transition to being a teacher leader?**

- Nosisa overcame the personal challenge of balancing domestic duties and professional responsibilities because she was a deputy principal and a wife and mother. She sought help in the form of family and a house-helper on the home front.
- Malibongwe did not go into detail about personal challenges that he had to overcome, he merely said that it was important that whatever personal challenges he was encountering, he work at getting it resolved quickly to reduce its negative impact on his work life, His greatest challenge was learner discipline.
- Thulisiwe mentioned the she faced the challenge of an overload of administrative requirements, teaching and family responsibility. This had created stress and she focused on stress management.
- Mphathiswa discussed that working with teams (SMT) and staff was a challenge for him as he was very shy and independent.
- Simphiwe discussed the pressure from the principal to deliver high learner outcomes and he did not discuss how he faced this challenge.

Many of the participants and literature discusses that there is a lack of teamwork between students and teachers. Teachers with too many roles, teachers being made accountable for

more than they should, not enough time to plan as teachers. The challenges were diverse but still congruent with literature. The two female respondents focussed on balancing time/ time management to do the work required, namely administrative planning for the term lesson plans, staff motivation and overall school management functions. The participants also mentioned tight deadlines, administrative workload as well as managing the personal dynamics of managing staff who were your colleagues and or peers.

#### **5.2 4. What professional development do teacher leaders engage in?**

- Nosisa read for her Teaching Diploma at the University of Zululand. She also undertook a certificate in management at Mancosa to assist her as a Deputy Principal. She invests a lot of her efforts and time in training and mentoring newly-appointed teachers.
- Thulisiwe hosts Departmental workshops in her capacity as a Cluster coordinator and this requires that she is updated on matters of the curriculum and policy. This knowledge is part of her professional development. She has also undergone a short course with Columba leadership.
- Mphathiswa is very pro-active in his professional development endeavours and has sought unique opportunities for professional development such as: The Yale Education Change makers program which is a collaboration between Unisa and the Trevor Noah foundation and the SADTU teacher leaders workshop.
- Malibongwe attends Departmental workshops and also heads and Adult literacy centre. This position of leadership also is similar to that held by Nosisa which requires updated curriculum details and policy change made by the department. This knowledge is part of professional development.
- Simphiwe holds a B.Ed degree and is most focused in developing his content knowledge and is very instrumental in setting cluster assessments for matric learners.

#### **5.2.6 What lessons and insights would you impart to novice teaches to prepare them for the journey to teacher leadership?**

- Nosisa provided the insight that as a Teacher leader your responsibility is to ensure that there is support available for your staff for good work –performance. There are many responsibilities of a Teacher leader such as managing resources and learner outcomes, but that the most essential is good people management because you need your team in order to fulfil your objectives as a Teacher leader,

- Mphathiswa recommended that a Teacher Leader must always be mindful of their attitude, words and actions as these have a huge impact on how the team responds and works to meet organisational objectives.
- Malibongwe recommended that Teacher leaders must work hard and smart to meet the departmental demands and administrative requirements and it was important to maintain a sense of hope for the sake of the learners and parents at parents' meetings.
- Simphiwe recommended that a Teacher leader must lead by example and committed to delivering the performance standards required from his staff. The staff need to see that the leader can walk the talk
- Thulisiwe recommended that a teacher leader must pay attention to managing their staff well as the staff the most important factor to achieving the goals set for each department by the school.

### **5.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

The study is aimed at enlightening novice teachers, encouraging aspirant teacher leaders and motivating teacher leaders to practice leadership for improved learner outcomes and for the improved school organisation and quality of education in our country as a whole, for it is only the teachers who can and should make this necessary impact.

#### **5.3.1 Aspiring teacher-leaders may benefit from the research report in the following ways:**

This research report discussed how teacher leadership skills are a fundamental factor that enhances the instructional quality of teachers both inside and outside of the classroom and that leadership can be harnessed through the various Spheres of influence found in teacher leadership theoretical framework of the Fairman and Mckenzie (2012) theory applied in this research.

This research report also encourages teachers to adopt the values, dispositions, behaviours and ethics of teacher leadership which lead to creating positive learning relationships between teachers and students. A positive teacher -learner relationship affects the classroom environment, culture of learning that effectively improves student energy, learning outcomes as well as the school's overall performance.

#### **5.3.2 Principals may benefit from Teacher leadership in the following ways:**

Principals may benefit from this research by understanding the manner in which they can leverage off collaboration with aspirant teacher leaders and experienced teacher leaders,

This report may assist principals to identify novice teachers with leadership potential, encouraging principals to set up channels and platforms for grooming them for leadership, assisting principals in succession planning strategies.

This report can assist principals to see the need of supporting aspirant teacher leaders and teacher leaders through delegation and the distribution of leadership to teachers and teacher leaders for improvement of the school's results.

It is the aim of this research to demonstrate the importance of principals to facilitate teacher leadership for improved relationships with the staff and for improved learning outcomes of the learners. As is suggested by Sphere A to F of the Fairman and Mckenzie theory.

Principals will see the need to create a culture of support of teacher's collaboration as opposed to a culture of competition within the school body.

Encouraging teacher leadership can improve teacher motivation and confidence in their own abilities and encourages teacher leaders to encourage other teachers in leading for increased knowledge and leading among teachers.

This study explored the journey of leadership from a novice to a teacher leader. It explored teacher leadership with a specific focus of exploring the experiences of teacher leaders being a leader in a school context. My study discussed the challenges and barriers in order for policy makers, administrators and teachers themselves to create support structures for the development of novice teacher to enabling them to become teacher leaders as teacher leadership is necessary for quality education in our country.

To this end my research on the experiences of teacher leaders served a purpose to enable the emergence of new knowledge of the phenomenon of teacher leadership.

#### **5.4.3 The key findings from this study provide the basis for making the following recommendations:**

Teacher leaders must focus on meeting school goals, provide inter active learning, planning, collaboration, have undergone training and have attended departmental workshops.

It is recommended that teacher leaders must invest their time attending department workshops, but many of the good leaders realise that that is not enough, and so the study recommends that teacher leaders must invest in formal professional development through external institutions such as universities. Teacher -leaders must always eager to grow as leaders by joining leadership programs and seeking school involvement opportunities

Teachers must realise that the journey and transition to being a teacher leader is personal and does not require a formal title but is attained through self-confidence, expert content knowledge, hard-work, good interpersonal skills and a passion for teaching and improving learner outcomes.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study were such that teacher leadership development was a process that began with the individual and it expanded in spheres. Teacher development occurred in the sphere of the teacher-self, where there was experimentation and reflection on the values of self as a practising teacher. Teacher leadership also occurs amid a complex context of policy, content, students, peers, and administrators, and its enactment remains, as discussed herein the findings and is far messier than the literature has revealed. The main findings were that once the study teacher leaders had gained sufficient efficacy and confidence in the self, there was a desire to acquire more leadership skills by active participation outside of the classroom, where it required the sharing of learning and ideas, collaboration, seeking further professional development and extending the teacher to participate in the broader school community. Despite a call by York-Barr and Duke (2004) for more theory-driven, empirical research, teacher leadership remains a largely undertheorized field. This is a view held by Wenner and Campbell (2017.p.2), and therefore there is still a need to understand the mechanisms of support necessary to enact teacher leadership professionally. I also agree that a larger empirical research study would be necessary to gain knowledge on specific supports that the Department of Education needs to facilitate to nurture teacher leadership order to make the transition into teacher leadership more seamless for novice teachers. It would also be interesting to research on how teacher leaders make use of their experiences post retirement. This would provide insight of the growth of teacher leaders outside of the teaching faculty.

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